

Parisian Points of View eBook

Parisian Points of View by Ludovic Halévy

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Page 1

THE SHORT STORIES OF M. LUDOVIC HALEVY

To most American readers of fiction I fancy that M. Ludovic Halevy is known chiefly, if not solely, as the author of that most charming of modern French novels, *The Abbe Constantin*. Some of these readers may have disliked this or that novel of M. Zola's because of its bad moral, and this or that novel of M. Ohnet's because of its bad taste, and all of them were delighted to discover in M. Halevy's interesting and artistic work a story written by a French gentleman for young ladies. Here and there a scoffer might sneer at the tale of the old French priest and the young women from Canada as innocuous and saccharine; but the story of the good Abbe Constantin and of his nephew, and of the girl the nephew loved in spite of her American millions—this story had the rare good fortune of pleasing at once the broad public of indiscriminate readers of fiction and the narrower circle of real lovers of literature. Artificial the atmosphere of the tale might be, but it was with an artifice at once delicate and delicious; and the tale itself won its way into the hearts of the women of America as it had into the hearts of the women of France.

There is even a legend—although how solid a foundation it may have in fact I do not dare to discuss—there is a legend that the lady-superior of a certain convent near Paris was so fascinated by *The Abbe Constantin*, and so thoroughly convinced of the piety of its author, that she ordered all his other works, receiving in due season the lively volumes wherein are recorded the sayings and doings of Monsieur and Madame Cardinal, and of the two lovely daughters of Monsieur and Madame Cardinal. To note that these very amusing studies of certain aspects of life in a modern capital originally appeared in that extraordinary journal, *La Vie Parisienne*—now sadly degenerate—is enough to indicate that they are not precisely what the good lady-superior expected to receive. We may not say that *La Famille Cardinal* is one of the books every gentleman's library should be without; but to appreciate its value requires a far different knowledge of the world and of its wickedness than is needed to understand *The Abbe Constantin*.

Yet the picture of the good priest and the portraits of the little Cardinals are the work of the same hand, plainly enough. In both of these books, as in *Criquette* (M. Halevy's only other novel), as in *A Marriage for Love*, and the twoscore other short stories he has written during the past thirty years, there are the same artistic qualities, the same sharpness of vision, the same gentle irony, the same constructive skill, and the same dramatic touch. It is to be remembered always that the author of *L'Abbe Constantin* is also the half-author of "Froufrou" and of "Tricoche et Cacolet," as well as of the librettos of "La Belle Helene" and of "La Grande Duchesse de Gerolstein."

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In the two novels, as in the twoscore short stories and sketches—the *contes* and the *nouvelles* which are now spring-like idyls and now wintry episodes, now sombre etchings and now gayly-colored pastels—in all the works of the story-teller we see the firm grasp of the dramatist. The characters speak for themselves; each reveals himself with the swift directness of the personages of a play. They are not talked about and about, for all analysis has been done by the playwright before he rings up the curtain in the first paragraph. And the story unrolls itself, also, as rapidly as does a comedy. The movement is straightforward. There is the cleverness and the ingenuity of the accomplished dramatist, but the construction has the simplicity of the highest skill. The arrangement of incidents is so artistic that it seems inevitable; and no one is ever moved to wonder whether or not the tale might have been better told in different fashion.

Nephew of the composer of “La Juive”—an opera not now heard as often as it deserves, perhaps—and son of a playwright no one of whose productions now survives, M. Halevy grew up in the theatre. At fourteen he was on the free-list of the Opera, the Opera-Comique, and the Odeon. After he left school and went into the civil service his one wish was to write plays, and so to be able to afford to resign his post. In the civil service he had an inside view of French politics, which gave him a distaste for the mere game of government without in any way impairing the vigor of his patriotism; as is proved by certain of the short stories dealing with the war of 1870 and the revolt of the Paris Communists. And while he did his work faithfully, he had spare hours to give to literature. He wrote plays and stories, and they were rejected. The manager of the Odeon declared that one early play of M. Halevy’s was exactly suited to the Gymnase, and the manager of the Gymnase protested that it was exactly suited to the Odeon. The editor of a daily journal said that one early tale of M. Halevy’s was too brief for a novel, and the editor of a weekly paper said that it was too long for a short story.

In time, of course, his luck turned; he had plays performed and stories published; and at last he met M. Henri Meilhac, and entered on that collaboration of nearly twenty years’ duration to which we owe “Froufrou” and “Tricoche et Cacolet,” on the one hand, and on the other the books of Offenbach’s most brilliant operas—“Barbebleue,” for example, and “La Perichole.” When this collaboration terminated, shortly before M. Halevy wrote *The Abbe Constantin*, he gave up writing for the stage. The training of the playwright he could not give up, if he would, nor the intimacy with the manners and customs of the people who live, move, and have their being on the far side of the curtain.

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Obviously M. Halevy is fond of the actors and the actresses with whom he spent the years of his manhood. They appear again and again in his tales; and in his treatment of them there is never anything ungentlemanly as there was in M. Jean Richepin's recent volume of theatrical sketches. M. Halevy's liking for the men and women of the stage is deep; and wide is his knowledge of their changing moods. The young Criquette and the old Karikari and the aged Dancing-master—he knows them all thoroughly, and he likes them heartily, and he sympathizes with them cordially. Indeed, nowhere can one find more kindly portraits of the kindly player-folk than in the writings of this half-author of "Froufrou"; it is as though the successful dramatist felt ever grateful towards the partners of his toil, the companions of his struggles. He is not blind to their manifold weaknesses, nor is he the dupe of their easy emotionalism, but he is tolerant of their failings, and towards them, at least, his irony is never mordant.

Irony is one of M. Halevy's chief characteristics, perhaps the chiefest. It is gentle when he deals with the people of the stage—far gentler than when he is dealing with the people of Society, with fashionable folk, with the aristocracy of wealth. When he is telling us of the young loves of millionaires and of million-heiresses, his touch may seem caressing, but for all its softness the velvet paw has claws none the less. It is amusing to note how often M. Halevy has chosen to tell the tale of love among the very rich. The heroine of *The Abbe Constantin* is immensely wealthy, as we all know, and immensely wealthy are the heroines of *Princesse*, of *A Grand Marriage*, and of *In the Express*.^[A] Sometimes the heroes and the heroines are not only immensely wealthy, they are also of the loftiest birth; such, for instance, are the young couple whose acquaintance we make in the pages of *Only a Waltz*.

[Footnote A: Perhaps the present writer will be forgiven if he wishes to record here that *In the Express (Par le Rapide)* was published in Paris only towards the end of 1892, while a tale not wholly unlike it, *In the Vestibule Limited*, was published in New York in the spring of 1891.]

There is no trace or taint of snobbery in M. Halevy's treatment of all this magnificence; there is none of the vulgarity which marks the pages of *Lothair*, for example; there is no mean admiration of mean things. There is, on the other hand, no bitterness of scourging satire. He lets us see that all this luxury is a little cloying and perhaps not a little enervating. He suggests (although he takes care never to say it) that perhaps wealth and birth are not really the best the world can offer. The amiable egotism of the hero of *In the Express*, and the not unkindly selfishness of the heroine of that most Parisian love-story, are set before us without insistence, it is true, but with an irony so keen that even he who runs as he reads may not mistake the author's real opinion of the characters he has evoked.

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To say this is to say that M. Halevy's irony is delicate and playful. There is no harshness in his manner and no hatred in his mind. We do not find in his pages any of the pessimism which is perhaps the dominant characteristic of the best French fiction of our time. To M. Halevy, as to every thinking man, life is serious, no doubt, but it need not be taken sadly, or even solemnly. To him life seems still enjoyable, as it must to most of those who have a vivid sense of humor. He is not disillusioned utterly, he is not reduced to the blankness of despair as are so many of the disciples of Flaubert, who are cast into the outer darkness, and who hopelessly revolt against the doom they have brought on themselves.

Indeed, it is Merimee that M. Halevy would hail as his master, and not Flaubert, whom most of his fellow French writers of fiction follow blindly. Now, while the author of *Salambo* was a romanticist turned sour, the author of *Carmen* was a sentimentalist sheathed in irony. To Gustave Flaubert the world was hideously ugly, and he wished it strangely and splendidly beautiful, and he detested it the more because of his impossible ideal. To Prosper Merimee the world was what it is, to be taken and made the best of, every man keeping himself carefully guarded. Like Merimee, M. Halevy is detached, but he is not disenchanted. His work is more joyous than Merimee's, if not so vigorous and compact, and his delight in it is less disguised. Even in the Cardinal sketches there is nothing that leaves an acrid after-taste, nothing corroding—as there is not seldom in the stronger and sterner short stories of Maupassant.

More than Maupassant or Flaubert or Merimee, is M. Halevy a Parisian. Whether or not the characters of his tale are dwellers in the capital, whether or not the scene of his story is laid in the city by the Seine, the point of view is always Parisian. The *Circus Charger* did his duty in the stately avenues of a noble country-place, and *Blacky* performed his task near a rustic water-fall; but the men who record their intelligent actions are Parisians of the strictest sect. Even in the patriotic pieces called forth by the war of 1870, in the *Insurgent* and in the *Chinese Ambassador*, it is the siege of Paris and the struggle of the Communists which seem to the author most important. His style even, his swift and limpid prose—the prose which somehow corresponds to the best *vers de societe* in its brilliancy and buoyancy—is the style of one who lives at the centre of things. Cardinal Newman once said that while Livy and Tacitus and Terence and Seneca wrote Latin, Cicero wrote Roman; so while M. Zola on the one side, and M. Georges Ohnet on the other, may write French, M. Halevy writes Parisian.

BRANDER MATTHEWS.

ONLY A WALTZ

“Aunt, dear aunt, don't believe a word of what he is going to tell you. He is preparing to fib, to fib outrageously. If I hadn't interrupted him at the beginning of his talk, he would

have told you that he had made up his mind to marry me from his and my earliest childhood.”

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"Of course!" exclaimed Gontran.

"Of course not," replied Marceline. "He was going to tell you that he was a good little boy, having always loved his little cousin, and that our marriage was a delightful romance of tenderness and sweetness."

"Why, yes, of course," repeated Gontran.

"Nonsense! The truth, Aunt Louise, the real truth, in short, is this, never, never should we have been married if on the 17th of May, 1890, between nine and eleven o'clock, he had not lost 34,000 points at bezique at the club, and if all the boxes had not been sold, that same night, at the Bouffes-Parisiens Theatre."

Gontran began to laugh.

"Oh, you can laugh as much as you please! You know very well that but for this—on what does fate depend?—I should now be married and a duchess, it is true; but Duchess of Courtalin, and not Duchess of Lannilis. Well, perhaps that would have been better! At any rate, I wish to give Aunt Louise the authentic history of our marriage."

"Tell away, if it amuses you," said Gontran.

"Yes, sir, it amuses me. You shall know all, Aunt Louise—all, absolutely all; and I beg you to be judge of our quarrel."

This scene was taking place eight days after Marceline de Lorlauge, at the Church of the Madeleine, before the altar, hidden under a mountain of roses, had answered "yes," with just the right amount of nervousness and emotion (neither too much nor too little, but exactly right), when she was asked if she was willing to take for husband her cousin, Jean Leopold Mathurin Arbert Gontran, Duke of Lannilis.

This marriage had been the great marriage of the season. There had been an absolute crush under the colonnade and against the railings of the church to see the bride walk down those fearful steps of the Madeleine. What an important feat that is! Merely to be beautiful is not all that is needful; it is necessary besides to know how to be beautiful. There is an art about being pretty which requires certain preparations and study. In society, as in the theatre, success rarely comes at once. *Mme.* de Lannilis had the good-fortune to make her first appearance with decisive success. She was at once quite easily and boldly at home in her beauty; she had only to appear to triumph. Prince Nerins had not a moment's hesitation concerning it, and he it is, as every one knows, who, with general consent, has made himself the distributor of the patents of supreme Parisian elegance; so while the new duchess, beneath the fire of a thousand eyes and behind the ringing staffs, was taking her first steps as a young married woman with calm assurance, Nerins, struck with admiration, was giving way, under the colonnade of the

Madeleine, to veritable transports of enthusiasm. He went from group to group repeating:

“She is aerial! There is no other expression for her—aerial! She does not walk, she glides! If she had the fantasy, with one little kick of her heel, she could raise herself lightly over the heads of those two tall fellows with spears, cross the Place de la Concorde, and go and place herself on the pediment of the Chamber of Deputies. Look at her well; that is true beauty, radiant beauty, blazing beauty! She is a goddess, a young goddess! she will reign long, gentlemen—as long as possible.”

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The young goddess, for the present, did not go farther than Lannilis, in Poitou, to her husband's home—her home—in a mansion that had seen many Duchesses of Lannilis, but never one more charming, and never, it must be said, one more absolutely in love. This little duchess of nineteen was wild about this little duke of twenty-five, who was jealously carrying her off for himself alone to a quiet and solitary retreat.

They had arrived Thursday, the 24th of June, at about two o'clock—on an exquisite night beneath a star-spangled sky—and they were suddenly astounded at receiving a letter from their Aunt Louise, dated July 1:

"Eight days' steady tete-a-tete," she wrote, "is enough, quite enough. Trust to the experience of an old countrywoman, who would be delighted to kiss her little nephew and niece. Don't eat all your love in the bud—keep a little for the future."

Thursday, the 1st of July! Eight days! They had been eight days at Lannilis! It was impossible! They tried to put some order in their reflections. What had they done Friday, Saturday, and Sunday? But all was vague, and became confused in their minds. The days and the nights, and the nights and days. What had they done? It was always the same, same thing; and the same thing had somehow never been the same thing.

They had just loved, loved, loved; and, quite given up to this very wise occupation, they had completely forgotten that near Lannilis, in the old residence of Chatellerault, there was dear old Aunt Louise, who was expecting their first bridal visit—a visit which was due her, for she had the best claim in the world, on account of her eighty-four years, her kindness, and also because of the gift of a magnificent pearl necklace to Marceline.

So it was necessary to be resigned, to leave off dreaming, and to come back to reality; and it was during this visit that, before the old aunt, much amused at the quarrel, this great dispute had abruptly burst forth between the young married couple.

Aunt Louise had accepted the position of arbitrator, and, presiding over the discussion, she had made the two contestants sit down before her in arm-chairs, at a respectful distance. Marceline, before being seated, had already taken the floor.

"Every one agreed upon this point (you know it, Aunt Louise; mamma must often have told you in her letters)—every one was agreed on this point: that there were really only two suitable matches for me—the Duke of Lannilis here present, and the Duke of Courtalin. I had the weakness to prefer him—him over there. Why? I can scarcely tell—a childish habit, doubtless. We had played together when we were no higher than that at being little husband and wife. I had remained faithful to that childhood love, whereas he—"

"Whereas I—"

“All in due season, sir, and you will lose nothing by waiting. However, there were all sorts of good reasons for preferring—the other one, who had a larger fortune and was of more ancient nobility.”



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“Oh, as to that—in money, maybe, but as to birth—”

“It is indisputable! You are both dukes by patent.”

“We in 1663.”

“And the Courtalin—”

“In 1666 only.”

“Agreed.”

“Well, then?”

“Oh, just wait! I am posted on the question; mamma studied it thoroughly when things looked, three months ago, as if I should be Duchess of Courtalin. One morning mamma went to the archives with an old friend of hers, a great historian, who is a member of the Institute. You date from 1663, and the Courtalin from 1666; that is correct. But Louis XIV., in 1672, by a special edict, gave the precedence to the Courtalins; and you have not, I suppose, any idea of disputing what Louis XIV. thought best to do. Now, Aunt Louise, can he?”

“Certainly not.”

“But Saint Simon—”

“Oh, let us leave Saint Simon alone; he is prejudice and inaccuracy itself! I know he is on your side, but that doesn’t count; but I will, to be agreeable to you, acknowledge that you are better looking and taller than M. de Courtalin—”

“But—”

“Oh, my dear, I begin to see! You are dying for me to tell you that. Well, yes, you are a fairly handsome man; but that is only a very perishable advantage, and you have too much respect for conventionalities to wish to make that equal to the decree of Louis XIV. However, I loved you—I loved you faithfully, tenderly, fondly, stupidly; yes, stupidly, for when I had come out in society, the year before, in April, 1889, at *Mme. de Fresnes’s* ball, when I had allowed my poor, little, thin shoulders to be seen for the first time (I must have been about seventeen), I noticed that the young marriageable men in our set (they are all quoted, noted, and labelled) drew away from me with strange, respectful deference. I appeared to be of no importance or interest, in spite of my name, my dowry, and my eyes. You see, I had singed myself. I had so ridiculously advertised my passion for you that I no longer belonged to myself; I was considered as belonging to you. As soon as I had put on my first long dress, which gave me at once the right to think of marriage and speak of love, I had told all my friends that I loved, and would

never love or marry any one but you—you or the convent. Yes, I had come to that! My friends had told their brothers and cousins, who had repeated it to you (just what I wanted), but it put me out of the race. Dare to say, sir, that it is not all true, strictly true!"

"I am saying nothing—?"

"Because you are overcome, crushed by the evidence. You say nothing now, but what did you say last year? Last year! When I think that we could have been married since last year! A year, a whole year lost! And it was so long, and it could have been so short! Well, he was there, at the Fresnes' ball. He condescended to do me the honor of dancing three times with me. I came home intoxicated,

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absolutely intoxicated with joy. But that great happiness did not last long, for this is what that Gontran the next day said to his friend Robert d'Aigremont, who told his sister Gabrielle, who repeated it to me, that he saw clearly that they wished to marry him to his cousin Marceline. I had, the day before, literally thrown myself into his arms; he had thought right, from pure goodness of heart, to show some pity for the love of the little school-girl, so he had resolved to dance with me; but he had done, quite done—he wouldn't be caught again. He would keep carefully away from coming-out balls; they were too dangerous a form of gayety. Marriage did not tempt him in the least. He had not had enough of a bachelor's life yet—besides, he knew of nothing more absurd than those marriages between cousins. The true pleasure of marriage, he said, must be to put into one's life something new and unexpected, and to call by her first name, all at once, on Tuesday morning, a person whom one didn't so call Monday night. But a person whom one already knew well, where would be the pleasure? He made a movement, Aunt Louise; did you see?"

"I saw—"

"He recognized the phrase."

"True. I remember—"

"Ah! but you did not say that phrase only—you said all the others. But that is nothing as yet, Aunt Louise. Do you know what was his principal objection to a marriage with me? Do you know what he told Robert? That he had seen me in evening-dress the night before for the first time, and that I was too thin! Too thin! Ah! that was a cruel blow to me! For it was true. I was thin. The evening after Gabrielle had told me that awful fact, that evening in undressing I looked at my poor little shoulders, with their poor little salt-cellars, and I had a terrible spasm of sorrow—a flood of tears that wouldn't stop—a torrent, a real torrent; and then mamma appeared. I was alone, disrobed, hair flying, studying my shoulders, deploring their meagreness—a true picture of despair! Mamma took me in her arms. 'My angel, my poor dear, what is the matter?' I answered only by sobbing. 'My child, tell me all.' Mamma was very anxious, but I could not speak; tears choked my voice. 'My dearest, do you wish to kill me?' So to reassure mamma I managed to say between my sobs: 'I am too thin, mamma; last night Gontran thought me too thin!' At that mamma began to laugh heartily; but as she was good-humored that evening, after laughing she explained to me that she, at seventeen, had been much thinner than I, and she promised me in the most solemn manner that I should grow stouter. Mamma spoke true; I have fattened up. Will you have the goodness, sir, to declare to our aunt that the salt-cellars have entirely disappeared, and that you cannot have against me, in that respect, any legitimate cause of complaint?"

"I will declare so very willingly; but you will permit me to add—"

“I will permit you no such thing. I have the floor, let me speak; but you will soon have a chance to justify yourself. I intend to put you through a little cross-questioning.”

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"I'll wait, then—"

"Yes, do. So last spring I began my first campaign. I do not know, Aunt Louise, what the customs were in your time, but I know that to-day, at the present time, the condition of young girls is one of extreme severity. We are kept confined, closely confined, till eighteen, for mamma was very indulgent in bringing me out when I was only seventeen; but mamma is goodness itself, and then she isn't coquettish for a sou—she didn't mind admitting that she had a marriageable daughter. All mothers are not like that, and I know some who are glad to put off the public and official exhibition of their poor children so as to gain a year. At the same time that they race at Longchamps and Chantilly the great fillies of the year, they take from their boxes the great heiresses of the year who are ripe for matrimony, and in a series of white balls given for that purpose, between Easter Sunday and the Grand Prix, they are made to take little trial gallops before connoisseurs. They have to work rapidly and find a buyer before the Grand Prix; for after that all is up, the young girls are packed back to their governesses, dancing-masters, and literary professors. The campaign is over. That is all for the year. They are not seen again, the poor things, till after Lent. So mamma took me last year to a dozen large balls, which were sad and sorrowful for me. He was not there! He didn't wish to marry! He told it to every one insolently, satirically. He would never, never, never marry! He told it to me."

"At your mother's request."

"Yes, that is true. I know since that it was at mamma's petition that he talked that way; she hoped it would prevent my being stubborn in my craze for him."

"Craze!" exclaimed Aunt Louise.

"Excuse me, Aunt Louise, it is a word of to-day."

"And means—"

"It means a sort of unexplainable, absurd, and extravagant love that comes without its being possible to know why—in short, Aunt Louise, exactly the love I have for him."

"Much obliged! But you do not tell everything. You do not say that your mother desired your marriage with Courtalin—"

"Yes, of course; mamma was quite right. M. de Courtalin has a thousand sterling merits that you have not—that you will never have; and then M. de Courtalin had a particularly good point in mamma's eyes: he did not find me too thin, and he asked for my hand in marriage. One day about four o'clock (that was the 2d of June last year) mamma came into my room with an expression on her face I had never seen before. 'My child,' she said—'my dear child!' She had no need to finish; I had understood. M. de Courtalin all



the evening before, at the Princess de Viran's, had hovered about me, and the next day his mother had come to declare to mamma that her son knew of nothing more delightful than my face. I answered that I knew of nothing less delightful than M. de Courtalin's face. I added that,

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besides, I was in no hurry to marry. Mamma tried to make me hear reason. I was going to let slip an admirable chance. The Duke of Courtalin was the target of all the ambitious mothers—a great name, a great position, a great fortune! I should deeply regret some day to have shown such disdain for advantages like these, *etc.* And to all these things, which were so true and sensible, I could find only one word to say: his name, Gontran, Gontran, Gontran! Gontran or the convent, and the most rigorous one of all, the Carmel, in sackcloth and ashes! Oh, Aunt Louise, do look at him! He listens to all this with an unbearable little air of fatuity.”

