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THE PARISIANS

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

It is several weeks after the date of the last chapter; the lime-trees in the Tuileries are clothed in green.

In a somewhat spacious apartment on the ground-floor in the quiet locality of the Rue d'Anjou, a man was seated, very still and evidently absorbed in deep thought, before a writing-table placed close to the window.

Seen thus, there was an expression of great power both of intellect and of character in a face which, in ordinary social commune, might rather be noticeable for an aspect of hardy frankness, suiting well with the clear-cut, handsome profile, and the rich dark auburn hair, waving carelessly over one of those broad open foreheads, which, according to an old writer, seem the "frontispiece of a temple dedicated to Honour."

The forehead, indeed, was the man's most remarkable feature. It could not but prepossess the beholder. When, in private theatricals, he had need to alter the character of his countenance, he did it effectually, merely by forcing down his hair till it reached his eyebrows. He no longer then looked like the same man.

The person I describe has been already introduced to the reader as Graham Vane. But perhaps this is the fit occasion to enter into some such details as to his parentage and position as may make the introduction more satisfactory and complete.

His father, the representative of a very ancient family, came into possession, after a long minority, of what may be called a fair squire's estate, and about half a million in moneyed investments, inherited on the female side. Both land and money were absolutely at his disposal, unencumbered by entail or settlement. He was a man of a brilliant, irregular genius, of princely generosity, of splendid taste, of a gorgeous kind of pride closely allied to a masculine kind of vanity. As soon as he was of age he began to build, converting his squire's hall into a ducal palace. He then stood for the county; and in days before the first Reform Bill, when a county election was to the estate of a candidate what a long war is to the debt of a nation. He won the election; he obtained early successes in Parliament. It was said by good authorities in political circles that, if he chose, he might aspire to lead his party, and ultimately to hold the first rank in the government of his country.

That may or may not be true; but certainly he did not choose to take the

trouble necessary for such an ambition. He was too fond of pleasure, of luxury, of pomp. He kept a famous stud of racers and hunters. He was a munificent patron of art. His establishments, his entertainments, were on a par with those of the great noble who represented the loftiest (Mr. Vane would not own it to be the eldest) branch of his genealogical tree.

He became indifferent to political contests, indolent in his attendance at the House, speaking seldom, not at great length nor with much preparation, but with power and fire, originality and genius; so that he was not only effective as an orator, but combining with eloquence advantages of birth, person, station, the reputation of patriotic independence, and genial attributes of character, he was an authority of weight in the scales of party.

This gentleman, at the age of forty, married the dowerless daughter of a poor but distinguished naval officer, of noble family, first cousin to the Duke of Alton.

He settled on her a suitable jointure, but declined to tie up any portion of his property for the benefit of children by the marriage. He declared that so much of his fortune was invested either in mines, the produce of which was extremely fluctuating, or in various funds, over rapid transfers in which it was his amusement and his interest to have control, unchecked by reference to trustees, that entails and settlements on children were an inconvenience he declined to incur.

Besides, he held notions of his own as to the wisdom of keeping children dependent on their father. "What numbers of young men," said he, "are ruined in character and in fortune by knowing that when their father dies they are certain of the same provision, no matter how they displease him; and in the meanwhile forestalling that provision by recourse to usurers." These arguments might not have prevailed over the bride's father a year or two later, when, by the death of intervening kinsmen, he became Duke of Alton; but in his then circumstances the marriage itself was so much beyond the expectations which the portionless daughter of a sea-captain has the right to form that Mr. Vane had it all his own way, and he remained absolute master of his whole fortune, save of that part of his landed estate on which his wife's jointure was settled; and even from this incumbrance he was very soon freed. His wife died in the second year of marriage, leaving an only son,--Graham. He grieved for her loss with all the passion of an impressionable, ardent, and powerful nature. Then for a while he sought distraction to his sorrow by throwing himself into public life with a devoted energy he had not previously displayed.

His speeches served to bring his party into power, and he yielded, though reluctantly, to the unanimous demand of that party that he should accept one of the highest offices in the new Cabinet. He acquitted himself well as an administrator, but declared, no doubt honestly, that he felt like Sinbad released from the old man on his back, when, a year or two afterwards, he went out of office with his party. No persuasions could induce him to come in again; nor did he ever again take a very active part in debate. "No," said he, "I was born to the freedom of a private gentleman: intolerable to me is the thralldom of a public servant. But I

will bring up my son so that he may acquit the debt which I decline to pay to my country." There he kept his word. Graham had been carefully educated for public life, the ambition for it dinned into his ear from childhood. In his school vacations his father made him learn and declaim chosen specimens of masculine oratory; engaged an eminent actor to give him lessons in elocution; bade him frequent theatres, and study there the effect which words derive from looks and gesture; encouraged him to take part himself in private theatricals. To all this the boy lent his mind with delight. He had the orator's inborn temperament; quick, yet imaginative, and loving the sport of rivalry and contest. Being also, in his boyish years, good-humoured and joyous, he was not more a favourite with the masters in the schoolroom than with the boys in the play-ground. Leaving Eton at seventeen, he then entered at Cambridge, and became, in his first term, the most popular speaker at the Union.

But his father cut short his academical career, and decided, for reasons of his own, to place him at once in diplomacy. He was attached to the Embassy at Paris, and partook of the pleasures and dissipations of that metropolis too keenly to retain much of the sterner ambition to which he had before devoted himself. Becoming one of the spoiled darlings of fashion, there was great danger that his character would relax into the easy grace of the Epicurean, when all such loiterings in the Rose Garden were brought to abrupt close by a rude and terrible change in his fortunes.

His father was killed by a fall from his horse in hunting; and when his affairs were investigated, they were found to be hopelessly involved: apparently the assets would not suffice for the debts. The elder Vane himself was probably not aware of the extent of his liabilities. He had never wanted ready money to the last. He could always obtain that from a money-lender, or from the sale of his funded investments. But it became obvious, on examining his papers, that he knew at least how impaired would be the heritage he should bequeath to a son whom he idolized. For that reason he had given Graham a profession in diplomacy, and for that reason he had privately applied to the Ministry for the Viceroyalty of India, in the event of its speedy vacancy. He was eminent enough not to anticipate refusal, and with economy in that lucrative post much of his pecuniary difficulties might have been redeemed, and at least an independent provision secured for his son.

Graham, like Alain de Rochebriant, allowed no reproach on his father's memory; indeed, with more reason than Alain, for the elder Vane's fortune had at least gone on no mean and frivolous dissipation.

It had lavished itself on encouragement to art, on great objects of public beneficence, on public-spirited aid of political objects; and even in more selfish enjoyments there was a certain grandeur in his princely hospitalities, in his munificent generosity, in a warm-hearted carelessness for money. No indulgence in petty follies or degrading vices aggravated the offence of the magnificent squanderer.

"Let me look on my loss of fortune as a gain to myself," said Graham, manfully. "Had I been a rich man, my experience of Paris tells me that I

should most likely have been a very idle one. Now that I have no gold, I must dig in myself for iron."

The man to whom he said this was an uncle-in-law,--if I may use that phrase,--the Right Hon. Richard King, popularly styled "the blameless King."

This gentleman had married the sister of Graham's mother, whose loss in his infancy and boyhood she had tenderly and anxiously sought to supply. It is impossible to conceive a woman more fitted to invite love and reverence than was Lady Janet King, her manners were so sweet and gentle, her whole nature so elevated and pure.

Her father had succeeded to the dukedom when she married Mr. King, and the alliance was not deemed quite suitable. Still it was not one to which the Duke would have been fairly justified in refusing his assent.

Mr. King could not indeed boast of noble ancestry, nor was even a landed proprietor; but he was a not-undistinguished member of Parliament, of irreproachable character, and ample fortune inherited from a distant kinsman, who had enriched himself as a merchant. It was on both sides a marriage of love.

It is popularly said that a man uplifts a wife to his own rank: it as often happens that a woman uplifts her husband to the dignity of her own character. Richard King rose greatly in public estimation after his marriage with Lady Janet.

She united to a sincere piety a very active and a very enlightened benevolence. She guided his ambition aside from mere party politics into subjects of social and religious interest, and in devoting himself to these he achieved a position more popular and more respected than he could ever have won in the strife of party.

When the Government of which the elder Vane became a leading Minister was formed, it was considered a great object to secure a name as high in the religious world, so beloved by the working classes, as that of Richard King; and he accepted one of those places which, though not in the cabinet, confers the rank of Privy Councillor.

When that brief-lived Administration ceased, he felt the same sensation of relief that Vane had felt, and came to the same resolution never again to accept office, but from different reasons, all of which need not now be detailed. Amongst them, however, certainly this: he was exceedingly sensitive to opinion, thin-skinned as to abuse, and very tenacious of the respect due to his peculiar character of sanctity and philanthropy. He writhed under every newspaper article that had made "the blameless King" responsible for the iniquities of the Government to which he belonged. In the loss of office he seemed to recover his former throne.

Mr. King heard Graham's resolution with a grave approving smile, and his interest in the young man became greatly increased. He devoted himself strenuously to the object of saving to Graham some wrecks of his paternal

fortunes, and having a clear head and great experience in the transaction of business, he succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations formed by the family solicitor. A rich manufacturer was found to purchase at a fancy price the bulk of the estate with the palatial mansion, which the estate alone could never have sufficed to maintain with suitable establishments.

So that when all debts were paid, Graham found himself in possession of a clear income of about £500 a year, invested in a mortgage secured on a part of the hereditary lands, on which was seated an old hunting-lodge bought by a brewer.

With this portion of the property Graham parted very reluctantly. It was situated amid the most picturesque scenery on the estate, and the lodge itself was a remnant of the original residence of his ancestors before it had been abandoned for that which, built in the reign of Elizabeth, had been expanded into a Trenthain-like palace by the last owner.

But Mr. King's argument reconciled him to the sacrifice. "I can manage," said the prudent adviser, "if you insist on it, to retain that remnant of the hereditary estate which you are so loath to part with. But how? by mortgaging it to an extent that will scarcely leave you £50. a year net from the rents. This is not all. Your mind will then be distracted from the large object of a career to the small object of retaining a few family acres; you will be constantly hampered by private anxieties and fears; you could do nothing for the benefit of those around you,--could not repair a farmhouse for a better class of tenant, could not rebuild a labourer's dilapidated cottage. Give up an idea that might be very well for a man whose sole ambition was to remain a squire, however beggarly. Launch yourself into the larger world of metropolitan life with energies wholly unshackled, a mind wholly undisturbed, and secure of an income which, however modest, is equal to that of most young men who enter that world as your equals."

Graham was convinced, and yielded, though with a bitter pang. It is hard for a man whose fathers have lived on the soil to give up all trace of their whereabouts. But none saw in him any morbid consciousness of change of fortune, when, a year after his father's death, he reassumed his place in society. If before courted for his expectations, he was still courted for himself; by many of the great who had loved his father, perhaps even courted more.

He resigned the diplomatic career, not merely because the rise in that profession is slow, and in the intermediate steps the chances of distinction are slight and few, but more because he desired to cast his lot in the home country, and regarded the courts of other lands as exile.

It was not true, however, as Lemerrier had stated on report, that he lived on his pen. Curbing all his old extravagant tastes, £500 a year amply supplied his wants. But he had by his pen gained distinction, and created great belief in his abilities for a public career. He had written critical articles, read with much praise, in periodicals of authority, and had published one or two essays on political questions

which had created yet more sensation. It was only the graver literature, connected more or less with his ultimate object of a public career, in which he had thus evinced his talents of composition. Such writings were not of a nature to bring him much money, but they gave him a definite and solid station. In the old time, before the first Reform Bill, his reputation would have secured him at once a seat in Parliament; but the ancient nurseries of statesmen are gone, and their place is not supplied.

He had been invited, however, to stand for more than one large and populous borough, with very fair prospects of success; and, whatever the expense, Mr. King had offered to defray it. But Graham would not have incurred the latter obligation; and when he learned the pledges which his supporters would have exacted, he would not have stood if success had been certain and the cost nothing. "I cannot," he said to his friends, "go into the consideration of what is best for the country with my thoughts manacled; and I cannot be both representative and slave of the greatest ignorance of the greatest number. I bide my time, and meanwhile I prefer to write as I please, rather than vote as I don't please."

Three years went by, passed chiefly in England, partly in travel; and at the age of thirty, Graham Vane was still one of those of whom admirers say, "He will be a great man some day;" and detractors reply, "Some day seems a long way off."

