

The Project Gutenberg eBook of Rosin the Beau

This ebook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this ebook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you'll have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

Title: Rosin the Beau

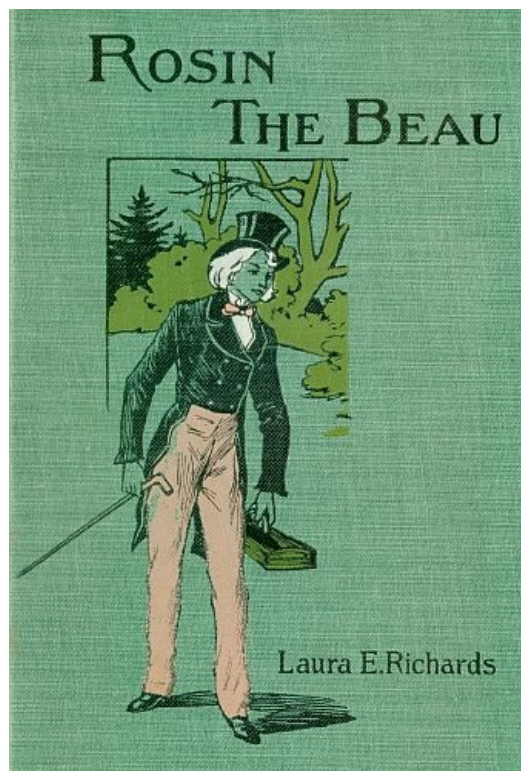
Author: Laura Elizabeth Howe Richards

Release date: December 24, 2008 [eBook #27607]

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROSIN THE BEAU ***

E-text prepared by Suzanne Shell, Emmy,
and the Project Gutenberg Online Distributed Proofreading Team
(<http://www.pgdp.net>)



ROSIN THE BEAU

[2]

The Captain January Series

By LAURA E. RICHARDS

[3]

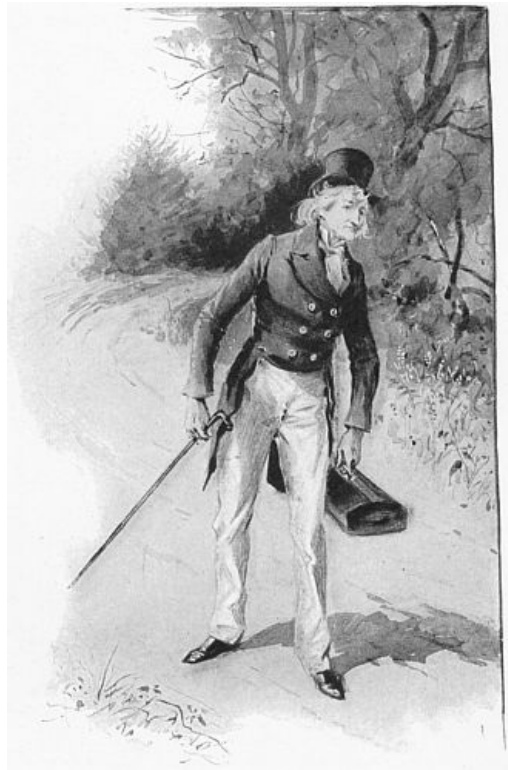
Over 350,000 copies of these books have been sold

CAPTAIN JANUARY	\$.50
Same. Illustrated Holiday Edition.	1.25
Same. Centennial Edition Limited.	2.50
MELODY	.50
Same. Illustrated Holiday Edition.	1.25
MARIE	.50
ROSIN THE BEAU	.50
NARCISSA	.50
SOME SAY	.50
JIM OF HELLAS	.50
SNOW WHITE	.50

Each volume attractively bound in cloth, with handsome new cover design. Frontispiece by Frank T. Merrill

DANA ESTES & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS
Estes Press, Summer Street, Boston

[4]



[5]

ROSIN THE BEAU

By

LAURA E. RICHARDS

Author of
"Captain January," "Snow-White," "Three
Margarets," "Queen Hildegarde," etc.



Boston
Dana Estes & Company
Publishers

TO
My Sister Maud

[6]

ROSIN THE BEAU.

[7]

CHAPTER I.

MELODY, MY DEAR CHILD:

I SIT down to write my story for you, the life-story of old Rosin the Beau, your friend and true lover. Some day, not far distant now, my fiddle and I shall be laid away, in the quiet spot you know and love; and then (for you will miss me, Melody, well I know that!) this writing will be read to you, and you will hear my voice still, and will learn to know me better even than you do now; though that is better than any one else living knows me.

When people ask me where I hail from, our good, neighbourly, down-east way, I answer "From the Androscoggin;" and that is true enough as far as it goes, for I have spent many years on and about the banks of that fine river; but I have told you more than that. You know something of the little village where I was born and brought up, far to the northeast of your own home village. You know something, too, of my second mother, as I call her,—Abby Rock; but of my own sweet mother I have spoken little. Now you shall hear.

[8]

The first thing I can remember is my mother's playing. She was a Frenchwoman, of remarkable beauty and sweetness. Her given name was Marie, but I have never known her maiden surname: I doubt if she knew it herself. She came, quite by accident, being at the time little more than a child, to the village where my father, Jacques De Arthenay, lived; he saw her, and loved her at the sight. She consented to marry him, and I was their only child. My father was a stern, silent man, with but one bright thing in his life,—his love for my mother. Whenever she came before his eyes, the sun rose in his face, but for me he had no great affection; he was incapable of dividing his heart. I have now and then seen a man with this defect; never a woman.

My first recollection, I said, is of my mother's playing. I see myself, sitting on a great black book, the family Bible. I must have been very small, and it was a large Bible, and lay on a table in the sitting-room. I see my mother standing before me, with her violin on her arm. She is light, young, and very graceful; beauty seems to flow from her face in a kind of dark brightness, if I may use such an expression; her eyes are soft and deep. I have seen no other eyes like my mother Marie's. She taps the violin with the bow; then she taps me under the chin.

"*Dis 'Bon jour!' petit Jacques!*" and I say "Bo' zour!" as well as I can, and duck my head, for a bow is expected of me. No bow, no music, and I am quivering with eagerness for the music. Now she draws the bow across the strings, softly, smoothly,—ah, my dear, you have heard only me play, all your life; if you could have heard my mother! As I see her and hear her, this day of my babyhood, the song she plays is the little French song that you love. If you could have heard her sing!

[9]

"A la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné.
Il y a longtemps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai!"

As I went walking, walking,
I found its waves so lovely,
Beside the fountain fair,
I stayed to bathe me there.
'Tis long and long I have loved thee,
I'll ne'er forget thee more.

It is the song of my life, Melody; I never told you that before, but it has always pleased me well that you cared for it.

As my mother sings the last words, she bends and kisses the violin, which was always a living personage to her. Her head moves like a bird's head, quickly and softly. I see her face all brightness, as I have told you; then suddenly a shadow falls on it. My back is towards the door, but she stands facing it. I feel myself snatched up by hands like quivering steel; I am set down—not roughly—on the floor. My father turns a terrible face on my mother.

"Mary!" he cried. "He was on the Bible! You—you set the child on the Holy Bible!"

I am too frightened to cry out or move, but my mother Marie lays down her violin in its box—as tenderly as she would lay me in my cradle—and goes to my father, and puts her arm round his neck, and speaks to him low and gently, stroking back his short, fair hair. Presently the frightful look goes out of his face; it softens into love and sadness; they go hand-in-hand into the inner room, and I hear their voices together speaking gravely, slowly. I do not know that they are praying,—I have known it since. I watch the flies on the window, and wish my father had not come.

[10]

That, Melody, is the first thing I remember. It must have been after that, that my father made me a little chair, and my mother made a gay cushion for it, with scarlet frills, and I sat always in that. Our kitchen was a sunny room, full of bright things; Mother Marie kept everything shining. The floor was painted yellow, and the rugs were scarlet and blue; she dyed the cloth herself, and made them beautifully. There was always a fire—or so it seems now—in the great black gulf of a fireplace, and the crane hung over it, with pots and kettles. The firelight was thrown back from bright pewter and glass and copper all about the walls; I have never seen so gay a room. And always flowers in the window, and always a yellow cat on a red cushion. No canary bird; my mother Marie never would have a bird. "No prisoners!" she would say. Once a neighbour brought her a wounded sparrow; she nursed and tended it till spring, then set it loose and watched it fly away.

This neighbour was a boy, some years older than myself; he is one of the people I remember best. Petie we called him; Peter Brand; he died long ago. He had been a comfort to my mother Marie, in days of sadness,—before my birth, for she was never sad after I came,—and she loved him, and he clung to her. He was a round-faced boy, with hair almost white; awkward and shy, but very good to me.

[11]

As I grew older my mother taught me many French songs and games, and Petie often made a third with us. He made strange work of the French speech; to me it came like running water, but to Petie it was like pouring wine from a corked bottle. Mother Marie could not understand this, and tried always to teach him. I can hear her cry out, "Not thus, Petie! not! you break me the ears! Listen only!"