“You have forbidden me to speak.”

“True. Don’t speak; but you have deserved a little lesson in modesty and humility. Good gracious! you think perhaps it was for your merits that I chose you, insisted on you. You would be far from the mark, my poor dear. It is, on the contrary, because of your want of merit. Now, as to M. de Courtalin. Why, there is a man of merit! I had, from morning to night, M. de Courtalin’s merit dinned into my ears, and that was why I had taken a dislike to him. What I dreaded more than anything for a husband was what is called a superior man; and mamma went the wrong way to work to win me over to her candidate when she said to me: ‘He is a very intelligent, very serious, very deep-thinking, and very distinguished man; he has spent his youth honorably; he has been a model son, and would make a model husband.’ It made me shiver to hear mamma talk so. I know nothing more awful than people who are always, always right; who, under all circumstances, give evidence of unfailing good sense; who crush us with their superiority. With Gontran I am easy, quite easy. It isn’t he who would crush me with his superiority. I do not know much, Aunt Louise, but my ignorance beside his is learning. He had great trouble in getting his baccalaureate. He flunked three times.”

“Flunked!” exclaimed Aunt Louise.

“It means failed. He taught me the word. All the queer words I use, Aunt Louise, were taught me by him.”

“Come, now—”

“Yes, all. I can see him now, coming to the house one day, and I can hear him say, ‘Flunked again!’ That was the third time. Then he went and took his examination in the country at a little college at Douai; it was easier, and he passed at last. M. de Courtalin has never been flunked; he is everything that one can be at his age: bachelor, advocate, lawyer, and grave, exact, and severe in his language, and dressed—always in a black frock-coat, with two rows of buttons, always all buttoned—in short, a man of the past. And what a future before him! Already a member of the General Council, and very eloquent, very influential, he will be deputy in three years, and then, when we have



a government that people of our class can recognize, minister, ambassador, and I know not what! The highest offices wait for him, and all his ambitions will be legitimate when he has a chance to put his superior talents at the service of the monarchy. That's one of mamma's phrases. Whereas you, my poor Gontran—you will never be anything other than a very funny and very nice old dear, whom I shall lead as I like with my little finger."

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“Oh! oh!”

“You will see. Besides, you have seen for eight days.”

“The first eight days don’t count.”

“I will continue, rest assured. I love you, besides. I love you, and do you know why? It is because you are not a man of the past; you are distinctly modern, very modern. Look at him, Aunt Louise. Isn’t he very nice, very well turned out, very modern, in fact—I repeat it—in his little pearl-gray suit. He is devoted to his clothes. He consults for hours and hours with his tailor, which delights me, for I intend to consult for hours and hours with my dress-maker. And he will pay the bills without a tremor, for he will be charmed to see me very stylish and very much admired. Ah, we shall make the most brilliant and most giddy little couple! He is modern, I shall be modern, we shall be modern! After three, four, or five weeks (we do not know exactly) dedicated to pure love, we shall take flight towards the country, where one has a good time; and then we shall be talked about, Aunt Louise, we shall be talked about. And now, where was I in my story? I am sure I do not know at all.”

“Nor I.”

“Nor I.”

“Ah, I know. *Mme. de Courtalin* had come to ask my hand for her honorable son, and when mamma had spoken to me of that I had exclaimed, ‘Sooner the convent!’ I do not know exactly what mamma said to *Mme. de Courtalin*—at any rate, I was left alone for the time being. There was a rush to the Grand Prix, and then a general breaking-up. We went to spend a month at Aix-les-Bains for papa’s complaint, and then a fortnight here, Aunt Louise; and then, do you remember, you received the confessions of my poor torn heart. Ah! I must say you are the only young member of the family—you were the only one who did not make a long face when I spoke of my love for that rogue. Mamma, however, had preached to you, and you vaunted the advantages of an alliance with Courtalin, but without conviction. I felt that you were at bottom on my side against mamma, and it was so easily explained—mamma could not understand me, whereas you! They think we little girls know nothing, and we know everything. I knew that mamma had made a worldly marriage, which had, however, turned out very well; and you, Aunt Louise, had married for love. You must have battled to get the husband you wished, and you had him, and you resolutely conquered your happiness. Yes, I knew all that; I dared even to allude to those things of the past, and those memories brought a smile to your lips and tears to your eyes. And to-day again, Aunt Louise, there it is, the smile, and there are the tears.”

Marceline interrupted her talk, affectionately threw herself on her Aunt Louise’s neck, and kissed her with all her heart. She wiped away the tears with kisses, and only the

smile remained. Yes, Aunt Louise remembered that she had had hard work to get as husband a certain handsome officer of the Royal Guard, who was there present at the scene, in an old decorated frame, standing up with his helmet on his head in a martial attitude, leaning on the hilt of his cavalry sabre.

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He, too, had been modern, that conqueror of the Trocadero, when he entered Madrid in 1822 on the staff of the Duke of Angouleme. And she, too, old Aunt Louise, had been modern, very modern, the day when, from a window of the Palace of the Tuileries, during a military parade, she had murmured this phrase in her mother's ear: "Mamma, there is the one I love."

"Ah, how cowardly we are!" exclaimed Marceline, abruptly, changing her tone. "Yes, how cowardly we are to love them—those, those dreadful men, who know so little how to care for us. I say that for Gontran. What was he doing while I was telling you my sorrows, Aunt Louise? Quite calmly taking a trip around the world. But let him speak now, let him speak, especially as I cannot any more. In all my life I have never made so long a speech. Speak, sir; why were you going round the world?"

"Because your mother, on the morning of the day before you departed for Aix-les-Bains, had had a very long conversation with me."

"And she had said to you?"

"She had said to me, 'Put a stop to this; marry her or go away, and let her not hear of you again till her marriage.' And as I had for some time been debating whether to take a little trip to Japan, I started for Japan."

"He started for Japan! That goes without saying. You hear him, Aunt Louise; he admits that this time last year he preferred to expatriate himself rather than marry me. So there he was in America, in China, and in Japan. This lasted ten months; from time to time, humbly and timidly, I asked for news of him. He was very well; his last letter was from Shanghai, or Sidney, or Java. For me, not a word, not a remembrance—nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing!"

"I had promised your mother. One day at Yokohama I had bought you a lot of fascinating little things. The box was done up and addressed to you when I remembered my promise. I sent all those Japaneseries to your mother, thinking that you would have your share of the spoil."

"I had nothing at all. The arrival of the box was kept a secret. It would have been necessary to have pronounced your name before me, and mamma didn't wish that. On the other hand, there was always one name on her lips—Courtalin. Still Courtalin, and always Courtalin. He had all qualities, all virtues. Then he had just lost his aunt in Brittany, and he had inherited something. It was thought that he would only have a quarter of the property, and he had had three-quarters. Besides, it was a country-seat, and all around this seat, an admirable domain, sixteen or seventeen hundred hectares. I say it to my shame, Aunt Louise, to my great shame, the thought of giving in came to me; and then, to be absolutely frank, it rather pleased me to become a duchess; so mamma made me out a list of all possible husbands for me, and there was no other

duke in the list but M. de Courtalin. There was, of course, the little Count of Limiers, who would be duke some

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day. But when? His father is forty-five and an athlete, and has an iron constitution. So I was obliged to admit it when I talked it over with mamma in the evening. To be duchess it was necessary to agree on M. de Courtalin. Mamma, however, was perfect, and delightfully gentle. She did not press me, nor treat me harshly, nor torment me; she waited. Only I knew she had said to *Mme. de Nelly*: 'It will be accomplished, my dear, before the 20th of June. It must be.' Papa was obliged to return to Aix for his complaint. The 20th of June was the date for his departure. I no longer said, 'No, no, no!' with that savage energy of the year before. You see, Gontran, I open my whole heart to you; you will have, I hope, soon the same courage and sincerity."

"You may be sure of it."

"I was waiting, however—I was waiting for his return. I wished to have with him a very serious conversation. It is quite true that I felt like fainting with fear at the mere thought of that explanation; but I was none the less resolved to speak, and I would speak. It seemed to me impossible that he had not thought of me sometimes out there in China and Cochin China. We had always loved each other (till the unhappy day on which I had become marriageable) with a tender and faithful affection! I knew that he would arrive in Paris during the night of the 2d or 3d of April. Very certainly the day after he would come and see us. And so, in fact, towards two o'clock he came. Mamma hadn't finished dressing; I was alone. I ran to him. 'Ah, how glad I am to see you!' and I kissed him with effusion. Then he, very much moved, yes, very much moved, kissed me, and began to say to me such nice and pretty things that I felt my heart melting. Ah, if mamma hadn't come for five minutes—I would only have asked for five minutes!—and how quickly it would have turned into love-making our little explanation!"

"Yes, that is true. The impulse that threw you into my arms was so sincere. Ah, very certainly it was that day, at that moment, that I began to love you. And then I looked at you. You were no longer the same. There was such great and happy change."

"He does not dare say it, Aunt Louise, but I will say it: I had become fatter. Ah, when I think that I might be Duchess of Courtalin if I had remained thin. Those men! Those men! What wretches! But mamma came in, then papa, and then my brother George. No explanation possible! There they all were engaged in an odious conversation on the comparative merits of the English and French boats—the English ones are faster, the food on the French ones is better, *etc.* It was charming! At the end of an hour Gontran went away, but not without giving me a very tender and eloquent hand-shake. I could wish nothing more speaking than that hand-shake. But mamma, who was observing us attentively, had clearly seen our two hands, after having found a way to say very pleasant things, had had a great deal of trouble in separating. I expected, of course, to see him the next day. Did you come?"

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"No."

"And the day after that?"

"No, nor then."

"At last, after three days, mamma took me to the races at the Bois de Boulogne. We arrived, and there at once, two steps from me, I saw him. But no, it was no longer he; frigid greeting, frigid good-day, frigid hand-shake, frigid words, and very few of them—scarcely a few sentences, awkward and embarrassed. Then he was lost in the crowd, and that was all. He did not appear again. I was dumfounded, overcome, crushed."

"But it was your mother who—"

"Yes, I know now; but I did not know that day. Yes, it was mamma. Oh, must I not love mamma to have forgiven her that?"

"She had come to me very early in the morning the day after the very eloquent hand-shake and there, in tears—yes, literally in tears (she was sobbing)—she had appealed to my sense of honor, of delicacy, of integrity. 'You both had,' she said to me, 'yesterday, on seeing each other again after a long absence, a little spasm of emotion. That is all right; but you must stop there, and not prolong this foolishness.' And, just as I was going to protest: 'Oh yes; foolishness!' 'Remember, Marceline's happiness is at stake. You have no right to compromise her. You come back from China all at once, and your abrupt return will break off more sensible, more studied arrangements. M. de Courtalin is thirty-four; he is a man of great knowledge and wisdom. However, I know that that is only a secondary consideration; but love passes away, and money remains, and M. de Courtalin is richer, very much richer, than you. With him Marceline will have quite a grand position. Whereas you, you know how I love you, and I know how worthy you are of being loved. You are charming, charming, charming.' It was your mother who spoke thus."

"I know; I know."

"Yes, charming; but when I have said that, I have said all. So I will ask you this question, and I expect from you a faithful answer: Have you those solid qualities which alone can make a husband, a true husband? Marceline is a little light-headed, a little frivolous, a little coquettish.' It is always your mother who is speaking."

"I know; I know."

"I was embarrassed, Aunt Louise; it seemed to me that that speech was not without reason. I hadn't a very high idea of myself as a husband, and even now I ask myself—"

“Don’t ask yourself anything. Be an affectionate husband, and you will have all the virtues. Nothing simpler, as you see. You can go on.”

“Well, your mother was so skilfully persuasive that the day after, at the races, I gave that cold greeting.”

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“And so I, that same day, on entering the house, threw myself into mamma’s arms, exclaiming, ‘Yes, I am willing to marry M. de Courtalin!’ Ah, how many times between that day and the 16th of May I threw myself into mamma’s arms! I did nothing else. Mamma got used to it, and never saw me appear without mechanically opening her arms. ‘Yes, I am willing,’ and sometimes, ‘No, I am not.’ But the ‘No, I am nots’ became fewer and fewer. M. de Courtalin, besides, was perfect; a model of tact, of gentleness, and of resignation. He waited, always in his black frock-coat, always buttoned, with an inexhaustible patience. Mamma was, in short, pledged to *Mme.* de Courtalin, and I felt the circle tighten round me. The papers announced, in a covert but transparent way, that there was question of an alliance between two families of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and they made it pretty clear that it concerned two important families. I already received vague congratulations, and I dared respond only by vague denials. The morning of the famous 17th of May mamma had said to me, ‘Come, my child, don’t make a martyr of that poor boy. Since it is to be “yes,” for it will be “yes,” you know yourself, say “yes” at once.’ I had obtained only a miserable respite of twenty-four hours; and things were thus when, still on the 17th of May, mamma and I arrived, a little late (after eleven), at *Mme.* de Vernieux’s, who was giving a ball, a very large ball. I went in, and I had at once the feeling that I must be looking extremely well that evening. They formed into a little hedge along my way, and I heard a little ‘oh!’ of surprise, and a big ‘ah!’ of admiration which went straight to my heart. I had had already in society certain successes, but never any as marked as that one. M. de Courtalin came towards me. He wished to engage me for all the waltzes, for all the quadrilles, for the entire evening, for the night, for life. I answered him: ‘Later, presently, we will see. I feel a little tired.’ The fact was I hadn’t the heart to dance. Mamma and I took our seats. A waltz began. Mamma scolded softly: ‘Dance with him, my child, I beg.’ I didn’t listen to her. I was abstractedly looking around the room when suddenly I saw in a corner two eyes fixed, fastened, pinioned on me—two eyes that I well knew, but that I had some difficulty in recognizing, for they were tremendously enlarged by a sort of stupor.”

“Say by overwhelming admiration.”

“As you please But it is here, Aunt Louise, that my interrogation will begin. Why and how were you there? Where had you dined, Gontran?”

“At the club.”

“And what did you intend to do after dinner? Come to *Mme.* de Vernieux’s?”

“No; Robert d’Aigremont and I had meant to go to the Bouffes-Parisiens.”

“You did not go? Why?”

“We had telephoned from the club to have a box; all were sold—”

“So you said to Robert—”

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"I said to Robert, 'Let's play bezique;' and I was beaten by one of those streaks of bad luck—34,000 points in a dozen games—so thoroughly that towards half-past ten I thought that bezique had lasted long enough—"

"And so—"

"And so—"

"So Robert wished to bring you to *Mme. de Vernieux's*. And you didn't want to go! If you hadn't come, however, and if there had been a box at the Bouffes-Parisiens, or if you had won at bezique, my marriage with M. de Courtalin would have been publicly announced the next day."

"Yes, but I came; and there I was in the corner looking at you, looking at you, looking at you. It was you, and yet not you—"

"I, immediately on seeing the way you were looking at me, understood that something extraordinary was going to happen. Your eyes shone, burned, blazed!"

"Because I had discovered that you were simply the prettiest woman of the ball, where all the prettiest women of Paris were. Yes, the prettiest, and such shoulders, such shoulders!"

"Ripe! in fact, I was ripe!"

"My head was turned at once. I saw Courtalin manoeuvring and trying to get near you. I understood that there was not a moment to be lost. To reach there ahead of Courtalin I threw myself intrepidly into the midst of the room, among the waltzers, pushing and being pushed. I forged a passage and tore into rags one of the lace flounces of *Mme. de Lornans*—she hasn't yet forgiven me. But I got there—I got there before Courtalin, and threw myself on you, and took you round your waist (I can still hear your little cry), and I dragged you off."

"Mamma had scarcely time to scream 'Marceline, Marceline!' when I was there no more. He had lifted me off, and carried me away; and we were waltzing wildly, furiously!—oh, what a waltz!—and he was saying to me: 'I love you! I adore you! You are grace and beauty itself! There is only one pretty woman here—you; and it is I who will be your husband. I, do you hear? I, and not another!' And I, quite suffocated with surprise, pleasure, and emotion, allowed myself to be nearly carried by him, but I kept begging him to speak lower. 'Anything you wish; yes, I will be your wife; but take care—you will be heard—you will be heard.'"

"That is what I wished; and I continued, 'I love you! I adore you!'"



“Then I, absolutely breathless: ‘Not so fast. I pray, not so fast; I shall fall. I assure you everything is going round, everything is going round. Let us stop.’ ‘No, no; don’t let’s stop. Keep on still. If we stop your mother will separate us, and I have still so many things to say to you—so many things, so many things. Swear to me that you will be my wife.’ ‘Yes, I swear it; but enough, enough—’ I was smothering. He heard nothing. He was going, going like a madman. We had become a hurricane, a whirlwind, a cyclone. We caused surprise and fright. No one danced any more, but looked at us. And he held me so close, and his face was so near my face, his lips so near my lips, that all at once I felt myself giving way. I slipped, and let myself into his arms. A cloud passed before my eyes; I could not speak nor think; then blankness. Everything had disappeared before me in a vertigo not too disagreeable, I must say. I had fainted, absolutely fainted.”

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"The next day our marriage was decided, perfectly decided. Our waltz had caused scandal. That was just what I wanted."

"There, Aunt Louise, is the history of our marriage, and I want to-day to draw this conclusion: it is that I was the first to begin to love, and I shall have, consequently, one day, when it pleases me, the right to stop the first."

"Ah, no, indeed; tell her, Aunt Louise, that she will never have that right—"

A new quarrel threatened to break out.

"This, my children," said the old aunt, "is all I have to say: she did, in truth, start the first to love; but it seems to me, Gontran, that you started all at once at such a great pace that you must have caught up with her."

"Passed her, Aunt Louise."

"Oh no!" exclaimed Marceline.

"Oh yes—"

"Oh no—"

"Well," continued Aunt Louise, "try never to have any other quarrels than that one. Try to walk always in life step by step, side by side, and heart to heart. I have seen many inventions since I was born, and the world is no longer what it was then. But there is one thing to which inventions have made no difference, and never will. That thing you have; keep it. It is love! Love each other, children, as strongly and as long as possible."

And Aunt Louise wept another tear, and smiled on looking at the portrait of the officer of the Royal Guard.

THE DANCING-MASTER

I was dining at the house of some friends, and in the course of the evening the hostess said to me:

"Do you often go to the opera?"

"Yes, very often."

"And do you go behind the scenes?"

"Yes, I go behind."



“Then you can do me a favor. In the ballet department there’s an old man called Morin, who is perfectly respectable, it seems. He is the little B——’s dancing-master. He gives excellent lessons. I should like to have him for my little girls, so ask him if he could come twice a week.”

I willingly undertook the delicate mission.

The next day, February 17, 1881, about ten in the evening, I arrived at the opera, and went behind the scenes to search for Monsieur Morin. “The Prophet” was being played, and the third act had just begun. On the stage the Anabaptists were singing forcibly:

“Du sang! que Judas succombe!
Du sang! Dansons sur leur tombe!
Du sang! Voila l’hecatombe
Que Dieu nous demande encor!”

Axes were raised over the heads of a crowd of hapless prisoners, who were barons, bishops, monks, and grand ladies. In the wings, balanced on their skates, all the ballet-girls were waiting the right moment to

“Effleurer la glace
Sans laisser de trace.”

I respectfully begged one of the young Westphalian peasant-girls to point out to me the man named Morin.

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“Morin,” she replied, “is not one of the skaters. Look, he is on the stage. That’s he over there, the one who is doing the bishop; that bishop, you see, who is being pushed and pulled. Wait, he will be off directly.”

One of the Anabaptist leaders intervened, however, declaring that the nobles and priests who could pay ransom should be spared. Morin escaped with his life, and I had the honor of being presented to him by the little Westphalian peasant-girl.

He had quite a venerable air, with his long gray beard and his fine purple robe with his large pastoral cross. While he was arranging somewhat his costume, which had been so roughly pulled by those violent Anabaptists, I asked him if he would be willing to give lessons to two young girls of good family.

The pious bishop accepted with alacrity. His price was ten francs an hour.

The little skaters had gone on the stage, and were performing wonderful feats. The wings had suddenly become calm and silent. We gave ourselves up, his Reverence and myself, to a little friendly chat.

“Yes, sir,” his Highness said to me, “I give dancing lessons. I have many patrons among the aristocracy and the bankers. I have no reason to complain; and yet one must admit things were better once, much better. Dancing is going out, sir, dancing is going out.”

“Is it possible?”

“It is as I have the honor of telling you. Women still learn to dance; but no longer the young men, sir, no longer. Baccarat, races, and the minor theatres—that’s what they enjoy. It’s a little the fault of the Government.”

“How can that be?”

“M. Jules Ferry has recently rearranged the curriculum of the University. He has made certain studies obligatory—modern languages, for instance. I don’t blame him for that; the study of modern languages has great advantages. But dancing, sir; nothing has been done for dancing, and it is dancing which ought, after all, to have been made obligatory. There ought to be a dancing-master in every high-school, and a normal-school for dancing with examinations and competitions in dancing. Dancing ought to be studied the same as Latin or Greek. Dancing, too, is a language, and a language that every well-bred man ought to be able to speak. Well, do you know what happens nowadays? Sometimes it happens, sir, that diplomatic posts are given to people who get confused in the figures of a quadrille, and who are incapable of waltzing for two minutes. They know very well that their education is incomplete. Quite lately a young man came to me—a young man of great merit, it seems, except in regard to dancing. He had just been attached to a great embassy. He had never danced in his life—never.

Do you understand? Never! It is scarcely to be credited, and yet it is true. That's the way M. Barthelemy-Saint-Hilaire picks them out. Oh, this beard smothers me! Will you permit me?"

"Certainly."