The same fastidiousness which had operated against that entrance into Parliament, to which his ambition not the less steadily adapted itself, had kept him free from the perils of wedlock. In his heart he yearned for love and domestic life, but he had hitherto met with no one who realized the ideal he had formed. With his person, his accomplishments, his connections, and his repute, he might have made many an advantageous marriage. But somehow or other the charm vanished from a fair face, if the shadow of a money-bag fell on it; on the other hand, his ambition occupied so large a share in his thoughts that he would have fled in time from the temptation of a marriage that would have overweighted him beyond the chance of rising. Added to all, he desired in a wife an intellect that, if not equal to his own, could become so by sympathy,--a union of high culture and noble aspiration, and yet of loving womanly sweetness which a man seldom finds out of books; and when he does find it, perhaps it does not wear the sort of face that he fancies. Be that as it may, Graham was still unmarried and heart-whole.

And now a new change in his life befell him. Lady Janet died of a fever contracted in her habitual rounds of charity among the houses of the poor. She had been to him as the most tender mother, and a lovelier soul than hers never alighted on the earth. His grief was intense; but what was her husband's?--one of those griefs that kill.

To the side of Richard King his Janet had been as the guardian angel. His love for her was almost worship: with her, every object in a life hitherto so active and useful seemed gone. He evinced no noisy passion of sorrow. He shut himself up, and refused to see even Graham. But after some weeks had passed, he admitted the clergyman in whom on spiritual matters he habitually confided, and seemed consoled by the

visits; then he sent for his lawyer and made his will; after which he allowed Graham to call on him daily, on the condition that there should be no reference to his loss. He spoke to the young man on other subjects, rather drawing him out about himself, sounding his opinion on various grave matters, watching his face while he questioned, as if seeking to dive into his heart, and sometimes pathetically sinking into silence, broken but by sighs. So it went on for a few more weeks; then he took the advice of his physician to seek change of air and scene. He went away alone, without even a servant, not leaving word where he had gone. After a little while he returned, more ailing, more broken than before. One morning he was found insensible,--stricken by paralysis. He regained consciousness, and even for some days rallied strength. He might have recovered, but he seemed as if he tacitly refused to live. He expired at last, peacefully, in Graham's arms.

At the opening of his will it was found that he had left Graham his sole heir and executor. Deducting government duties, legacies to servants, and donations to public charities, the sum thus bequeathed to his lost wife's nephew was two hundred and twenty thousand pounds.

With such a fortune, opening indeed was made for an ambition so long obstructed. But Graham affected no change in his mode of life; he still retained his modest bachelor's apartments, engaged no servants, bought no horses, in no way exceeded the income he had possessed before. He seemed, indeed, depressed rather than elated by the succession to a wealth which he had never anticipated.

Two children had been born from the marriage of Richard King: they had died young, it is true, but Lady Janet at the time of her own decease was not too advanced in years for the reasonable expectation of other offspring; and even after Richard King became a widower, he had given to Graham no hint of his testamentary dispositions. The young man was no blood-relation to him, and naturally supposed that such relations would become the heirs. But in truth the deceased seemed to have no blood-relations: none had ever been known to visit him; none raised a voice to question the justice of his will.

Lady Janet had been buried at Kensal Green; her husband's remains were placed in the same vault.

For days and days Graham went his way lonely to the cemetery. He might be seen standing motionless by that tomb, with tears rolling down his cheeks; yet his was not a weak nature,--not one of those that love indulgence of irremediable grief. On the contrary, people who did not know him well said "that he had more head than heart," and the character of his pursuits, as of his writings, was certainly not that of a sentimentalist. He had not thus visited the tomb till Richard King had been placed within it. Yet his love for his aunt was unspeakably greater than that which he could have felt for her husband. Was it, then, the husband that he so much more acutely mourned; or was there something that, since the husband's death, had deepened his reverence for the memory of her whom he had not only loved as a mother, but honoured as a saint?

These visits to the cemetery did not cease till Graham was confined to his bed by a very grave illness,--the only one he had ever known. His physician said it was nervous fever, and occasioned by moral shock or excitement; it was attended with delirium. His recovery was slow, and when it was sufficiently completed he quitted England; and we find him now, with his mind composed, his strength restored, and his spirits braced, in that gay city of Paris; hiding, perhaps, some earnest purpose amid his participation in its holiday enjoyments. He is now, as I have said, seated before his writing-table in deep thought. He takes up a letter which he had already glanced over hastily, and reperuses it with more care.

The letter is from his cousin, the Duke of Alton, who had succeeded a few years since to the family honours,--an able man, with no small degree of information, an ardent politician, but of very rational and temperate opinions; too much occupied by the cares of a princely estate to covet office for himself; too sincere a patriot not to desire office for those to whose hands he thought the country might be most safely entrusted; an intimate friend of Graham's. The contents of the letter are these:--

MY DEAR GRAHAM,--I trust that you will welcome the brilliant opening into public life which these lines are intended to announce to you. Vavasour has just been with me to say that he intends to resign his seat for the county when Parliament meets, and agreeing with me that there is no one so fit to succeed him as yourself, he suggests the keeping his intention secret until you have arranged your committee and are prepared to take the field. You cannot hope to escape a contest; but I have examined the Register, and the party has gained rather than lost since the last election, when Vavasour was so triumphantly returned. The expenses for this county, where there are so many outvoters to bring up, and so many agents to retain, are always large in comparison with some other counties; but that consideration is all in your favour, for it deters Squire Hunston, the only man who could beat you, from starting; and to your resources a thousand pounds more or less are a trifle not worth discussing. You know how difficult it is nowadays to find a seat for a man of moderate opinions like yours and mine. Our county would exactly suit you. The constituency is so evenly divided between the urban and rural populations, that its representative must fairly consult the interests of both. He can be neither an ultra-Tory nor a violent Radical. He is left to the enviable freedom, to which you say you aspire, of considering what is best for the country as a whole.

Do not lose so rare an opportunity. There is but one drawback to your triumphant candidature. It will be said that you have no longer an acre in the county in which the Vanes have been settled so long. That drawback can be removed. It is true that you can never hope to buy back the estates which you were compelled to sell at your father's death: the old manufacturer gripes them too firmly to loosen his hold; and after all, even were your income double what it is, you would be overhoused in the vast pile in which your father

buried so large a share of his fortune. But that beautiful old hunting-lodge, the Stamm Schloss of your family, with the adjacent farms, can be now repurchased very reasonably. The brewer who bought them is afflicted with an extravagant son, whom he placed in the--Hussars, and will gladly sell the property for L5,000 more than he gave: well worth the difference, as he has improved the farm-buildings and raised the rental. I think, in addition to the sum you have on mortgage, L3,000 will be accepted, and as a mere investment pay you nearly three per cent. But to you it is worth more than double the money; it once more identifies your ancient name with the county. You would be a greater personage with that moderate holding in the district in which your race took root, and on which your father's genius threw such a lustre, than you would be if you invested all your wealth in a county in which every squire and farmer would call you "the new man." Pray think over this most seriously, and instruct your solicitor to open negotiations with the brewer at once. But rather put yourself into the train, and come back to England straight to me. I will ask Vavasour to meet you. What news from Paris? Is the Emperor as ill as the papers insinuate? And is the revolutionary party gaining ground?

Your affectionate cousin,

ALTON.

As he put down this letter, Graham heaved a short impatient sigh.

"The old Stamm Schloss," he muttered,--"a foot on the old soil once more! and an entrance into the great arena with hands unfettered. Is it possible!--is it?--is it?"

At this moment the door-bell of the apartment rang, and a servant whom Graham had hired at Paris as a *laquais de place* announced "Ce Monsieur."

Graham hurried the letter into his portfolio, and said, "You mean the person to whom I am always at home?"

"The same, Monsieur."

"Admit him, of course."

There entered a wonderfully thin man, middle-aged, clothed in black, his face cleanly shaven, his hair cut very short, with one of those faces which, to use a French expression, say "nothing." It was absolutely without expression: it had not even, despite its thinness, one salient feature. If you had found yourself anywhere seated next to that man, your eye would have passed him over as too insignificant to notice; if at a cafe, you would have gone on talking to your friend without lowering your voice. What mattered it whether a *bete* like that overheard or not? Had you been asked to guess his calling and station, you might have said, minutely observing the freshness of his clothes and the undeniable respectability of his *tout ensemble*, "He must be well off, and with no

care for customers on his mind,--a ci-devant chandler who has retired on a legacy."

Graham rose at the entrance of his visitor, motioned him courteously to a seat beside him, and waiting till the _Jaquais_ had vanished, then asked, "What news?"

"None, I fear, that will satisfy Monsieur. I have certainly hunted out, since I had last the honour to see you, no less than four ladies of the name of Duval, but only one of them took that name from her parents, and was also christened Louise."

"Ah--Louise!"

"Yes, the daughter of a perfumer, aged twenty-eight. She, therefore, is not the Louise you seek. Permit me to refer to your instructions." Here M. Renard took out a note-book, turned over the leaves, and resumed, "Wanted, Louise Duval, daughter of Auguste Duval, a French drawing-master, who lived for many years at Tours, removed to Paris in 1845, lived at No. 12, Rue de S---- at Paris for some years, but afterwards moved to a different quartier of the town, and died 1848, in Rue I----, No. 39. Shortly after his death, his daughter Louise left that lodging, and could not be traced. In 1849 official documents reporting her death were forwarded from Munich to a person (a friend of yours, Monsieur). Death, of course, taken for granted; but nearly five years afterwards, this very person encountered the said Louise Duval at Aix-la-Chapelle, and never heard nor saw more of her. Demande submitted, to find out said Louise Duval or any children of hers born in 1848-9; supposed in 1852-3 to have one child, a girl, between four and five years old. Is that right, Monsieur?"

"Quite right."

"And this is the whole information given to me. Monsieur on giving it asked me if I thought it desirable that he should commence inquiries at Aix-la-Chapelle, where Louise Duval was last seen by the person interested to discover her. I reply, No; pains thrown away. Aix-la-Chapelle is not a place where any Frenchwoman not settled there by marriage would remain. Nor does it seem probable that the said Duval would venture to select for her residence Munich, a city in which she had contrived to obtain certificates of her death. A Frenchwoman who has once known Paris always wants to get back to it; especially, Monsieur, if she has the beauty which you assign to this lady. I therefore suggested that our inquiries should commence in this capital. Monsieur agreed with me, and I did not grudge the time necessary for investigation."

"You were most obliging. Still I am beginning to be impatient if time is to be thrown away."

"Naturally. Permit me to return to my notes. Monsieur informs me that twenty-one years ago, in 1848, the Parisian police were instructed to find out this lady and failed, but gave hopes of discovering her through her relations. He asks me to refer to our archives; I tell him that is

no use. However, in order to oblige him, I do so. No trace of such inquiry: it must have been, as Monsieur led me to suppose, a strictly private one, unconnected with crime or with politics; and as I have the honour to tell Monsieur, no record of such investigations is preserved in our office. Great scandal would there be, and injury to the peace of families, if we preserved the results of private inquiries intrusted to us--by absurdly jealous husbands, for instance. Honour,--Monsieur, honour forbids it. Next I suggest to Monsieur that his simplest plan would be an advertisement in the French journals, stating, if I understand him right, that it is for the pecuniary interest of Madame or Mademoiselle Duval, daughter of Auguste Duval, _artiste en dessin_, to come forward. Monsieur objects to that."

"I object to it extremely; as I have told you, this is a strictly confidential inquiry; and an advertisement which in all likelihood would be practically useless (it proved to be so in a former inquiry) would not be resorted to unless all else failed, and even then with reluctance."

"Quite so. Accordingly, Monsieur delegates to me, who have been recommended to him as the best person he can employ in that department of our police which is not connected with crime or political surveillance, a task the most difficult. I have, through strictly private investigations, to discover the address and prove the identity of a lady bearing a name among the most common in France, and of whom nothing has been heard for fifteen years, and then at so migratory an _endroit_ as Aix-la-Chapelle. You will not or cannot inform me if since that time the lady has changed her name by marriage."

"I have no reason to think that she has; and there are reasons against the supposition that she married after 1849."

"Permit me to observe that the more details of information Monsieur can give me, the easier my task of research will be."

"I have given you all the details I can, and, aware of the difficulty of tracing a person with a name so much the reverse of singular, I adopted your advice in our first interview, of asking some Parisian friend of mine, with a large acquaintance in the miscellaneous societies of your capital, to inform me of any ladies of that name whom he might chance to encounter; and he, like you, has lighted upon one or two, who alas! resemble the right one in name and nothing more."

"You will do wisely to keep him on the watch as well as myself. If it were but a murderess or a political incendiary, then you might trust exclusively to the enlightenment of our corps, but this seems an affair of sentiment, Monsieur. Sentiment is not in our way. Seek the trace of that in the haunts of pleasure."

M. Renard, having thus poetically delivered himself of that philosophical dogma, rose to depart.

Graham slipped into his hand a bank-note of sufficient value to justify the profound bow he received in return.