"*Sur le pont d'Avignon,*"

Encore! again, Petie! sing wiz p'tit Jacques!"

And Petie would drone out, all on one note (for the poor boy had no music either),

"*Sooly pong d'Avinnong,*"

And Mother Marie would put her hands to her ears and cry out, "Ah, *que non!* ah, *que non!* you keell me in my heart!" and poor Petie would be so ashamed! Then Mother Marie would be grieved for him, and would beat herself, and say that she was a demon, a monster of cruelty; and she would run to the cupboard and bring cakes and doughnuts (she always called them "dout's," I remember that), and make Petie eat till his eyes stood out. And it always ended in her taking out the violin, and playing and singing our hearts to heaven. Petie loved music, when Mother Marie made it.

[12]

I speak of cakes. There was no one in the village who could cook like my mother; every one acknowledged that. Whatever she put her hand to was done to perfection. And the prettiness of it all! A flower, a green leaf, a bunch of parsley,—there was some delicate, pretty touch to everything she did. I must have been still small when I began to notice how she arranged the dishes on our table. These matters can mean but little to you, my dear child; but the eyes of your mind are so quick, I know it is one of your delights to fancy the colours and lights that you cannot see. Some bright-coloured food, then,—fried fish, it might be, which should be of a golden brown shade,—would be always on a dark blue platter, while a dark dish, say beefsteak, would be on the creamy yellow crockery that had belonged to my father's mother; and with it a wreath of parsley or carrot, setting off the yellow still more. And always, winter and summer, some flower, if only a single geranium-bloom, on the table. So that our table was always like a festival. I think this troubled my father, when his dark moods were on him. He thought it a snare of the flesh. Sometimes, if the meal were specially dainty, he would eat nothing but dry bread, and this grieved Mother Marie almost more than anything else. I remember one day,—it was my birthday, and I must have been quite a big boy by that time,—Mother Marie had made a pretty rose-feast for me. The table was strewn with rose-leaves, and there was a garland of roses round my plate, and they stood everywhere, in cups and bowls. There was a round cake, too, with rose-coloured frosting; I thought the angels might have such feasts on their birthdays, but was sure no one else could.

[13]

But when my father came in,—I can see now his look of pain and terror.

"You are tempting the Lord, Mary!" he cried. "You are teaching our child to love the lust of the flesh and the pride of the eye. It is sin, it is sin, my wife!"

I trembled, for I feared he would throw my beautiful cake into the fire, as I had once seen him throw a pretty salad. But my mother Marie took his arm. The door stood open, and the warm June was shining through. She led him to the doorway, and pointed to the sky.

"Look, *mon ami!*" she said, in her clear, soft voice. "See the day of gold that the good God has made for our little Jacques! He fills the garden with roses,—I bring His roses in the house. It is that He loves the roses, and the little child, and thee and me, my poor Jacques; for He makes us all, is it not?"

And presently, with her soft hand on his arm, the pain went from my poor father, and he came in and sat down with us, and even patted my head and tasted the cake. I recall many such scenes as this, my dear child. And perhaps I should say that my mind was, and has always remained, with my mother on such matters. If God gives food for the use of His creatures, it is to His honour and glory to serve it handsomely, so far as may be; and I see little religion in a slovenly piece of meat, or a shapeless hunch of butter on a dingy plate. [14]

My mother having this gift of grace, it was not strange that the neighbours often called on her for some service of making beautiful. At a wedding or a merrymaking of any kind she would be sent for, and the neighbours, who were plain people, thought her gift more than natural. People still speak of her in all that part of the country, though she has been dead sixty odd years, little Mother Marie. She would have liked to make the meeting-house beautiful each Sabbath with flowers, but this my father could not hear of, and she never urged it after the first time. At a funeral, too, she must arrange the white blossoms, and lay the pale hands together. Abby Rock has told me many stories of the comfort she brought to sorrowing homes, with her sweet, light, quiet ways. Abby loved her as her own child.

As I grew older, my mother taught me the violin. I learned eagerly. I need not say much about that, Melody; my best playing has been for you, and you know all I could tell you; I learned, and it became the breath of life to me. My lessons were in the morning always, so that my father might not hear the sound; but this was not because he did not love the violin. Far otherwise! In the long winter evenings my mother Marie would play for him, after I was tucked up in my trundle-bed; music of religious quality, which stirred his deep, silent nature strongly. She had learned all the psalm-tunes that he loved, stern old Huguenot melodies, many of them, that had come over from France with his ancestor, and been sung down through the generations since. And with these she played soft, tender airs,—I never knew what they were, but they could wile the heart out of one's breast. I sometimes would lift my head from my pillow, and look through the open door at the warm, light kitchen beyond (for my mother Marie could not bear to shut me into the cold, dark little bedroom; my door stood open all night, and if I woke in the night, the coals would always wink me a friendly greeting, and I could hear the cat purring on her cushion). I would look, I say, through the open door. There would my mother stand, with the light, swaying way she had, like a flower or a young white birch in the wind; her cheek resting on the violin, her eyelids dropped, as they mostly were when she played, and the long lashes black against her soft, clear paleness. And my father Jacques sitting by the fire, his chin in his hand, still as a carved image, looking at her with his heart in his eyes. That is the way I think of them oftenest, Melody, my dear, as I look back to the days long ago; this is the way I mostly see my father and mother, Jacques and Marie De Arthenay, a faithful husband and wife. [15]

CHAPTER II. [16]

OUR village was not far from the sea, and my mother often took me down to the beach. It was a curving beach of fine sand, bright and warm, and the rocks that shut it in were warm, too, brown and yellow; it was a sunny, heartsome place as ever I saw. I remember one day,—many days, and this one of them,—when the three of us went down to the beach, Mother Marie and Petie Brand and I. The Lady, the violin, went too, of course, and we had our music, and it left us heartened through and through, and friends with all the world. Then we began to skip stones, three children together. Petie and I were only learning, and Mother Marie laughed at our stones, which would go flopping and tumbling a little way, then sink with a splash.

"They are ducks!" she said. (She called it "docks," Melody; you cannot think how soft her speech was.) "Poor little docks, that go flap, flap; not yet zey have learned to swim, no! But here now, see a bird of the ze water, a sea-bird what you call." She turned her wrist and sent the flat pebble flying; it skimmed along like a live thing, flipping the little crests of the ripples, going miles, it seemed to Petie and me, till at length we lost sight of it altogether. [17]

"Where did it go?" I asked. "I didn't hear it splash."

"It went—to France!" said Mother Marie. "It makes a voyage, it goes, goes,—at last it arrives. '*Voilà la France!*' it says. 'That I go ashore, to ask of things for Marie, and for *petit Jacques*, and for Petie too, good Petie, who bring the apples.'"

There were red apples in a basket, and I can see now the bright whiteness of her teeth as she set them into one.

"What will the stone see?" I asked again; for I loved to make my mother tell me of the things she remembered in France, the country she always loved. She loved to tell, too; and a dreamy look would come into her eyes at such times, as if she did not see us near at hand, but only things far off and dim. We listened, Petie and I, as if for a fairy tale.

"He come, zat leetle—non! *that lit-tel* stone." (Mother Marie could often pronounce our English "th" quite well; it was only when she forgot that she slipped back to the soft "z" which I liked much better.) "He come to the shore! It is not as this shore, no! White is the sand, the rocks black, black. All about are nets, very great, and boats. The men are great and brown; and their beards—Holy Cric! their beards are a bush for owls; and striped their shirt, jersey, what you call, and blue trousers. Zey come in from sea, their sails are brown and red; the boats are full wiz fish, that shine like silver; they are the herring, *petit Jacques*, it is of those that we live a great deal. Down zen come ze women to ze shore and zey—*they*—are dressed beautiful, ah! so beautiful! A red petticoat,—sometimes a blue, but I love best the red, striped wiz white, and over this the dress turned up, *à la blanchisseuse*. A handkerchief round their neck, and gold earrings,—ah! long ones, to touch their neck; and gold beads, most beautiful! and then the cap! *P'tit Jacques*, thou hast not seen caps, because here they have not the understanding. But! white, like snow in ze sun; the muslin clear, you understand, and stiff that it cracks,—ah! of a beauty! and standing out like wings here, and here—you do not listen! you make not attention, bad children that you are! Go! I tell you no more!"

[18]

It was true, Melody, my dear, that Petie and I did not care so much about the descriptions of dress as if we had been little girls; my mother was never weary of telling about the caps and earrings; I think she often longed for them, poor little Mother Marie! But now Petie and I clung about her, and begged her to go on, and she never could keep her vexation for two minutes.

"Tell how they go up the street!" said Petie.

"Play we went, too!" cried I. "Play the stone was a boat, Mère Marie." (I said it as one word, Melody; it makes a pretty name, "Mère-Marie," when the pronunciation is good. To hear our people say "M'ree" or "Marry," breaks the heart, as my mother used to say.)