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He took off his gray beard, and thus looked much less venerable. He then continued:

“I said to this young man: ‘We will try, but it will be hard work. One oughtn’t to begin dancing at twenty-eight.’ I limbered him up as best I could. I had only two weeks to do it in. I begged him to put off his departure, to obtain a reprieve of three or four months—I could have made something of him. He would not. He went without knowing anything. I often think of him. He will represent us out there; he will represent us very badly; he will not be an honor to his country. Please to remember that he may be called upon to take part in some official quadrille—to dance, for instance, with an archduchess. Well, if he slips up in it, with his archduchess, it will be charming! All this is very sad indeed. I am a Republican, sir, an old Republican, and it is painful to think that the republic is represented by diplomats who cannot distinguish between a change of foot and a simple step. Do you know what is said in foreign courts? ‘Why, who are those savages that France sends us?’ Yes, that’s what they say. The diplomatic corps in the time of the Empire was not brilliant. Oh no; those gentlemen did many foolish things. Oh yes; but still they knew how to dance!”

And the good old bishop, seeing that I listened with much interest, went on with his brilliant improvisation.

“Dancing, sir, is not merely a pleasure, an amusement; no, it is of great social interest. Why, the question of marriage is closely connected with dancing. At present, in France, marriage is languishing. That is proved by statistics. Well, I am convinced that if there are fewer marriages it is because there is less dancing. Consider this first of all, that to know how to dance well, very well, is, for an agreeable young man who is without fortune, a great advantage in society. One of my pupils, sir, has recently married extremely well. He was a very ordinary kind of youth, who had tried everything and had succeeded in nothing; but he was a first-rate waltzer, and he danced away with two millions.”

“Two millions!”

“Yes, two millions, and they were two cash millions; she was an orphan, no father nor mother—all that can be dreamed of. He clasped that young lady (she was very plump). Well, in his arms, she felt herself light as a feather. She thought of but one thing—waltzing with him. She was as one wild. He gave her a new sensation, and what is it women desire above all things? To have new sensations, in short, she refused marquises, counts, and millionaires. She wanted him only. She got him, and he was penniless, and his name is Durand. Ah, do not repeat his name; I oughtn’t to have told you.”

“Don’t be afraid.”

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"After all, you can repeat it; it doesn't matter, it's such a common name. There is public policy in love-matches which cause a rich girl to marry a poor man, or a poor girl to marry a rich man. It sets money circulating, it prevents its remaining in the same place, it keeps capital moving. Well, three-fourths of the love-matches were formerly made by the dance. Now there are short interviews in parlors, in galleries, and at the Opera Comique. They chat; that's all right, but chatting is not sufficient. Wit is something, but not everything. A waltz furnishes much knowledge that conversation cannot. Dress-makers nowadays are so wily. They know how to bring out this point and hide that; they remodel bad figures. They give plumpness and roundness to the thin; they make hips, shoulders—everything, in fact. One doesn't know what to expect, science has made such advances. The eye may be deceived, but the hand of an experienced dancer never! A waltzer with tact knows how to find out the exact truth about things."

"Oh! oh!"

"Remaining all the time, sir, perfectly respectful and perfectly reserved. Good heavens! look at myself, for instance. It is to waltzing that I owe my happiness. *Mme. Morin* was not then *Mme. Morin*. I kept my eye on her, but I hesitated. She appeared thin, and—well, I'll admit that to marry a thin woman didn't suit my ideas. You know every one has his ideals. So, sir, I was still hesitating, when one evening, at the wedding of one of my friends, a very capable young man, a deputy manager of a department at the Ministry of Religion, they started a little dance. For the first waltz I asked the one who was to be my companion through life. Immediately I felt in my hand a delightful figure—one of those full but supple figures; and while waltzing, quite enchanted, I was saying to myself, 'She isn't really thin! she isn't really thin!' I took her back to her place after the waltz, and went at once to her mother to ask for her hand, which was granted me. For fourteen years I have been the happiest of men, and perhaps I shouldn't have made that marriage if I hadn't known how to waltz. You see, sir, the results of a waltz?"

"Perfectly."

"That is not all, sir. Thanks to dancing, one discovers not only the agreeable points of a person, the fulness of her figure, the litheness of her waist, but also, in a briskly led waltz, a little examination of the health and constitution of a woman can be had. I remember one evening twelve or so years ago—in the Rue Le Peletier, in the old Opera-house, which has burned down—I was on the stage awaiting my cue for the dance in 'William Tell,' you know, in the third act. Two subscribers were talking quite close to me, in the wings. One of the gentlemen was an old pupil of mine. I have had so many pupils! Without wishing to, I heard scraps of the conversation, and these two sentences struck my ear: 'Well, have you decided?' 'Oh,' replied

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my pupil, 'I find her very charming, but I have heard that she is weak in the lungs.' Then, sir, I did a very unusual thing for me. I begged pardon for having heard unintentionally, and I said to my old pupil: 'I think I have guessed that a marriage is in question. Will you authorize me to give you a piece of advice—advice drawn from the practice of my profession? Do they allow this young lady to waltz?' You know there are mothers who do not permit—"

"I know, I know."

We had arrived at this point in that interesting conversation when the ballet ended. The bishop and myself were assailed by an actual whirlwind of skaters, and my little Westphalian peasant-girl found me where she had left me.

"I declare!" she said to me, "so you come to confess at the opera? Give him absolution, Morin, and give it to me, too. Now then, come along to the greenroom."

She took my arm, and we went off together, while the excellent Morin, with gravity and dignity beneath his sacred ornaments, withstood the shock of this avalanche of dancers.

THE CIRCUS CHARGER

After George had related how he had been married off at twenty-two by his aunt, the Baroness de Stilb, Paul said: "I was married off by a circus charger. I was very nearly forty years of age, and I felt so peacefully settled in my little bachelor habits that, in the best faith in the world, on all occasions, I swore by the gods never to run the great risk of marriage; but I reckoned without the circus charger.

"It was in the last days of September, 1864. I had just arrived from Baden-Baden, and my intention was to spend only twenty-four hours in Paris. I had invited four or five of my friends—Callieres, Bernheim, Frondeville, and Valreas—to my place in Poitou for the shooting season. They were to come in the first part of October, and it needed a week to put all in order at Roche-Targe. A letter from my overseer awaited me in Paris, and the letter brought disastrous news; the dogs were well, but out of the dozen hunting horses that I had there, five, during my sojourn at Baden, had fallen sick or lame, and I found myself absolutely forced to get new horses.

"I made a tour of the Champs-Elysees sellers, who showed me as hunters a fine collection of broken—down skeletons. Average price, three thousand francs. Roulette had treated me badly of late, and I was neither in the humor, nor had I the funds, to spend in that way seven or eight hundred louis in a morning.



“It was a Wednesday, and Cheri was holding his first autumn sale. I went to the Rue de Ponthieu during the day; and there out of the lot, on chance, without inquiry, blindly, by good-luck, and from the mere declarations of the catalogue—‘*Excellent hunter, good jumper, has hunted with lady rider, etc.*’—I bought eight horses, which only cost me five thousand francs. Out of eight, I said to myself, there will always be four or five who will go, and who will be good enough to serve as remounts.

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“Among the horses there was one that I had bought, I must confess, particularly on account of his coat, which was beautiful. The catalogue did not attribute to him any special qualifications for hunting, but limited itself to ‘*Brutus, riding horse.*’ He was a large dapple-gray horse, but never, I think, have I seen gray better dappled; the white coat was strewn almost regularly with beautiful black spots, which were well distributed and well marked.

“I left town the next day for Roche-Targe, and the following day, early, they announced to me that the horses had arrived. I at once went down to see them, and my first glance was at Brutus. He had been trotting in my head for forty-eight hours, that devil of a gray horse, and I had a singular desire to know what he was and of what he was capable.

“I had him taken out of the stable first. A groom led him to me with a strap. The horse had long teeth, hollows in the chest, lumpy fetlocks—in short, all the signs of respectable age; but he had powerful shoulders, a large breast, a neck which was both strong and supple, head well held, tail well placed, and an irreproachable back. It wasn’t, however, all this that attracted most my attention. What I admired above all was the air with which Brutus looked at me, and with what an attentive, intelligent, and curious eye he followed my movements and gestures. Even my words seemed to interest him singularly; he inclined his head to my side as if to hear me, and, as soon as I had finished speaking, he neighed joyously in answer.

“They showed me successively the seven other horses; I examined them rapidly and absent-mindedly. They were horses like all other horses. Brutus certainly had something in particular, and I was anxious to make in his company a short jaunt in the country. He allowed himself to be saddled, bridled, and mounted like a horse who knows his business, and so we both started in the quietest way in the world.

“I had at first ridden him with the snaffle, and Brutus had gone off at a long easy gait, with rather a stiff neck and projected head; but as soon as I let him feel the curb, he changed with extraordinary rapidity and suppleness, drawing his head back to his breast, and champing his bit noisily; then at the same time he took a short gait, which was light and even, lifting well his feet and striking the sod with the regularity of a pendulum.

“Cheri’s catalogue had not lied; the horse was a good rider—too good a rider, in fact. I made him trot, then gallop; the horse at the first suggestion gave me an excellent little trot and an excellent little gallop, but always plunging to the ground and pulling my arms when I tried to lift his head. When I wished to quicken his gait, the horse broke at once. He began to rack in great style, trotting with the fore-feet and galloping with the hind ones. ‘Well,’ I said to myself, ‘I see now; I’ve bought some old horse of the Saumur or Saint-Cyr school, and it’s not on this beast that I’ll hunt in eight days.’

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"I was about to turn and go home, quite edified as to Brutus's qualities, when the report of a gun was heard twenty yards away in the woods. It was one of my keepers who was shooting a rabbit, and who received some time after a handsome present from my wife for that shot.

"I was then in the centre of the cross-roads, which formed a perfect circle of five or six yards in radius; six long green alleys came to an end at this spot. On hearing the report, Brutus had stopped short, planted himself on his four legs, with ears erect and head raised. I was surprised to find the horse so impressionable. I should have thought that after the brilliant education that very certainly he had received in his youth, Brutus must be an artillery horse, used to gun and cannon. I drew in my legs to urge the horse on, but Brutus didn't move; I spurred him sharply twice, but Brutus didn't move; I whipped him soundly, but Brutus didn't move. I tried to back the horse, to push him to the right, to the left, but I couldn't move him in the slightest degree. Brutus seemed glued to the ground, and yet—don't you dare to laugh, and be assured that my tale is absolutely true—each time that I attempted to put the horse in motion he turned his head and looked at me with an expression which could clearly be read as impatience and surprise; then he would again become as immovable as a statue. There was evidently some misunderstanding between the horse and myself. I saw that in his eyes, and Brutus said to me, with all the clearness he could put in his expression, 'I, as a horse, am doing my duty, and it's you, as a rider, who are not doing yours!'

"I was more puzzled than embarrassed. 'What extraordinary kind of a horse have I bought at Cheri's,' I said to myself, 'and why does he look at me so queerly?' I was, however, going to take strong measures—that is to say, I was preparing to whip him smartly—when another report was heard.

"Then the horse gave a jump. I thought I had the best of it, and, profiting by his bound, I tried to carry him forward with hand and knee. But no; he stopped short after his bound, and again planted himself on the ground more energetically and more resolutely than the first time. Ah, then I grew angry, and my whip came into play; I grasped it firmly and began to strike the horse with all my strength to the right and left. But Brutus, he too lost patience, and, instead of the cold and immovable opposition that at first he had shown, I met with furious retaliations, strange springs, bucking, extraordinary rearing, fantastic whirling; and in the midst of this battle, while the infatuated horse bounded and reared, while I, exasperated, struck with vigor the leather pommel with my broken whip, Brutus still found time to give me glances not only of surprise and impatience, but also of anger and indignation. While I was asking the horse for the obedience which he refused me, it is certain that he expected from me something that I was not doing.

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“How did it end? To my shame, to my great shame, I was pitifully unhorsed by an incomparable feat! Brutus understood, I think, that he would not get the better of me by violence, and judged it necessary to try cunning; after a pause which was most certainly a moment of reflection, the horse rose up, head down, upright on his fore-feet, with the skill, the calm, and the perfect equilibrium of a clown who walks on his hands. Thus I tumbled into the sand, which, by good-luck, was thick in that spot.

“I tried to get up. I screamed and fell back ridiculously, flat on my stomach, on my nose. At the slightest movement I felt as though a knife ran through my left leg. It’s a slight matter, however—the rupture of a slender sinew; but though slight, the injury was none the less painful. I succeeded, nevertheless, in turning over and sitting up; but just when, while rubbing my eyes, filled with sand, I was beginning to ask myself what in the midst of this tumult had become of my miserable dapple-gray, I saw over my head a large horse’s hoof descending. Then this large hoof pressed, with a certain gentleness, however, on my chest, and pushed me delicately back on the ground, on my back this time.

“I was greatly discouraged; and feeling incapable of another effort, I remained in that position, continuing to ask myself what sort of a horse I had bought at Cheri’s, closing my eyes, and awaiting death.

“Suddenly I heard a curious trampling around me; a quantity of little hard things struck me on the face. I opened my eyes, and perceived Brutus, who, with his fore-feet and hind-legs, was trying with incredible activity and prodigious skill to bury me in the sand. He was doing his best, poor beast, and from time to time he stopped to gaze at his work; then, raising his head, he neighed and began his work again. That lasted for a good three or four minutes, after which Brutus, judging me doubtless sufficiently interred, placed himself very respectfully on his knees before my tomb—on his knees, literally on his knees! He was saying, I suppose, a little prayer. I looked at him. It interested me extremely.

“His prayer finished, Brutus made a slight bow, went off a few steps, stopped, then, beginning to gallop, made at least twenty times the circuit of the open space in the middle of which he had buried me. Brutus galloped very well, with even stride, head well held, on the right foot, making around me a perfect circle. I followed him with my eyes, but it made me uneasy to see him go round and round and round. I had the strength to cry ‘Stop! stop!’ The horse stopped and seemed embarrassed, without doubt asking himself what there was still to be done; but he perceived my hat, which in my fall had got separated from me, and at once made a new resolution: he walked straight to the hat, seized it in his teeth, and galloped off, this time by one of the six alleys that led from my tomb.

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"Brutus got farther and farther away, and disappeared; I remained alone. I was puzzled, positively puzzled. I shook off the little coating of dust which covered me, and without getting up, by the help of my two arms and right leg—to move my left leg was not to be thought of—I succeeded in dragging myself to a little grassy slope on the edge of one of the alleys. Once there, I could sit down, after a fashion, and I began to shout with all the strength of my lungs, 'Hi, there! hi! hi, there!' No answer. The woods were absolutely deserted and still. The only thing to be done was to wait till some one passed by to aid me.

"For half an hour I had been in that hateful position when I perceived in the distance, at the very end of the same alley by which he had gone off, Brutus coming back, with the same long gallop he had used in going. A great cloud of dust accompanied the horse. Little by little, in that cloud, I perceived a tiny carriage—a pony-carriage; then in that little pony-carriage a woman, who drove herself, and behind the woman a small groom.

"A few moments later Brutus, covered with foam, stopped before me, let my hat drop at my feet and neighed, as though to say, 'I've done my duty; here is help.' But I no longer bothered myself about Brutus and the explanations that he made me. My only thoughts were for the fairy who was to relieve me, and who, after lightly jumping from her little carriage, was coming quickly towards me. Besides, she, too, was examining me curiously, and all at once we both exclaimed, at the same time:

"'Mme. de Noriolis!'

"'M. de La Roche-Targe!'

"A little while ago George spoke to us of his aunt, and mentioned how she had married him quite young, at one stroke, without giving him time to reflect or breathe. I, too, have an aunt, and between us for a number of years there has been a perpetual battle.

'Marry.' 'I don't want to marry.' 'Do you want young girls? There is Mademoiselle A, Mademoiselle B, Mademoiselle C.' 'I don't want to marry.' 'Do you want widows? There is Madame D, Madame E, Madame F.' 'I don't want to marry.'

"Mme. de Noriolis figured always in the first rank in the series of widows, and I noticed that my aunt put stress, with evident favoritism, on all the good points and advantages that I should find in that marriage. She didn't have to tell me that *Mme. de Noriolis* was very pretty—any one could see that; or that she was very rich—I knew it already. But she explained to me that M. de Noriolis was an idiot, who had had the merit of making his wife perfectly miserable, and that thus it would be very easy for the second husband to make himself very much loved.

"Then, when she had discoursed at length on the virtues, graces, and merits of *Mme. de Noriolis*, my aunt, who is clever and knows my weakness, pulled out of her desk a topographical map, and spread it out with care on the table.

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"It was the map of the district of Chatellerault, a very correct and minute map, that my aunt had gone herself to the military station to buy, with the view of convincing me that I ought to marry *Mme. de Noriolis*. The places of Noriolis and of La Roche-Targe were scarcely three kilometers apart in that map. My aunt, with her own hands, had drawn a line of red ink, and slyly united the two places, and she forced me to look at her little red line, saying to me, 'Two thousand acres without a break, when the places of Noriolis and La Roche-Targe are united; what a chance for a hunter!'

"I closed my eyes, so strong was the temptation, and repeated my refrain, 'I don't want to marry.' But I was afraid, seriously afraid; and when I met *Mme. de Noriolis* I always saw her surrounded, as by a halo, by the little red line of my aunt, and I said to myself: 'A charming, and clever, and sensible woman, whose first husband was an idiot, and this and that, and two thousand acres without a break. Run away, wretch, run away, since you don't wish to marry.'

"And I ran away! But this time by what means could I run away? I was there, miserable, in the grass, covered with sand, with my hair in disorder, my clothes in rags, and my unfortunate leg stiff. And *Mme. de Noriolis* came nearer, looking spick and span—always in the halo of the little red line—and said to me:

"'You, M. de La Roche-Targe, is it you? What are you doing there? What has happened to you?'

"I frankly confessed my fall.

"'At least you are not wounded?'

"'No, no, I'm not wounded. I've something the matter with that leg; but it's nothing serious, I know.'

"'And what horse played you that trick?'

"'Why, this one.'

"And I pointed out Brutus to *Mme. de Noriolis*. Brutus was there, quite near us, untied, peacefully crunching little tufts of broom.

"'What, that one, that brave horse? Oh, he has well made up for his faults, I assure you. I will tell you about it, but later on. You must first get home, and at once.'

"'I can't walk a step.'

"'But I am going to take you back myself, at the risk of compromising you.'

“And she called Bob, her little groom, and taking me gently by the arm, while Bob took me by the other, she made me get into her carriage; five minutes later we were bowling off, both of us, in the direction of La Roche-Targe: she, holding the reins and driving the pony with a light hand; I, looking at her, feeling troubled, confused, embarrassed, ridiculous, and stupid. We were alone in the carriage. Bob was commissioned to bring Brutus, who, very docile, had allowed himself to be taken.

“‘Lie down,’ *Mme. de Noriolis* said to me; ‘keep your leg straight; I am going to drive you slowly so as to avoid bumps.’

“In short, she made a lot of little amiable and pleasant remarks; then, when she saw me well settled, she said:

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“Tell me how you came to fall, and then I will tell you how I happened to come to your aid. It seems to me this horse story must be queer.”

“I began my tale; but as soon as I spoke of Brutus’s efforts to unhorse me, and the two reports of the gun, she exclaimed:

“‘I understand, I understand. You have bought a circus charger.’

“‘A circus charger!’

“‘Why, yes; that’s it, and that explains everything. You have seen twenty times at the Circus of the Empress the performance of the circus charger—the light-cavalryman who enters the arena on a gray horse, then the Arabs come and shoot at the cavalryman, who is wounded and falls; and as you didn’t fall, the horse, indignant and not understanding how you could so far forget your part, threw you on the ground. And when you were on the ground, what did the horse do?’

“‘I related Brutus’s little work in burying me suitably.

“‘The circus charger,’ she continued; ‘still the circus charger. He sees his master wounded, the Arabs could come back and finish him, and so what does the horse do? He buries the cavalryman. Then goes off galloping, didn’t he?’

“‘Yes, on a hard gallop,’

“‘Carrying the flag, which is not to fall into the hands of the Arabs.’

“‘It’s my hat that he took.’

“‘He took what he could. And where does the circus charger gallop to?’

“‘Ah! I know, I know,’ I exclaimed, in my turn, ‘he goes to get the sutler.’

“‘Precisely. He goes to get the sutler; and the sutler to-day, if you please, is I, Countess of Noriolis. Your big gray horse galloped into my grounds. I was standing on the porch, putting on my gloves and ready to step into my carriage, when the stablemen came running, upon seeing that horse arrive saddled and bridled, without a rider, and a hat in his mouth. They tried to catch him, but he shunned them and escaped, and came straight to the porch, falling on his knees before me. The men approached, and once more tried to catch him; but he got up, galloped away, stopped by the gate of the grounds, turned around, and looked at me. He called to me—I assure you, he called to me. I told the men not to bother about the horse any more. Then I jumped into my carriage and started; the horse rushed into the woods; post-haste I followed him by paths that were not always intended for carriages; but still I followed him, and I arrived and found you.’



“At the moment *Mme.* de Noriolis was speaking those last words the carriage received a tremendous shock from behind; then we saw in the air Brutus’s head, which was held there upright as though by a miracle. For it was again Brutus. Mounted by Bob, he had followed the carriage for several minutes, and seeing that the back seat of the little pony-carriage was unoccupied, he had, like a true artist, cleverly seized the moment to give us a new proof of his talent in executing the most brilliant of his former performances. In one jump he had placed his fore-feet on the carriage, then, that done, he quietly continued trotting on his two hind-legs. Bob, distracted, with his body thrown over and his head thrown back, was making vain attempts to put the horse back on his four legs.

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“As to *Mme. de Noriolis*, she was so well frightened, that, letting the reins drop from her hands, she had simply thrown herself in my arms. Her adorable little head had rolled hap-hazard on my shoulder, and my lips just touched her hair. With my left hand I tried to recover the reins, with my right I supported *Mme. de Noriolis*; my leg hurt me frightfully, and I was seized with a queer feeling of confusion.

“It was thus that *Mme. de Noriolis* made her first entry into La Roche-Targe.

“When she returned there, one evening at midnight, six weeks later, having during the day become *Mme. de La Roche-Targe*, she said:

“‘What is life, after all? Nothing like this would have happened if you hadn’t bought the circus charger.’”

BLACKY

“Don’t be alarmed, sir; you won’t miss the train. For the last fifteen years I’ve been carrying travellers to the station, and I’ve never yet missed a train! Think of that, sir; never!”