When M. Renard had gone, Graham heaved another impatient sigh, and said to himself, "No, it is not possible,--at least not yet."

Then, compressing his lips as a man who forces himself to something he dislikes, he dipped his pen into the inkstand, and wrote rapidly thus to his kinsman:

MY DEAR COUSIN,--I lose not a post in replying to your kind and considerate letter. It is not in my power at present to return to England. I need not say how fondly I cherish the hope of representing the dear old county some day. If Vavasour could be induced to defer his resignation of the seat for another session, or at least for six or seven months, why then I might be free to avail myself of the opening; at present I am not. Meanwhile I am sorely tempted to buy back the old Lodge; probably the brewer would allow me to leave on mortgage the sum I myself have on the property, and a few additional thousands. I have reasons for not wishing to transfer at present much of the money now invested in the Funds. I will consider this point, which probably does not press.

I reserve all Paris news till my next; and begging you to forgive so curt and unsatisfactory a reply to a letter so important that it excites me more than I like to own, believe me your affectionate friend and cousin,

GRAHAM.

CHAPTER II.

AT about the same hour on the same day in which the Englishman held the conference with the Parisian detective just related, the Marquis de Rochebriant found himself by appointment in the *_cabinet d'affaires_* of his *_avoue_* M. Gandrin that gentleman had hitherto not found time to give him a definite opinion as to the case submitted to his judgment. The *_avoue_* received Alain with a kind of forced civility, in which the natural intelligence of the Marquis, despite his inexperience of life, discovered embarrassment.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said Gandrin, fidgeting among the papers on his bureau, "this is a very complicated business. I have given not only my best attention to it, but to your general interests. To be plain, your estate, though a fine one, is fearfully encumbered--fearfully--frightfully."

"Sir," said the Marquis, haughtily, "that is a fact which was never disguised from you."

"I do not say that it was, Marquis; but I scarcely realized the amount of the liabilities nor the nature of the property. It will be difficult--

nay, I fear, impossible--to find any capitalist to advance a sum that will cover the mortgages at an interest less than you now pay. As for a Company to take the whole trouble off your hands, clear off the mortgages, manage the forests, develop the fisheries, guarantee you an adequate income, and at the end of twenty-one years or so render up to you or your heirs the free enjoyment of an estate thus improved, we must dismiss that prospect as a wild dream of my good friend M. Hebert. People in the provinces do dream; in Paris everybody is wide awake."

"Monsieur," said the Marquis, with that inborn imperturbable loftiness of *_sang froid_* which has always in adverse circumstances characterized the French noblesse, "be kind enough to restore my papers. I see that you are not the man for me. Allow me only to thank you, and inquire the amount of my debt for the trouble I have given."

"Perhaps you are quite justified in thinking I am not the man for you, Monsieur le Marquis; and your papers shall, if you decide on dismissing me, be returned to you this evening. But as to my accepting remuneration where I have rendered no service, I request M. le Marquis to put that out of the question. Considering myself, then, no longer your *_avoué_*, do not think I take too great a liberty in volunteering my counsel as a friend,--or a friend at least to M. Hebert, if you do not vouchsafe my right so to address yourself."

M. Gandrin spoke with a certain dignity of voice and manner which touched and softened his listener.

"You make me your debtor far more than I pretend to repay," replied Alain. "Heaven knows I want a friend, and I will heed with gratitude and respect all your counsels in that character."

"Plainly and briefly, my advice is this: M. Louvier is the principal mortgagee. He is among the six richest capitalists of Paris. He does not, therefore, want money, but, like most self-made men, he is very accessible to social vanities. He would be proud to think he had rendered a service to a Rochebriant. Approach him, either through me, or, far better, at once introduce yourself, and propose to consolidate all your other liabilities in one mortgage to him, at a rate of interest lower than that which is now paid to some of the small mortgagees. This would add considerably to your income and would carry out M. Hebert's advice."

"But does it not strike you, dear M. Gandrin, that such going cap-in-hand to one who has power over my fate, while I have none over his, would scarcely be consistent with my self-respect, not as Rochebriant only, but as Frenchman?"

"It does not strike me so in the least; at all events, I could make the proposal on your behalf, without compromising yourself, though I should be far more sanguine of success if you addressed M. Louvier in person."

"I should nevertheless prefer leaving it in your hands; but even for that I must take a few days to consider. Of all the mortgagees M. Louvier has

been hitherto the severest and most menacing, the one whom Hebert dreads the most; and should he become sole mortgagee, my whole estate would pass to him if, through any succession of bad seasons and failing tenants, the interest was not punctually paid."

"It could so pass to him now."

"No; for there have been years in which the other mortgagees, who are Bretons and would be loath to ruin a Rochebriant, have been lenient and patient."

"If Louvier has not been equally so, it is only because he knew nothing of you, and your father no doubt had often sorely tasked his endurance. Come, suppose we manage to break the ice easily. Do me the honour to dine here to meet him; you will find that he is not an unpleasant man."

The Marquis hesitated, but the thought of the sharp and seemingly hopeless struggle for the retention of his ancestral home to which he would be doomed if he returned from Paris unsuccessful in his errand overmastered his pride. He felt as if that self-conquest was a duty he owed to the very tombs of his fathers. "I ought not to shrink from the face of a creditor," said he, smiling somewhat sadly, "and I accept the proposal you so graciously make."

"You do well, Marquis, and I will write at once to Louvier to ask him to give me his first disengaged day."

The Marquis had no sooner quitted the house than M. Gandrin opened a door at the side of his office, and a large portly man strode into the room,--stride it was rather than step,--firm, self-assured, arrogant, masterful.

"Well, mon ami," said this man, taking his stand at the hearth, as a king might take his stand in the hall of his vassal, "and what says our petit muscadin?"

"He is neither petit nor muscadin, Monsieur Louvier," replied Gandrin, peevishly; "and he will task your powers to get him thoroughly into your net. But I have persuaded him to meet you here. What day can you dine with me? I had better ask no one else."

"To-morrow I dine with my friend O-----, to meet the chiefs of the Opposition," said M. Louvier, with a sort of careless rollicking pomposity. "Thursday with Pereire; Saturday I entertain at home. Say Friday. Your hour?"

"Seven."

"Good! Show me those Rochebriant papers again; there is something I had forgotten to note. Never mind me. Go on with your work as if I were not here."

Louvier took up the papers, seated himself in an armchair by the fireplace, stretched out his legs, and read at his ease, but with a very

rapid eye, as a practised lawyer skims through the technical forms of a case to fasten upon the marrow of it.

"Ah! as I thought. The farms could not pay even the interest on my present mortgage; the forests come in for that. If a contractor for the yearly sale of the woods was bankrupt and did not pay, how could I get my interest? Answer me that, Gandrin."

"Certainly you must run the risk of that chance."

"Of course the chance occurs, and then I foreclose, seize,--Rochebriant and its seigneuries are mine."

As he spoke he laughed, not sardonically,--a jovial laugh,--and opened wide, to reshut as in a vice, the strong iron hand which had doubtless closed over many a man's all.

"Thanks. On Friday, seven o'clock." He tossed the papers back on the bureau, nodded a royal nod, and strode forth imperiously as he had strode in.

CHAPTER III.

MEANWHILE the young Marquis pursued his way thoughtfully through the streets, and entered the Champs Elysees. Since we first, nay, since we last saw him, he is strikingly improved in outward appearances. He has unconsciously acquired more of the easy grace of the Parisian in gait and bearing. You would no longer detect the Provincial--perhaps, however, because he is now dressed, though very simply, in habiliments that belong to the style of the day. Rarely among the loungers in the Champs Elysees could be seen a finer form, a comelier face, an air of more unmistakable distinction.

The eyes of many a passing fair one gazed on him, admiringly or coquettishly. But he was still so little the true Parisian that they got no smile, no look in return. He was wrapped in his own thoughts; was he thinking of M. Louvier?

He had nearly gained the entrance of the Bois de Boulogne, when he was accosted by a voice behind, and turning round saw his friend Lemer cier arm-in-arm with Graham Vane.

"Bonjour, Alain," said Lemer cier, hooking his disengaged arm into Rochebriant's. "I suspect we are going the same way."

Alain felt himself change countenance at this conjecture, and replied coldly, "I think not; I have got to the end of my walk, and shall turn back to Paris;" addressing himself to the Englishman, he said with formal politeness, "I regret not to have found you at home when I called some weeks ago, and no less so to have been out when you had the complaisance

to return my visit."

"At all events," replied the Englishman, "let me not lose the opportunity of improving our acquaintance which now offers. It is true that our friend Lemercier, catching sight of me in the Rue de Rivoli, stopped his coupe and carried me off for a promenade in the Bois. The fineness of the day tempted us to get out of his carriage as the Bois came in sight. But if you are going back to Paris I relinquish the Bois and offer myself as your companion."

Frederic (the name is so familiarly English that the reader might think me pedantic did I accentuate it as French) looked from one to the other of his two friends, half amused and half angry.

"And am I to be left alone to achieve a conquest, in which, if I succeed, I shall change into hate and envy the affection of my two best friends? Be it so.

"Un veritable amant ne connait point d'amis."

"I do not comprehend your meaning," said the Marquis, with a compressed lip and a slight frown.

"Bah!" cried Frederic; "come, _franc jeu_; cards on the table. M. Gram Varn was going into the Bois at my suggestion on the chance of having another look at the pearl-coloured angel; and you, Rochebriant, can't deny that you were going into the Bois for the same object."

"One may pardon an _enfant terrible_," said the Englishman, laughing, "but an _ami terrible_ should be sent to the galleys. Come, Marquis, let us walk back and submit to our fate. Even were the lady once more visible, we have no chance of being observed by the side of a Lovelace so accomplished and so audacious!"

"Adieu, then, recreants: I go alone. Victory or death." The Parisian beckoned his coachman, entered his carriage, and with a mocking grimace kissed his hand to the companions thus deserting or deserted.

Rochebriant touched the Englishman's arm, and said, "Do you think that Lemercier could be impertinent enough to accost that lady?"

"In the first place," returned the Englishman, "Lemercier himself tells me that the lady has for several weeks relinquished her walks in the Bois, and the probability is, therefore, that he will not have the opportunity to accost her. In the next place, it appears that when she did take her solitary walk, she did not stray far from her carriage, and was in reach of the protection of her _laquais_ and coachman. But to speak honestly, do you, who know Lemercier better than I, take him to be a man who would commit an impertinence to a woman unless there were _viveurs_ of his own sex to see him do it?"

Alain smiled. "No. Frederic's real nature is an admirable one, and if he ever do anything that he ought to be ashamed of, 'twill be from the

pride of showing how finely he can do it. Such was his character at college, and such it still seems at Paris. But it is true that the lady has forsaken her former walk; at least I--I have not seen her since the day I first beheld her in company with Frederic. Yet--yet, pardon me, you were going to the Bois on the chance of seeing her. Perhaps she has changed the direction of her walk, and--and--"

The Marquis stopped short, stammering and confused.

The Englishman scanned his countenance with the rapid glance of a practised observer of men and things, and after a short pause said: "If the lady has selected some other spot for her promenade, I am ignorant of it; nor have I ever volunteered the chance of meeting with her, since I learned--first from Lemercier, and afterwards from others--that her destination is the stage. Let us talk frankly, Marquis. I am accustomed to take much exercise on foot, and the Bois is my favourite resort: one day I there found myself in the *_allee_* which the lady we speak of used to select for her promenade, and there saw her. Something in her face impressed me; how shall I describe the impression? Did you ever open a poem, a romance, in some style wholly new to you, and before you were quite certain whether or not its merits justified the interest which the novelty inspired, you were summoned away, or the book was taken out of your hands? If so, did you not feel an intellectual longing to have another glimpse of the book? That illustration describes my impression, and I own that I twice again went to the same *_allee_*. The last time I only caught sight of the young lady as she was getting into her carriage. As she was then borne away, I perceived one of the custodians of the Bois; and learned, on questioning him, that the lady was in the habit of walking always alone in the same *_allee_* at the same hour on most fine days, but that he did not know her name or address. A motive of curiosity--perhaps an idle one--then made me ask Lemercier, who boasts of knowing his Paris so intimately, if he could inform me who the lady was. He undertook to ascertain."

"But," interposed the Marquis, "he did not ascertain who she was; he only ascertained where she lived, and that she and an elder companion were Italians;--whom he suspected, without sufficient ground, to be professional singers."

"True; but since then I ascertained more detailed particulars from two acquaintances of mine who happen to know her,--M. Savarin, the distinguished writer, and Mrs. Morley, an accomplished and beautiful American lady, who is more than an acquaintance. I may boast the honour of ranking among her friends. As Savarin's villa is at A-----, I asked him incidentally if he knew the fair neighbour whose face had so attracted me; and Mrs. Morley being present, and overhearing me, I learned from both what I now repeat to you.