[19]

She nodded, pleased enough to play,—for she was a child, as I have told you, in many, many ways, though with a woman's heart and understanding,—and clapped our hands softly together, as she held them in hers.

"We, then, yes! we three, Mère-Marie, *p'tit Jacques*, and Petie, we go up from the beach, up the street that goes tic tac, zic zac, here and there, up the hill; very steep in zose parts. We come to one place, it is steps—"

"Steps in the street?"

"Steps that make the street, but yes! and on them (white steps, clean! ah! of a cleanness!), in the sun, sit the old women, and spin, and sing, and tell stories. Ah! the fine steps. They, too, have caps, but they are brown in the faces, and striped—"

"Striped, Mère-Marie? painted, do you mean?"

"She said the steps had caps!" whispered Petie, incredulous, but too eager for the story to interrupt the teller.

"Painted? wat you mean of foolishness, *p'tit Jacques*? Ah! I was wrong! not striped; wreenkled, you say? all up togezzer like a brown apple when he is dry up,—like zis way!" and Mother Marie drew her pretty face all together in a knot, and looked so comical that we went into fits of laughter.

"So! zey sit, ze old women, and talk, talk, wiz ze heads together; but one sit alone, away from those others, and she sing. Her voice go up, thin, thin, like a little cold wind in ze boat-ropes.

[20]

"Il était trois mat'lots de Groix,
Il était trois mat'lots de Groix,
Embarqués sur le Saint François,
Tra la derira, la la la,
Tra la derira la laire!"^[1]

"I make learn you that song, *petit Jacques*, one time! So we come,—now, *mes enfants*, we come! and all the old women point the nose, and say, 'Who is it comes there?' But that one old—but Mère Jeanne, she cry out loud, loud. 'Marie! *petite Marie*, where hast thou been so long, so long?' She opens the arms—I fall into zem, on my knees; I cry—but hush, *p'tit Jacques*! I cry now only in ze story, only—to—to show thee how it would be! I say, 'It is me, Marie, Mère Jeanne! I come to show thee my little son, to take thy blessing. And my little friend, too!'" She turned to pat Petie's head; she would not let the motherless boy feel left out, even from a world in which he had no part.

"My good friend Petie, whose mother is with the saints. Then Mère Jeanne, she take all our hands, after she has her weep; she say 'Come!' and we go up ze street, up, up, till we come to Mère Jeanne's house."

"Tell about the house!" I cried.

"Holy Cric! what a house!" cried Mère-Marie, clapping her hands together. "It is stone, painted white, clean, like new cheese; the roof beautiful, straw, warm, thick,—ah! what roofs! I have tried to teach thy father to make them, but no! Inside, it is dark and warm, and full wiz good smells. Now it is the *pot-au-feu*, but not every day zis, for Mère Jeanne is poor; but always somesing, fish to fry, or pancakes, or apples. But zis time, Mère Jeanne make me a *fête*; she say, 'It is the *Fête Marie*!' [21]

"She make the fire bright, bright; and she bring big chestnuts, two handfuls of zem, and set zem on ze shovel to roast; and zen she put ze greedle, and she mixed ze batter in a great bowl—it is yellow, that bowl, and the spoon, it is horn. She show it to me, she say, 'Wat leetle child was eat wiz this spoon, Marie? hein?' and I—I kiss the spoon; I say, '*Tite Marie, Mère Jeanne! Tite Marie qui t'aime!*' [2] It is the first words I could say of my life, *mes enfants!*

"Zen she laugh, and nod her head, and she stir, stir, stir till ze bobbles come—"

"The way they do when you make griddle-cakes, Mère-Marie?"

"Ah! no! much, much, thousand time better, Mère Jeanne make zem! She toss them—so! wiz ze spoon, and they shine like gold, and when they come down—hop!—they say 'Ssssssssss!' that they like to fry for Mère Jeanne, and for Marie, and *p'tit Jacques*, and good Petie. Then I bring out the black table, and I know where the bread live, and the cheese, and while the cakes fry, I go to milk the cow—ah! the pearl of cows, children, white like her own cream, fat like a boiled chestnut, good like an angel! She has not forgotten Marie, she rub her nose in my heart, she sing to me. I take her wiz both my arms, I weep—ah! but it is joy, *p'tit Jacques!* it is wiz joy I weep! Zen, again in ze house, and round ze table, we all sit, and we eat, and eat, that we can eat no more. And Mère Jeanne say: [22]

"'Tell me of thy home, Marie!' and I tell all, all; of thy father Jacques, how he good, and great, and handsome as Saint Michael; and how my house is fine, fine, and how Abiroc is good. And Mère Jeanne, she make the great eyes; she cry, 'Ah! the good fortune! Ah, Marie, that thou art fortunate, that thou art happy!'

"Then she tell thee, *p'tit Jacques*, how I was little, little, in a blue frock, wiz the cap tie under my chin; and how I dance and sing in the street, and how *Madame la Comtesse* see me, and take me to ze castle, and make teach me the violin, and give me Madame for my friend. I have told thee all, many, many times. Then she tell, Mère Jeanne,—oh! she is good, good, and all ze time she fill thee wiz chestnuts that I cry out lest thou die,—she tell how one day she come home from market, and I am gone. No Marie! She look, she run here and there, she cry, "'Tite Marie, where art thou?' No Marie come. She run to the neighbours, she search, she tear her cap; they tell her, 'Demand of thy son's wife! The strange ship sailed this morning; we heard child cry; what do we know?' [23]

"For the wife of Mère Jeanne's Jeannot, she was a devil, as I have told thee, a devil with both the eyes evil; and none dare say what she had done, for fear of their children and their cows to die. And then, Mère Jeanne she tell how she run to Jeannot's house,—she fear nossing, Mère Jeanne! the good God protect her always. She cry, 'Where is Marie? where is my child?' And Jeannot's Manon, she laugh, she say, 'Cross the sea after her, old witch! Who keeps thee?' Then—see, *p'tit Jacques!* see, Petie! I have not seen this wiz my eyes, no! but in my heart I have seen, I know! Then Mère Jeanne run at that woman, that devil; and she pull off her cap and tread it wiz her foot; and she pull out her hair,—never she had much, but since this day none!—and she scratch her face and tear the clothes—ah! Mère Jeanne is mild like a cherub till she is angry, but then— And that devil scream, scream, but no one come, no one care; they are all glad, they laugh to hear. Till Jeannot run in, and catch his mother and hold her hands, and take her home to her house. She tell me all this, Mère Jeanne, and it is true, and I know it in my heart. But now she is dead, that witch, and the great devil has her, and that is well." (I think my father would have lost his wits, Melody, if he had heard the way my mother talked to me sometimes; but it was a child's talk, my dear, and there was no harm. A child who had been brought up among ignorant peasants; how should she know better, poor little Mother Marie?) [24]

"But now, see, *mes enfants!* We must come back across the sea, for ze sun, he begin to go away down. So I tell zis, and Mère Jeanne she cry, she take us wiz her arms, she cannot let us go. But I take Madame on my arm, I go out in ze street, I begin to play wiz my hand. Then all come, all run, all cry, 'Marie! Marie is here wiz her *violon!*' And I play, play and sing, and the little children dance, dance, and *p'tit Jacques* and Petie take them the hands and dance wiz—

"Eh! gai, Coco,
Eh! gai, Coco,
Eh! venez voir la danse
Du petit marmot!
Eh! venez voir la danse
Du petit marmot!"

"Adieu, adieu, Mère Jeanne! adieu, la France! but you, *mes enfants*; why do you cry?"

I WAS twelve years old when my mother died. She had no illness, or none that we had known of; the sweet soul of her slipped away in the night like a bird, and left the body smiling asleep. We never knew what ailed her; people did not torment themselves in those days with the "how" of a thing. There may have been talk behind the village doors, but my father never asked. She was gone, and his heart was gone with her, my poor father. She was all the joy of his life, and he never had any more; I never remember seeing him smile after that time. What gave him the best comfort was trying to keep things pretty and bright, as she liked to see them. He was neat as a woman, and he never allowed a speck of dust on the chairs, or a withered leaf on the geraniums. He never would let me touch her flowers, but I was set to polish the pewter and copper,—indeed, my mother had taught me that,—and he watched jealously lest any dimness come on them. I sometimes wondered at all this, as he had so lately counted these matters of adornment and prettiness and such as less than nothing, and vanity, as the preacher has it. But I think his great grief put a sacredness, as it were, over everything that had been hers, and all her ways seemed heavenly to him now, even though he had frowned at them (never at her, Melody, my dear! never at her!) when she was still with him.

[26]

My father wished me to help him in the farm work, but I had no turn for that. I was growing up tall and weedy, and most like my strength went into that. However it was, there was little of it for farming, and less liking. Father Jacques made up his mind that I was no good for anything, but Abby Rock stood up for me.