“But—”

“Oh, don’t look at your watch. There is one thing you don’t know and that you must learn, and that your watch will never be able to tell you—that is, that the train is always a quarter of an hour late. Such a thing as the train’s being on time has never happened.”

Such a thing happened that day, however, for the train was on time, and so I missed it. My driver was furious.

“You should warn us,” he said to the station-master, “if your trains are suddenly going to start at the right hour. Who ever saw the like!”

And he turned to one or two of the porters for witnesses.

“Did you ever see such a thing? I don’t wish to appear blamable before the gentleman. A train on time—on time! You know it’s the first time it has ever happened.”

There was a general cry of “Yes, indeed; usually there’s some delay.” But, for all that, I had none the less three long hours to pass in a very desolate village (in the Canton of Vaud) shut in by two sad-looking mountains, which had their little topknots covered with snow.

But how kill three hours? In my turn I now asked advice, and again there was a chorus of “Go see the Caldron; that’s the only sight to be seen in this part of the country.” “And where is this Caldron?” On the mountain, to the right, half way up; but the path was a little complicated, and I was advised to take a guide; and there, over there in that white cottage with green blinds, I would find the best guide there was about here, an honest man—Old Simon.

So I went and knocked at the door of the little house.

An old woman opened it.

“Simon, the guide?”

“Yes, right here; but—if it’s to go to the Caldron—”

“It is to go to the Caldron.”

“Well, Simon hasn’t been very well since morning; he hasn’t much strength, and he can’t go out. But don’t worry yourself; there is some one who can replace him—there is Blacky.”

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"All right, let it be Blacky, then."

"Only I must tell you that Blacky isn't a person."

"Not a person?"

"No, he's our dog."

"A dog? What do you mean?"

"Yes, Blacky; and he will guide you very well—quite as well as my husband. He is in the habit of—"

"In the habit?"

"Certainly; for years and years Simon took him along, so he learned the different places, and now he does very well all by himself. He has often taken travellers, and we have always been complimented about him. As for intelligence, don't be afraid—he has as much as you or I. He needs only speech, but speech isn't required. If it was to show a monument, now—why, yes, for then it would be necessary to give some account and know the historical dates; but here there are only the beauties of nature. Take Blacky, and it will be cheaper also; my husband would cost three francs, whereas Blacky is only thirty sous, and he will show you as much for thirty sous as my husband would for three francs."

"Very well; and where is Blacky?"

"He is resting in the sun, in the garden. Already this morning he has taken some English people to the Caldron. Shall I call him?"

"Yes, call him."

"Blacky! Blacky!"

He came with a leap through the window. He was a rather ugly-looking little dog, with long frizzy hair, all mussed; he wasn't much to look at, but he had, however, about him a certain air of gravity, resolution, and importance. His first glance was at me—a clear, searching, confident look that took me in from head to toe, and that seemed to say, "It's a traveller, and he wants to see the Caldron."

One train missed sufficed me for that day, and I was particularly anxious not to lay myself open to another such experience, so I explained to the good woman that I had only three hours for my visit to the Caldron.



“Oh, I know,” she said; “you wish to take the four-o’clock train. Don’t be alarmed; Blacky will bring you back in time. Now then, Blacky, off with you; hurry up!”

But Blacky didn’t seem at all disposed to mind. He stayed there motionless, looking at his mistress with a certain uneasiness.

“Ah, how stupid of me!” said the old woman. “I forgot the sugar;” and she went to get four pieces of sugar from a drawer, and gave them to me, saying: “That’s why he wouldn’t start; you had no sugar. You see, Blacky, the gentleman has the sugar. Now then, run along with you, sir, to the Caldron! to the Caldron! to the Caldron!”

She repeated these last words three times, slowly and distinctly, and during that time I was closely examining Blacky. He acknowledged the words of his mistress with little movements of the head, which rapidly became more emphatic, and towards the end he evinced some temper and impatience. They could be interpreted thus: “Yes, yes, to the Caldron—I understand. The gentleman has the pieces of sugar, and we are going to the Caldron—it’s settled. Do you take me for a fool?”

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And, without waiting for *Mme. Simon's* third "To the Caldron!" Blacky, evidently hurt, turned tail, came and placed himself in front of me, and by his look showed me the door, which told me as plainly as a dog can tell, "Now then, come along, you!"

I meekly followed him. We two started, he in front, I behind. In this manner we went through the entire village. The children who were playing in the street recognized my guide.

"Hello, Blacky! good-morning, Blacky!" They wanted to play with the dog, but he turned his head with a disdainful air—the air of a dog who hasn't the time to answer himself, and who is doing his duty and earning thirty sous. One of the children exclaimed:

"Leave him alone; don't you see he is taking the gentleman to the Caldron? Good-day, sir!"

And all repeated, laughing, "Good-day, sir!"

I smiled rather awkwardly; I am sure I felt embarrassed, even a little humiliated. I was, in fact, under the lead of that animal. He, for the present, was my master. He knew where he was going; I did not. I was in a hurry to get out of the village and find myself alone with Blacky and face to face with the beauties of nature that he had been commissioned to show me.

These beauties of nature were, at the beginning, a fearfully hot and dusty road, on which the sun fell with full force. The dog walked with a brisk step, and I was getting tired following him. I tried to slacken his gait. "Come, I say, Blacky, my friend, not so quickly." But Blacky turned a deaf ear, and continued, without listening to me, his little trot. He was taken suddenly with a real fit of anger when I wished to sit down in the corner of a field, under a tree that gave a meagre shade. He barked furiously, and cast on me outraged looks; evidently what I was doing was against the rule. He was not in the habit of stopping there, and his barks were so piercing and annoying that I rose to continue on my way. Blacky became calm at once, and walked placidly in front of me—I had understood him, and he was satisfied.

Shortly afterwards we entered a delightful path, in full blossom, shady, sweet-smelling, and filled with freshness and the murmur of springs. Blacky immediately entered the wood, took to his heels, and disappeared in the little footway. I followed, slightly out of breath, and had not gone a hundred steps when I found Blacky waiting for me, with head erect and bright eyes, in a clearing enlivened by the tinkle of a tiny cascade. There was there an old rustic bench, and Blacky looked impatiently from me to the seat and from the seat to me. I was beginning to understand Blacky's language.



“There now,” he said to me, “here is indeed a place to rest in. It’s nice and cool here; but you were so stupid, you wanted to stop in the sun. Come on, now; sit down; you really can sit down. I will allow you.”

I stopped, sat down, and lit a cigar, and came near offering one to Blacky; perhaps he smoked. But I thought he would prefer a piece of sugar. He caught it on the fly very cleverly, and crunched it with enjoyment. Then he lay down and took a nap at my feet. He was evidently accustomed to a little siesta at this place.

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He slept barely ten minutes I was, however, perfectly easy, for Blacky began to inspire me with absolute confidence, and I was determined to obey him blindly. He got up, stretched himself, and threw me a glance that meant, "Come along, my friend, come along." And, like two old friends, we set off slowly. Blacky was enjoying the silence and the sweetness of the place. On the road, previously, being in a hurry, he had walked with an abrupt, sturdy, hurried step—he was walking to get there; but now, refreshed and revived, Blacky was walking for the pleasure of a promenade in one of the prettiest paths in the Canton of Vaud.

Presently a side path appeared, leading off to the left; there was a short hesitation on the part of Blacky, who reflected, and then passed it, continuing on his way straight ahead, but not without some doubt and uncertainty in his manner. Then he stopped; he must have made some mistake. Yes; for he retraced his steps, and we took the turning to the left, which, at the end of a hundred feet, led into an open circular space, and Blacky, with his nose in the air, invited me to contemplate the highly respectable height of the lofty rocks which formed this circle. When Blacky thought I had seen sufficient, he turned around, and we went on again in the path through the woods. Blacky had forgotten to show me the circle of rocks—a slight error quickly repaired.

The road soon became very mountainous, broken, and difficult, and I advanced slowly and with many precautions. As to Blacky, he sprang lightly from rock to rock, but did not forsake me. He waited and fixed his eyes on me with the most touching solicitude. At last I began to hear a rushing of water; Blacky commenced barking joyously.

"Courage!" he said to me; "courage! We are nearly there; you will soon see the Caldron."

It was in truth the Caldron. From a short height a modest stream fell, splashing and rebounding on a large rock slightly hollowed. I should never have been consoled for such a steep climb to see such a small sight if I had not had brave little Blacky for a companion. He, at least, was much more interesting and marvellous than the Caldron. On either side of the fall, in little Swiss chalets, were two dairy-maids; one was a blonde and the other a brunette; both were in their national dress, and were eagerly on the lookout for my coming, standing on the door-steps of their tiny houses—little wooden boxes, seemingly cut out by machine.

It seemed to me that the blonde had very pretty eyes, and I had already taken several steps towards her when Blacky began to bark emphatically, and resolutely barred the way. Could he have a preference for the dark one? I walked in the other direction. That was it; Blacky calmed down as though by enchantment when he saw me seated at a table in front of the house of his young protegee. I asked for a cup of milk; Blacky's friend entered her little toy house,

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and Blacky slipped in at her feet. Through a half-open window I followed him with my eyes. The wretch! He was waited upon before I was. He it was who first had his large bowl of milk. He had sold himself! After which, with white drops on his mustache, Blacky came to keep me company and look at me drink my milk. I gave him a piece of sugar, and both of us, absolutely satisfied with each other, filled our lungs with the sharp air of the mountain. We were at a height of about three or four hundred yards. It was a delightful half-hour.

Blacky began to show signs of impatience and agitation. I could read him then like a book. It was time to go. I paid, got up, and while I went off to the right towards the path by which we came to the mountain, I saw Blacky go and plant himself on the left, at the opening of another path. He gave me a serious and severe look. What progress I had made during the last two hours, and how familiar Blacky's eloquent silence had become!

"What must you think of me?" said Blacky to me. "Do you imagine I am going to take the same path twice? No, indeed. I am a good guide, and I know my business. We shall make the descent another way."

We went back by another road, which was much prettier than the first. Blacky, quite sprightly, often turned around to me with an air of triumphant joy. We traversed the village, and at the station Blacky was assailed by three or four dogs of his acquaintance, who seemed desirous of a talk or game with their comrade. They attempted to block his way, but Blacky, grumbling and growling, repulsed their advances.

"Can't you see what I am doing? I am taking this gentleman to the station."

It was only in the waiting-room that he consented to leave me, after having eaten with relish the two last pieces of sugar. And this is how I interpreted the farewell look of Blacky:

"We are twenty minutes ahead of time. It isn't I who would have let you lose the train. Well, good-bye—pleasant journey!"

THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN PARIS

On Friday, April 19th, Prince Agenor was really distracted at the opera during the second act of "Sigurd." The prince kept going from box to box, and his enthusiasm increased as he went.

"That blonde! Oh, that blonde! She is ideal! Look at that blonde! Do you know that blonde?"

It was from the front part of *Mme.* de Marizy's large first tier box that all these exclamations were coming at that moment.

"Which blonde?" asked *Mme.* de Marizy.

"Which blonde! Why, there is but one this evening in the house. Opposite to you, over there, in the first box, the Sainte Mesme's box. Look, baroness, look straight over there —"

"Yes I am looking at her. She is atrociously got up, but pretty—"

"Pretty! She is a wonder! Simply a wonder! Got up? Yes, agreed—some country relative. The Sainte Mesmes have cousins in Perigord. But what a smile! How well her neck is set on! And the slope of the shoulders! Ah, especially the shoulders!"

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“Come, either keep still or go away. Let me listen to *Mme. Caron*—”

The prince went away, as no one knew that incomparable blonde. Yet she had often been to the opera, but in an unpretentious way—in the second tier of boxes. And to Prince Agenor above the first tier of boxes there was nothing, absolutely nothing. There was emptiness—space. The prince had never been in a second-tier box, so the second-tier boxes did not exist.

While *Mme. Caron* was marvellously singing the marvellous phrase of Reyer, “*O mon sauveur silencieux la Valkyrie est ta conquete*,” the prince strolled along the passages of the opera. Who was that blonde? He wanted to know, and he would know.

And suddenly he remembered that good *Mme. Picard* was the box-opener of the *Sainte Mesmes*, and that he, Prince of Nerins, had had the honor of being for a long time a friend of that good *Mme. Picard*. It was she who in the last years of the Second Empire had taught him *bezique* in all its varieties—Japanese, Chinese, etc. He was then twenty, *Mme. Picard* was forty. She was not then box-opener of the National Academy of Music; she had in those times as office—and it was not a sinecure—the position of aunt to a nice young person who showed a very pretty face and a very pretty pair of legs in the chorus of the *revues* of the *Varietee*. And the prince, while quite young, at the beginning of his life, had, for three or four years, led a peaceful, almost domestic life, with the aunt and niece. Then they went off one way and he another.

One evening at the opera, ten years later, in handing his overcoat to a venerable-looking old dame, Agenor heard himself saluted by the following little speech:

“Ah, how happy I am to see you again, prince! And not changed—not at all changed. Still the same, absolutely the same—still twenty.”

It was *Mme. Picard*, who had been raised to the dignity of box-opener. They chatted, talked of old times, and after that evening the prince never passed *Mme. Picard* without greeting her. She responded with a little deferential courtesy. She was one of those people, becoming rarer and rarer nowadays, who have the exact feeling for distances and conventions. There was, however, a little remnant of familiarity, almost of affection, in the way in which she said “prince.” This did not displease Agenor; he had a very good recollection of *Mme. Picard*.

“Ah, prince,” said *Mme. Picard* on seeing Agenor, “there is no one for you to-night in *my* boxes. *Mme. de Simiane* is not here, and *Mme. de Sainte Mesme* has rented her box.”

“That’s precisely it. Don’t you know the people in *Mme. de Sainte Mesme*’s box?”

“Not at all, prince. It’s the first time I have seen them in the marquise’s box—”

“Then you have no idea—”

“None, prince. Only to me they don’t appear to be people of—”

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She was going to say of *our* set. A box-opener of the first tier of boxes at the opera, having generally only to do with absolutely high-born people, considers herself as being a little of their set, and shows extreme disdain for unimportant people; it displeases her to receive these unimportant people in *her* boxes. *Mme.* Picard, however, had tact which rarely forsook her, and so stopped herself in time to say:

“People of *your* set. They belong to the middle class, to the wealthy middle class; but still the middle class. That doesn’t satisfy you; you wish to know more on account of the blonde. Is it not so, prince?”

Those last words were spoken with rare delicacy; they were murmured more than spoken—box-opener to a prince! It would have been unacceptable without that perfect reserve in accent and tone; yes, it was a box-opener who spoke, but a box-opener who was a little bit the aunt of former times, the aunt *a la mode de Cythere*. *Mme.* Picard continued:

“Ah, she is a beauty! She came with a little dark man—her husband, I’m sure; for while she was taking off her cloak—it always takes some time—he didn’t say a word to her. No eagerness, no little attentions. Yes, he could only be a husband. I examined the cloak. People one doesn’t know puzzle me and *my* colleague. *Mme.* Flachet and I always amuse ourselves by trying to guess from appearances. Well, the cloak comes from a good dress-maker, but not from a great one. It is fine and well-made, but it has no style. I think they are middle-class people, prince. But how stupid I am! You know M. Palmer—well, a little while ago he came to see the beautiful blonde!”

“M. Palmer?”

“Yes, and he can tell you.”

“Thanks, *Mme.* Picard, thanks—”

“Good-bye, prince, good-bye,” and *Mme.* Picard went back to her stool, near her colleague, *Mme.* Flachet, and said to her:

“Ah, my dear, what a charming man the prince is! True gentlefolks, there is nothing like them! But they are dying out, they are dying out; there are many less than formerly.”

Prince Agenor was willing to do Palmer—big Palmer, rich Palmer, vain Palmer—the honor of being one of his friends; he deigned, and very frequently, to confide to Palmer his financial difficulties, and the banker was delighted to come to his aid. The prince had been obliged to resign himself to becoming a member of two boards of directors presided over by Palmer, who was much pleased at having under obligations to him the representative of one of the noblest families in France. Besides, the prince proved himself to be a *good prince*, and publicly acknowledged Palmer, showing himself in his

box, taking charge of his entertainments, and occupying himself with his racing-stable. He had even pushed his gratitude to the point of compromising *Mme.* Palmer in the most showy way.

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"I am removing her from the middle class," he said; "I owe it to Palmer, who is one of the best fellows in the world."

The prince found the banker alone in a lower box.

"What is the name—the name of that blonde in the Sainte Mesme's box?"

"Mme. Derline."

"Is there a M. Derline?"

"Certainly, a lawyer—my lawyer; the Sainte Mesme's lawyer. And if you want to see *Mme. Derline* close to, come to my ball next Thursday. She will be there—"

The wife of a lawyer! She was only the wife of a lawyer! The prince sat down in the front of the box, opposite *Mme. Derline*, and while looking at that lawyeress he was thinking. "Have I," he said to himself, "sufficient credit, sufficient power, to make of *Mme. Derline* the most beautiful woman in Paris?"

For there was always a *most beautiful woman in Paris*, and it was he, Prince Agenor, who flattered himself that he could discover, proclaim, crown, and consecrate that most beautiful woman in Paris. Launch *Mme. Derline* in society! Why not? He had never launched any one from the middle class. The enterprise would be new, amusing, and bold. He looked at *Mme. Derline* through his opera-glass, and discovered thousands of beauties and perfections in her delightful face.

After the opera, the prince, during the exit, placed himself at the bottom of the great staircase. He had enlisted two of his friends. "Come," he had said to them, "I will show you the most beautiful woman in Paris." While he was speaking, two steps away from the prince was an alert young man who was attached to a morning paper, a very widely-read paper. The young man had sharp ears, he caught on the fly the phrase of the Prince Agenor, whose high social position he knew; he succeeded in keeping close to the prince, and when *Mme. Derline* passed, the young reporter had the gift of hearing the conversation, without losing a word, of the three brilliant noblemen. A quarter of an hour later he arrived at the office of the paper.

"Is there time," he asked, "to write a dozen lines in the *Society Note-book*?"

"Yes, but hurry."

The young man was a quick writer; the fifteen lines were done in the twinkling of an eye. They brought seven francs fifty to the reporter, but cost M. Derline a little more than that.

During this time Prince Agenor, seated in the club at the whist-table, was saying, while shuffling the cards:

“This evening at the opera there was a marvellous woman, a certain *Mme.* Derline. She is the most beautiful woman in Paris!”

The following morning, in the gossip-corner of the Bois, in the spring sunshine, the prince, surrounded by a little group of respectful disciples, was solemnly delivering from the back of his roan mare the following opinion:

“Listen well to what I say. The most beautiful woman in Paris is a certain *Mme.* Derline. This star will be visible Thursday evening at the Palmer’s. Go, and don’t forget the name—*Mme.* Derline.”

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The disciples dispersed, and went abroad spreading the great news.

Mme. Derline had been admirably brought up by an irreproachable mother; she had been taught that she ought to get up in the morning, keep a strict account of her expenses, not go to a great dress-maker, believe in God, love her husband, visit the poor, and never spend but half her income in order to prepare dowries for her daughters. *Mme.* Derline performed all these duties. She led a peaceful and serene life in the old house (in the Rue Dragon) which had sheltered, since 1825, three generations of Derlines; the husbands had all three been lawyers, the wives had all three been virtuous. The three generations had passed there a happy and moderate life, never having any great pleasures, but, also, never being very bored.

The next day at eight o'clock in the morning *Mme.* Derline awoke with an uneasy feeling. She had passed a troubled night—she, who usually slept like a child. The evening before at the opera, in the box, *Mme.* Derline had vaguely felt that something was going on around her. And during the entire last act an opera-glass, obstinately fixed on her—the prince's opera-glass—had thrown her into a certain agitation, not disagreeable, however. She wore a low dress—too much so, in her mother's opinion—and two or three times, under the fixity of that opera-glass, she had raised the shoulder-straps of her dress.

So, after opening her eyes, *Mme.* Derline reclosed them lazily, indolently, with thoughts floating between dreamland and reality. She again saw the opera-house, and a hundred, two hundred, five hundred opera-glasses obstinately fixed on her—on her alone.

The maid entered, placed a tray on a little table, made up a big fire in the fire-place, and went away. There was a cup of chocolate and the morning paper on the tray, the same as every morning. Then *Mme.* Derline courageously got up, slipped her little bare feet into fur slippers, wrapped herself in a white cashmere dressing-gown, and crouched shivering in an arm-chair by the fire. She sipped the chocolate, and slightly burned herself; she must wait a little while. She put down the cup, took up the paper, unfolded it, and rapidly ran her eye over the six columns of the front page. At the bottom, quite at the bottom of the sixth column, were the following lines:

Last evening at the opera there was a very brilliant performance of "Sigurd." Society was well represented there; the beautiful Duchess of Montaignon, the pretty Countess Verdiniere of Lardac, the marvellous Marquise of Muriel, the lively Baroness of—

To read the name of the baroness it was necessary to turn the page. *Mme.* Derline did not turn it; she was thinking, reflecting. The evening before she had amused herself by having Palmer point out to her the social leaders in the house, and it so happened that the banker had pointed out to her the marvellous marquise. And *Mme.* Derline—who

was twenty-two—raised herself a little to look in the glass. She exchanged a slight smile with a young blonde, who was very pink and white.

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“Ah,” she said to herself, “if I were a marquise the man who wrote this would perhaps have paid some attention to me, and my name would perhaps be there. I wonder if it’s fun to see one’s name printed in a paper?”

And while addressing this question to herself, she turned the page, and continued reading:

—the lively Baroness of Myrvoix, etc. We have to announce the appearance of a new star which has abruptly burst forth in the Parisian constellation. The house was in ecstasy over a strange and disturbing blonde, whose dark steel eyes, and whose shoulders—ah, what shoulders! The shoulders were the event of the evening. From all quarters one heard asked, “Who is she?” “Who is she?” “To whom do those divine shoulders belong?” “To whom?” We know, and our readers will doubtless thank us for telling them the name of this ideal wonder. It is Mme. Derline.

Her name! She had read her name! She was dazzled. Her eyes clouded. All the letters in the alphabet began to dance wildly on the paper. Then they calmed down, stopped, and regained their places. She was able to find her name, and continue reading;

It is Mme. Derline, the wife of one of the most agreeable and richest lawyers in Paris. The Prince of Nerins, whose word has so much weight in such matters, said yesterday evening to every one who would listen, “She is the most beautiful woman in Paris.” We are absolutely of that opinion.