"The young lady is a Signorina Cicogna,--at Paris, exchanging (except among particular friends), as is not unusual, the outlandish designation of Signorina for the more conventional one of Mademoiselle. Her father was a member of the noble Milanese family of the same name, therefore the young lady is well born. Her father has been long dead; his widow

married again an English gentleman settled in Italy, a scholar and antiquarian; his name was Selby. This gentleman, also dead, bequeathed the Signorina a small but sufficient competence. She is now an orphan, and residing with a companion, a Signora Venosta, who was once a singer of some repute at the Neapolitan Theatre, in the orchestra of which her husband was principal performer; but she relinquished the stage several years ago on becoming a widow, and gave lessons as a teacher. She has the character of being a scientific musician, and of unblemished private respectability. Subsequently she was induced to give up general teaching, and undertake the musical education and the social charge of the young lady with her. This girl is said to have early given promise of extraordinary excellence as a singer, and excited great interest among a coterie of literary critics and musical _cognoscenti_. She was to have come out at the Theatre of Milan a year or two ago, but her career has been suspended in consequence of ill-health, for which she is now at Paris under the care of an English physician, who has made remarkable cures in all complaints of the respiratory organs. -----, the great composer, who knows her, says that in expression and feeling she has no living superior, perhaps no equal since Malibran."

"You seem, dear Monsieur, to have taken much pains to acquire this information."

"No great pains were necessary; but had they been I might have taken them, for, as I have owed to you, Mademoiselle Cicogna, while she was yet a mystery to me, strangely interested my thoughts or my fancies. That interest has now ceased. The world of actresses and singers lies apart from mine."

"Yet," said Alain, in a tone of voice that implied doubt, "if I understand Lemerrier aright, you were going with him to the Bois on the chance of seeing again the lady in whom your interest has ceased."

"Lemerrier's account was not strictly accurate. He stopped his carriage to speak to me on quite another subject, on which I have consulted him, and then proposed to take me on to the Bois. I assented; and it was not till we were in the carriage that he suggested the idea of seeing whether the pearly-robed lady had resumed her walk in the allee. You may judge how indifferent I was to that chance when I preferred turning back with you to going on with him. Between you and me, Marquis, to men of our age, who have the business of life before them, and feel that if there be aught in which noblesse oblige it is a severe devotion to noble objects, there is nothing more fatal to such devotion than allowing the heart to be blown hither and thither at every breeze of mere fancy, and dreaming ourselves into love with some fair creature whom we never could marry consistently with the career we have set before our ambition. I could not marry an actress,--neither, I presume, could the Marquis de Rochebriant; and the thought of a courtship which excluded the idea of marriage to a young orphan of name unblemished, of virtue unsuspected, would certainly not be compatible with 'devotion to noble objects.'"

Alain involuntarily bowed his head in assent to the proposition, and, it may be, in submission to an implied rebuke.

The two men walked in silence for some minutes, and Graham first spoke, changing altogether the subject of conversation. "Lemercier tells me you decline going much into this world of Paris, the capital of capitals, which appears so irresistibly attractive to us foreigners."

"Possibly; but, to borrow your words, I have the business of life before me."

"Business is a good safeguard against the temptations to excess in pleasure, in which Paris abounds. But there is no business which does not admit of some holiday, and all business necessitates commerce with mankind. A propos, I was the other evening at the Duchesse de Tarascon's,--a brilliant assembly, filled with ministers, senators, and courtiers. I heard your name mentioned."

"Mine?"

"Yes; Duplessis, the rising financier--who rather to my surprise was not only present among these official and decorated celebrities, but apparently quite at home among them--asked the Duchess if she had not seen you since your arrival at Paris. She replied, 'No; that though you were among her nearest connections, you had not called on her;' and bade Duplessis tell you that you were a monstre for not doing so. Whether or not Duplessis will take that liberty I know not; but you must pardon me if I do. She is a very charming woman, full of talent; and that stream of the world which reflects the stars, with all their mythical influences on fortune, flows through her salons."

"I am not born under those stars. I am a Legitimist."

"I did not forget your political creed; but in England the leaders of opposition attend the salons of the Prime Minister. A man is not supposed to compromise his opinions because he exchanges social courtesies with those to whom his opinions are hostile. Pray excuse me if I am indiscreet, I speak as a traveller who asks for information: but do the Legitimists really believe that they best serve their cause by declining any mode of competing with its opponents? Would there not be a fairer chance of the ultimate victory of their principles if they made their talents and energies individually prominent; if they were known as skilful generals, practical statesmen, eminent diplomatists, brilliant writers? Could they combine,--not to sulk and exclude themselves from the great battle-field of the world, but in their several ways to render themselves of such use to their country that some day or other, in one of those revolutionary crises to which France, alas! must long be subjected, they would find themselves able to turn the scale of undecided councils and conflicting jealousies."

"Monsieur, we hope for the day when the Divine Disposer of events will strike into the hearts of our fickle and erring countrymen the conviction that there will be no settled repose for France save under the sceptre of her rightful kings. But meanwhile we are,--I see it more clearly since I have quitted Bretagne,--we are a hopeless minority."

"Does not history tell us that the great changes of the world have been wrought by minorities,--but on the one condition that the minorities shall not be hopeless? It is almost the other day that the Bonapartists were in a minority that their adversaries called hopeless, and the majority for the Emperor is now so preponderant that I tremble for his safety. When a majority becomes so vast that intellect disappears in the crowd, the date of its destruction commences; for by the law of reaction the minority is installed against it. It is the nature of things that minorities are always more intellectual than multitudes, and intellect is ever at work in sapping numerical force. What your party want is hope; because without hope there is no energy. I remember hearing my father say that when he met the Count de Chambord at Ems, that illustrious personage delivered himself of a *_belle phrase_* much admired by his partisans. The Emperor was then President of the Republic, in a very doubtful and dangerous position. France seemed on the verge of another convulsion. A certain distinguished politician recommended the Count de Chambord to hold himself ready to enter at once as a candidate for the throne. And the Count, with a benignant smile on his handsome face, answered, 'All wrecks come to the shore: the shore does not go to the wrecks.'"

"Beautifully said!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"Not if 'Le beau est toujours le vrai.' My father, no inexperienced nor unwise politician, in repeating the royal words, remarked: 'The fallacy of the Count's argument is in its metaphor. A man is not a shore. Do you not think that the seamen on board the wrecks would be more grateful to him who did not complacently compare himself to a shore, but considered himself a human being like themselves, and risked his own life in a boat, even though it were a cockleshell, in the chance of saving theirs?'"

Alain de Rochebriant was a brave man, with that intense sentiment of patriotism which characterizes Frenchmen of every rank and persuasion, unless they belong to the Internationalists; and, without pausing to consider, he cried, "Your father was right."

The Englishman resumed: "Need I say, my dear Marquis, that I am not a Legitimist? I am not an Imperialist, neither am I an Orleanist nor a Republican. Between all those political divisions it is for Frenchmen to make their choice, and for Englishmen to accept for France that government which France has established. I view things here as a simple observer. But it strikes me that if I were a Frenchman in your position, I should think myself unworthy my ancestors if I consented to be an insignificant looker-on."

"You are not in my position," said the Marquis, half mournfully, half haughtily, "and you can scarcely judge of it even in imagination."

"I need not much task my imagination; I judge of it by analogy. I was very much in your position when I entered upon what I venture to call my career; and it is the curious similarity between us in circumstances,

that made me wish for your friendship when that similarity was made known to me by Lemerrier, who is not less garrulous than the true Parisian usually is. Permit me to say that, like you, I was reared in some pride of no inglorious ancestry. I was reared also in the expectation of great wealth. Those expectations were not realized: my father had the fault of noble natures,--generosity pushed to imprudence: he died poor and in debt. You retain the home of your ancestors; I had to resign mine."

The Marquis had felt deeply interested in this narrative, and as Graham now paused, took his hand and pressed it. "One of our most eminent personages said to me about that time, 'Whatever a clever man of your age determines to do or to be, the odds are twenty to one that he has only to live on in order to do or to be it.' Don't you think he spoke truly? I think so."

"I scarcely know what to think," said Rochebriant; "I feel as if you had given me so rough a shake when I was in the midst of a dull dream, that I am not yet quite sure whether I am asleep or awake."

Just as he said this, and towards the Paris end of the Champs Elysees, there was a halt, a sensation among the loungers round them; many of them uncovered in salute.

A man on the younger side of middle age, somewhat inclined to corpulence, with a very striking countenance, was riding slowly by. He returned the salutations he received with the careless dignity of a Personage accustomed to respect, and then reined in his horse by the side of a barouche, and exchanged some words with a portly gentleman who was its sole occupant. The loungers, still halting, seemed to contemplate this parley--between him on horseback and him in the carriage--with very eager interest. Some put their hands behind their ears and pressed forward, as if trying to overhear what was said.

"I wonder," quoth Graham, "whether, with all his cleverness, the Prince has in any way decided what he means to do or to be."

"The Prince!" said Rochebriant, rousing himself from reverie; "what Prince?"

"Do you not recognize him by his wonderful likeness to the first Napoleon,--him on horseback talking to Louvier, the great financier."

"Is that stout bourgeois in the carriage Louvier,--my mortgagee, Louvier?"

"Your mortgagee, my dear Marquis? Well, he is rich enough to be a very lenient one upon pay-day."

"_Hein_!--I doubt his leniency," said Alain. "I have promised my _avoué_ to meet him at dinner. Do you think I did wrong?"

"Wrong! of course not; he is likely to overwhelm you with civilities. Pray don't refuse if he gives you an invitation to his soiree next

Saturday; I am going to it. One meets there the notabilities most interesting to study,--artists, authors, politicians, especially those who call themselves Republicans. He and the Prince agree in one thing; namely, the cordial reception they give to the men who would destroy the state of things upon which Prince and financier both thrive. Hillo! here comes Lemerrier on return from the Bois."

Lemerrier's *coupe* stopped beside the footpath. "What tidings of the *Belle Inconnue*?" asked the Englishman. "None; she was not there. But I am rewarded: such an adventure! a dame of the *haute volee*; I believe she is a duchess. She was walking with a lap-dog, a pure Pomeranian. A strange poodle flew at the Pomeranian, I drove off the poodle, rescued the Pomeranian, received the most gracious thanks, the sweetest smile: *femme superbe*, middle aged. I prefer women of forty. *Au revoir*, I am due at the club."

Alain felt a sensation of relief that Lemerrier had not seen the lady in the pearl-coloured dress, and quitted the Englishman with a lightened heart.

CHAPTER IV.

"*Piccola, piccola! com e cortese!* another invitation from M. Louvier for next Saturday,--*conversazione*." This was said in Italian by an elderly lady bursting noisily into the room,--elderly, yet with a youthful expression of face, owing perhaps to a pair of very vivacious black eyes. She was dressed, after a somewhat slatternly fashion, in a wrapper of crimson merino much the worse for wear, a blue handkerchief twisted turban-like round her head, and her feet encased in list slippers. The person to whom she addressed herself was a young lady with dark hair, which, despite its evident repugnance, was restrained into smooth glossy braids over the forehead, and at the crown of the small graceful head into the simple knot which Horace has described as "Spartan." Her dress contrasted the speaker's by an exquisite neatness.

We have seen her before as the lady in the pearl-coloured robe; but seen now at home she looks much younger. She was one of those whom, encountered in the streets or in society, one might guess to be married, --probably a young bride; for thus seen there was about her an air of dignity and of self-possession which suits well with the ideal of chaste youthful matronage; and in the expression of the face there was a pensive thoughtfulness beyond her years. But as she now sat by the open window arranging flowers in a glass bowl, a book lying open on her lap, you would never have said, "What a handsome woman!" you would have said, "What a charming girl!" All about her was maidenly, innocent, and fresh. The dignity of her bearing was lost in household ease, the pensiveness of her expression in an untroubled serene sweetness.

Perhaps many of my readers may have known friends engaged in some absorbing cause of thought, and who are in the habit when they go out,

especially if on solitary walks, to take that cause of thought with them. The friend may be an orator meditating his speech, a poet his verses, a lawyer a difficult case, a physician an intricate malady. If you have such a friend, and you observe him thus away from his home, his face will seem to you older and graver. He is absorbed in the care that weighs on him. When you see him in a holiday moment at his own fireside, the care is thrown aside; perhaps he mastered while abroad the difficulty that had troubled him; he is cheerful, pleasant, sunny. This appears to be very much the case with persons of genius. When in their own houses we usually find them very playful and childlike. Most persons of real genius, whatever they may seem out of doors, are very sweet-tempered at home, and sweet temper is sympathizing and genial in the intercourse of private life. Certainly, observing this girl as she now bends over the flowers, it would be difficult to believe her to be the Isaura Cicogna whose letters to Madame de Grantinesnil exhibit the doubts and struggles of an unquiet, discontented, aspiring mind. Only in one or two passages in those letters would you have guessed at the writer in the girl as we now see her. It is in those passages where she expresses her love of harmony, and her repugnance to contest: those were characteristics you might have read in her face.