"The boy is not strong enough for farming, Jacques!" she said. "He's near as tall as you, now, and not fifteen yet. Put him to learn a trade, and he'll be a credit to you."

So I was put to learn shoemaking, and a good trade it has been to me all my life. The shoemaker was a kind old man, who had known me from a baby, and he contrived to make my work easy for me,—seeing I took kindly to it,—and often let me have the afternoon to myself. My lungs were weak, or Abby thought they were, and the doctor had told her I must not sit too long over my bench, but must be out in the air as much as might be, though not at hard labour. Then,—those afternoons, I am saying,—I would be off like a flash with my fiddle,—off to the yellow sand beach where the round pebbles lay. I could never let my poor father hear me play; it was a knife in his heart even to see the Lady; and these hours on the beach were my comfort, and kept the spirit alive in me. Looking out to sea, I could still feel my mother Marie beside me, still hear her voice singing, so gay, so sad,—singing all ways, as the wind blows. She had no voice like yours, Melody, my dear, but it was small and sweet as a bird's; sweet as a bird's! It was there, on the yellow sand beach, that I first met Father L'Homme-Dieu, the priest.

[27]

I have told you a great deal about this good man, Melody. He came of old French stock, like ourselves,—like most of the people in our village; only his people had always been Catholics. His village, where he had a little wooden church, was ten or twelve miles from ours, but he was the only priest for twenty miles round, and he rode or walked long distances, visiting the scattered families that belonged to his following. He chanced to come to the beach one day when I was there, and stayed to hear me play. I never knew he was there till I turned to go home; but then he spoke to me, and asked about my music and my home, and talked so kindly and wisely that my heart went out to him that very hour. He took to me, too; he was a lonely man, and there was none in his own neighbourhood that he cared to make his friend; and seldom a week passed that he did not find his way to the beach, for an hour of music and talk. Talk! How we did talk! There was always a book in his pocket, too, and he would read some fine passage aloud, and then we would discuss it, and turn it over and over, and let it draw our own thoughts like a magnet. It was a rare chance for a country boy, Melody! Here was a scholar, and as fine a gentleman as ever I met, and the heart of a child and a wise man melted into one; and I like his own son for the kindness he gave me. Sometimes I went to his house, but not often, for I could not take so long a time away from my work. He lived in a little house like a bird's house, and the little brown woman who did for him was like a bird, and of all curious things, her name was Sparrow,—the widow Sparrow.

[28]

There was a little study, where he sat at a desk in the middle, and could pull down any book, almost, with no more than tilting his chair; and there was a little dining-room, and a closet with a window in it, where his bed stood. All these rooms were lined with books, most of them works of theology and religion, but plenty of others, too: poetry, and romances, and plays,—he was a great reader, and his books were all the friends he had, he used to say, till he found me. I should have been his son, he would say; and then lay his hand on my head and bid me be good, and say my prayers, and keep my heart true and clean. He never talked much to me of his own church (knowing my father by name and reputation), only made plain to me the love of God, and taught me to seek it through loving man.

I used to wonder how he came to be there, in the wilderness, as it must often have seemed to him, for he had travelled much, and was city-bred, his people having left the seacoast and settled inland in his grandfather's time. One day, as I stood by his desk waiting for him, I saw a box that always lay there, set open; and in it was a portrait of a most beautiful lady in a rich dress. The portrait was in a gold frame set with red stones,—rubies, they may have been,—and was a rich jewel indeed. While I stood looking at it, Father L'Homme-Dieu came in; and at sight of the open box, and me looking at it, his face, that was like old ivory in its ordinary look, flushed dark red as the stones themselves. I was sorely vexed at myself, and frightened too, maybe; but the change

[29]

passed from him, and he spoke in his own quiet voice. "That is the first half of my life, Jacques!" he said. "It is set in heart's blood, my son." And told me that this was his sweetheart who was drowned at sea, and it was after her death that he became a priest, and came to find some few sheep in the wilderness, near the spot where his fathers had lived. Then he bade me look well at the sweet face, and when my time should come to love, seek out one, if not so fair (as he thought there were none such), still one as true, and pure, and tender, and loving once, let it last till death; and so closed the box, and I never saw it open again.

All this time I never let my father know about Father L'Homme-Dieu. It would have seemed to him a terrible thing that his son should be friends with a priest of the Roman Church, which he held a thing accursed. I thought it no sin to keep his mind at peace, and clear of this thing, for a cloud was gathering over him, my poor father. I told Abby, however, good Abby Rock; and though it shocked her at first, she was soon convinced that I brought home good instead of harm from my talks with Father L'Homme-Dieu. She it was who begged me not to tell my father, and she knew him better than any one else did, now that my mother Marie was gone. She told me, too, of the danger that hung over my poor father. The dark moods, since my mother's death, came over him more and more often; it seemed, when he was in one of them, that his mind was not itself. He never slighted his work,—that was like the breath he drew,—but when it was done, he would sit for hours brooding by the fireplace, looking at the little empty chair where my mother used to sit and sing at her sewing. And sitting so and brooding, now and again there would come over him as it were a blindness, and a forgetting of all about him, so that when he came out of it he would cry out, asking where he was, and what had been done to him. He would forget, too, that my mother was gone, and would call her, "Mary! Mary!" so that one's heart ached to hear him; and then Abby or I must make it clear to him again, and see the dumb suffering of him, like a creature that had not the power of speech, and knew nothing but pain and remembrance.

[30]

I might have been seventeen or eighteen at this time; I do not recall the precise year. I was doing well with my shoemaking, and when this trouble grew on my poor father I brought my bench into the kitchen, so that I might have him always in sight. This was well enough for every day, but already I was beginning to be sent for here and there, among the neighbouring villages, to play the fiddle. The people of my father's kind were passing away, those who thought music a device of the devil, and believed that dancing feet were treading the road to hell. He was still a power in our own village; but in the country round about the young folks were learning the use of their feet, and none could hinder them, being the course of nature, since young lambs first skipped in the meadows. It was an old farmer, a good, jolly kind of man, who first gave me the name of "Rosin." He sent for me to play at his barn-raising, and a pretty sight it was; a fine new barn, Melody, all smelling sweet of fresh wood, and hung with lanterns, and a vast quantity of fruits and vegetables and late flowers set all about. Pretty, pretty! I have never seen a prettier barn-raising than that, and I have fiddled at a many since then. Well, this old gentleman calls to me across the floor, "Come here, young Rosin!" I remember his very words. "Come here, young Rosin! I can't get my tongue round your outlandish name, but Rosin'll do well enough for you." Well, it stuck to me, the name did, and I was never sorry, for I did not like to carry my father's name about overmuch, he misliking the dancing as he did. The young folks caught up an old song, and tagged that name on too, and called me Rosin the Bow. So it was first, Melody; but there are two songs, as you know, my dear, to the one tune (or one tune is all I know, and fits both sets of words), and the second song spells the word "Beau," and so some merry girls in a house where I often went to play, they vowed I should be Rosin the Beau. I suppose I may have been rather a good-looking lad, from what they used to say; and to make a long story short, it was by that name that I came to be known through the country, and shall be known till I die. An old beau enough now, my little girl; eighty years old your Rosin will be, if he lives till next September. I took to playing the air whenever I entered a room; it made a little effect, a little stir,—I was young and foolish, and it took little to please me in those days. But I have always thought, and think still, that a man, as well as a woman, should make the best of the mortal part of him; and I do not know why we should not be thankful for a well-looking body as for a well-ordered mind. I cannot abide to see a man shamble or slouch, or throw his arms and legs about as if they were timber logs. Many is the time I have said to my scholars, when I was teaching dancing-school,—great lumbering fellows, hulking through a quadrille as if they were pacing a raft in log-running,—"Don't insult your Creator by making a scarecrow of the body He has seen fit to give you. With reverence, He might have given it to one of better understanding; but since you have it, for piety's sake hold up your head, square your shoulders, and put your feet in the first position!"

[31]

[32]

[33]

But I wander from the thread of my story, as old folks will do. After all, it is only a small story, of a small life; not every man is born to be great, my dear. Yet, while I sat on my shoemaker's bench, stitching away, I thought of greatness, as I suppose most boys do. I thought of a scholar's life, like that of Father L'Homme-Dieu before his sorrow came to him; a life spent in cities, among libraries and learned, brilliant people, men and women. I thought of a musician's life, and dreamed of the concerts and operas that I had never heard. The poet Wordsworth, my dear, has written immortal words about the dreams of a boy, and my dreams were fair enough. It seemed as if all the world outside were clouded in a golden glory, if I may put it so, and as if I had only to run forth and put aside this shining veil, to find myself famous, and happy, and blessed. And when I came down from the clouds, and saw my little black bench, and the tools and scraps of leather, and my poor father sitting brooding over the fire, my heart would sink down within me, and the longing would come strong upon me to throw down hammer and last, and run away, out into that great world that was calling for me. And so the days went by, and the months, and the years.