A single paragraph, and that was all. It was enough, it was too much! Mme Derline was seized with a feeling of undefinable confusion. It was a combination of fear and pleasure, of joy and trouble, of satisfied vanity and wounded modesty. Her dressing-gown was a little open; she folded it over with a sort of violence, and crossed it upon, her feet, abruptly drawn back towards the arm-chair. She had a feeling of nudity. It seemed to her that all Paris was there, in her room, and that the Prince de Nerins was in front saying to all Paris, “Look, look! She is the most beautiful woman in Paris.”

The Prince of Nerins! She knew the name well, for she read with keen interest in the papers all the articles entitled “*Parisian Life*,” “*High Life*,” “*Society Echoes*,” etc.; and all the society columns signed “*Mousseline*,” “*Fanfreluche*,” “*Brimborion*,” “*Veloutine*”; all the accounts of great marriages, great balls, of great comings out, and of great charity sales. The name of the prince often figured in these articles, and he was always quoted as supreme arbiter of Parisian elegances.

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And it was he who had declared—ah!—decidedly pleasure got the better of fear. Still trembling with emotion, *Mme.* Derline went and placed herself before a long looking-glass, an old cheval-glass from Jacob's, which never till now had reflected other than good middle-class women married to good lawyers. In that glass she looked at herself, examined herself, studied herself, long, curiously, and eagerly. Of course she knew she was pretty, but oh, the power of print! She found herself absolutely delightful. She was no longer *Mme.* Derline—she was the most beautiful woman in Paris! Her feet, her little feet—their bareness no longer troubled her—left the ground. She raised herself gently towards the heavens, towards the clouds, and felt herself become a goddess.

But suddenly an anxiety seized her. “Edward! What would Edward say?” Edward was her husband. There had been but one man's surname in her life—her husband's. The lawyer was well loved! And almost at the same moment when she was asking herself what Edward would say, Edward abruptly opened the door.

He was a little out of breath. He had run up-stairs two at a time. He was peacefully rummaging among old papers in his study on the ground-floor when one of his brother-lawyers, with forced congratulations, however, had made him read the famous article. He had soon got rid of his brother-lawyer, and he had come, much irritated, to his room. At first there was simply a torrent of words.

“Why do these journalists meddle? It's an outrage! Your name—look, there is your name in this paper!”

“Yes, I know, I've seen—”

“Ah, you know, you have seen—and you think it quite natural!”

“But, dear—”

“What times do we live in? It's your fault, too.”

“My fault!”

“Yes, your fault!”

“And how?”

“Your dress last night was too low, much too low. Besides, your mother told you so—”

“Oh, mamma—”

“You needn't say ‘Oh, mamma!’ Your mother was right. There, read: ‘And whose shoulders—ah, what shoulders!’ And it is of your shoulders they are speaking. And that prince who dares to award you a prize for beauty!”

The good man had plebeian, Gothical ideas—the ideas of a lawyer of old times, of a lawyer of the Rue Dragon; the lawyers of the Boulevard Malesherbes are no longer like that.

Mme. Derline very gently, very quietly, brought the rebel back to reason. Of course there was charm and eloquence in her speech, but how much more charm and eloquence in the tenderness of her glance and smile.

Why this great rage and despair? He was accused of being the husband of the most beautiful woman in Paris. Was that such a horrible thing, such a terrible misfortune? And who was the brother-lawyer, the good brother-lawyer, who had taken pleasure in coming to show him the hateful article?

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“M. Renaud.”

“Oh, it was M. Renaud—dear M. Renaud!”

Thereupon *Mme.* Derline was seized with a hearty fit of laughter; so much so that the blond hair, which had been loosely done up, came down and framed the pretty face from which gleamed the dark eyes which could also, when they gave themselves the trouble, look very gentle, very caressing, very loving.

“Oh, it was M. Renaud, the husband of that delightful *Mme.* Renaud! Well, do you know what you will do immediately, without losing a minute? Go to the president of the Tribunal and ask for a divorce. You will say to him: ‘M. Aubepin, deliver me from my wife. Her crime is being pretty, very pretty, too pretty. I wish another one who is ugly, very ugly, who has *Mme.* Renaud’s large nose, colossal foot, pointed chin, skinny shoulders, and eternal pimples.’ That’s what you want, isn’t it? Come, you big stupid, kiss your poor wife, and forgive her for not being a monster.”

As rather lively gestures had illustrated this little speech, the white cashmere dressing-gown had slipped—slipped a good deal, and had opened, very much opened; the criminal shoulders were within reach of M. Derline’s lips—he succumbed. Besides, he too felt the abominable influence of the press. His wife had never seemed so pretty to him, and, brought back to subjection, M. Derline returned to his study in order to make money for the most beautiful woman in Paris.

A very wise and opportune occupation; for scarcely was *Mme.* Derline left alone when an idea flashed through her head which was to call forth a very pretty collection of bank-notes from the cash-box of the lawyer of the Rue Dragon. *Mme.* Derline had intended wearing to the Palmer’s ball a dress which had already been much seen. *Mme.* Derline had kept the dress-maker of her wedding-dress, her mother’s dress-maker, a dress-maker of the Left Bank. It seemed to her that her new position imposed new duties on her. She could not appear at the Palmer’s without a dress which had not been seen, and stamped with a well-known name. She ordered the carriage in the afternoon, and resolutely gave her coachman the address of one of the most illustrious dress-makers in Paris. She arrived a little agitated, and to reach the great artist was obliged to pass through a veritable crowd of footmen, who were in the antechamber chatting and laughing, used to meeting there and making long stops. Nearly all the footmen were those of society, the highest society; they had spent the previous evening together at the English Embassy, and were to be that evening at the Duchess of Gremaille.

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Mme. Derline entered a sumptuous parlor; it was very sumptuous, too sumptuous. Twenty great customers were there—society women and actresses, all agitated, anxious, feverish—looking at the beautiful tall saleswomen come and go before them, wearing the last creations of the master of the house. The great artist had a diplomatic bearing: buttoned-up black frock-coat, long cravat with pin (a present from a royal highness who paid her bills slowly), and a many-colored rosette in his button-hole (the gift of a small reigning prince who paid slower yet the bills of an opera-dancer). He came and went—precise, calm, and cool—in the midst of the solicitations and supplications of his customers. “M. Arthur! M. Arthur!” One heard nothing but that phrase. He was M. Arthur. He went from one to the other—respectful, without too much humility, to the duchesses, and easy, without too much familiarity, to the actresses. There was an extraordinary liveliness, and a confusion of marvellous velvets, satins, and embroidered, brocaded, and gold or silver threaded stuffs, all thrown here and there, as though by accident—but what science in that accident—on arm-chairs, tables, and divans.

In the first place *Mme.* Derline ran against a shop-girl who was bearing with outstretched arms a white dress, and was almost hidden beneath a light mountain of muslins and laces. The only thing visible was the shop-girl’s mussed black hair and sly suburban expression. *Mme.* Derline backed away, wishing to place herself against the wall; but a tryer-on was there, a large energetic brunette, who spoke authoritatively in a high staccato. “At once,” she was saying—“bring me at once the princess’s dress!”

Frightened and dazed, *Mme.* Derline stood in a corner and watched an opportunity to seize a saleswoman on the fly. She even thought of giving up the game. Never, certainly, should she dare to address directly that terrible M. Arthur, who had just given her a rapid glance in which she believed to have read, “Who is she? She isn’t properly dressed! She doesn’t go to a fashionable dress-maker!” At last *Mme.* Derline succeeded in getting hold of a disengaged saleswoman, and there was the same slightly disdainful glance—a glance which was accompanied by the phrase:

“Madame is not a regular customer of the house?”

“No, I am not a customer—”

“And you wish?”

“A dress, a ball-dress—and I want the dress for next Thursday evening—”

“Thursday next!”

“Yes, Thursday next.”

“Oh! madame, it is not to be thought of. Even for a customer of the house it would be impossible.”

“But I wished it so much—”

“Go and see M. Arthur. He alone can—”

“And where is M. Arthur?”

“In his office. He has just gone into his office. Over there, madame, opposite.”

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Mme. Derline, through a half-open door, saw a sombre and severe but luxurious room—an ambassador's office. On the walls the great European powers were represented by photographs—the Empress Eugenie, the Princess of Wales, a grand-duchess of Russia, and an archduchess of Austria. M. Arthur was there taking a few moments' rest, seated in a large arm-chair, with an air of lassitude and exhaustion, and with a newspaper spread out over his knees. He arose on seeing *Mme. Derline* enter. In a trembling voice she repeated her wish.

"Oh, madame, a ball-dress—a beautiful ball-dress—for Thursday! I couldn't make such a promise—I couldn't keep it. There are responsibilities to which I never expose myself."

He spoke slowly, gravely, as a man conscious of his high position.

"Oh, I am so disappointed. It was a particular occasion and I was told that you alone could—"

Two tears, two little tears, glittered on her eye-lashes. M. Arthur was moved. A woman, a pretty woman, crying there, before him! Never had such homage been paid to his genius.

"Well, madame, I am willing to make an attempt. A very simple dress—"

"Oh no, not simple. Very brilliant, on the contrary—everything that is most brilliant. Two of my friends are customers of yours (she named them), and I am *Mme. Derline*—"

"*Mme. Derline*! You are *Mme. Derline*?"

The two *Mme. Derlines* were followed by a glance and a smile—the glance was at the newspaper and the smile was at *Mme. Derline*; but it was a discreet, self-contained smile—the smile of a perfectly gallant man. This is what the glance and smile said with admirable clearness:

"Ah I you are *Mme. Derline*—that already celebrated *Mme. Derline*—who yesterday at the opera—I understand, I understand—I was reading just now in this paper—words are no longer necessary—you should have told your name at once—yes, you need me; yes, you shall have your dress; yes, I want to divide your success with you."

M. Arthur called:

"Mademoiselle Blanche, come here at once! Mademoiselle Blanche!"

And turning towards *Mme. Derline*, he said:

"She has great talent, but I shall myself superintend it; so be easy—yes, I myself."

Mme. Derline was a little confused, a little embarrassed by her glory, but happy nevertheless. Mademoiselle Blanche came forward.

“Conduct madame,” said M. Arthur, “and take the necessary measures for a ball-dress, very low, and with absolutely bare arms. During that time, madame, I am going to think seriously of what I can do for you. It must be something entirely new—ah! before going, permit me—”

He walked very slowly around *Mme.* Derline, and examined her with profound attention; then he walked away, and considered her from a little distance. His face was serious, thoughtful, and anxious. A great thinker wrestling with a great problem. He passed his hand over his forehead, raised his eyes to the sky, getting inspiration by a painful delivery; but suddenly his face lit up—the spirit from above had answered.

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"Go, madame," he said, "go. Your dress is thought out. When you come back, mademoiselle, bring me that piece of pink satin; you know, the one that I was keeping for some great occasion."

Thus *Mme.* Derline found herself with Mademoiselle Blanche in a trying-on room, which was a sort of little cabin lined with mirrors. A quarter of an hour later, when the measures had been taken, *Mme.* Derline came back and discovered M. Arthur in the midst of pieces of satin of all colors, of crepes, of tulles, of laces, and of brocaded stuffs.

"No, no, not the pink satin," he said to Mademoiselle Blanche, who was bringing the asked-for piece; "no, I have found something better. Listen to me. This is what I wish: I have given up the pink, and I have decided on this, this peach-colored satin. A classic robe, outlining all the fine lines and showing the suppleness of the body. This robe must be very clinging—hardly any underskirts. It must be of surah. Madame must be melted into it—do you thoroughly understand?—absolutely melted into the robe. We will drop over the dress this crepe—yes, that one, but in small, light pleats. The crepe will be as a cloud thrown over the dress—a transparent, vapory, impalpable cloud. The arms are to be absolutely bare, as I already told you. On each shoulder there must be a simple knot, showing the upper part of the arm. Of what is the knot to be? I'm still undecided—I need to think it over—till to-morrow, madame, till to-morrow."

Mme. Derline came back the next day, and the next, and every day till the day before the famous Thursday; and each time that she came back, while awaiting her turn to try on, she ordered dresses, very simple ones, but yet costing from seven to eight hundred francs each.

And that was not all. On the day of her first visit to M. Arthur, when *Mme.* Derline came out of the great house, she was broken-hearted—positively broken-hearted—at the sight of her brougham; it really did make a pitiful appearance among all the stylish carriages which were waiting in three rows and taking up half the street. It was the brougham of her late mother-in-law, and it still rolled through the streets of Paris after fifteen years' service. *Mme.* Derline got into the woe-begone brougham to drive straight to a very well-known carriage-maker, and that evening, cleverly seizing the psychological moment, she explained to M. Derline that she had seen a certain little black coupe lined with blue satin that would frame delightfully her new dresses.

The coupe was bought the next day by M. Derline, who also was beginning fully to realize the extent of his new duties. But the next day it was discovered that it was impossible to harness to that jewel of a coupe the old horse who had pulled the old carriage, and no less impossible to put on the box the old coachman who drove the old horse.

This is how on Thursday, April 25th, at half-past ten in the evening, a very pretty chestnut mare, driven by a very correct English coachman, took M. and *Mme.* Derline to

the Palmer's. They still lacked something—a little groom to sit beside the English coachman. But a certain amount of discretion had to be employed. The most beautiful woman in Paris intended to wait ten days before asking for the little groom.

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While she was going up-stairs at the Palmer's, she distinctly felt her heart beat like the strokes of a hammer. She was going to play a decisive game. She knew that the Palmers had been going everywhere, saying, "Come on Thursday; we will show you *Mme. Derline*, the most beautiful woman in Paris." Curiosity as well as jealousy had been well awakened.

She entered, and from the first minute she had the delicious sensation of her success. Throughout the long gallery of the Palmer's house it was a true triumphal march. She advanced with firm and precise step, erect, and head well held. She appeared to see nothing, to hear nothing, but how well she saw! how well she felt, the fire of all those eyes on her shoulders! Around her arose a little murmur of admiration, and never had music been sweeter to her.

Yes, decidedly, all went well. She was on a fair way to conquer Paris. And, sure of herself, at each step she became more confident, lighter, and bolder, as she advanced on Palmer's arm, who, in passing, pointed out the counts, the marquises, and the dukes. And then Palmer suddenly said to her:

"I want to present to you one of your greatest admirers, who, the other night at the opera, spoke of nothing but your beauty; he is the Prince of Nerins."

She became as red as a cherry. Palmer looked at her and began to laugh.

"Ah, you read the other day in that paper?"

"I read—yes, I read—"

"But where is the prince, where is he? I saw him during the day, and he was to be here early."

Mme. Derline was not to see the Prince of Nerins that evening. And yet he had intended to go to the Palmers and preside at the deification of his lawyeress. He had dined at the club, and had allowed himself to be dragged off to a first performance at a minor theatre. An operetta of the regulation type was being played. The principal personage was a young queen, who was always escorted by the customary four maids-of-honor.

Three of these young ladies were very well known to first-nighters, as having already figured in the tableaux of operettas and in groups of fairies, but the fourth—Oh, the fourth! She was a new one, a tall brunette of the most striking beauty. The prince made himself remarked more than all others by his enthusiasm. He completely forgot that he was to leave after the first act. The play was over very late, and the prince was still there, having paid no attention to the piece or the music, having seen nothing but the wonderful brunette, having heard nothing but the stanza which she had unworthily

massacred in the middle of the second act. And while they were leaving the theatre, the prince was saying to whoever would listen:

“That brunette! oh, that brunette! She hasn’t an equal in any theatre! She is the most beautiful woman in Paris! The most beautiful!”

It was one o’clock in the morning. The prince asked himself if he should go to the Palmers. Poor *Mme.* Derline; she was of very slight importance beside this new wonder! And then, too, the prince was a methodical man. The hour for whist had arrived; so he departed to play whist.

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The following morning *Mme. Derline* found ten lines on the *Palmer's* ball in the "society column." There was mention of the marquises, the countesses, and the duchesses who were there, but about *Mme. Derline* there was not a word—not a word.

On the other hand, the writer of theatrical gossip celebrated in enthusiastic terms the beauty of that ideal maid-of-honor, and said, "*Besides, the Prince of Nerins declared that Mademoiselle Miranda was indisputedly the most beautiful woman in Paris!*"

Mme. Derline threw the paper in the fire. She did not wish her husband to know that she was already not the most beautiful woman in Paris.

She has, however, kept the great dress-maker and the English coachman, but she never dared to ask for the little groom.

THE STORY OF A BALL-DRESS

When the women of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries write their memoirs they boldly present themselves to the reader thus: "I have a well-shaped mouth," said the Marquise of Courcelles, "beautiful lips, pearly teeth, good forehead, cheeks, and expression, finely chiselled throat, divine hands, passable arms (that is to say, they are a little thin); but I find consolation for that misfortune in the fact that I have the prettiest legs in the world."

And I will follow the marquise's example. Here is my portrait: Overskirt of white illusion trimmed with fringe, and three flounces of blond alternating with the fringe; court mantle of cherry silk girt by a high flounce of white blond which falls over the fringe and is caught up by Marie Antoinette satin; two other flounces of blond are placed behind at intervals above; on each side from the waist up are facings composed of little alternating flounces of blond, looped up with satin; the big puff behind is bound by a flounce of white blond. A little white waist, the front and shoulder-straps of which are of satin trimmed with blond. Belt of red satin with large red butterfly.

The world was made in six days, I in three. And yet I too am in the world—a little complicated world of silk, satin, blond, loops, and fringes. Did God rest while he was making the world? I do not know; but I do know that the scissors that cut me out and the needle that sewed me rested neither day nor night from Monday evening, January 24, 1870, to Thursday morning, January 27th. The slashes of the scissors and the pricks of the needle caused me great pain at first, but I soon paid no attention to them at all. I began to observe what was going on, to understand that I was becoming a dress, and to discover that the dress would be a marvel. From time to time M. Worth came himself to pay me little visits. "Take in the waist," he would say, "add more fringe, spread out the train, enlarge the butterfly," etc.



One thing worried me: For whom was I intended? I knew the name, nothing more—the Baroness Z——. Princess would have been better; but still, baroness did very well. I was ambitious. I dreaded the theatre. It remained to be seen whether this baroness was young, pretty, and equal to wearing me boldly, and whether she had a figure to show me off to advantage. I was horribly afraid of falling into the hands of an ugly woman, a provincial, or an old coquette.

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How perfectly reassured I was as soon as I saw the baroness! Small, delicate, supple, stylish, a fairy waist, the shoulders of a goddess, and, besides all this, a certain little air of audacity, of raillery, but in exquisite moderation.

I was spread out on a large pearl-gray lounge, and I was received with marks of frank admiration. M. Worth had been good enough to bring me *himself*, and he didn't trouble himself about all dresses.

"How original!" exclaimed the little baroness; "how new! But very dear, isn't it?"

"One thousand and fifty francs."

"One thousand and fifty francs! And I furnished the lace! Ah, how quickly I should leave you if I didn't owe you so much! For I owe you a lot of money."

"Oh, very little, baroness—very little."

"No, no; a great deal. But we will discuss that another day."

That evening I made my first appearance in society, and I came out at the Tuileries. We both of us, the baroness and myself, had an undeniable success. When the Empress crossed the Salon of Diana, making pleasant remarks to the right and left, she had the graciousness to stop before us and make the following remark, which seemed to me extremely witty, "Ah, baroness, what a dress—what a dress! It's a dream!" On that occasion the Empress wore a dress of white tulle dotted with silver, on a design of cloudy green, with epaulettes of sable. It was queer, not ineffective, but in doubtful taste.

We received much attention, the baroness and I. The new Minister, M. Emile Ollivier, was presented to us; we received him coldly, as the little baroness did not approve, I believe, of liberal reforms, and looked for nothing good from them. We had a long chat on the window-seat with the Marshal Leboeuf. The only topic during that interesting conversation was the execution of Troppmann. It was the great event of the week.

At two o'clock we left—the baroness, I, and the baron. For there was a husband, who for the time being was crowded in the corner of the carriage, and hidden under the mass of my skirts and of my train, which was thrown back on him all in a heap.

"Confess, Edward," said the little baroness—confess that I was pretty to-night."

"Very."

"And my dress?"

"Oh, charming!"

“You say that indolently, without spirit or enthusiasm. I know you well. You think I’ve been extravagant. Well, indeed I haven’t. Do you know how much this dress cost me? Four hundred francs—not a centime more.”

We arrived home, which was a step from the Tuileries, in the Place Vendome. The baron went to his rooms, the baroness to hers; and while Hermance, the maid, cleverly and swiftly untied all my rosettes and took out the pins, the little baroness kept repeating: “How becoming this dress is to me! And I seem to become it, too. I shall wear it on Thursday, Hermance, to go to the Austrian Embassy. Wait a minute, till I see the effect of the butterfly in the back. Bring the lamp nearer; nearer yet. Yes, that’s it. Ah, how pretty it is! I am enchanted with this dress, Hermance—really enchanted!”

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If the little baroness was enchanted with me, I was equally enchanted with the baroness. We two made the most tender, the most intimate, and the most united of families. We comprehended, understood, and completed each other so well. I had not to do with one of those mechanical dolls—stupidly and brutally laced into a padded corset. Between the little baroness and myself there was absolutely nothing but lace and fine linen. We could confidentially and surely depend on one another. The beauty of the little baroness was a real beauty, without garniture, conjuring, or trickery.

So the following Thursday I went to the Austrian Embassy, and a week later to the Princess Mathilde's. But, alas! the next morning the little baroness said to her maid: "Hermance, take that dress to the reserve. I love it, and I'd wear it every evening; but it has been seen sufficiently for this winter. Yesterday several people said to me, 'Ah, that's your dress of the Tuileries; it's your dress of the Austrian Embassy.' It must be given up till next year. Good-bye, dear little dress."

And, having said that, she placed her charming lips at hap-hazard among my laces and kissed me in the dearest way in the world. Ah, how pleased and proud I was of that childish and sweet fellowship! I remembered that the evening before, on our return, the little baroness had kissed her husband; but the kiss she had given him was a quick, dry kiss—one of those hurried kisses with which one wishes to get through; whereas my kiss had been prolonged and passionate. She had cordiality for the baron, and love for me. The little baroness wasn't twenty, and she was a coquette to the core. I say this, in the first place, to excuse her, and, in the second place, to give an exact impression of her character.