Certainly the girl is very lovely: what long dark eyelashes! what soft, tender, dark-blue eyes! now that she looks up and smiles, what a bewitching smile it is! by what sudden play of rippling dimples the smile is enlivened and redoubled! Do you notice one feature? In very showy beauties it is seldom noticed; but I, being in my way a physiognomist, consider that it is always worth heeding as an index of character. It is the ear. Remark how delicately it is formed in her: none of that heaviness of lobe which is a sure sign of sluggish intellect and coarse perception. Hers is the artist's ear. Note next those hands: how beautifully shaped! small, but not doll-like hands,--ready and nimble, firm and nervous hands, that could work for a helpmate. By no means very white, still less red, but somewhat embrowned as by the sun, such as you may see in girls reared in southern climes, and in her perhaps betokening an impulsive character which had not accustomed itself, when at sport in the open air, to the thralldom of gloves,--very impulsive people even in cold climates seldom do.

In conveying to us by a few bold strokes an idea of the sensitive, quick-moved, warm-blooded Henry II., the most impulsive of the Plantagenets, his contemporary chronicler tells us that rather than imprison those active hands of his, even in hawking-gloves, he would suffer his falcon to fix its sharp claws into his wrist. No doubt there is a difference as to what is befitting between a burly bellicose creature like Henry II. and a delicate young lady like Isaura Cicogna; and one would not wish to see those dainty wrists of hers seamed and scarred by a falcon's claws. But a girl may not be less exquisitely feminine for slight heed of artificial prettiness. Isaura had no need of pale bloodless hands to seem one of Nature's highest grade of gentlewomen even to the most fastidious eyes. About her there was a charm apart from her mere beauty, and often disturbed instead of heightened by her mere intellect: it consisted in a combination of exquisite artistic refinement, and of a generosity of character by which refinement was animated into vigour and

warmth.

The room, which was devoted exclusively to Isaura, had in it much that spoke of the occupant. That room, when first taken furnished, had a good deal of the comfortless showiness which belongs to ordinary furnished apartments in France, especially in the Parisian suburbs, chiefly let for the summer: thin limp muslin curtains that decline to draw; stiff mahogany chairs covered with yellow Utrecht velvet; a tall secretaire in a dark corner; an oval buhl-table set in tawdry ormolu, islanded in the centre of a poor but gaudy Scotch carpet; and but one other table of dull walnut-wood, standing clothless before a sofa to match the chairs; the eternal ormolu clock flanked by the two eternal ormolu candelabra on the dreary mantelpiece. Some of this garniture had been removed, others softened into cheeriness and comfort. The room somehow or other--thanks partly to a very moderate expenditure in pretty twills with pretty borders, gracefully simple table-covers, with one or two additional small tables and easy-chairs, two simple vases filled with flowers; thanks still more to a nameless skill in re-arrangement, and the disposal of the slight knick-knacks and well-bound volumes, which, even in travelling, women who have cultivated the pleasures of taste carry about them--had been coaxed into that quiet harmony, that tone of consistent subdued colour, which corresponded with the characteristics of the inmate. Most people might have been puzzled where to place the piano, a semi-grand, so as not to take up too much space in the little room; but where it was placed it seemed so at home that you might have supposed the room had been built for it.

There are two kinds of neatness,--one is too evident, and makes everything about it seem trite and cold and stiff; and another kind of neatness disappears from our sight in a satisfied sense of completeness, --like some exquisite, simple, finished style of writing, an Addison's or a St. Pierre's.

This last sort of neatness belonged to Isaura, and brought to mind the well-known line of Catullus when on recrossing his threshold he invokes its welcome,--a line thus not inelegantly translated by Leigh Hunt,

"Smile every dimple on the cheek of Home."

I entreat the reader's pardon for this long descriptive digression; but Isaura is one of those characters which are called many-sided, and therefore not very easy to comprehend. She gives us one side of her character in her correspondence with Madame de Grantmesnil, and another side of it in her own home with her Italian companion,--half nurse, half chaperon.

"Monsieur Louvier is indeed very courteous," said Isaura, looking up from the flowers with the dimpled smile we have noticed. "But I think, Madre, that we should do well to stay at home on Saturday,--not peacefully, for I owe you your revenge at Euchre."

"You can't mean it, Piccola!" exclaimed the Signora, in evident consternation. "Stay at home!--why stay at home? Euchre is very well

when there is nothing else to do: but change is pleasant; le bon Dieu likes it,

"'Ne caldo ne gelo
Resta mai in cielo.'

"And such beautiful ices one gets at M. Louvier's! Did you taste the pistachio ice? What fine rooms, and so well lit up! I adore light. And the ladies so beautifully dressed: one sees the fashions. Stay at home! play at Euchre indeed! Piccola, you cannot be so cruel to yourself: you are young."

"But, dear Madre, just consider; we are invited because we are considered professional singers: your reputation as such is of course established,-- mine is not; but still I shall be asked to sing, as I was asked before; and you know Dr. C. forbids me to do so except to a very small audience; and it is so ungracious always to say 'No; and besides, did you not yourself say, when we came away last time from M. Louvier's, that it was very dull, that you knew nobody, and that the ladies had such superb toilets that you felt mortified--and--"

"Zitto! zitto! you talk idly, Piccola,--very idly. I was mortified then in my old black Lyons silk; but have I not bought since then my beautiful Greek jacket,--scarlet and gold lace? and why should I buy it if I am not to show it?"

"But, dear Madre, the jacket is certainly very handsome, and will make an effect in a little dinner at the Savarins or Mrs. Morley's; but in a great formal reception like M. Louvier's will it not look--"

"Splendid!" interrupted the Signora.

"But _singolare_."

"So much the better; did not that great English Lady wear such a jacket, and did not every one admire her, _piu tosto invidia the compassione_?"

Isaura sighed. Now the jacket of the Signora was a subject of disquietude to her friend. It so happened that a young English lady of the highest rank and the rarest beauty had appeared at M. Louvier's, and indeed generally in the _beau monde_ of Paris, in a Greek jacket that became her very much. The jacket had fascinated, at M. Louvier's, the eyes of the Signora. But of this Isaura was unaware. The Signora, on returning home from M. Louvier's, had certainly lamented much over the _mesquin_ appearance of her old-fashioned Italian habiliments compared with the brilliant toilette of the gay Parisiennes; and Isaura--quite woman enough to sympathize with woman in such womanly vanities--proposed the next day to go with the Signora to one of the principal couturieres of Paris, and adapt the Signora's costume to the fashions of the place. But the Signora having predetermined on a Greek jacket, and knowing by instinct that Isaura would be disposed to thwart that splendid predilection, had artfully suggested that it would be better to go to the couturiere with Madame Savarin, as being a more experienced

adviser,--and the coupe only held two.

As Madame Savarin was about the same age as the Signora, and dressed as became her years and in excellent taste, Isaura thought this an admirable suggestion; and pressing into her chaperon's hand a *_billet de banque_* sufficient to re-equip her *_cap-a pie_*, dismissed the subject from her mind. But the Signora was much too cunning to submit her passion for the Greek jacket to the discouraging comments of Madame Savarin. Monopolizing the *_coupe_*, she became absolute mistress of the situation. She went to no fashionable couturiere's. She went to a magasin that she had seen advertised in the *_Petites Afiches_* as supplying superb costumes for fancy-balls and amateur performers in private theatricals. She returned home triumphant, with a jacket still more dazzling to the eye than that of the English lady.

When Isaura first beheld it, she drew back in a sort of superstitious terror, as of a comet or other blazing portent.

"*_Cosa stupenda_!*" (stupendous thing!) She might well be dismayed when the Signora proposed to appear thus attired in M. Louvier's salon. What might be admired as coquetry of dress in a young beauty of rank so great that even a vulgarity in her would be called *distinguee*, was certainly an audacious challenge of ridicule in the elderly *_ci-devant_* music-teacher.

But how could Isaura, how can any one of common humanity, say to a woman resolved upon wearing a certain dress, "You are not young and handsome enough for that?" Isaura could only murmur, "For many reasons I would rather stay at home, dear Madre."

"Ah! I see you are ashamed of me," said the Signora, in softened tones: "very natural. When the nightingale sings no more, she is only an ugly brown bird;" and therewith the Signora Venosta seated herself submissively, and began to cry.

On this Isaura sprang up, wound her arms round the Signora's neck, soothed her with coaxing, kissed and petted her, and ended by saying, "Of course we will go;" and, "but let me choose you another dress,--a dark-green velvet trimmed with blonde: blonde becomes you so well."

"No, no: I hate green velvet; anybody can wear that. *Piccola*, I am not clever like thee; I cannot amuse myself like thee with books. I am in a foreign land. I have a poor head, but I have a big heart" (another burst of tears); "and that big heart is set on my beautiful Greek jacket."

"Dearest Madre," said Isaura, half weeping too, "forgive me, you are right. The Greek jacket is splendid; I shall be so pleased to see you wear it: poor Madre! so pleased to think that in the foreign land you are not without something that pleases you!"

CONFORMABLY with his engagement to meet M. Louvier, Alain found himself on the day and at the hour named in M. Gandrin's salon. On this occasion Madame Gandrin did not appear. Her husband was accustomed to give *_diners d'hommes_*. The great man had not yet arrived. "I think, Marquis," said M. Gandrin, "that you will not regret having followed my advice: my representations have disposed Louvier to regard you with much favour, and he is certainly flattered by being permitted to make your personal acquaintance."

The *_avoue_* had scarcely finished this little speech, when M. Louvier was announced. He entered with a beaming smile, which did not detract from his imposing presence. His flatterers had told him that he had a look of Louis Philippe; therefore he had sought to imitate the dress and the bonhomie of that monarch of the middle class. He wore a wig, elaborately piled up, and shaped his whiskers in royal harmony with the royal wig. Above all, he studied that social frankness of manner with which the able sovereign dispelled awe of his presence or dread of his astuteness. Decidedly he was a man very pleasant to converse and to deal with--so long as there seemed to him something to gain and nothing to lose by being pleasant. He returned Alain's bow by a cordial offer of both expansive hands, into the grasp of which the hands of the aristocrat utterly disappeared. "Charmed to make your acquaintance, Marquis; still more charmed if you will let me be useful during your *_sejour_* at Paris. *_Ma foi_*, excuse my bluntness, but you are a *_fort beau garcon_*. Monsieur your father was a handsome man, but you beat him hollow. Gandrin, my friend, would not you and I give half our fortunes for one year of this fine fellow's youth spent at Paris? *_Peste_!* what love-letters we should have, with no need to buy them by *_billets de banque_!*" Thus he ran on, much to Alain's confusion, till dinner was announced. Then there was something grandiose in the frank *_bourgeois_* style wherewith he expanded his napkin and twisted one end into his waistcoat; it was so manly a renunciation of the fashions which a man so *_repandu_* in all circles might be supposed to follow,--as if he were both too great and too much in earnest for such frivolities. He was evidently a sincere *_bon vivant_*, and M. Gandrin had no less evidently taken all requisite pains to gratify his taste. The Montrachet served with the oysters was of precious vintage; that *_vin de madere_* which accompanied the *_potage a la bisque_* would have contented an American. And how radiant became Louvier's face when amongst the *_entrees_* he came upon *_laitances de carpes_!* "The best thing in the world," he cried, "and one gets it so seldom since the old Rocher de Cancale has lost its renown. At private houses, what does one get now? *_blanc de poulet_*, flavourless trash. After all, Gandrin, when we lose the love-letters, it is some consolation that *_laitances de carpes_* and *_sautes de foie gras_* are still left to fill up the void in our hearts. Marquis, heed my counsel; cultivate betimes the taste for the table,--that and whist are the sole resources of declining years. You never met my old friend Talleyrand--ah, no! he was long before your time. He cultivated both, but he made two mistakes. No man's intellect is perfect on all sides. He confined himself to one meal a day, and he never learned to play well at whist. Avoid his errors, my young friend,--avoid them. Gandrin, I guess this pineapple is English,--it is superb."

"You are right,--a present from the Marquis of H-----."

"Ah! instead of a fee, I wager. The Marquis gives nothing for nothing, dear man! Droll people the English. You have never visited England, I presume, _cher_ Rochebriant?" The affable financier had already made vast progress in familiarity with his silent fellow-guest.