I WAS twenty years old when the change came in my life. I remember the day was cold and bleak, an early spring day. My father had had an accident a few days before. In one of his unconscious fits he had fallen forward—I had left the room but for a moment—and struck his head sharply against one of the fire-irons. He came to himself quite wild, and seeing the blood, thought he had killed some one, and cried to us to take him to prison as a murderer. It took Abby and me a long time to quiet him. The shock and the pain of it all had shaken me more than I knew, and I felt sick, and did not know what ailed me; but Abby knew, and she sent me to see Father L'Homme-Dieu, while she sat with my father. I was glad enough to go, more glad than my duty allowed, I fear; yet I knew that Abby was better than I at caring for my father.

As I walked across the brown fields, where the green was beginning to prick in little points here and there, I began to feel the life strong in me once more. The dull cloud of depression seemed to drop away, and instead of seeing always that sad, set face of my poor father's, I could look up and around, and whistle to the squirrels, and note the woodpecker running round the tree near me. It has remained a mystery to me all my life, Melody, that this bird's brains are not constantly addled in his head, from the violence of his rapping. When I was a little boy, I tried, I remember, to nod my head as fast as his went nodding; with the effect that I grew dizzy and sick, and Mother Marie thought I was going to die, and said the White Paternoster over me five times.

[35]

I looked about me, I say, and felt my spirit waking with the waking of the year. Yet, though I was glad to feel alive and young once more, I never thought I was going to anything new or wonderful. The wise, kind friend would be there; we should talk, and I should come away refreshed and strengthened, in peace and courage; I thought of nothing more. But when the widow Sparrow opened the door to me, I heard voices from the room within; a strange voice of a man, and the priest's answering. I stopped short on the threshold.

"The Father is busy!" I said. "I will call again, when he is alone."

"Now don't you!" said Mrs. Sparrow, who was always fond of me, and thought it a terrible walk for me to take, so young, and with the "growing weakness" not out of me. "Don't ye go a step, Jacques! I expect you can come in just as well as not. There is a gentleman here, but he's so pleasant, I should wish to have you see him, if I was the Father."

I was hesitating, all the shyness of a country-bred boy coming over me; for I had a quick ear, and this strange voice was not like the voices I was used to hearing; it was like Father L'Homme-Dieu's, fine and high-bred. But the next instant Father L'Homme-Dieu had stepped to the door of the study, and saw me.

[36]

"Come in, Jacques!" he cried. His eyes were bright, and his air gay, as I had never seen it. "Come in, my son! I have a friend here, and you are the very person I want him to meet." I stepped over the threshold awkwardly enough, and stood before the stranger. He was a young man, a few years older than myself; tall and slender,—we might have been twins as far as height and build went, but there the resemblance ceased. He was fair, with such delicate colouring that he might have looked womanish but for the dark fiery blue of his eyes, and his little curled moustache. He looked the way you fancy a prince looking, Melody, when Auntie Joy tells you a fairy story, though he was simply dressed enough.

"Marquis," said Father L'Homme-Dieu, with a shade of ceremony that I had never heard before in his tone, "let me present to you M. Jacques D'Arthenay, my friend! Jacques, this is the Marquis de Ste. Valerie."

He gave my name the French pronunciation. It was kindly meant; at my present age, I think it was perhaps rightly done; but then, it filled me with a kind of rage. The angry blood of a false pride, a false humility, surged to my brain and sang in my ears; and as the young man stepped forward with outstretched hand, crying, "A compatriot. Welcome, monsieur!" I drew back, stammering with anger. "My name is Jacques De Arthenay!"^[3] I said. "I am an American, a shoemaker, and the son of a farmer."

[37]

There was a moment of silence, in which I seemed to live a year. I was conscious of everything, the well-bred surprise of the young nobleman, the half-amused vexation of the priest, my own clumsy, boyish rage and confusion. In reality it was only a few seconds before I felt my friend's hand on my shoulder, with its kind, fatherly touch.

"Sit down, my child!" he said. "Does it matter greatly how a name is pronounced? It is the same name, and I pronounced it thus, not without a reason. Sit down, and have peace!"

There was authority as well as kindness in his voice. I sat down, still trembling and blushing. Father L'Homme-Dieu went on quietly, as if nothing had happened.

"It was for the marquis's sake that I gave your name its former—and correct—pronunciation, my son Jacques. If I mistake not, he is of the same part of France from which your ancestors came. Huguenots of Blaque, am I not right, marquis?"

I was conscious that the stranger, whom I was inwardly accusing as a pretentious puppy, a slip of a dead and worthless tree, was looking at me intently; my eyes seemed drawn to his whether I

would or no. So meeting those blue eyes, there passed as it were a flash from them into mine, a flash that warmed and lightened, as a smile broke over his face.

[38]

"D'Arthenay!" he said, in a tone that seemed to search for some remembrance. "*D'Arthenay, tenez foi! n'est-ce pas, monsieur?*"

I started. The words were the motto of my father's house. They were engraved on the stone which marked the grave of my grandfather many times back, Jacques, Sieur D'Arthenay. Seeing my agitation, the marquis leaned forward eagerly. He was full of quick, light gestures, that somehow brought my mother back to me.

"But, we are neighbours!" he cried. "We must be friends, M. D'Arthenay. Your tower—it is a noble ruin—stands not a league from my château in Blanque. The Ste. Valeries and the D'Arthenays were always friends, since Adam was, and till the Grand Monarque separated them with his accursed Revocation. Monsieur, that I am enchanted at this rencounter! *La bonne aventure, oh gai! n'est-ce pas, mon père?*"

There was no resisting his eager gaiety. And when he quoted the nursery song that my mother used to sing, my stubborn resentment—at what? who can say?—broke and melted away, and I was smiling back into the bright, merry eyes. Once more he held out his hand, and this time I took it gladly. Father L'Homme-Dieu looked on in delight; it was a good moment.

After that the talk flowed freely. I found that the young marquis, having come on a pleasure tour to the United States, had travelled thus far out of the general route to look up the graves of some of his mother's people, who had come out with Baron Castine, but had left him, as my ancestor had done, on account of his marriage with the Indian princess. They were the Belleforts of Blanque.

[39]

"Bellefort!" I cried. "That name is on several stones in our old burying-ground. The Belforts of our village are their descendants, Father L'Homme-Dieu."

"Not Ham?" cried the father, bursting into a great laugh. "Not Ham Belfort, Jacques?"

I laughed back, nodding. "Just Ham, father!"

I never saw Father L'Homme-Dieu so amused. He struck his hands together, and leaned back in his chair, repeating over and over, "Ham Belfort! Cousin of the Marquis de Ste. Valerie! Ham Belfort! Is it possible?"

The young nobleman looked from one to the other of us curiously.

"But what?" he asked. "Ham! *c'est-à-dire, jambon, n'est-ce pas?*"

"It is also a Biblical name, marquis!" said Father L'Homme-Dieu. "I must ask who taught you your catechism!"

"True! true!" said the marquis, slightly confused. "*Sem, Ham, et Japhet*, perfectly! and—I have a cousin, it appears, named Jam—I should say, Ham? Will you lead me to him, M. D'Arthenay, that I embrace him?"

[40]

"You shall see him!" I said. "I don't think Ham is used to being embraced, but I will leave that to you. I will take you to see him, and to see the graves in the burying-ground, whenever you say."

"But now, at the present time, this instant!" cried Ste. Valerie, springing from his chair. "Here is Father L'Homme-Dieu dying of me, in despair at his morning broken up, his studies destroyed by chatter. Take me with you, D'Arthenay, and show me all things; Ham, also his brothers, and Noë and the Ark, if they find themselves also here. Amazing country! astonishing people!"

So off we went together, he promising Mrs. Sparrow to return in time for dinner, and informing her that she was a sylphide, which caused her to say, "Go along!" in high delight. He had brought a letter to the priest, from an old friend, and was to stay at the house.

Back across the brown fields we went. I was no longer alone; the world was full of new light, new interest. I felt that it was good to be alive; and when my companion began to sing in very lightness of heart, I joined in, and sang with right good will.

"La bonne aventure, oh gai!
La bonne aventure!"

He told me that his mother always sang him this song when he had been a good boy; I replied that mine had done the same. How many French mothers have sung the merry little lilt, I wonder? We sang one snatch and another, and I could not see that the marquise had had the advantage of the little peasant girl, if it came to songs.

[41]

The marquis—but why should I keep to the empty title, which I was never to use after that first hour? Nothing would do but that we should be friends on the instant, and for life,—Jacques and Yvon. "Thus it was two centuries ago," my companion declared, "thus shall it be now!" and I, in my dream of wonderment and delight, was only too glad to have it so.