So at noon, in the arms of Hermance, I made my entry to the reserve. It was a dormitory of dresses, an immense room on the third story, very large, and lined with wardrobes of white oak, carefully locked. In the middle of the room was an ottoman, on which Hermance deposited me; after which she slid back ten or twelve wardrobe doors, one after the other. Dresses upon dresses! I should never be able to tell how many. All were hung in the air by silk tape on big triangles. Hermance, however, seemed much embarrassed.

"In the reserve," she murmured, "in the reserve; that is easy to say. But where is there any room? And this one needs a lot." At last Hermance, after having given a number of little taps to the right and left, succeeded in making a sort of slit, into which I had great difficulty in sliding. Hermance gave me and my neighbors some more little taps to lump us together, and then shut the door. Darkness reigned. I was placed between a blue velvet dress and a mauve satin one.

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Towards the end of April we received a visit from the little baroness, and in consequence of that visit there was great disturbance. Winter dresses were hung up; spring dresses were got down. At the beginning of July another visit, another disturbance—entry of the costumes from the races; departure of others for the watering-places. I lost my neighbor to the right, the mauve dress, and kept my neighbor on the left, the blue dress, a cross and crabbed person who was forever groaning, complaining, and saying to me, “Oh, my dear, you do take up so much room; do get out of the way a little.” I must admit that the poor blue velvet dress was much to be pitied. It was three years old, having been a part of the little baroness’s trousseau, and had never been worn. “A high-neck blue velvet dress, at my age, with my shoulders and arms!” had exclaimed the little baroness; “I should look like a grandmother!” Thus it was decreed, and the unfortunate blue dress had gone from the trousseau straight to the reserve.

A week or ten days after the departure of the dresses for Baden-Baden we heard a noise, the voices of women, and all the doors were opened. It was the little baroness, who had brought her friend the Countess N——.

“Sit there, my dear, on that ottoman,” said the little baroness. “I have come to look over my dresses. I am very hurried; I arrived but just now from Baden, and I start again to-night for Anjou. We can chatter while Hermance shows me the dresses. Oh, those Prussians, my dear, the monsters! We had to run away, Blanche and myself, like thieves. (Very simple dresses, Hermance, every-day dresses, and walking and boating dresses.) Yes, my dear, like thieves! They threw stones at us, real stones, in the Avenue of Lichtental, and called us ‘Rascally Frenchwomen! French rabble!’ The Emperor did well to declare war against such people. (Dresses for horseback, Hermance—my brown riding-habit.) At any rate, there’s no need to worry. My husband dined yesterday with Guy; you know, the tall Guy, who is an aide of Leboeuf. Well, we are ready, admirably ready, and the Prussians not at all. (Very simple, I said, Hermance. You are showing me ball-dresses. I don’t intend to dance during the war.) And then, my dear, it seems that this war was absolutely necessary from a dynastic point of view. I don’t quite know why, but I tell it to you as I heard it. (These dozen dresses, Hermance, will be sufficient. But there are thirteen. I never could have thirteen. Take away the green one; or, no, add another—that blue one; that’s all.) Now let’s go down, my dear.”

Whereupon she departed. So war was declared, and with Prussia. I was much moved. I was a French dress and a Bonapartist dress. I was afraid for France and afraid for the dynasty, but the words of the tall Guy were so perfectly reassuring.

For two months there was no news; but about the 10th of September the little baroness arrived with Hermance. She was very pale, poor little baroness—very pale and agitated.

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“Dark dresses, Hermance,” she said, “black dresses. I know! What remains of Aunt Pauline’s mourning? There must remain quite a lot of things. You see, I am too sad—”

“But if madame expects to remain long in England?”

“Ah! as long as the Republic lasts.”

“Then it may be a long time.”

“What do you mean—a long time? What *do* you mean, Hermance? Who can tell you such things?”

“It seems to me that if I were madame I’d take for precaution’s sake a few winter dresses, a few evening-dresses—”

“Evening-dresses! Why, what are you thinking of? I shall go nowhere, Hermance, alone in England, without my husband, who stays in Paris in the National Guard.”

“But if madame should go to see their Majesties in England?”

“Yes, of course I shall, Hermance.”

“Well, it’s because I know madame’s feelings and views that—”

“You are right; put in some evening-dresses.”

“Will madame take her last white satin dress?”

“Oh no, not that one; it would be too sad a memory for the Empress, who noticed it at the last ball at the Tuileries. And then the dress wouldn’t stand the voyage. My poor white satin dress! Shall I ever wear it again?”

That is why I did not emigrate, and how I found myself blockaded in Paris during the siege. From the few words that we had heard of the conversation of the little baroness and Hermance we had a pretty clear idea of the situation. The Empire was overthrown and the Republic proclaimed. The Republic! There were among us several old family laces who had seen the first Republic—that of ’93. The Reign of Terror! Ah, what tales they told us! The fall of the Empire, however, did not displease these old laces, who were all Legitimists or Orleanists. In my neighborhood, on a gooseberry satin skirt, there were four flounces of lace who had had the honor of attending the coronation of Charles X., and who were delighted, and kept saying to us: “The Bonapartes brought about invasion; invasion brings back the Bourbons. Long live Henry V.!”

We all had, however, a common preoccupation. Should we remain in style? We were nearly all startling, risky, and loud—so much so that we were quite anxious, except

three or four quiet dresses, velvet and dark cloth dresses, who joined in the chorus with the old laces, and said to us: “Ah, here’s an end to the carnival, to this masquerade of an empire! Republic or monarchy, little we care; we are sensible and in good taste.” We felt they were somewhat in the right in talking thus. From September to February we remained shut up in the wardrobes, wrangling with each other, listening to the cannon, and knowing nothing of what was going on.

Towards the middle of February all the doors were opened. It was the little baroness—the little baroness!

“Ah!” she exclaimed, “my dresses, my beloved dresses, there they are; how happy I am to see them!”

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We could say nothing; but we, too, were very happy to see the little baroness.

“Now, then, Hermance,” continued the little baroness, “let us hunt around a little. What can I take to Bordeaux? After such disasters I must have quiet and sombre dresses.”

“Madame hasn’t very many.”

“I beg your pardon, Hermance, I have dark dresses—this one and that one. The blue velvet dress! The blue velvet dress is just the thing, and I’ve never worn it.”

And so my neighbor the blue dress was taken down, and was at last going to make her first appearance in the world. However, the little baroness herself, with great activity, rummaged round in the wardrobes.

“Nothing, nothing,” she said; “four or five dresses only. All the rest are impossible, and would not accord with the Government we shall have in Bordeaux. Well, I shall be obliged to have some republican dresses made—very moderate republican, but still republican.”

The little baroness went away, to come back a month later, always with Hermance, who was an excellent maid, and much thought of by her mistress. New deliberation.

“Hermance,” said the little baroness, “what can I take to Versailles? I think we shall be able to have a little more freedom. There will be receptions and dinners with M. Thiers; then the princes are coming. I might risk transition dresses. Do you know what I mean by that, Hermance—transition dresses?”

“Perfectly, madame—pearl grays, mauves, violets, lilacs.”

“Yes, that’s it, Hermance; light but quiet colors. You are an invaluable maid. You understand me perfectly.”

The little baroness started for Versailles with a collection of transition dresses. There must have been twenty. It was a good beginning, and filled us with hope. She had begun at Bordeaux with sombre colors, and continued on at Versailles with light ones, Versailles was evidently only a stepping-stone between Bordeaux and Paris. The little baroness was soon coming back to Paris, and once the little baroness was in Paris we could feel assured that we should not stay long in the wardrobes.

But it happened that a few days after the departure of the little baroness for Versailles we heard loud firing beneath the windows of the house (we lived in the Place Vendome). Was it another revolt, another revolution? For a week nothing more was heard; there was silence. Then at the end of that week the cannonade began around Paris worse than ever. Was the war recommencing with the Prussians? Was it a new siege?



The days passed, and the boom of the cannon continued. Finally, one morning there was a great racket in the court-yard of our house. Cries, threats, oaths! The noise came up and up. Great blows with the butt ends of muskets were struck on the wardrobe doors. They were smashed in and we perceived eight or ten slovenly looking, dirty, and bearded men. Among these men was a woman, a little brunette; fairly pretty, I must say, but queerly gotten up. A black dress with a short skirt, little boots with red bows, a round gray felt hat with a large red plume, and a sort of red scarf worn crosswise. It was a peculiar style, but it was style all the same.

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“Oh, oh!” exclaimed the little woman, “here’s luck! What a lot of dresses! Well, clear away all this, sergeant, and take those duds to headquarters.”

Then all those men threw themselves upon us with a sort of fury. We felt ourselves gripped and dishonored by coarse, dirty hands.

“Don’t soil them too much, citizens,” the little woman would cry. “Do them up in packages, and take the packages down to the ammunition-wagon.”

The headquarters was the apartment of the young lady of the red plume. Our new mistress was the wife of a general of the Commune. We were destined to remain official dresses. Official during the Empire, and official during the Commune. The first thought of *Mme. General* was to hold a review of us, and I had the honor of being the object of her special attention and admiration.

“Ah, look, Emile!” (Emile was the General.) “Look! this is the toniest of the whole concern. I’ll keep it for the Tuileries.”

I was to be kept for the Tuileries! What tales of woe and what lamentations there were in the sort of alcove where we were thrown like rags! *Mme. General* went into society every evening, and never put on the same dress twice. My poor companions the day after told me their adventures of the day before. This one had dined at Citizen Raoul Rigault’s, the Prefecture of Police; that one attended a performance of “*Andromaque*” at the Theatre Francais, in the Empress’s box, etc. At last it was my turn. The 17th of May was the day of the grand concert at the Tuileries.

Oh, my dear little baroness, what had become of you? Where were your long soft muslin petticoats and your fine white satin corsets? Where were your transparent linen chemisettes? *Mme. General* had coarse petticoats of starched calico. *Mme. General* wore such a corset! *Mme. General* had such a crinoline! My poor skirts of lace and satin were abominably stiffened and tossed about by the hard crinoline hoops. As to the basque, the strange thing happened that the basque of the little baroness was much too tight for *Mme. General* at the waist, and, on the contrary, above the waist it was—I really do not know how to explain such things. At any rate, it was just the opposite of small, so much so that it had to be padded. Horrible! Most horrible!

At ten that evening I was climbing for the second time the grand staircase of the Tuileries, in the midst of a dense and ignoble mob. One of the General’s aides-de-camp tried in vain to open a passage.

“Room, room, for the wife of the General!” he cried.

Much they cared for the wife of the General! Great big boots trampled on my train, sharp spurs tore my laces, and the bones of the corsets of *Mme.* General hurt me terribly.

At midnight I returned to *Mme.* General's den. I returned in rags, shreds, soiled, dishonored, and stained with wine, tobacco, and mud. A hateful little maid brutally tore me from the shoulders of *Mme.* General, and said to her mistress:

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"Well, madame, was it beautiful?"

"No, Victoria," replied *Mme. General*, "it was too mixed. But do hurry up! tear it off if it won't come. I know where to find others at the same price."

And I was thrown like a rag on a heap of pieces. The heap of pieces was composed of ball-dresses of the little baroness.

One morning, three or four days later, the aide-de-camp rushed in, crying, "The Versaillists! The Versaillists are in Paris!"

Thereupon *Mme. General* put on a sort of military costume, took two revolvers, filled them with cartridges, and hung them on a black leather belt which she wore around her waist. "Where is the General?" she said to the aide-de-camp.

"At the Tuileries."

"Very well, I shall go there with you." And on that she departed, with her little gray felt hat jauntily tilted over her ear.

The cannonade and firing redoubled and came nearer. Evidently there was fighting very near us, quite close to us. The next day towards noon we saw them both come back, the General and *Mme. General*. And in what a condition! Panting, frightened, forbidding, with clothes white with dust, and hands and faces black with powder. The General was wounded in the left hand, he had twisted around his wrist a handkerchief bathed in blood.

"Does your arm hurt you?" *Mme. General* said to him.

"It stings a little, that's all."

"Are they following us?"

"Yes, I think so."

"Listen! There are noises, shouts."

"Look out of the window without showing yourself."

"The red trousers! They are here!"

"Lock and bolt the door. Get the revolvers and load them. I can't on account of my arm. This wound is a bore."

"You are so pale!"

“Yes; I am losing blood—a good deal of blood.”

“They are coming up the stairs!”

“Into the alcove—let us go into the alcove, on the dresses.”

“Here they are!”

“Give me the revolver.”

The door gave way violently under the hammering of the butts of the guns. A shower of bullets fell on us and around us. The General, with a single movement, fell heavily at full length on the bed of silk, muslin, and laces that we made for him. Three or four men with red trousers threw themselves on *Mme. General*, who fought, bit, and screamed, “Assassins! assassins!”

A soldier tore away the bell-cord, firmly tied her hands, and carried her away like a bundle. She continued to repeat, in a strangled voice, “Assassins! assassins!” The soldiers approached the alcove and looked at the General. “As to him,” they said, “he’s done for; he doesn’t need anything more. Let’s be off.”

They left us, and we remained there for two days, crushed beneath that corpse and covered with blood. Finally, at the end of those two days, a man arrived who was called a Commissioner, and who wore a tricolored scarf around his waist. “This corpse has been forgotten,” he said. “Take it away.”

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They tried to lift the body, but with fingers stiffened by death the General held my big cherry satin butterfly. They had nearly to break his fingers to get it out.

Meantime the Commissioner examined and searched curiously among that brilliant heap of rags on which the General had died. My waist appeared to catch his eye. "Here is a mark," he said to one of his men—"a mark inside the waist, with the name and number of the maker. We can learn where these dresses came from. Wrap this waist in a newspaper and I'll take it."

They wrapped me in an old number of the *Official Journal of the Commune*. The following day we went to M. Worth, the Commissioner and I. The conversation was not long.

"Was this dress made by you?" the Commissioner asked.

"Yes; here's the mark."

"And for whom was it made?"

"Number 18,223. Wait a moment; I'll consult my books." The dress-maker came back in five minutes, and said to the Commissioner, "It was for the Baroness Z—— that I made this dress, eighteen months ago, and it isn't paid for."

THE INSURGENT

"Prisoner," said the President of the Council of War, "have you anything to add in your defence?"

"Yes, colonel," replied the prisoner. "The little lawyer you assigned me defended me according to his idea; I want to defend myself according to mine."

"My name is Martin (Lewis Joseph). I am fifty-five years old. My father was a locksmith. He had a little shop in the upper part of the Saint-Martin Quarter, and had a fair business. We just existed. I learned to read in the *National*, which was, I believe, the paper of M. Thiers.

"On the 27th of July, 1830, my father went out very early. That evening, at ten o'clock, he was brought back to us on a litter, dying. He had received a bullet in the chest. Beside him on the litter was his musket.

"'Take it,' he said to me. 'I give it to you; and every time there is a riot, be against the Government—always, always, always!'

“An hour later he was dead. I went out in the night. At the first barricade I stopped and offered myself; a man examined me by the light of a lantern. ‘A child!’ he exclaimed. I was not fifteen. I was very slight and undersized. I answered: ‘A child, maybe, but my father was killed two hours ago. He gave me his musket. Teach me how to use it.’

“From that moment I became what I have always been for forty years, an insurgent! If I fought during the Commune, it was not because I was forced, nor for the thirty sous; it was from taste, from pleasure, from habit, from routine.

“In 1830 I behaved rather bravely at the attack on the Louvre. The urchin who first scaled the gate beneath the bullets of the Swiss was I. I received the Medal of July. But the shopkeepers gave us a king. It had all to be done over. I joined a secret society; I learned to melt bullets, to make powder—in short, I completed my education, and I waited.

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"I had to wait nearly two years. On June 5, 1832, at noon, in front of the Madeleine, I was the first to unharness one of the horses of the hearse of General Lamarque. I passed the day in shouting, 'Long live Lafayette!' and I passed the night in making barricades. The next morning we were attacked by the regulars. In the evening, towards four o'clock, we were blocked, cannonaded, swept with grape-shot, and crushed back into the Church of Saint-Mery. I had a bullet and three bayonet-stabs in my body when I was picked up by the soldiers from the stone floor of a little chapel to the left—the Chapel of St. John. I have often gone back to that little chapel—not to pray, I wasn't brought up with such ideas—but to see the stains of my blood which still remain on the stones.

"On account of my youth I received a ten-year sentence. I was sent to Mont Saint-Michel. That was why I didn't take part in the riots of 1834. If I had been free I should have fought in Rue Transnonian as I had fought in Rue Saint-Mery—'against the Government—always, always, always!' It was my father's last word; it was my gospel, my religion. I call that my catechism in six words. I came out of prison in 1842, and I again began to wait.

"The revolution of '48 was made without effort. The shopkeepers were stupid and cowardly. They were neither for nor against us. The municipal guards alone defended themselves. We had a little trouble in taking the guard-house of the Chateau d'Eau. On the evening of February 24th I remained three or four hours on the square before the Hotel de Ville. The members of the Provisional Government, one after another, made speeches to us—said that we were heroes, great citizens, the foremost nation in the world, that we had broken the bonds of tyranny. After having fed us on these fine speeches, they gave us a republic which wasn't any better than the monarchy we had overthrown.

"In June I took up my musket again, but on that occasion we were not successful. I was arrested, sentenced, and sent to Cayenne. It seems that I behaved well there. One day I saved a captain of marines from drowning. Observe that I should most certainly have shot at that captain if he had been on one side of a barricade and I on the other; but a man who is drowning, dying—in short, I received my pardon, I came back to France in 1852, after the Coup d'Etat; I had missed the insurrection of 1851.

"At Cayenne I had made friends with a tailor named Barnard. Six months after my departure for France, Barnard died. I went to see his widow. She was in want. I married her. We had a son in 1854—you will understand presently why I speak to you of my wife and my son. But you must already suspect that an insurgent who marries the widow of an insurgent does not have royalist children.

"Under the Empire there was nothing to do. The police were very strict. We were dispersed, disarmed. I worked, I brought up my son with the ideas that my father had

given me. The wait was long. Rochefort, Gambetta, public reunions—all that put us in motion again.

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“On the first important occasion I showed myself. I was one of that little band who assaulted the barracks of the firemen of Villette. Only there we made a mistake. We killed a fireman, unnecessarily, I was caught and thrown into prison, but the Government of the Fourth of September liberated us, from which I concluded that we did right to attack those barracks and kill the fireman, even unnecessarily.

“The siege began. I immediately opposed the Government, on the side of the Commune. I marched against the Hotel de Ville on the 31st of October and on the 22d of January. I liked revolt for revolt's sake. An insurgent—I told you in the beginning I am an insurgent. I cannot hear a discussion without taking part, nor see a riot without running to it, nor a barricade without bringing my paving-stone. It's in the blood.

“And then, besides, I wasn't quite ignorant, and I said to myself, It is only necessary to succeed thoroughly some day, and then, in our turn, we shall be the Government, and it will be better than with all these lawyers, who place themselves behind us during the battle, and pass ahead after the victory.’

“The 18th of March came, and naturally I was in it. I shouted 'Hurrah for the regulars!' I fraternized with the army. I went to the Hotel de Ville. I found a government already at work. It was absolutely the same as on the 24th of February.

“Now you tell me that that insurrection was not lawful. That is possible, but I don't quite see why not. I begin to get muddled—about these insurrections which are a duty and those which are a crime! I do not clearly see the difference.

“I shot at the Versailles troops in 1871, as I had shot at the royal guard in 1830 and on the municipals in 1848. After 1830 I received the Medal of July; after 1848 the compliments of M. de Lamartine. This time I am going to get transportation or death.

“There are insurrections which please you. You raise columns to them, you give their names to streets, you give yourselves the offices, the promotions, and the big salaries, and we folks, who made the revolution, you call us great citizens, heroes, a nation of brave men, *etc.* That's the coin we are paid with.

“And then there are other insurrections which displease you. As a result, transportation, death. Well, you see, if you hadn't complimented us so after the first ones, perhaps we wouldn't have made the last. If you hadn't raised the Column of July at the entrance of our neighborhood, we wouldn't perhaps have gone and demolished the Vendome Column in your neighborhood. Those two penny trumpets didn't agree. One had to upset the other, and that is what happened.

“Now, why I threw away my captain's uniform on the 26th of May, why I was in a blouse when I was arrested, I will tell you. When I learned that the gentlemen of the Commune, instead of coming to shoot with us behind the barricades, were at the Hotel

de Ville distributing among themselves thousand-franc notes, were shaving their beards, dyeing their hair, and hiding themselves in caves, I did not wish to keep the shoulder-straps they had given me.

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"Besides, shoulder-straps embarrassed me. 'Captain Martin' sounded idiotic. 'Insurgent Martin'—why, that's well and good. I wanted to end as I had begun, die as my father had died, as a rioter in a riot, as a barricader behind a barricade.

"I could not get killed. I got caught. I belong to you. But I wish to beg a favor of you. I have a son, a child of seventeen; he is at Cherbourg, on the hulks. He fought, it is true, and he does not deny it; but it is I who put a musket in his hand, it is I who told him that his duty was there. He listened to me. He obeyed me. That is all his crime. Do not sentence him too harshly.

"As for me, you have got me; do not let me go, that's the advice I give you. I am too old to mend; and then, what can you expect? Nothing can change it. I was born on the wrong side of the barricade."

THE CHINESE AMBASSADOR

In the beginning of the year 1870 some English and French residents had been massacred in China. Reparation was demanded. His Excellency Tchong-Keon, Tutor of the Heir-apparent and Vice-President of the War Department, was sent to Europe as Ambassador Extraordinary to the English and French governments.

Tchong-Keon has recently published at Peking a very curious account of his voyage. One of my friends who lives in Shanghai, and who possesses the rare talent of being able to read Chinese easily, sent me this faithful translation of a part of Tchong-Keon's book:

HAVRE, *September 12, 1870.*

I land, and I make myself known. I am the Ambassador of the Emperor of China. I bear apologies to the Emperor of the French, and presents to the Empress. There is no Emperor and no Empress. A Republic has been proclaimed. I am much embarrassed. Shall I offer the apologies and presents that were intended for the Empire to the Republic?

HAVRE, *September 14, 1870.*

After much reflection, I shall offer the apologies and keep the presents.