When the dinner was over and the three men had reentered the salon for coffee and liqueurs, Gandrin left Louvier and Alain alone, saying he was going to his cabinet for cigars which he could recommend. Then Louvier, lightly patting the Marquis on the shoulder, said with what the French call effusion, "My dear Rochebriant, your father and I did not quite understand each other. He took a tone of grand seigneur that sometimes wounded me; and I in turn was perhaps too rude in asserting my rights--as creditor, shall I say?--no, as fellow-citizen; and Frenchmen are so vain, so over-susceptible; fire up at a word; take offence when none is meant. We two, my dear boy, should be superior to such national foibles. _Bref_ --I have a mortgage on your lands. Why should that thought mar our friendship? At my age, though I am not yet old, one is flattered if the young like us, pleased if we can oblige them, and remove from their career any little obstacle in its way. Gandrin tells me you wish to consolidate all the charges on your estate into one on a lower rate of interest. Is it so?"

"I am so advised," said the Marquis.

"And very rightly advised; come and talk with me about it some day next week. I hope to have a large sum of money set free in a few days. Of course, mortgages on land don't pay like speculations at the Bourse; but I am rich enough to please myself. We will see, we will see."

Here Gandrin returned with the cigars; but Alain at that time never smoked, and Louvier excused himself, with a laugh and a sly wink, on the plea that he was going to pay his respects--as doubtless that _joli garcon_ was going to do likewise--to a belle dame who did not reckon the smell of tobacco among the perfumes of Houbigant or Arabia.

"Meanwhile," added Louvier, turning to Gandrin, "I have something to say to you on business about the contract for that new street of mine. No hurry,--after our young friend has gone to his 'assignation.'"

Alain could not misinterpret the hint; and in a few moments took leave of his host, more surprised than disappointed that the financier had not invited him, as Graham had assumed he would, to his soiree the following evening.

When Alain was gone, Louvier's jovial manner disappeared also, and became bluffly rude rather than bluntly cordial. "Gandrin, what did you mean by saying that that young man was no _muscadin_! _Muscadin, aristocrate_, offensive from top to toe."

"You amaze me; you seemed to take to him so cordially."

"And pray, were you too blind to remark with what cold reserve he responded to my condescensions; how he winced when I called him Rochebriant; how he coloured when I called him 'dear boy'? These aristocrats think we ought to thank them on our knees when they take our money, and" here Louvier's face darkened--"seduce our women." "Monsieur Louvier, in all France I do not know a greater aristocrat than yourself."

I don't know whether M. Gandrin meant that speech as a compliment, but M. Louvier took it as such,--laughed complacently and rubbed his hands.

"Ay, ay, _millionnaires_ are the real aristocrats, for they have power, as my _beau Marquis_ will soon find. I must bid you good night. Of course I shall see Madame Gandrin and yourself to-morrow. Prepare for a motley gathering,--lots of democrats and foreigners, with artists and authors, and such creatures."

"Is that the reason why you did not invite the Marquis?"

"To be sure; I would not shock so pure a Legitimist by contact with the sons of the people, and make him still colder to myself. No; when he comes to my house he shall meet lions and _viveurs_ of the _haut ton_, who will play into my hands by teaching him how to ruin himself in the quickest manner and in the _genre Regence_. _Bon soir, mon vieux._"

CHAPTER VI.

The next night Graham in vain looked round for Alain in M. Louvier's salons, and missed his high-bred mien and melancholy countenance. M. Louvier had been for some four years a childless widower, but his receptions were not the less numerously attended, nor his establishment less magnificently monde for the absence of a presiding lady: very much the contrary; it was noticeable how much he had increased his status and prestige as a social personage since the death of his unlamented spouse.

To say truth, she had been rather a heavy drag on his triumphal car. She had been the heiress of a man who had amassed a great deal of money,--not in the higher walks of commerce, but in a retail trade.

Louvier himself was the son of a rich money-lender; he had entered life with an ample fortune and an intense desire to be admitted into those more brilliant circles in which fortune can be dissipated with _eclat_. He might not have attained this object but for the friendly countenance of a young noble who was then--

"The glass of fashion and the mould of form;"

but this young noble, of whom later we shall hear more, came suddenly to grief, and when the money-lender's son lost that potent protector, the dandies, previously so civil, showed him a very cold shoulder.

Louvier then became an ardent democrat, and recruited the fortune he had impaired by the aforesaid marriage, launched into colossal speculations, and became enormously rich. His aspirations for social rank now revived, but his wife sadly interfered with them. She was thrifty by nature; sympathized little with her husband's genius for accumulation; always said he would end in a hospital; hated Republicans; despised authors and artists, and by the ladies of the *_beau monde_* was pronounced common and vulgar.

So long as she lived, it was impossible for Louvier to realize his ambition of having one of the salons which at Paris establish celebrity and position. He could not then command those advantages of wealth which he especially coveted. He was eminently successful in doing this now. As soon as she was safe in Pere la Chaise, he enlarged his hotel by the purchase and annexation of an adjoining house; redecorated and refurnished it, and in this task displayed, it must be said to his credit, or to that of the administrators he selected for the purpose, a nobleness of taste rarely exhibited nowadays. His collection of pictures was not large, and consisted exclusively of the French school, ancient and modern, for in all things Louvier affected the patriot. But each of those pictures was a gem; such Watteaus, such Greuzes, such landscapes by Patel, and, above all, such masterpieces by Ingres, Horace Vernet, and Delaroche were worth all the doubtful originals of Flemish and Italian art which make the ordinary boast of private collectors.

These pictures occupied two rooms of moderate size, built for their reception, and lighted from above. The great salon to which they led contained treasures scarcely less precious; the walls were covered with the richest silks which the looms of Lyons could produce. Every piece of furniture here was a work of art in its way: console-tables of Florentine mosaic, inlaid with pearl and lapis-lazuli; cabinets in which the exquisite designs of the Renaissance were carved in ebony; colossal vases of Russian malachite, but wrought by French artists. The very knick-knacks scattered carelessly about the room might have been admired in the cabinets of the Palazzo Pitti. Beyond this room lay the *_salle de danse_*, its ceiling painted by -----, supported by white marble columns, the glazed balcony and the angles of the room filled with tiers of exotics. In the dining-room, on the same floor, on the other side of the landing-place, were stored in glazed buffets not only vessels and salvers of plate, silver and gold, but, more costly still, matchless specimens of Sevres and Limoges, and mediaeval varieties of Venetian glass. On the ground-floor, which opened on the lawn of a large garden, Louvier had his suite of private apartments, furnished, as he said, "simply, according to English notions of comfort;"--Englishmen would have said, "according to French notions of luxury." Enough of these details, which a writer cannot give without feeling himself somewhat vulgarized in doing so, but without a loose general idea of which a reader would not have an accurate conception of something not vulgar,--of something grave, historical, possibly tragical,--the existence of a Parisian millionaire at the date of this narrative.

The evidence of wealth was everywhere manifest at M. Louvier's, but it was everywhere refined by an equal evidence of taste. The apartments

devoted to hospitality ministered to the delighted study of artists, to whom free access was given, and of whom two or three might be seen daily in the "show-rooms," copying pictures or taking sketches of rare articles of furniture or effects for palatial interiors.

Among the things which rich English visitors of Paris most coveted to see was M. Louvier's hotel, and few among the richest left it without a sigh of envy and despair. Only in such London houses as belong to a Sutherland or a Holford could our metropolis exhibit a splendour as opulent and a taste as refined.

M. Louvier had his set evenings for popular assemblies. At these were entertained the Liberals of every shade, from tricolor to rouge, with the artists and writers most in vogue, pelee-mele with decorated diplomatists, ex-ministers, Orleanists, and Republicans, distinguished foreigners, plutocrats of the Bourse, and lions male and female from the arid nurse of that race, the Chaussee d'Antin. Of his more select reunions something will be said later.

"And how does this poor Paris metamorphosed please Monsieur Vane?" asked a Frenchman with a handsome, intelligent countenance, very carefully dressed though in a somewhat bygone fashion, and carrying off his tenth lustrum with an air too sprightly to evince any sense of the weight. This gentleman, the Vicomte de Breze, was of good birth, and had a legitimate right to his title of Vicomte,--which is more than can be said of many vicomtes one meets at Paris. He had no other property, however, than a principal share in an influential journal, to which he was a lively and sparkling contributor. In his youth, under the reign of Louis Philippe, he had been a chief among literary exquisites; and Balzac was said to have taken him more than once as his model for those brilliant young *vauriens* who figure in the great novelist's comedy of Human Life. The Vicomte's fashion expired with the Orleanist dynasty.

"Is it possible, my dear Vicomte," answered Graham, "not to be pleased with a capital so marvellously embellished?"

"Embellished it may be to foreign eyes," said the Vicomte, sighing, "but not improved to the taste of a Parisian like me. I miss the dear Paris of old,--the streets associated with my *beaux jours* are no more. Is there not something drearily monotonous in those interminable perspectives? How frightfully the way lengthens before one's eyes! In the twists and curves of the old Paris one was relieved from the pain of seeing how far one had to go from one spot to another,--each tortuous street had a separate idiosyncrasy; what picturesque diversities, what interesting recollections,--all swept away! *Mon Dieu!* and what for,--miles of flroid *facades* staring and glaring at one with goggle-eyed pitiless windows; house-rents trebled, and the consciousness that if you venture to grumble underground railways, like concealed volcanoes, can burst forth on you at any moment with an eruption of bayonets and muskets. This *maudit* empire seeks to keep its hold on France much as a *grand seigneur* seeks to enchain a nymph of the ballet,--tricks her out in finery and baubles, and insures her infidelity the moment he fails to satisfy her whims."

"Vicomte," answered Graham, "I have had the honour to know you since I was a small boy at a preparatory school home for the holidays, and you were a guest at my father's country-house. You were then *_fete_* as one of the most promising writers among the young men of the day, especially favoured by the princes of the reigning family. I shall never forget the impression made on me by your brilliant appearance and your no less brilliant talk."

"Ah! *_ces beaux jours! ce bon Louis Philippe, ce cher petit Joinville_*," sighed the Vicomte.

"But at that day you compared *_le bon_* Louis Philippe to Robert Macaire. You described all his sons, including, no doubt, *_ce cher petit Joinville_*, in terms of resentful contempt, as so many plausible *_gamins_* whom Robert Macaire was training to cheat the public in the interest of the family firm. I remember my father saying to you in answer, 'No royal house in Europe has more sought to develop the literature of an epoch and to signalize its representatives by social respect and official honours than that of the Orleans dynasty. You, Monsieur de Breze, do but imitate your elders in seeking to destroy the dynasty under which you flourish; should you succeed, you *_hommes de plume_* will be the first sufferers and the loudest complainers.'"

"Cher Monsieur Vane," said the Vicomte, smiling complacently, "your father did me great honour in classing me with Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas, Emile de Girardin, and the other stars of the Orleanist galaxy, including our friend here, M. Savarin. A very superior man was your father."

"And," said Savarin, who, being an Orleanist, had listened to Graham's speech with an approving smile,--"and if I remember right, my dear De Breze, no one was more brilliantly severe than yourself on poor De Lamartine and the Republic that succeeded Louis Philippe; no one more emphatically expressed the yearning desire for another Napoleon to restore order at home and renown abroad. Now you have got another Napoleon."

"And I want change for my Napoleon," said De Breze, laughing.

"My dear Vicomte," said Graham, "one thing we may all grant,--that in culture and intellect you are far superior to the mass of your fellow Parisians; that you are therefore a favourable type of their political character."

"*_Ah, mon cher, vous etes trop aimable_*."

"And therefore I venture to say this,--if the archangel Gabriel were permitted to descend to Paris and form the best government for France that the wisdom of seraph could devise, it would not be two years--I doubt if it would be six months--before out of this Paris, which you call the *_Foyer des Idees_*, would emerge a powerful party, adorned by yourself and other *_hommes de plume_*, in favour of a revolution for the benefit of

ce bon Satan and _ce cher petit Beelzebub_."

"What a pretty vein of satire you have, _mon cher_!" said the Vicomte, good-humouredly; "there is a sting of truth in your witticism. Indeed, I must send you some articles of mine in which I have said much the same thing,--_les beaux, esprits se rencontrent_. The fault of us French is impatience, desire of change; but then it is that desire which keeps the world going and retains our place at the head of it. However, at this time we are all living too fast for our money to keep up with it, and too slow for our intellect not to flag. We vie with each other on the road to ruin, for in literature all the old paths to fame are shut up."