We talked of a thousand things; or, to be precise, he talked, and I listened. What had I to say that could interest him? But he was full of the wonders of travel, the strangeness of the new

world and the new people. Niagara had shaken him to the soul, he told me; on the wings of its thunder he had soared to the empyrean. How his fanciful turns of expression come back to me as I write of him! He was proud of his English, which was in general surprisingly good.

New York he did not like,—a savage in a Paris gown, with painted face; but on Boston he looked with the eyes of a lover. What dignity! what Puritan, what maiden grace of withdrawal! An American city, where one feels oneself not a figure of chess, but a human being; where no street resembles the one before it, and one can wander and be lost in delicious windings! Ah! in Boston he could live, the life of a poet, of a scholar.

[42]

"And then,—what, my friend? I come, I leave those joys, I come away here, to—to the locality of jump-off, as you say,—and what do I find? First, a pearl, a saint; for nobleness, a prince, for holiness, an anchorite of Arabia,—Le Père L'Homme-Dieu! Next, the ancient friend of my house, who becomes on the instant mine also, the brother for whom I have yearned. With these, the graves of my venerable ancestors, heroes of constancy, who lived for war and died for faith; graves where I go even now, where I kneel to pay my duty of respect, to drop the filial tear!"

"Don't forget your living relations!" I said, with some malice. "Here is your cousin, coming to meet us."

CHAPTER V.

[43]

AN ox-team was lumbering along the road towards us. The huge oxen lurched from side to side, half-asleep, making nothing of their load of meal-sacks piled high in air; their driver walked beside, half-asleep, too. He was a giant in height (six foot six, Melody, in his stockings! I have measured him myself), and his white clothes made him look something monstrous indeed. Yvon stared and gaped, as this vision came slowly towards him.

"What—what is it?" he asked. "Is it a monster?"

"Oh, no!" I said. "It's only Ham Belfort. How are you, Ham?"

"Smart!" said Ham. "How be you? Hoish, Star! haw! Stand still there, will ye?"

The oxen came to a halt willingly enough, and man and beasts stood regarding us with calm, friendly eyes. Ham and his oxen looked so much alike, Melody (the oxen were white, I ought to have said), that I sometimes thought, if we dressed one of the beasts up and did away with his horns, people would hardly know which was which.

"Taking a load over to Cato?"

[44]

Cato was the nearest town, my dear. It was there that the weekly boat touched, which was our one link with the world of cities and railways.

Ham nodded; he was not given to unnecessary speech.

"Is your wife better? I heard she was poorly."

"No, she ain't! I expect she'll turn up her toes now most any day."

This seemed awkward. I muttered some expressions of regret, and was about to move on, when my companion, who had been gazing speechless and motionless at the figure before him, caught my arm.

"Present me!" he whispered. "Holy Blue! this is my cousin, my own blood! Present me, Jacques!"

Now, I had never had occasion to make a formal introduction in my life, Melody. I had not yet begun to act as master of ceremonies at balls, only as fiddler and call-man; and it is the living truth that the only form of words I could bring to mind at the moment was, "Gents, balance to partners!" I almost said it aloud; but, fortunately, my wits came back, and I stammered out, sorely embarrassed:

"Ham, this is—a gentleman—who—who is staying with Father L'Homme-Dieu."

"That so? Pleased to meet you!" and Ham held out a hand like a shoulder of mutton, and engulfed the marquis's slender fingers.

"I am delighted to make the acquaintance of Mr. Belfort," said Ste. Valerie, with winning grace. "I please myself to think that we are related by blood. My mother was a Bellefort of Blanque; it is the French form of your name, Mr. Belfort."

[45]

"I want to know!" said Ham. "*Darned* pleased to meet you!" He laboured for a moment, casting a glance of appeal at the oxen, who showed no disposition to assist him; then added, "You're slim-appearin' for a Belfort; they run consid'able large in these parts."

"Truly, yes!" cried the marquis, laughing delightedly. "You desire to show the world that there are still giants. What pleasure, what rapture, to go through the crowd of small persons, as myself, as D'Arthenay here, and exhibit the person of Samson, of Goliath!"

Ham eyed him gravely. "Meanin' shows?" he asked, after a pause of reflection. "No, we've never shew none, as I know of. We've been asked, father 'n' I, to allow guessin' on our weight at fairs and sech, but we jedged it warn't jest what we cared about doin'. Sim'lar with shows!"

This speech was rather beyond Ste. Valerie, and seeing him look puzzled, I struck in, "Mr. Ste. Valerie wants to see the old graves in the old burying-ground, Ham. I told him there were plenty of Belforts there, and spelling the name as he does, with two l's and an e in the middle."

"I want to know if he spells it that way!" said Ham, politely. "We jedged they didn't know much spellin', in them times along back, but I presume there's different ideeas. Does your folks run slim as a rule?" [46]

"Very slim, my cousin!" said Yvon. "Of my generation, there is none so great as myself."

"I *want* to know!" said Ham; and the grave compassion in his voice was almost too much for my composure. He seemed to fear that the subject might be a painful one, and changed it with a visible effort.

"Well, there's plenty in the old berr'in-ground spelt both ways. Likely it don't matter to 'em now."

He pondered again, evidently composing a speech; again he demanded help of the oxen, and went so far as to examine an ear of the nigh ox with anxious attention.

"Pears as if what Belforts is above the sod ought to see something of ye!" he said at last. "My woman is sick, and liable to turn—I should say, liable to pass away most any time; but if she should get better, or—anything—I should be pleased to have ye come and stop a spell with us at the grist-mill. Any of your folks in the grist business?"

"Grist?" Ste. Valerie looked helplessly at me. I explained briefly the nature of a grist-mill, and said truly that Ham's mill was one of the pleasantest places in the neighbourhood. Yvon was enchanted. He would come with the most lively pleasure, he assured Ham, so soon as Madame Belfort's health should be sufficiently rehabilitated. I remember, Melody, the pride with which he rolled out that long word, and the delight with which he looked at me, to see if I noticed it. [47]

"Meantime," he added, "I shall haste at the earliest moment to do myself the honour to call, to make inquiries for the health of madame, to present my respectful homages to monsieur your father. He will permit me to embrace him as a son?"

Fortunately Ham only heard the first part of this sentence; he responded heartily, begging the marquis to call at any hour. Then, being at the end of his talk, he shook hands once more with ponderous good will, and passed on, he and the oxen rolling along with equal steps.

Ste. Valerie was silent until Ham was out of earshot; then he broke out.

"Holy Blue! what a prodigy! You suffer this to burst upon me, Jacques, without notice, without preparation. My nerves are permanently shattered. You tell me, a man; I behold a tower, a mountain, Atlas crowned with clouds! Thousand thunders! what bulk! what sinews! and of my race! Amazing effect of—what? Climate? occupation? In France, this race shrinks, diminishes; a rapier, keen if you will, but slender like a thread; here, it swells, expands, towers aloft,—a club of Hercules. And with my father, who could sit in my pocket, and my grandfather, who could sit in his! Figure to yourself, Jacques, that I am called *le grand Yvon!*" He was silent for a moment, then broke out again. "But the mind. D'Arthenay! the brain; how is it with that? Thought,—a lightning flash! is it not lost, wandering through a head large like that of an ox?" [48]

I cannot remember in what words I answered him, Melody. I know I was troubled how to make it clear to him, and he so different from the other. I seemed to stand midway between the two, and to understand both. Half of me seemed to spring up in joy at the voice of the young foreigner; his lightness, his quickness, the very way he moved his hands, seemed a part of my own nature that I had not learned to use, and now saw reflected in another. I am not sure if I make myself clear, my child; it was a singular feeling. But when I would spring forward with him, and toss my head and wave my hands as he did,—as my mother Marie did,—there was something held me back; it was the other nature in me, slow and silent, and—no! not cold, but loath to show its warmth, if I may put it so. My father in me kept me silent many a time when I might have spoken foolishness. And it was this half, my father's half, that loved Ham Belfort, and saw the solid sweetness of nature that made that huge body a temple of good will, so to speak. He had the kind of goodness that gives peace and rest to those who lean against it. His mill was one of the places—but we shall come to that by and by!

Walking on as we talked, we soon came to the village, and I begged my new friend to come in and see my father and my home. We entered. My father was standing by the fire, facing the door, with one hand on the tall mantel-shelf. He was in one of his waking dreams, and I was struck deeply, Melody, by the beauty, and, if I may use the word about a plain man, the majesty of his looks. My companion was struck, too, for he stopped short, and murmured something under his breath; I heard the word "Noblesse," and thought it not amiss. My father's eyes (they were extraordinarily bright and blue) were wide open, and looked through us and beyond us, yet saw nothing, or nothing that other eyes could see; the tender look was in them that meant the thought of my mother. But Abby came quietly round from the corner where she sat sewing, and laid her hand on his arm, and spoke clearly, yet not sharply, telling him to look and see, Jakey had brought a gentleman to see him. Then the vision passed, and my father looked and saw us, and [49]

came forward with a stately, beautiful way that he could use, and bade the stranger welcome. Ste. Valerie bowed low, as he might to a prince. Hearing that he was a Frenchman, my father seemed pleased. "My dear wife was a Frenchwoman!" he said. "She was a musician, sir; I wish you could have heard her play."