HAVRE, *September 26, 1870.*

Yes; but to whom shall I carry the apologies, and to whom shall I present them? The Government of the French Republic is divided in two: there is one part in Paris and one part in Tours. To go to Paris is not to be thought of. Paris is besieged and blockaded by the Prussians. I shall go to Tours.

HAVRE, *October 2, 1870.*

I did not go, and I shall not go, to Tours. I received yesterday a visit from the correspondent of the *Times*, a most agreeable and sensible man. I told him that I intended going to Tours.

“To Tours! What do you want in Tours?”

“To present the apologies of my master to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the French Republic.”

“But that minister isn’t in Tours.”

“And where is he?”

“Blockaded in Paris.”

A Minister of Foreign Affairs who is blockaded in a besieged town seemed to me most extraordinary.

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"And why," the correspondent of the *Times* asked me, "do you bring apologies to the French Government?"

"Because we massacred some French residents."

"French residents! That's of no importance nowadays. France no longer exists. You can, if it amuses you, throw all the French residents into the sea."

"We also thoughtlessly massacred some English residents."

"You massacred some English residents! Oh, that's very different! England is still a great nation. And you have brought apologies to Queen Victoria?"

"Yes, apologies and presents."

"Go to London, go straight to London, and don't bother about France; there is no France."

The correspondent of the *Times* looked quite happy when he spoke those words: "there is no France."

LONDON, *October 10, 1870.*

I've seen the Queen of England. She received me very cordially. She has accepted the apologies; she has accepted the presents.

LONDON, *October 12, 1870.*

Had a long conversation with Lord Granville, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Queen of England. I explained to his Excellency that I meant to go home at once, and that I feel I need not pay further attention to my French embassy, as France no longer exists. Lord Granville answered me:

"Don't go away so soon; you will perhaps be obliged to come back, and sooner than you imagine. France is an extraordinary country, which picks up very quickly. Await the end of the war, and then you can take your apologies to the Government that France will have decided on giving itself. Till then remain in England. We shall be most happy to offer you our hospitality."

LONDON, *November 3, 1870.*

I did not return to China. I am waiting in London till the Minister of Foreign Affairs is not besieged, and till there is some way of laying one's hands on the French Government. There are many Parisians here who escaped from their country on account of the war. I dined yesterday with his Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales. Three Parisian women,

all three young, and all three pretty, took possession of me after dinner. We had a very interesting conversation in English.

“You are looking for the French Government, the legitimate Government?” said the first of these Parisians. “Why, it is here in England, half an hour from London. To-morrow go to the Waterloo station and buy a ticket for Chiselhurst, and there you will find Napoleon III., who is, and has never ceased to be, the Emperor of the French.”

“Don’t listen to her, Mr. Ambassador,” laughingly said the second Parisian, “don’t listen to her; she is a terrible Bonapartist. Yes, the true sovereign of France is in England, quite near London, but not at Chiselhurst; and it is not the Waterloo station you must go to, but the Victoria station. You mustn’t take a ticket for Chiselhurst, but for Twickenham, and there you will find at Orleans House his Royal Highness the Count of Paris.”

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“Don’t listen to her, Mr. Ambassador,” exclaimed in turn, and also laughing, the third Parisian, “don’t listen to her; she is a terrible revolutionist! The Count of Paris is not the heir to the throne of France. To find the legitimate King you must go a little farther than Chiselhurst or Twickenham; you must go to Austria, to the Frohsdorf Palace. The King of France—he is the descendant of Henry IV.—is the Count of Chambord.”

If I count aright, that makes three legitimate sovereigns, and all three deposed. Never in China have we had anything of that sort. Our old dynasty has had to fight against the invasions of the Mongols and against the insurrections of the Taipings. But three legitimate sovereigns for the same country, for a single throne! One has to come to Europe to see such things.

However, the three Parisians gayly discussed the matter, and seemed to be the best friends in the world.

LONDON, *November 15, 1870.*

As a sequel to the three Frenchwomen, representing three different monarchs, I met, this evening, at Lord Granville’s, three Frenchmen representing three different republics.

The first asked me why I didn’t go to Tours.

“You will find there,” he said to me, “the authorized representatives of the French Republic, and in addressing yourself to M. Gambetta you are addressing France—”

“Don’t do that, Mr. Ambassador!” exclaimed the second Frenchman; “the real Government of the real French Republic is shut up in Paris. M. Jules Favre alone can officially receive your visit and your apologies.”

“The Republic of Paris isn’t worth more than the Republic of Tours,” the third Frenchman then told me. “If we have a Republic in France, it will be neither the Republic of M. Gambetta nor the Republic of M. Jules Favre.”

“And whose Republic then?”

“The Republic of M. Thiers—”

Whereupon the three Frenchmen began to dispute in earnest. They were very red, shouted loudly, and made violent gestures. The discussion about the three monarchies had been much gentler and much more agreeable than the discussion about the three republics.

During the evening these Frenchmen managed to slip into my ear, in turn, two or three little phrases of this kind:

“Don’t listen,” the first one said to me, “to that partisan of the Government of Paris; he is a lawyer who has come here with a commission from M. Jules Favre. So you see he has a big salary, and as he wishes to keep it—”

“Don’t listen,” the second one said to me, “to that partisan of the alleged Republic of M. Thiers; he is only a monarchist, a disguised Orleanist—”

“Don’t listen,” the third one said to me, “to that partisan of the Republic of Tours; he is a gentleman who has come to England to get a loan for the benefit of the Government of Tours; so, as he expects to get a lot of money—”

Thus I am, if I reckon correctly, face to face with six governments—three monarchies and three republics.

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LONDON, *December 6, 1870.*

I think that his Excellency, M. de Bernstoff, Prussian Ambassador to England, takes pleasure in making fun of me. I never meet him but that he announces to me that Paris will capitulate the next day. The next day arrives and Paris does not capitulate. However, this evening his Excellency looked so perfectly sure of what he was saying that I think I can prepare to start for Paris.

PARIS, *February 20, 1871.*

I only left on the 10th of February. At last I am in Paris. I travelled slowly, by short stages. What a lot of burned villages! What a lot of sacked houses! What a lot of devastated forests, dug-up woods, and bridges and railroads destroyed! And these Europeans treat us as barbarians!

However, among all these ruins there is one the sight of which filled me with the keenest joy. The palace of Saint-Cloud was the summer palace of the Emperor Napoleon, and not a stone upon a stone remains. I contemplated curiously, eagerly, and for a long time the blackened ruins of this palace. Pieces of old Chinese vases were hidden in the heaps of rubbish among the wreck of marble and fragments of shell.

Where did those old Chinese vases come from? Perhaps from the summer palace of our Emperor, from that palace which was devastated, burned, and destroyed by those English and French soldiers who came to bring us civilization.

I was extremely well received by the English, who overwhelmed me with invitations and kindnesses; but none the less I hope that the palaces of Buckingham and Windsor will also have their turn.

PARIS, *February 25, 1871.*

I have written to M. Jules Favre to let him know that I have been waiting six months for the opportunity of presenting to him the compliments and apologies of the Emperor of China. M. Jules Favre answered me that he is obliged to start for Bordeaux. I shall have an audience in the beginning of March.

PARIS, *March 7, 1871.*

Another letter from M. Jules Favre. He is expected at Frankfort by M. de Bismarck. My audience is again put off.

PARIS, *March 17, 1871.*

At last, to-morrow, March 18th, at four o'clock, I am to be received by M. Jules Favre at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

PARIS, *March 18, 1871.*

We dressed ourselves, I and my two secretaries, in our official costumes, and departed at three o'clock, accompanied by an interpreter. We arrived. The court of the house was filled with people who appeared busy and hurried, and who came and went, carrying cases and packages. The interpreter, after having exchanged several words with an employee of the ministry, said to me:

"Something serious has happened—an insurrection. The Government is again obliged to change its capital!"

At that moment a door opened, and M. Jules Favre himself appeared with a large portfolio under his arm. He explained to the interpreter that I should have my audience at Versailles in several days, and having made me a profound bow, which I returned him, he ran away with his large portfolio.

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VERSAILLES, *March 19, 1871.*

I had to leave Paris at twelve o'clock in a great hurry. There really is a new Government at Paris. This Government is not one of the three monarchies, nor one of the three republics. It is a seventh arrangement, which is called the *Commune*. This morning an armed troop of men surrounded the house where I live. It seems that the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paris of the Commune would have been charmed to receive a Chinese ambassador. They had come to carry me off. I had time to escape. It is not the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Paris that I ought to see, it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Versailles.

Good heavens, how complicated it all is! And when shall I be able to put my hand on this intangible person, who is now blockaded in Paris and now chased out of Paris?

VERSAILLES, *April 6, 1871.*

At last, yesterday, I had the honor of being received by his Excellency, and we discussed the events that had occurred in Paris.

"This insurrection," M. Jules Favre said to me, "is the most formidable and the most extraordinary that has ever broken out."

I could not allow such a great historical error to pass. I answered M. Jules Favre that we had had in China for millions of years socialists and socialistic uprisings; that the French Communists were but rough imitators of our Chinese Taipings; that we had had in 1230 a siege at Nankin which had lasted seven years, *etc.* In short, these Europeans are only beginning again our history with less grandeur and more barbarity.

VERSAILLES, *May 15, 1871.*

My mission is ended; I could return to China; but all that I see here interests me extremely. This civil war immediately succeeding a foreign war is a very curious occurrence. There is here, for a Chinaman, an excellent opportunity of study, on the spot and from life, of European civilization.

VERSAILLES, *May 24, 1871.*

Paris is burning, and on the terrace of the palace of Saint-Cloud, in the midst of the ruins of that palace, I passed my day looking at Paris burn. It is a dead, destroyed, and annihilated city.

PARIS, *June 10, 1871.*

Not at all. It is still the most beautiful city in Europe, and the most brilliant, and the most gay. I shall spend some time in Paris.

PARIS, *June 29, 1871.*

Yesterday M. Thiers, in the Bois de Boulogne, held a review of a hundred thousand men. Will there always be a France?

IN THE EXPRESS

“When one bears the name of Luynes or La Tremoille, I can readily understand the desire to continue the Luynes or the La Tremoilles; but really when one is named Chamblard, what possible object can there be in—Eh? Answer.”

In this fashion young Raoul Chamblard talked while comfortably settled back in a large red velvet arm-chair. This happened on the 26th of March, 1892, in one of the parlor-cars of the express to Marseilles, which had left Paris at 8.50 that morning. It was now five minutes past nine. The train with much racket was crossing the bridge of Charentin. Young Chamblard was talking to his friend, Maurice Revoille, who, after a six weeks' leave, was going to join his regiment in Algeria.

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The lieutenant of light cavalry responded to his friend's question with a vague gesture. Raoul Chamblard continued:

"However, it's my father's fixed idea. There must be Chamblards after me. And as papa has but one son, it's to me he looks to do what is necessary."

"Well, do what is necessary."

"But I am only twenty-four, my dear fellow, and to marry at twenty-four is hard. It seems to me that I'm still entitled to a little more fun, and even a good deal."

"Well, have your fun."

"That's just what I've done up to now. I have had a first-rate time! But I've taste only for expensive amusements. I don't know how to enjoy myself without money, and I haven't a cent. Do you understand? Not a cent!"

"You? You are very rich."

"A great mistake! Upon coming of age, three years ago, I spent what was left me by my mother. Mother wasn't very rich; she was worth six hundred thousand francs, not more. Papa made almost a love-match. The six hundred thousand francs vanished in three years, and could I decently do anything else as the son of my father? He is powerfully rich!"

"That's what's said."

"And it's very true. He has a dozen millions which are quite his own, and can't be hurt by an accident; and his bank still goes on, and brings him in, one year with another, besides the interest on his dozen millions, three or four hundred thousand francs more. Nothing is more solid than the Chamblard bank; it's honest, it's venerable. Papa isn't fair to me, but I'm fair to him. When you have a father in business, it's a good thing when you go out not to be exposed to meet eyes which seem to say to you, 'My dear fellow, your father has swindled me.' Papa has but one passion: from five to seven every day he plays piquet at his club, at ten sous a point, and as he is an excellent player, he wins seven times out of ten. He keeps an account of his games with the same scrupulous exactitude he has in all things, and he was telling the day before yesterday that piquet this year had brought him in six thousand five hundred francs over and above the cost of the cards. He has a seat in the orchestra at the opera, not for the ballet, but for the music only; he never goes on the stage—neither do I, for that matter. Dancers don't attract me at all; they live in Batignolles, in Montmartre; they always walk with their mothers; they completely lack charm. In short, my father is what one calls a good man. You see I continue to be fair to him. Besides, I'm always right. Yes, it's a very good thing to have an honorable father, and Papa Chamblard is a model of all

virtues, and he accumulates for me with a zeal! but I think, just at present, he accumulates a little too much. He has cut off my income. No marriage, no money. That's brief and decisive. That's his programme. And he has hunted up a wife for me —when I say one, I should say three."

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"Three wives!"

"Yes. One morning he came to me and said: 'This must end. Look, here's a list—three splendid matches.' There were the names, the relations, the dowries—it was even arranged in the order of the dowries. I had to yield and consent to an interview with Number One. That took place at the Salon in the Champs Elysees. Ah, my boy, Number One—dry, flat, bony, sallow!"

"Then why did your father—"

"Why? Because she was the daughter, and only daughter, of a wealthy manufacturer from Roubaix. It was splendid! We each started with a hundred thousand francs income, and that was to be, in the course of time, after realized expectations, a shower of millions! It made papa supremely happy—the thought that all his millions in Paris would one day make an enormous heap with all those Roubaix millions. Millions don't frighten me, but on the condition that they surround a pretty, a very pretty and stylish woman—a great deal of style! That's *my* programme. I want to be able to take my wife to the theatres without having to blush before the box-openers."

"What do you mean? Before the box-openers?"

"Why, certainly. I am known, and I've a reputation to keep up. You see, the openers are always the same—always; and of course they know me. They've been in the habit of seeing me, during the last three or four years, come with the best-known and best-dressed women in Paris. Which is to say, that I should never dare present myself before them with that creature from Roubaix. They would think I had married for money. I tried to explain that delicately to papa, but one can't make him hear reason. There are things which he doesn't understand, which he can't understand. I have no grudge against him; he's of his time, I'm of mine. In short, I declared resolutely that I would never marry Number One. Notice that I discoursed most sensibly with papa. I said to him: 'You want me to have a home' (home is his word), 'but when I should have placed in that home a fright such as to scare the sparrows, my home would be a horror to me, and I should be forced, absolutely forced, to arrange a home outside. Thus I should have a household at home and a household outside, and it's then that the money would fly!' But papa won't listen to anything! He doesn't understand that I must have a little wife who is pretty, Parisian pretty—that is to say, original, gay, jolly, who is looked at on the street, and stared at through opera-glasses at the theatre, who will do me honor, and who will set me off well. I must be able to continue my bachelor life with her, and as long as possible. And then there's another thing that I can't tell papa. His name is Chamblard—it isn't his fault; only, in consequence, I too am named Chamblard, and it's not very agreeable, with a name like that, to try to get on in society. And a pretty, a very pretty, woman is the best passport. There, look at Robineau. He has just been received into the little club of the Rue Royale. And why? It's not the Union or the

Jockey; but never mind, one doesn't get in there as into a hotel. And why was Robineau received?"

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"I don't know."

"It's because he has married a charming woman, and this charming woman is a skater of the first rank. She had a tremendous success on the ice at the Bois de Boulogne. In the society columns of all the papers there was mention of the exquisite, delightful, and ideal *Mme. Robineau*. She was in the swim at one stroke. And Robineau, he too was in the swim. He was a member of the little club six weeks later! Papa, he doesn't understand the importance of these things; one can't reason with him about it; it's all Greek to him. However, as he had absolutely cut off my supplies, I had to submit, and consent to an interview with Number Two."

"And what was Number Two like?"

"Ah, my dear fellow, what was she like! She was the daughter of a rich merchant of Antwerp. A Belgian article! First a provincial, and then a foreigner! Papa doesn't like Parisians. Mamma was from Chatellerault, and she was indeed a saint. Number Two happened to be in Paris; so last night, at the Opera Comique, they showed me a Fleming, who was very blond, very insipid, very masculine—a Rubens, a true Rubens; a giantess, a colossal woman, a head taller than I, which is to say that materially one could not take her in a lower stage-box, and those are the only boxes I like. On leaving the theatre I told papa that I wouldn't have Number Two any more than Number One, and that I had had enough, and that I wouldn't see Number Three. The discussion was heated. Papa went off banging doors and repeating, 'No more money!' I saw that it was serious. I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep—I thought; but I could think of nothing to save me from the fat hands of the Antwerp girl. Suddenly, towards three in the morning, I had an inspiration—I had an idea that I can call, if you'll permit it, a stroke of genius."

"I'll permit it."

"Yes, genius. I knew that you left to-day for Marseilles, and this morning I departed, English fashion, without explanation, and in a little while, at the first stop, at Laroche—I have looked at the time-table, I have thought of everything—I shall send the following despatch to my father," and Raoul triumphantly pulled a paper out of his pocket. "It's all ready. Listen. 'M. Chamblard, 8 Rue Rougemont, Paris, Laroche station. I left on the express for Marseilles with Maurice. I am going to make a voyage around the world. I sha'n't be more than six months. I have engaged by telegraph a state-room on the *Traonaddy* which leaves to-morrow for Singapore. Anything rather than a Flemish alliance! Farewell. With regrets for leaving you, your affectionate son, Raoul Chamblard.' My telegram's all right, isn't it?"

"It isn't bad, but do you seriously mean—"

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“Yes, I shall go if, before I reach Marseilles, I haven’t an answer from papa; but I shall have one, for two reasons. In the first place, Papa Chamblard knows how to reason, and he will say to himself: ‘What shall I gain by it? Instead of fooling round with little white women in Paris, he will fool round with little yellow ones at Singapore.’ And then another reason, the best one, is that Papa Chamblard adores me, and he can’t do without me, and the little sentimental phrase at the end of my despatch will appeal to his heart. You’ll see how it will turn out. At 11.20 my telegram will leave Laroche; papa will receive it at half-past twelve. And I’ll bet you ten louis that at Dijon or Macon I’ll find in the wire screen of the station a telegram addressed to me, and worded thus: ‘Return; no longer question of Antwerp marriage.’ Papa’s telegram will be brief, because he is saving and suppresses unnecessary words. Will you take the bet?”

“No, I should lose.”

“I think so. Have you the papers?”

“Yes.”

They read three or four papers, Parisian papers, and read them like true Parisians. It took a short fifteen minutes. While reading they exchanged short remarks about the new ministry, the races at Auteuil, and Yvette Guilbert—particularly about Yvette Guilbert. Young Chamblard had been to hear her the day before, and he hummed the refrain:

“Un fiacre allait trotinant
Cahin-caha
Hu dia! Hop la!
Un fiacre allait trotinant
Jaune avec un cocher blanc.”

And as the light cavalryman had never heard Yvette Guilbert sing the “Fiacre,” young Chamblard threw up his arms and exclaimed: “You never heard the ‘Fiacre,’ and you had three months’ leave! What did you do in Paris? I know the ‘Fiacre’ by heart.”

Upon which Raoul began to hum again, and while humming in a voice which became more and more slow, and more and more feeble, he settled back into his arm-chair, and soon fell into a peaceful slumber, like the big baby that he was.

All at once he was waked up with a start by the stepping of the train, and by the voice of the conductor, who cried, “Ouah! Ouah! Ouah!” The cry is the same for all stations. This time it was meant for Laroche. And now for the telegram. Young Chamblard ran to the telegraph-office. The immovable operator counted the sixty-seven words of that queer despatch. “All aboard, all aboard!”

Young Chamblard had scarcely time to jump on the step of his car.

“Ouf! that’s done,” he said to the cavalryman. “Suppose we lunch.”

So they both started on their way to the dining-car. It was quite a journey, for two parlor-cars separated them from the restaurant-car, and those two cars were crowded. It was the season for the great pilgrimage of a few Parisians and a good many English towards Nice, Cannes, and Monte Carlo. The express was running very fast, and was pitching violently. One needed sea-legs. Then a furious wind beat against the train, and wrapped it in clouds of dust, making the crossing of the platforms particularly disagreeable.

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They advanced, walking with difficulty through the first car, over the first crossing, and encountering the first squall, then through the second car; but Chamblard, who went ahead, had difficulty in opening the door to the second platform. It resisted on account of the force of the wind; finally it yielded, and Raoul received at the same time in his eyes a cloud of dust, and in his arms a young blonde, who exclaimed, "Oh, excuse me!" while he, too, exclaimed, "Oh, excuse me!" and at the same time he received the cavalryman on his back, who, also blinded by the dust, was saying, "Go on, Raoul, go on."

The two doors of the cars had shut, and they were all three crowded in the little passage in the wind—young Raoul, young Maurice, and the young blonde.

The "Oh, excuse me" was immediately followed by a "M. Maurice!" which was replied to by a "Mlle. Martha!" The little blonde knew the cavalryman, and perceiving that she was almost in the arms of a stranger, *Mlle. Martha* disengaged herself, and backed cleverly towards the platform of the car, saying to Maurice, "You're on the train, and you're going?"

"To Algeria."

"We to Marseilles. I am getting a shawl for mamma, who is cold. Mamma will be delighted to see you. You will find her in the dining-car. I'll see you later."

"But I will accompany you?"

"If you like."

She walked on, but not without first having slightly bowed to young Chamblard, who had remained there astounded, contemplating *Mlle. Martha* with eyes filled with admiration.

She had time before going to notice that he was a good-looking young fellow, that he wore a neat little suit, and that he looked at her with staring eyes; but in those staring eyes a thought could be clearly read that could not displease her: "Oh, how pretty you are!"

Raoul was, in fact, saying to himself: "My type, exactly my type! And what style—what style in the simplicity of that costume! And the little toque, a little on one side over the ear—it's a masterpiece! How well she knows how to dress! What an effect she would make in an audience! And that little English accent!"

For she had a little English accent; she had even taken a good deal of trouble for several years to acquire that little accent. She used to say to her governess, Miss Butler:

“Yes, of course I want to know English, but I wish especially to speak French with an English accent.” She had worked for nothing else. She had been, fortunately, rewarded for her perseverance; her little Anglo-Parisian gibberish was at times quite original.