Here a tall gentleman, with whom the Vicomte had been conversing before he accosted Vane, and who had remained beside De Breze listening in silent attention to this colloquy, interposed, speaking in the slow voice of one accustomed to measure his words, and with a slight but unmistakable German accent. "There is that, Monsieur de Breze, which makes one think gravely of what you say so lightly. Viewing things with the unprejudiced eyes of a foreigner, I recognize much for which France should be grateful to the Emperor. Under his sway her material resources have been marvellously augmented; her commerce has been placed by the treaty with England on sounder foundations, and is daily exhibiting richer life; her agriculture had made a prodigious advance wherever it has allowed room for capitalists, and escaped from the curse of petty allotments and peasant-proprietors, a curse which would have ruined any country less blessed by Nature; turbulent factions have been quelled; internal order maintained; the external prestige of France, up at least to the date of the Mexican war, increased to an extent that might satisfy even a Frenchman's amour propre; and her advance in civilization has been manifested by the rapid creation of a naval power which should put even England on her mettle. But, on the other hand--"

"Ay, on the other hand," said the Vicomte.

"On the other hand there are in the imperial system two causes of decay and of rot silently at work. They may not be the faults of the Emperor, but they are such misfortunes as may cause the fall of the Empire. The first is an absolute divorce between the political system and the intellectual culture of the nation. The throne and the system rest on universal suffrage,--on a suffrage which gives to classes the most ignorant a power that preponderates over all the healthful elements of knowledge. It is the tendency of all ignorant multitudes to personify themselves, as it were, in one individual. They cannot comprehend you when you argue for a principle; they do comprehend you when you talk of a name. The Emperor Napoleon is to them a name, and the prefects and officials who influence their votes are paid for incorporating all principles in the shibboleth of that single name. You have thus sought the well-spring of a political system in the deepest stratum of popular ignorance. To rid popular ignorance of its normal revolutionary bias, the rural peasants are indoctrinated with the conservatism that comes from the fear which appertains to property. They have their roots of land or their shares in a national loan. Thus you estrange the crassitude of an ignorant democracy still more from the intelligence of

the educated classes by combining it with the most selfish and abject of all the apprehensions that are ascribed to aristocracy and wealth. What is thus embedded in the depths of your society makes itself shown on the surface. Napoleon III. has been compared to Augustus; and there are many startling similitudes between them in character and in fate. Each succeeds to the heritage of a great name that had contrived to unite autocracy with the popular cause; each subdued all rival competitors, and inaugurated despotic rule in the name of freedom; each mingled enough of sternness with ambitious will to stain with bloodshed the commencement of his power,--but it would be an absurd injustice to fix the same degree of condemnation on the _coup d'etat_ as humanity fixes on the earlier cruelties of Augustus; each, once firm in his seat, became mild and clement,--Augustus perhaps from policy, Napoleon III. from a native kindliness of disposition which no fair critic of character can fail to acknowledge. Enough of similitudes; now for one salient difference. Observe how earnestly Augustus strove, and how completely he succeeded in the task, to rally round him all the leading intellects in every grade and of every party,--the followers of Antony, the friends of Brutus; every great captain, every great statesman, every great writer, every man who could lend a ray of mind to his own Julian constellation, and make the age of Augustus an era in the annals of human intellect and genius. But this has not been the good fortune of your Emperor. The result of his system has been the suppression of intellect in every department. He has rallied round him not one great statesman; his praises are hymned by not one great poet. The celebrates of a former day stand aloof; or, preferring exile to constrained allegiance, assail him with unremitting missiles from their asylum in foreign shores. His reign is sterile of new celebrities. The few that arise enlist themselves against him. Whenever he shall venture to give full freedom to the press and to the legislature, the intellect thus suppressed or thus hostile will burst forth in collected volume. His partisans have not been trained and disciplined to meet such assailants. They will be as weak as no doubt they will be violent. And the worst is, that the intellect thus rising in mass against him will be warped and distorted, like captives who, being kept in chains, exercise their limbs on escaping in vehement jumps without definite object. The directors of emancipated opinion may thus be terrible enemies to the Imperial Government, but they will be very unsafe councillors to France. Concurrently with this divorce between the Imperial system and the national intellect,--a divorce so complete that even your salons have lost their wit, and even your caricatures their point,--a corruption of manners which the Empire, I own, did not originate, but inherit, has become so common that every one owns and nobody blames it. The gorgeous ostentation of the Court has perverted the habits of the people. The intelligence abstracted from other vents betakes itself to speculating for a fortune; and the greed of gain and the passion for show are sapping the noblest elements of the old French manhood. Public opinion stamps with no opprobrium a minister or favourite who profits by a job; and I fear you will find that jobbing pervades all your administrative departments."

"All very true," said De Breze, with a shrug of the shoulders and in a tone of levity that seemed to ridicule the assertion he volunteered;

"Virtue and Honour banished from courts and salons and the cabinet of authors ascend to fairer heights in the attics of _ouvriers_."

"The _ouvriers_, _ouvriers_ of Paris!" cried this terrible German.

"Ay, Monsieur le Comte, what can you say against our _ouvriers_? A German count cannot condescend to learn anything about _ces petites gens_."

"Monsieur," replied the German, "in the eyes of a statesman there are no _petites gens_, and in those of a philosopher no _petites choses_. We in Germany have too many difficult problems affecting our working classes to solve, not to have induced me to glean all the information I can as to the _ouvriers_ of Paris. They have among them men of aspirations as noble as can animate the souls of philosophers and poets, perhaps not the less noble because common-sense and experience cannot follow their flight; but as a body the _ouvriers_ of Paris have not been elevated in political morality by the benevolent aim of the Emperor to find them ample work and good wages independent of the natural laws that regulate the markets of labour. Accustomed thus to consider the State bound to maintain them, the moment the State fails in that impossible task, they will accommodate their honesty to a rush upon property under the name of social reform.

"Have you not noticed how largely increased within the last few years is the number of those who cry out, 'La Propriete, cest le vol'? Have you considered the rapid growth of the International Association? I do not say that for all these evils--the Empire is exclusively responsible. To a certain degree they are found in all rich communities, especially where democracy is more or less in the ascendant. To a certain extent they exist in the large towns of Germany; they are conspicuously increasing in England; they are acknowledged to be dangerous in the United States of America; they are, I am told on good authority, making themselves visible with the spread of civilization in Russia. But under the French Empire they have become glaringly rampant, and I venture to predict that the day is not far off when the rot at work throughout all layers and strata of French society will insure a fall of the fabric at the sound of which the world will ring.

"There is many a fair and stately tree which continues to throw out its leaves and rear its crest till suddenly the wind smites it, and then, and not till then, the trunk which seems so solid is found to be but the rind to a mass of crumbled powder."

"Monsieur le Comte," said the Vicomte, "you are a severe critic and a lugubrious prophet; but a German is so safe from revolution that he takes alarm at the stir of movement which is the normal state of the French esprit."

"French esprit may soon evaporate into Parisian _betise_. As to Germany being safe from revolution, allow me to repeat a saying of Goethe's_-but has Monsieur le Vicomte ever heard of Goethe?"

"Goethe, of course,--_tres joli ecrivain_."

"Goethe said to some one who was making much the same remark as yourself, 'We Germans are in a state of revolution now, but we do things so slowly that it will be a hundred years before we Germans shall find it out; but when completed, it will be the greatest revolution society has yet seen, and will last like the other revolutions that, beginning, scarce noticed, in Germany, have transformed the world.'"

"Diable, Monsieur le Comte! Germans transformed the world! What revolutions do you speak of?"

"The invention of gunpowder, the invention of printing, and the expansion of a monk's quarrel with his Pope into the Lutheran revolution."

Here the German paused, and asked the Vicomte to introduce him to Vane, which De Breze did by the title of Count von Rudesheim. On hearing Vane's name, the Count inquired if he were related to the orator and statesman, George Graham Vane, whose opinions, uttered in Parliament, were still authoritative among German thinkers. This compliment to his deceased father immensely gratified but at the same time considerably surprised the Englishman. His father, no doubt, had been a man of much influence in the British House of Commons,--a very weighty speaker, and, while in office, a first-rate administrator; but Englishmen know what a House of Commons reputation is,--how fugitive, how little cosmopolitan; and that a German count should ever have heard of his father delighted but amazed him. In stating himself to be the son of George Graham Vane, he intimated not only the delight but the amaze, with the frank *savoir vivre* which was one of his salient characteristics.

"Sir," replied the German, speaking in very correct English, but still with his national accent, "every German reared to political service studies England as the school for practical thought distinct from impracticable theories. Long may you allow us to do so! Only excuse me one remark,--never let the selfish element of the practical supersede the generous element. Your father never did so in his speeches, and therefore we admired him. At the present day we don't so much care to study English speeches; they may be insular,--they are not European. I honour England; Heaven grant that you may not be making sad mistakes in the belief that you can long remain England if you cease to be European." Herewith the German bowed, not uncivily,--on the contrary, somewhat ceremoniously,--and disappeared with a Prussian Secretary of Embassy, whose arm he linked in his own, into a room less frequented.

"Vicomte, who and what is your German count?" asked Vane.

"A solemn pedant," answered the lively Vicomte,--"a German count, *_que voulez-vous de plus?*"

A LITTLE later Graham found himself alone amongst the crowd. Attracted by the sound of music, he had strayed into one of the rooms whence it came, and in which, though his range of acquaintance at Paris was for an Englishman large and somewhat miscellaneous, he recognized no familiar countenance. A lady was playing the pianoforte--playing remarkably well --with accurate science, with that equal lightness and strength of finger which produces brilliancy of execution; but to appreciate her music one should be musical one's self. It wanted the charm that fascinates the uninitiated. The guests in the room were musical connoisseurs,--a class with whom Graham Vane had nothing in common. Even if he had been more capable of enjoying the excellence of the player's performance, the glance he directed towards her would have sufficed to chill him into indifference. She was not young, and with prominent features and puckered skin, was twisting her face into strange sentimental grimaces, as if terribly overcome by the beauty and pathos of her own melodies. To add to Vane's displeasure, she was dressed in a costume wholly antagonistic to his views of the becoming,--in a Greek jacket of gold and scarlet, contrasted by a Turkish turban.

Muttering "What she-mountebank have we here?" he sank into a chair behind the door, and fell into an absorbed revery. From this he was aroused by the cessation of the music and the hum of subdued approbation by which it was followed. Above the hum swelled the imposing voice of M. Louvier as he rose from a seat on the other side of the piano, by which his bulky form had been partially concealed.

"Bravo! perfectly played! excellent! Can we not persuade your charming young countrywoman to gratify us even by a single song?" Then turning aside and addressing some one else invisible to Graham he said, "Does that tyrannical doctor still compel you to silence, Mademoiselle?"

A voice so sweetly modulated that if there were any sarcasm in the words it was lost in the softness of pathos, answered, "Nay, Monsieur Louvier, he rather overtasks the words at my command in thankfulness to those who like yourself, so kindly regard me as something else than a singer."

It was not the she-mountebank who thus spoke. Graham rose and looked round with instinctive curiosity. He met the face that he said had haunted him. She too had risen, standing near the piano, with one hand tenderly resting on the she-mountebank's scarlet and gilded shoulder,--the face that haunted him, and yet with a difference. There was a faint blush on the clear pale cheek, a soft yet playful light in the grave dark-blue eyes, which had not been visible in the countenance of the young lady in the pearl-coloured robe. Graham did not hear Louvier's reply, though no doubt it was loud enough for him to hear. He sank again into revery. Other guests now came into the room, among them Frank Morley, styled Colonel,--eminent military titles in the United States do not always denote eminent military services,--a wealthy American, and his sprightly and beautiful wife. The Colonel was a clever man, rather stiff in his deportment, and grave in speech, but by no means without a vein of dry humour. By the French he was esteemed a high-bred specimen of the kind of grand seigneur which democratic republics engender. He spoke

French like a Parisian, had an imposing presence, and spent a great deal of money with the elegance of a man of taste and the generosity of a man of heart. His high breeding was not quite so well understood by the English, because the English are apt to judge breeding by little conventional rules not observed by the American Colonel. He had a slight nasal twang, and introduced "sir" with redundant ceremony in addressing Englishmen, however intimate he might be with them, and had the habit (perhaps with a sly intention to startle or puzzle them) of adorning his style of conversation with quaint Americanisms.

Nevertheless, the genial amiability and the inherent dignity of his character made him acknowledged as a thorough gentleman by every Englishman, however conventional in tastes, who became admitted into his intimate acquaintance.