"He was himself also of French descent," Ste. Valerie reminded him, with another bow; and told of the ruined tower, and the old friendship between the two houses. But my father cared nothing for descent.

"Long ago, sir!" he said. "Long ago! I have nothing to do with the dead of two hundred years back. I am a plain farmer; my son has learned the trade of shoemaking, though he also has some skill with the fiddle, I am told. Nothing compared to his mother, but still some skill." [50]

Ste. Valerie looked from one of us to the other. "A farmer,—a shoemaker!" he said, slowly. "Strange country, this! And while your *vieille noblesse* make shoes and till the soil, who are these, monsieur, who live in some of the palaces that I have seen in your cities? In many, truly, persons of real nobility also, gentlemen, whether hunting of race or of Nature's own. But these others? I have seen them; large persons, both male and female, red as beef, their grossness illuminated with diamonds of royalty, their dwelling a magazine from the Rue de la Paix. These things are shocking to a European, M. D'Arthenay!" My father looked at him with something like reproof in his quiet gaze.

"I have never been in cities," he said. "I consider that a farmer's life may be used as well as another for the glory of God."

Then, with a wave of his hand, he seemed to put all this away from him, and with a livelier air asked the stranger to take supper with us. Abby had been laying the cloth quietly while we were talking, and my father would have asked her to sit down with us, but she slipped away while his face was turned in the other direction, and though he looked once or twice, he soon forgot. Poor Abby! I had seen her looking at him as he talked, and was struck by her intent expression, as if she would not lose a word he might say. It seemed natural, though, that he should be her first thought; he had always been, since my mother died. [51]

So presently we three sat about the little table, that was gay with flowers and pretty dishes. I saw Ste. Valerie's wondering glances; was it thus, he seemed to ask, that a farmer lived, who had no woman to care for him? My father saw, too, and was pleased as I had rarely seen him. He did not smile, but his face seemed to fill with light.

"My wife, sir," he said, "loved to see things bright and adorned. I try—my son and I try—to keep the table as she would like it. I formerly thought these matters sinful, but I have been brought to a clearer vision,—through affliction." (Strange human nature, Melody, my child! he was moved to say these words to a stranger, which he could not have said to me, his son!) "She had the French taste and lightness, my wife Mary. I should have been proud to have you see her, sir; the Lord was mindful of His own, and took her away from a world of sin and suffering."

The light died out; his eyes wandered for a moment, and then set, in a way I knew; and I began to talk fast of the first thing that came into my mind.

CHAPTER VI.

 [52]

I COULD write a whole book about the summer that followed this spring day, when I first met Yvon de Ste. Valerie. Yes, and the book would be so long that no mortal man would have time to read it; but I must hurry on with my story; for truth to tell, my eyes are beginning to be not quite what they have been,—they'll serve my time, I hope, but my writing was always small and crabbed,—and I must say what I have to say, shorter than I have begun, I perceive. After the first week, then, which he spent with Father L'Homme-Dieu, Yvon came over to our village and boarded with Abby Rock. The Father was pleased to have him come; he knew it would be a great thing for me, and he thought it would not hurt the young gentleman to live for a time with plain folks. But if he thought Yvon would look down on our village people, or hold himself better than they, he was mistaken. In a week the young Frenchman was the son and brother of the whole village. Our people were dear, good people, Melody; but I sometimes thought them a little dull; that was after my mother's death. I suppose I had enough of another nature in me to be troubled by this, but not enough to know how to help it; later I learned a little more; but indeed, I should justly say that my lessons were begun by Yvon de Ste. Valerie. It was from him I learned, my dear, that nothing in this world of God's is dull or common, unless we bring dull hearts and dim eyes to look at it. It is the vision, the vision, that makes the life; that vision which you, my child, with your sightless eyes, have more clearly than almost any one I have known. [53]

He was delighted with everything. He wanted to know about everything. He declared that he should write a book, when he returned to France, all about our village, which he called Paradise. It is a pretty place, or was as I remember it. He must see how bread was made, how wool was spun, how rugs were braided. Many's the time I have found him sitting in some kitchen, winding the great balls of rags neatly cut and stitched together, listening like a child while the woman told him of how many rugs she had made, and how many quilts she had pieced; and she more pleased than he, and thinking him one wonder and herself another.

He was in love with all the girls; so he said, and they had nothing to say against it. But yet there was no girl could carry a sore heart, for he treated them all alike. In this I have thought that he showed a sense and kindness beyond his years or his seeming giddiness; for some of them might well enough have had their heads turned by a gentleman, and one so handsome, and with a tongue that liked better to say "Angel!" to a woman than anything more suited to the average of the sex. But no girl in the village could think herself for a moment the favoured maiden; for if one had the loveliest eyes in the world, the next had a cheek of roses and velvet, and the third walked like a goddess, and the fourth charmed his soul out of his body every time she opened her lips. And so it went on, till all understood it for play, and the pleasantest play they ever saw. But he vowed from the first that he would marry Abby Rock, and no other living woman. Abby always said yes, she would marry him the first Sunday that came in the middle of the week; and then she would try to make him eat more, though he took quite as much as was good for him, not being used to our hearty ways, especially in the mornings. Abby was as pleased with him as a child with a kitten, and it was pretty to see them together.

[54]

"Light of my life!" Yvon would cry. "You are exquisite this morning! Your eyes are like stars on the sea. Come, then, angelic Rock, *Rocher des Anges*, and waltz with your Ste. Valerie!" And he would take Abby by the waist, and try to waltz with her, till she reached for the broomstick. I have told you, Melody, that Abby was the homeliest woman the Lord ever made. Not that I ever noticed it, for the kindness in her face was so bright I never saw anything but that; but strangers would speak of it, and Yvon himself, before he heard her speak, made a little face, I remember, that only I could see, and whispered, had I brought him to lodge with Medusa? Medusa, indeed! I think Abby's smile would soften any stone that had ever had a human heart beating in it, instead of the other way.

[55]

But the place in the village that Yvon loved best was Ham Belfort's grist-mill; and when he comes to my mind, in these days, when sadder visions are softened and partly dim to me, it is mostly there that I seem to see my friend.

It was, as I have said, one of the pleasantest places in the world. To begin with, the colour and softness of it all! The window-glass was powdered white, and the light came through white and dim, and lay about in long powdery shafts, and these were white, too, instead of yellow. So was the very dust white; or rather, it was good oatmeal and wheat flour that lay thick and crumbling on the rafters above, and the wheels and pulleys and other gear. As for Ham, the first time Yvon saw him in the mill, he cried out "Mont Blanc!" and would not call him anything else for some time. For Ham was whiter than all the rest, in his working-dress, cap and jacket and breeches, white to begin with, and powdered soft and furry, like his face and eyebrows, with the flying meal. Down-stairs there was plenty of noise; oats and corn and wheat pouring into the hoppers, and the great stones going round and round, and wheels creaking and buzzing, and belts droning overhead. Yvon could not talk at all here, and I not too much; only Ham's great voice and his father's (old Mr. Belfort was Ham over again, gray under the powder, instead of pink and brown) could roar on quietly, if I may so express it, rising high above the rattle and clack of the machinery, and yet peaceful as the stream outside that turned the great wheels and set the whole thing flying. So, as he could not live long without talking, Yvon loved best the loft above, where the corn was stored, both in bags and unground, and where the big blowers were, and the old green fire-engine, and many other curious things. I had known them all my life, but they were strange to him, and he never tired, any more than if he had been a boy of ten. Sometimes I wondered if he could be twenty-two, as he said; sometimes when he would swing himself on to the slide, where the bags of meal and flour were loaded on to the wagons. Well, Melody, it was a thing to charm a boy's heart; it makes mine beat a little quicker to think of it, even now; perhaps I was not much wiser than my friend, after all. This was a slide some three feet wide, and say seven or eight feet long, sloping just enough to make it pleasant, and polished till it shone, from the bags that rubbed along it day after day, loading the wagons as they backed up under it. Nothing would do but we must slide down this, as if, I say, we were children of ten years old, coming down astride of the meal-sacks, and sending a plump of flour into the air as we struck the wagon. Father Belfort thought Yvon was touched in the brain; but he was all the more gentle on this account. Boys were not allowed on the slide, unless it were a holiday, or some boy had had a hard time with sickness or what not; it was a treat rarely given, and the more prized for that. But Yvon and I might slide as much as we pleased. "Keep him cheerful, Jakey!" the dear old man would say. "Let him kibobble all he's a mind to! I had a brother once was looney, and we kep' him happy all his life long, jest lettin' him stay a child, as the Lord intended. Six foot eight he stood, and weighed four hundred pounds."