While Maurice was retracing his steps with *Mlle.* Martha, Raoul placed himself at a table in the dining-car. He soon saw them come back with mamma’s shawl. Maurice lingered for a few minutes at the table where the mother and the young brother of the little blonde were lunching. Then he came back to Raoul, who said as soon as he approached:

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"Who is she—quick, tell me, who is she? Whenever one pleases I will marry her—now, on getting down from the train. In my arms! I held her in my arms! Such a waist! A dream! There are, as you must know, slim waists and slim waists. There are waists which are slim, hard, harsh, stiff, bony, or mechanically made by odious artifices in the corsets. I have thoroughly studied the corset question. It's so important! And then there's the true slim waist, which is easy, natural, supple. Supple isn't sufficient for what just slid through my hands a short time ago. Slippery—yes, that's the word. Slippery just expresses my thought—a slippery waist!"

Raoul was quite charmed with what he said.

"Yes," he continued, "slippery; and that little pug-nose! and her little eyes have quite a—a Chinese air! But who is she, who is she?"

"The daughter of one of my mother's friends."

"Is she rich?"

"Very rich."

"It's on account of papa that I asked you that, because I would marry her without a dowry. It's the first time I've ever said such a thing on meeting a young girl. And now the name."

"Mlle. Martha Derame."

"Derame, did you say?"

"Yes."

"Isn't the father a wealthy merchant who has business in Japan and China?"

"The same."

"Ah, my dear fellow—no; one only sees such things in the comic plays of the minor theatres, at Cluny or Dejazet."

"What's the matter with you?"

"What's the matter with me? She's papa's Number Three—yes, Number Three. The father of that little marvel is one of papa's piquet players at the club. And I wouldn't see Number Three, and she falls into my arms on the platform between Paris and Lyons. You will present me after lunch, and I shall speak to the mother and tell her all."

"How, all?"

“Yes, all; that her daughter is papa’s Number Three, and that I didn’t want Number One or Two, but that I should like Number Three. Ah, dear boy, how pretty she is—especially her nose, so charmingly turned up. She has just looked at me, and in a certain way; I am sure I don’t displease her. Did you mention me, did you tell my name?”

“No.”

“You were wrong. At any rate, right after lunch—Do you know what I think? That this affair will go through on wheels. I shall first telegraph papa, and then to-morrow—Oh, heavens! I hope there’s a telephone between Paris and Marseilles—”

He interrupted himself and called:

“Porter! Porter!”

“Sir.”

“Is there a telephone between Paris and Marseilles?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Ah! That’s all Thanks. The telephone, Maurice, there’s the telephone! Papa can speak for me to-morrow by telephone. It will be charming! Marriage by express. Express, electric, telephonic, and romantic marriage, all at the same time. You understand that between a little phiz like that and a voyage around the world I don’t hesitate. But why haven’t you thought of marrying her?”

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“Oh, too wealthy—too wealthy a match for me; and then she is not the kind of little person to go and bury in a garrison town in Algeria. She is a Parisian, a true Parisian, who wants to amuse herself, and who will amuse herself.”

“Just what I want, absolutely just what I want. I too wish to amuse myself. She will amuse herself, I shall amuse myself, we will amuse ourselves.”

Young Raoul was in a frenzy, and as soon as he had finished his luncheon he scrawled a new despatch on the restaurant table to his father, and, while writing, talked very excitedly.

“I’ll send my despatch from Dijon, and I’ll address it to the club; papa will be there about five o’clock, and also the father of this little marvel. They can immediately discuss the affair. Shall I ask for an answer at Lyons? The time-table, pass me the time-table. Lyons, 5.25. No, that would be too short. Answer at Marseilles. They stop at Marseilles? Yes? For twenty-four hours? All right, so do I. At what hotel? Hotel de Noailles? All right, so do I. So answer Hotel de Noailles. My despatch is very good. You will see. As good as the other—better, even. I’ve the knack of telegrams to-day. Yes, it’s very good.”

He wrote and wrote; he was inspired, he was animated; he made a few more mistakes than usual in spelling, that was all—it was emotion. He reread his despatch with complaisance, he made Maurice read it, who could not help thinking the incident funny. Raoul counted the words of his despatch—there were about a hundred and fifty—and calling the waiter of the dining-car, he said, “Send this telegram off for me at Dijon. Here are ten francs; there will be two or three over for you.”

Then turning at once to Maurice he asked, “Is that enough?”

“Why certainly.”

“Well, for such a marriage—ah, my dear fellow, you sail to-morrow at what time?”

“At two o’clock.”

“Oh, we have plenty of time, then; all will be settled by two o’clock.”

“Oh, settled; you’re crazy!”

“Not at all; it’s already very far advanced, since it’s papa’s Number Three. I only ask one thing of you: present me to the mother shortly. After that let me alone. I’ll manage everything; only, at any cost, we must leave our car and find two arm-chairs in the same car, and near my mother-in-law.”

“Your mother-in-law!”



“That’s what I said; my mother-in-law. Once the two arm-chairs are procured, I am master of the situation. You don’t know me. I already know what I shall say to the mother, what I shall say to my young brother-in-law (he is very nice), and what I shall say to my future bride. I shall have made a conquest of all of them before we reach Lyons. Lyons? No; that’s going a little fast—say Valence or Montelimar. Pass me the time-table again. Let us settle everything, and leave nothing to chance. Oh, look at her! She has nibbled nuts for the last fifteen minutes,

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and how she cracks them—crack! one little bite—and what pretty little teeth! She is very pretty even while eating—an important thing. It's very rare to find women who remain pretty while eating and sleeping, very rare. Little Adelaide, the red-headed one, you remember, ate stupidly. And this one over there eats brightly; she eats—crack! another nut—and she looks at me on the sly. I can see that she looks at me. All goes well, all goes well!”

In truth, all did go well. At Montbard, 12.32, Raoul was presented to *Mme. Derame*, who, on hearing the name of Chamblard, had a little shiver—the shiver of a mother who has a young daughter to marry, and who says to herself, “Oh, what a splendid match!” Her husband had often spoken to her of young Chamblard.

“Ah,” he used to say to her, “what a marriage for Martha! We speak of it sometimes before and after our piquet, Chamblard and I; but the young man is restive—doesn't yet wish to settle down. It would be such a good thing—he is richer than we. Chamblard is once, twice, three times richer! And Martha isn't easy to marry; she has already refused five or six desirable matches on all sorts of pretexts. They didn't please her: they were too old, they had no style, they didn't live in fashionable neighborhoods, she didn't wish to go into sugar, or cotton, or wine—or anything, in short. She would accept none other than a young husband, and not too serious. She must have a very rich man who did nothing and loved pleasure.”

How well young Chamblard answered to that description! When there was question of doing nothing, Raoul showed real talent. As soon as one talked horses, dogs, carriages, hats, dresses, jewelry, races, fencing, skating, cooking, *etc.*, he showed signs of the rarest and highest competence.

So, as there was general conversation, Raoul was very brilliant. In the neighborhood of Chalons-sur-Saone (3.10), while relating how he, Chamblard, had invented a marvellous little coupe, he did not say that: that coupe had been offered by him to *Mlle. Juliette Lorphelin*, of the ballet corps at the Folies-Bergere. This coupe was a marvel; besides, it was very well known; it was called the Chamblard coupe.

“Small,” he said, “very small. A coupe ought always to be small.” But what a lot of things in such a small space: a drawer for toilet necessities, a secret box for money and jewelry, a clock, a thermometer, a barometer, a writing-shelf—and that was not all!

He became animated, and grew excited in speaking of his invention. Martha listened to him eagerly.

“When you pull up the four wooden shutters you naturally find yourself in the dark; but the four shutters are mirrors, and as soon as one has placed a finger on a little button

hidden under the right-hand cushion, six little crystal balls, ingeniously scattered in the tufting of the blue satin of the coupe, become electric lights. The coupe is turned into a little lighted boudoir; and not only for five minutes—no, but for an hour, two hours, if one wishes it; there is a storage-battery under the seat. When I submitted this idea to my carriage-maker he was smitten with envy and admiration.”

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Martha, too, was smitten.

“What a charming man!” she said to herself. “Oh, to have such a coupe! But pearl-gray—I should want it pearl-gray.”

Then they discussed jewelry, dresses, hats, stuffs. And Raoul proved on all those questions, if possible, more remarkable than ever. He had paid so many bills to great dress-makers, great milliners, and great jewellers! He had been present at so many conferences on the cut of such a dress or the arrangement of such a costume, at so many scenes of trying on and draping! And as he drew easily, he willingly threw his ideas on paper, as he said, neatly. He had even designed the costumes of a little piece—played in I do not know what little theatre—which was revolutionary, anarchistic, symbolic, decadent, end of the century, end of the world.

He took his little note-book and began to outline with a light hand, in spite of the movement of the train, several of his creations. He had tact, and thought of everything. “It was,” he said, “for charades played in society at my friend’s, the baron so and so.” He invented the baron, and gave him a resonant name.

Martha was delighted. Never had a man, since she had been allowed to chat a little with young men, seemed to her to have such an original and interesting conversation.

“Lately,” said Raoul, “one of my cousins—she often applies to me—consulted me about a dress for a ball at Nice, during the carnival. This is what I advised her. See, I draw at the same time—look.”

Oh, how she did look!

“I am going to try to make myself well understood. A foundation of smooth white satin, clinging, very clinging—blue, I adore blue.”

That pained her; she disliked blue.

“Yes, very clinging; my cousin has a delightful figure, and can stand it.”

He took Martha’s figure in with a hasty glance, and the glance seemed to say, “You could, too.” She understood and blushed, charmed with that delicate flattery. Raoul continued:

“Pale, very pale blue satin. Then on my foundation I threw an over-dress of pompadour lace of very soft tones: greens, pinks, mauves, cream, and azure. Very large sleeves with a double puff of blue velvet, wristlets of Venetian point. Am I clear?”

“Oh, very clear, very clear.”

And in an excited voice she repeated:

“A double puff of blue velvet, with wristlets of Venetian point.”

All of a sudden the brakes scraped, and the train came sharply to a stop. One heard the cry of “Macon! Macon!”

“Macon already!” said Martha.

That “*already*” rang delightfully in Raoul’s ears. There was much in that *already*. Raoul profited by the five minutes’ stop to complete and fix his little sketch, which was slightly jolted; and he did not notice that his young brother-in-law had been sent out with a despatch to the telegraph-office. The despatch had been secretly written by *Mme. Derame*, and had, too, been directed to the Old Club.

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The train started—4.11. Raoul had not thought to get down to see if under the railing there was not a despatch addressed to him. There was one, which was to remain eternally at Macon. The telegram contained these words: “Return; no longer question of Antwerp marriage.”

The train ran on and on, and now there was question of another dress—a silk dress, light pink, with a large jabot of lace down the front. Raoul literally dazzled Martha by his inexhaustible fertility of wise expressions and technical terms.

* * * * *

While the express passed the Romaneche station (4.32) father Chamblard came into the Old Club, went into the card-room, and met father Derame. Piquet? With pleasure. So there they sat, face to face. There were there eight or ten card-tables—piquet, bezique, whist, etc. The works were in full blast. First game, and papa Derame is rubiconed; the second game was going to begin when a footman arrives with a despatch for M. Chamblard.

“Will you excuse me?”

“Certainly.”

He reads, he becomes red; he rereads, and he gets scarlet.

It was Raoul’s brilliant telegram from Dijon:

“Dear father, I shall not go. Most extraordinary meeting. Your Number Three—yes, your Number Three—in the train with her mother, and I wouldn’t see her. Ah! if I had known. Strike while the iron’s hot; I’m striking it, strike it too. M. D. must be at the club, speak to him at once; tell him that I left to avoid marrying an ugly woman; that I only wish to make a love-match; that I am head-over-heels in love with his daughter. We shall all be to-night at Marseilles, Hotel de Noailles. Get M. D. to back me up by telegraph to *Mme*. D. I will talk with you to-morrow over the telephone. I am writing my telegram in the dining-car. At this moment she is nibbling nuts—charming, she is charming! She fell into my arms on the platform. Till to-morrow at the telephone, nine o’clock.”

M. Chamblard’s agitation did not escape M. Derame.

“Is it a serious matter?” he asked.

“Yes.”

“We can stop if you wish.”

“Yes; but first of all, did *Mme.* and *Mlle.* Derame leave here this morning on the express for Marseilles?”

“Yes, at 9.55. Why do you ask that? Has there been any accident?”

“No, no accident; it can’t be called that; on the contrary. Come, come into the little parlor.”

He told him everything, showed him the despatch, gave him certain necessary explanations about the words, such as Number Three. And there they were, choking, delighted—both the father of the young man and the father of the young girl. What luck, what a providential meeting!

“But you told me that your son didn’t wish to marry.”

“He didn’t wish to, but he has seen your daughter, and now he wishes to. Come, hurry up and send a telegram to Marseilles to *Mme.* Derame.”

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"But she will be thunderstruck when I present to her a son-in-law by telegraph."

Return of the footman. It was a despatch for M. Derame. He opens it.

"It's from my wife, from Macon, 2.15."

"Good," says M. Chamblard; "all goes well, very well."

"Very disturbed. Met in the train the son of M. C., of Rue Rougemont, your club friend. He was presented by Maurice. You often spoke to me of a possible alliance there. Evidently he thinks her charming. Just at present he is talking to her, and looks at her, looks at her. What shall I do? Shall I put a stop to it or allow it to continue? Large fortune, isn't there?"

M. Derame in his turn showed his despatch to M. Chamblard. They continued to talk, in high good-humor and in excellent accord, and went on with their game of piquet only after having sent the following two telegrams to the Hotel de Noailles:

First despatch to *Mme.* Derame: "If it pleases you, if it pleases her, yes. Enormous fortune."

Second despatch to Raoul: "Have spoken to D. He is telegraphing to *Mme.* D. He approves, so do I."

A footman carried the two despatches at the same time to the telegraph-office in the Place de la Bourse, and during the time that, running over the wires along the railroad, they passed the express towards half-past six in the neighborhood of Saint-Rambert, the Derames, Raoul, and Maurice, in the best possible spirits and in most perfect harmony, dined at the same table, and Martha looked at Raoul, and Raoul looked at Martha, and *Mme.* Derame said to herself: "Martha's falling in love; I know her, she is falling in love. She fell in love just so last year at a ball with a little youth who was very dandified, but without fortune. This time, luckily, yes—Edward told me so—there is plenty of money; so, naturally, if Martha is willing we are."

The train ran on, and on, and on; and Raoul talked, and talked, and talked. He even let slip practical thoughts, raised himself up to general ideas, and developed with force the theory that the first duty of a woman was to be, in all things, refined elegance. He explained, with endless detail, what the life of an absolutely correct fashionable woman was, what it was to be an absolutely fashionable woman. He triumphantly took *his fashionable woman* from Paris to Trouville, from Trouville to Lake Como, from Lake Como to Monte-Carlo. He drew the trunks of the fashionable woman, marvellous trunks, which were heaped up in the vestibules of first-class hotels. Besides, he had also invented a trunk.

Then, very tactfully, he put Martha through a little examination, which had nothing in common with the examinations of the Sorbonne or the Hotel de Ville.

“Did she skate?” That’s what he wanted to know first! He was himself a very distinguished skater. He needed a sport-loving wife. He had but just pronounced the word skating when suddenly the young brother (how precious little brothers sometimes are) exclaimed: “Ah, it’s sister who skates well! She makes figures-of-eight. And who swims well, too—like a fish!”

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She skated, she swam, she was sport-loving. Raoul said to the young girl, with deep enthusiasm: "I congratulate you. A woman who can't swim isn't a woman."

And he added, with increasing energy:

"A woman who can't skate isn't a woman."

When he had a strong thought, he willingly used it again in a brief but striking form.

Martha's face beamed with joy. She was really a woman. Never had a sweeter word been said to her.

Night had come; it was necessary, therefore, to tear one's self away from that exquisite conversation, and return to the parlor-car. Young Derame was going to sleep; so they began to prepare for the trip through the train.

Here is the platform, the platform of the morning, the platform of the first meeting. She walks ahead of him, and in a whisper he says to her, "It's here that this morning—"

She turns round, and smiling repeats, "Yes, it's here that this morning—"

Always with that little English accent which never leaves her, even when she is most agitated.

It is here that this morning—That was all, and it said all. A delightful evening. No more rain, no more dust. Already there was the soft, balmy air of the South. The moon lit that idyl at full speed. Spring-time everywhere, in the sky and in the hearts.

"She loves me," he said to himself.

"He adores me," she said to herself.

How right they were to give themselves up thus, without a struggle, without resistance, to the inclination which carried them, quite naturally, towards each other. There had been between them, from the first word, so perfect, so complete a community of tastes, ideas, and sentiments. They were so well made, this little puppet and this little doll, to roll off, both together, gloriously in the "Chamblard coupe," so well matched to walk in the world, accomplishing mechanically, automatically, at the right hour, in the prescribed costume, everywhere where it was correct to take pleasure, all the functions of fashionable life, and all the rituals of worldly worship.

They arrive in the parlor-car. The shades are drawn over the lamps; travellers are stiff, drowsy, and asleep in the big red arm-chairs.

“Change places,” Raoul whispers to Maurice; “sit beside her. I am going to sit by the mother; I must speak to her.”

Maurice lent himself to this manoeuvre with perfect docility, Martha did not understand it. Why did he abandon her? Why was he talking to her mother, and so low, so low that she couldn’t hear? What was he saying? What was he saying?

This is what he said between Montelimar, 8.35, and Pierrelatte, 8.55:

“Listen to me, madam, listen to me. I am an honest man; I wish, I ought, to let you know the situation, the entire situation. Let us first settle an important point. My father knows M. Derame.”

“Yes, yes, I know.”

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"Another more important point. Let us mention the essential things first. My father is very rich."

"I know, I know that too."

"Good, then, very good. I continue. I left Paris this morning, and I have here in my pocket a ticket for cabin No. 27 on the *Traonaddy*, which leaves to-morrow at four o'clock from the Bay of Joliette for Suez, Aden, Colombo, and Singapore, and I shall go on board to-morrow at four o'clock if you don't let me hope to become your son-in-law."

"Sir!"

"Don't move, madam, don't move. *Mlle.* Martha is pretending to sleep, but she isn't sleeping; she is watching us, and I haven't said all yet. I am but just beginning. You are going to answer me—oh, I know it—that you don't know me, that *Mlle.* Martha doesn't know me. Allow me to tell you that *Mlle.* Martha and myself know each other better than three-fourths of engaged couples on the day of their marriage. You know how it is usually done. A rapid glance from afar in a theatre—one brings good lorgnettes, one examines. 'How do you like him?' 'Fairly, fairly.' Then, several days later, at a ball, in the midst of the figures of the quadrille, several gasping, breathless phrases are exchanged. Then a meeting in a picture-gallery. There, there is more intimacy, because it takes place in a small room. It happened to me with a young provincial. I had pegged away that morning at the Joanne guide, so as to be able to find something to say about the Raphaels and the Murillos. And at the end of several interviews of that sort it is over, one has made acquaintance, one suits the other, and the marriage is decided. *Mlle.* Martha and I are already old comrades. In the first place, to begin with, this morning at half-past eleven she fell into my arms."

"My daughter in your arms!"

"Don't jump, madam; *Mlle.* Martha will see you jump."

Martha had, in fact, closely followed the scene with half-shut eyes, and said to herself, "Good gracious! what is he telling mamma? She is obliged to hold on to the arms of her seat to keep herself from jumping up."

"Yes, madam, in my arms; by the greatest, by the most fortunate of accidents, we stumbled over each other on one of the platforms of the train. And since I have seen her, not in the false light of a theatre or a gallery, but in the full glare of sunlight. I have seen her at lunch, munching nuts with the prettiest teeth there are in the world; I have seen her, just now, in the moonlight; and I know that she skates, and I know that she swims, and I know she would like to have a pearl-gray coupe, and she ought to have it. And now I admire her in the semi-obscurity. Ravishing! isn't she ravishing?"

“Sir, never has a mother found herself—”

“In such a situation? I acknowledge it, madam, and for that very reason you must get out of the situation quickly; it’s evident that it can’t be prolonged.”

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"That's true—"

"Here is what I propose to you. You go to the Hotel de Noailles; I, too, naturally. You have all the morning to-morrow to talk to *Mlle.* Martha, and the telephone to talk through to M. Derame. You know who I am. You have seen me, too, in the daylight. I have talked—talked a great deal. You could, you and *Mlle.* Martha, find out what I am, what I think. Well, to-morrow—what time do you expect to breakfast to-morrow?"

"But I don't know. I assure you that I am choking, upset, overcome."

"Let us settle on an hour all the same; eleven o'clock—will you, at eleven?"

"If you wish."

"Well, to-morrow at eleven o'clock I shall be in the dining-room of the hotel. If you say 'Go' I shall go; if you say 'Stay' I shall stay. Don't answer me; take time to reflect; it's worth while. Till to-morrow, madam, till to-morrow at eleven."

* * * * *

In the morning very interesting communications passed between Paris and Marseilles.

When *Mme.* Derame entered the dining-room of the hotel at eleven o'clock, Raoul went straight to her, and the cavalryman, always adroit in his manoeuvres, had taken possession of *Mlle.* Martha. A short dialogue ensued between Raoul and *Mme.* Derame, who was much agitated.

"They tell me there are boats every fortnight between Indo-China and Marseilles—you could put off your departure—merely taking another boat—"

"Ah, thanks, madam, thanks!"

* * * * *

At two o'clock the Derames and young Chamblard accompanied Maurice to the boat for Africa. On the deck of the steamer Raoul said to his friend:

"It's understood that you are to be best man. On arriving, ask your colonel for leave at once. It will take place, I think, in six weeks."

Raoul was mistaken. It was decidedly an express marriage; five weeks were sufficient.

When they were mounting the steps of the Madeleine, Raoul said to Martha:

"Twelve o'clock."

“What are you thinking of?”

“Ah, you too.”

“Twelve, the hour of the platform, isn’t it?”

“Yes, that’s it.”

They began to laugh, but quickly became serious, and made an irreproachable entry into church.

They were looked at eagerly, and on all sides the following remarks were exchanged:

“You know it’s a love-match.” “Yes, it appears it was a meeting on the train.” “A lightning-stroke!” “What a charming affair!” “And so rare!” “Oh yes, so rare! A love-match! A true love-match!”

THE END