Mrs. Morley, ten or twelve years younger than her husband, had no nasal twang, and employed no Americanisms in her talk, which was frank, lively, and at times eloquent. She had a great ambition to be esteemed of a masculine understanding; Nature unkindly frustrated that ambition in rendering her a model of feminine grace. Graham was intimately acquainted with Colonel Morley; and with Mrs. Morley had contracted one of those cordial friendships, which, perfectly free alike from polite flirtation and Platonic attachment, do sometimes spring up between persons of opposite sexes without the slightest danger of changing their honest character into morbid sentimentality or unlawful passion. The Morleys stopped to accost Graham, but the lady had scarcely said three words to him, before, catching sight of the haunting face, she darted towards it. Her husband, less emotional, bowed at the distance, and said, "To my taste, sir, the Signorina Cicogna is the loveliest girl in the present bee,* and full of mind, sir."

[*Bee, a common expression in "the West" for a meeting or gathering of people.

"Singing mind," said Graham, sarcastically, and in the ill-natured impulse of a man striving to check his inclination to admire.

"I have not heard her sing," replied the American, dryly; "and the words 'singing mind' are doubtless accurately English, since you employ them; but at Boston the collocation would be deemed barbarous. You fly off the handle. The epithet, sir, is not in concord with the substantive."

"Boston would be in the right, my dear Colonel. I stand rebuked; mind has little to do with singing."

"I take leave to deny that, sir. You fire into the wrong flock, and would not hazard the remark if you had conversed as I have with Signorina Cicogna"

Before Graham could answer, Signorina Cicogna stood before him, leaning lightly on Mrs. Morley's arm.

"Frank, you must take us into the refreshment-room," said Mrs. Morley to

her husband; and then, turning to Graham, added, "Will you help to make way for us?"

Graham bowed, and offered his arm to the fair speaker. "No," said she, taking her husband's. "Of course you know the Signorina, or, as we usually call her, Mademoiselle Cicogna. No? Allow me to present you. Mr. Graham Vane, Mademoiselle Cicogna. Mademoiselle speaks English like a native."

And thus abruptly Graham was introduced to the owner of the haunting face. He had lived too much in the great world all his life to retain the innate shyness of an Englishman; but he certainly was confused and embarrassed when his eyes met Isaura's, and he felt her hand on his arm. Before quitting the room she paused and looked back. Graham's look followed her own, and saw behind them the lady with the scarlet jacket escorted by some portly and decorated connoisseur. Isaura's face brightened to another kind of brightness,--a pleased and tender light.

"Poor dear Madre," she murmured to herself in Italian. "Madre!" echoed Graham, also in Italian. "I have been misinformed, then; that lady is your mother."

Isaura laughed a pretty, low, silvery laugh, and replied in English, "She is not my mother; but I call her Madre, for I know no name more loving."

Graham was touched, and said gently, "Your own mother was evidently very dear to you."

Isaura's lip quivered, and she made a slight movement as if she would have withdrawn her hand from his arm. He saw that he had offended or wounded her, and with the straightforward frankness natural to him, resumed quickly, "My remark was impertinent in a stranger; forgive it."

"There is nothing to forgive, Monsieur."

The two now threaded their way through the crowd, both silent. At last Isaura, thinking she ought to speak first in order to show that Graham had not offended her, said,

"How lovely Mrs. Morley is!"

"Yes; and I like the spirit and ease of her American manner. Have you known her long, Mademoiselle?"

"No; we met her for the first time some weeks ago at M. Savarin's."

"Was she very eloquent on the rights of women?"

"What! you have heard her on that subject?"

"I have rarely heard her on any other, though she is the best and perhaps the cleverest friend I have at Paris; but that may be my fault, for I like to start it. It is a relief to the languid small-talk of society to

listen to any one thoroughly in earnest upon turning the world topsy-turvy."

"Do you suppose poor Mrs. Morley would seek to do that if she had her rights?" asked Isaura, with her musical laugh.

"Not a doubt of it; but perhaps you share her opinions."

"I scarcely know what her opinions are, but--"

"Yes?--but--"

"There is a--what shall I call it?--a persuasion, a sentiment, out of which the opinions probably spring, that I do share."

"Indeed? a persuasion, a sentiment, for instance, that a woman should have votes in the choice of legislators, and, I presume, in the task of legislation?"

"No, that is not what I mean. Still, that is an opinion, right or wrong, which grows out of the sentiment I speak of."

"Pray explain the sentiment."

"It is always so difficult to define a sentiment; but does it not strike you that in proportion as the tendency of modern civilization has been to raise women more and more to an intellectual equality with men, in proportion as they read and study and think, an uneasy sentiment, perhaps querulous, perhaps unreasonable, grows up within their minds that the conventions of the world are against the complete development of the faculties thus aroused and the ambition thus animated; that they cannot but rebel, though it may be silently, against the notions of the former age, when women were not thus educated, notions that the aim of the sex should be to steal through life unremarked; that it is a reproach to be talked of; that women are plants to be kept in a hothouse and forbidden the frank liberty of growth in the natural air and sunshine of heaven? This, at least, is a sentiment which has sprung up within myself; and I imagine that it is the sentiment which has given birth to many of the opinions or doctrines that seem absurd, and very likely are so, to the general public. I don't pretend even to have considered those doctrines; I don't pretend to say what may be the remedies for the restlessness and uneasiness I feel. I doubt if on this earth there be any remedies; all I know is, that I feel restless and uneasy."

Graham gazed on her countenance as she spoke with an astonishment not unmingled with tenderness and compassion, astonishment at the contrast between a vein of reflection so hardy, expressed in a style of language that seemed to him so masculine, and the soft velvet dreamy eyes, the gentle tones, and delicate purity of hues rendered younger still by the blush that deepened their bloom.

At this moment they had entered the refreshment-room; but a dense group being round the table, and both perhaps forgetting the object for which

Mrs. Morley had introduced them to each other, they had mechanically seated themselves on an ottoman in a recess while Isaura was yet speaking. It must seem as strange to the reader as it did to Graham that such a speech should have been spoken by so young a girl to an acquaintance so new; but in truth Isaura was very little conscious of Graham's presence. She had got on a subject that perplexed and tormented her solitary thoughts; she was but thinking aloud.

"I believe," said Graham, after a pause, "that I comprehend your sentiment much better than I do Mrs. Morley's opinions; but permit me one observation. You say truly that the course of modern civilization has more or less affected the relative position of woman cultivated beyond that level on which she was formerly contented to stand,--the nearer perhaps to the heart of man because not lifting her head to his height, --and hence a sense of restlessness, uneasiness; but do you suppose that, in this whirl and dance of the atoms which compose the rolling ball of the civilized world, it is only women that are made restless and uneasy? Do you not see amid the masses congregated in the wealthiest cities of the world, writhings and struggles against the received order of things? In this sentiment of discontent there is a certain truthfulness, because it is an element of human nature, and how best to deal with it is a problem yet unsolved; but in the opinions and doctrines to which, among the masses, the sentiment gives birth, the wisdom of the wisest detects only the certainty of a common ruin, offering for reconstruction the same building-materials as the former edifice,--materials not likely to be improved because they may be defaced. Ascend from the working classes to all others in which civilized culture prevails, and you will find that same restless feeling,--the fluttering of untried wings against the bars between wider space and their longings. Could you poll all the educated ambitious young men in England,--perhaps in Europe,--at least half of them, divided between a reverence for the past and a curiosity as to the future, would sigh, 'I am born a century too late or a century too soon!'"

Isaura listened to this answer with a profound and absorbing interest. It was the first time that a clever young man talked thus sympathetically to her, a clever young girl.

Then, rising, he said, "I see your Madre and our American friends are darting angry looks at me. They have made room for us at the table, and are wondering why I should keep you thus from the good things of this little life. One word more ere we join them,--consult your own mind, and consider whether your uneasiness and unrest are caused solely by conventional shackles on your sex. Are they not equally common to the youth of ours,--common to all who seek in art, in letters, nay, in the stormier field of active life, to clasp as a reality some image yet seen but as a dream?"

No further conversation in the way of sustained dialogue took place that evening between Graham and Isaura.

The Americans and the Savarins clustered round Isaura when they quitted the refreshment-room. The party was breaking up. Vane would have offered his arm again to Isaura, but M. Savarin had forestalled him. The American was despatched by his wife to see for the carriage; and Mrs. Morley said, with her wonted sprightly tone of command,

"Now, Mr. Vane, you have no option but to take care of me to the shawl-room."

Madame Savarin and Signora Venosta had each found their cavaliers, the Italian still retaining hold of the portly connoisseur, and the Frenchwoman accepting the safeguard of the Vicomte de Breze. As they descended the stairs, Mrs. Morley asked Graham what he thought of the young lady to whom she had presented him.

"I think she is charming," answered Graham.

"Of course; that is the stereotyped answer to all such questions, especially by you Englishmen. In public or in private, England is the mouthpiece of platitudes."

"It is natural for an American to think so. Every child that has just learned to speak uses bolder expressions than its grandmamma; but I am rather at a loss to know by what novelty of phrase an American would have answered your question."

"An American would have discovered that Isaura Cicogna had a soul, and his answer would have confessed it."

"It strikes me that he would then have uttered a platitude more stolid than mine. Every Christian knows that the dullest human being has a soul. But, to speak frankly, I grant that my answer did not do justice to the Signorina, nor to the impression she makes on me; and putting aside the charm of the face, there is a charm in a mind that seems to have gathered stores of reflection which I should scarcely have expected to find in a young lady brought up to be a professional singer."

"You add prejudice to platitude, and are horribly prosaic to-night; but here we are in the shawl-room. I must take another opportunity of attacking you. Pray dine with us tomorrow; you will meet our Minister and a few other pleasant friends."

"I suppose I must not say, 'I shall be charmed,'" answered Vane; "but I shall be."

"Bon Dieu! that horrid fat man has deserted Signora Venosta,--looking for his own cloak, I dare say; selfish monster! Go and hand her to her carriage; quick, it is announced!"

Graham, thus ordered, hastened to offer his arm to the she-mountebank.

Somehow she had acquired dignity in his eyes, and he did not feel the least ashamed of being in contact with the scarlet jacket.

The Signora grappled to him with a confiding familiarity. "I am afraid," she said in Italian, as they passed along the spacious hall to the porte cochere,--"I am afraid that I did not make a good effect to-night. I was nervous; did not you perceive it?"

"No, indeed; you enchanted us all;" replied the dissimulator.

"How amiable you are to say so! You must think that I sought for a compliment. So I did; you gave me more than I deserved. Wine is the milk of old men, and praise of old women; but an old man may be killed by too much wine, and an old woman lives all the longer for too much praise. Buona notte."

Here she sprang, lithesomely enough, into the carriage, and Isaura followed, escorted by M. Savarin. As the two men returned towards the shawl-room, the Frenchman said, "Madame Savarin and I complain that you have not let us see so much of you as we ought. No doubt you are greatly sought after; but are you free to take your soup with us the day after to-morrow? You will meet the Count von Rudesheim, and a few others more lively if less wise."

"The day after to-morrow I will mark with a white stone. To dine with M. Savarin is an event to a man who covets distinction."

"Such compliments reconcile an author to his trade. You deserve the best return I can make you. You will meet la belle Isaura. I have just engaged her and her chaperon. She is a girl of true genius; and genius is like those objects of vertu which belong to a former age, and become every day more scarce and more precious."

Here they encountered Colonel Morley and his wife hurrying to their carriage. The American stopped Vane, and whispered, "I am glad, sir, to hear from my wife that you dine with us to-morrow. Sir, you will meet Mademoiselle Cicogna, and I am not without a kinkle [notion] that you will be enthused."

"This seems like a fatality," soliloquized Vane as he walked through the deserted streets towards his lodging. "I strove to banish that haunting face from my mind. I had half forgotten it, and now--" Here his murmur sank into silence. He was deliberating in very conflicted thought whether or not he should write to refuse the two invitations he had accepted.

"Pooh!" he said at last, as he reached the door of his lodging, "is my reason so weak that it should be influenced by a mere superstition? Surely I know myself too well, and have tried myself too long, to fear that I should be untrue to the duty and ends of my life, even if I found my heart in danger of suffering."

Certainly the Fates do seem to mock our resolves to keep our feet from

their ambush, and our hearts from their snare! How our lives may be coloured by that which seems to us the most trivial accident, the merest chance! Suppose that Alain de Rochebriant had been invited to that reunion at M. Louvier's, and Graham Vane had accepted some other invitation and passed his evening elsewhere, Alain would probably have been presented to Isaura--what then might have happened? The impression Isaura had already made upon the young Frenchman was not so deep as that made upon Graham; but then, Alain's resolution to efface it was but commenced that day, and by no means yet confirmed. And if he had been the first clever young man to talk earnestly to that clever young girl, who can guess what impression he might have made upon her? His conversation might have had less philosophy and strong sense than Graham's, but more of poetic sentiment and fascinating romance.

However, the history of events that do not come to pass is not in the chronicle of the Fates.

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