[56]

[57]

And when the boy was tired of playing we would sit down together, and call to Ham to come up and talk; for even better than sliding, Yvon loved to hear his cousin talk. You can take the picture into your mind, Melody, my dear. The light dim and white, as I have told you, and very soft, falling upon rows and rows of full sacks, ranged like soldiers; the great white miller sitting with his back against one of these, and his legs reaching anywhere,—one would not limit the distance; and running all about him, without fear, or often indeed marking him in any way, a multitude of little birds, sparrows they were, who spent most of their life here among the meal-sacks. Sometimes they hopped on his shoulder, or ran over his head, but they never minded his talking, and he sat still, not liking to disturb them. It was a pretty sight of extremes in bulk, and in nature too; for while Ham was afraid to move, for fear of troubling them, they would bustle up to him and cock their heads, and look him in the eye as if they said, "Come on, and show me which is the biggest!"

[58]

There you see him, my dear; and opposite to him you might see a great mound or heap of corn that shone yellow as gold. "*Le Mont d'Or*," Yvon called it; and nothing would do but he must sit on this, lifted high above us, yet sliding down every now and then, and climbing up again, with the yellow grains slipping away under him, smooth and bright as pebbles on the shore. And for myself, I was now here and now there, as I found it more comfortable, being at home in every part of the friendly place.

How we talked! Ham was mostly a silent fellow; but he grew to love the lad so that the strings of his tongue were loosened as they had never been before. His woman, too (as we say in those parts, Melody; wife is the more genteel expression, but I never heard Ham use it. My father, on the other hand, never said anything else; a difference in the fineness of ear, my dear, I have always supposed),—his woman, I say, or wife, had not "turned up her toes," but recovered, and as he was a faithful and affectionate man, his heart was enlarged by this also. However it was, he talked more in those weeks, I suppose, than in the rest of his life put together. Bits of his talk, homely and yet wise, come back to me across the sixty years. One day, I remember, we talked of life, as young men love to talk. We said nothing that had not been said by young men since Abel's time, I do suppose, but it was all new to us; and indeed, my two companions had fresh ways of putting things that seemed to make them their own in a manner. Yvon maintained that gaiety was the best that life had to give; that the butterfly being the type of the human soul, the nearer man could come to his prototype, the better for him and for all. Sorrow and suffering, he cried, were a blot on the scheme, a mistake, a concession to the devil; if all would but spread their wings and fly away from it, houp! it would no longer exist. "*Et voilà!*"

[59]

We laughed, but shook our heads. Ham meditated awhile, and then began in his strong, quiet voice, a little husky, which I always supposed was from his swallowing so much raw meal and flour.

"That's one way of lookin' at it, Eavan; I expect that's your French view, likely; looks different, you see, to folks livin' where there's cold, and sim'lar things, as butterflies couldn't find not to say comfortable. Way I look at it, it always seemed to me that grain come as near it as anything, go to compare things. Livin' in a grist-mill, I presume, I git into a grainy way of lookin' at the world. Now, take wheat! It comes up pooty enough, don't it, in the fields? Show me a field o' wheat, and I'll show you as handsome a thing as is made this side of Jordan. Wal, that might be a little child, we'll say; if there's a thing handsomer than a field o' wheat, it's a little child. But bimeby comes reapin' and all, and then the trouble begins. First, it's all in the rough, ain't it, chaff and all, mixed together; and has to go through the thresher? Well, maybe that's the lickin's a boy's father gives him. He don't like 'em,—I can feel Father Belfort's lickin's yet,—but they git red of a sight o' chaff, nonsense, airs, and what not, for him. Then it comes here to the grist-mill. Well, I may be gittin' a little mixed, boys, but you can foller if you try, I expect. Say that's startin' out in life, leavin' home, or bindin' to a trade, or whatever. Well, it goes into the duster, and there it gets more chaff blowed off'n it. And from the duster it goes into the hopper, and down in betwixt the stones; and them stones grind, grind, grind, till you'd think the life was ground clear'n out of it. But 'tain't so; contrary! That's affliction; the upper and nether millstone—Scriptur! Maybe sickness, maybe losin' your folks, maybe business troubles,—whichever comes is the wust, and more than any mortal man ever had to bear before. Well, now, see! That stuff goes in there, grain; it comes out wheat flour! Then you take and wet it down and put your 'east in,—that's thought, I expect, or brains,—or might be a woman,—and you bake it in the oven,—call that—well, 'git-up-and-git' is all I can think of, but I should aim for a better word, talkin' to a foreigner."

[60]

"Purpose," I suggested.

"That's it! purpose! bake it in that oven, and you have a loaf of wheat bread, riz bread; and that's the best eatin' that's ben invented yet. That's food for the hungry,—which raw wheat ain't, except it's cattle. But now you hear me, boys! To git wheat bread, riz bread, you've got to have wheat to begin with. You've got to have good stuff to start with. You can't make good riz bread out o' field corn. But take good stuff and grind it in the Lord's mill, and you've got the best this world can give. That's my philos'phy!"

[61]

He nodded his head to the last words, which fell slowly and weightily; and as he did so, the sparrow that had been perched on his head ran down his nose and fluttered in his face, seeming to ask how he dared make such a disturbance. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure!" said Ham. "I'd no notion I was interferin' with you. Why didn't you hit one of your size?"

CHAPTER VII.

[62]

I T was in the grist-mill loft, too, that Yvon brought forward his great plan, what he called the project of his life,—that of taking me back to France with him. I remember how I laughed when he spoke of it; it seemed as easy for me to fly to the moon as to cross the ocean, a thing which none of my father's people had done since the first settlers came. My mother, to be sure, had come from France, but that was a different matter; nor had her talk of the sea made me feel any longing for it. But Yvon had set his heart on it; and his gay talk flowed round and over my objections, as your brook runs over stones. I must go; I should go! I should see my tower, the castle of my fathers. It was out of repair, he could not deny that; but what! a noble château might still be made of it. Once restored, I would bring my father over to end his days with me, under the

roof that alone could properly shelter a person of such nobility. He had won my father's heart, too, Melody, as he won all hearts; they understood each other in some fine, far-off way, that was beyond me. I sometimes felt a little pang that was not, I am glad to believe, jealousy, only a wish that I might be more like Yvon, more like my mother's people, since it was that so charmed my poor father.

I asked Yvon how I was to live, how my father and I should support ourselves in our restored castle, and whose money would pay for the restoration. He threw this aside, and said that money was base, and he refused to consider it. It had nothing to do with the feelings, less than nothing with true nobility. Should I then take my cobbler's bench, I asked him, and make shoes for him and his neighbours, while my father tilled the ground? But then, for the first and almost the last time, I saw my friend angry; he became like a naughty, sulky child, and would hardly speak to me for the rest of the day.

[63]

But he clung to his idea, none the less; and, to my great surprise, my father took it up after awhile. He thought well, he told me, of Yvon's plan; Yvon had talked it over with him. He, himself, was much stronger than he had been (this was true, Melody, or nothing would have induced me to leave him even for a week; Yvon had been like a cordial to him, and he had not had one of his seizures for weeks); and I could perfectly leave him under Abby's care. I had not been strong myself, a voyage might be a good thing for me; and no doubt, after seeing with my own eyes the matters this young lad talked of, I would be glad enough to come home and settle to my trade, and would have much to think over as I sat at my bench. It might be that a man was better for seeing something of the world; he had never felt that the Lord intended him to travel, having brought to his own door all that the world held of what was best (he paused here, and said "Mary!" two or three times under his breath, a way he had when anything moved him), but it was not so with me, nor likely to be, and it might be a good thing for me to go. He had money laid by that would be mine, and I could take a portion of that, and have my holiday.

[64]

These are not his very words, Melody, but the sense of them. I was strangely surprised; and being young and eager, the thought came upon me for the first time that this thing was really possible; and with the thought came the longing, and a sense which I had only felt dimly before, and never let speak plain to me, as it were. I suppose every young man feels the desire to go somewhere else than the place where he has always abided. The world may be small and wretched, as some tell him, or great and golden, according to the speech of others; he believes neither one nor the other, he must see it with his own eyes. So this grew upon me, and I brooded over it, till my life was full of voices calling, and hands pointing across the sea, to the place which is Somewhere Else. I talked with Father L'Homme-Dieu, and he bade me go, and gave me his blessing; he had no doubt it was my pleasure, and might be my duty, in the way of making all that might be made of my life. I talked with Abby; she grew pale, and had but one word, "Your father!" Something in her tone spoke loud to my heart, and there came into my mind a thought that I spoke out without waiting for it to cool.

"Won't you marry my father, Abby?"

[65]

Abby's hands fell in her lap, and she turned so white that I was frightened; still, I went on. "You love him better than any one else, except me." (She put her hand on her heart, I remember, Melody, and kept it there while I talked; she made no other sign.)

"And you can care for him ten times better than I could, you know that, Abby, dear; and—and—I know Mère-Marie would be pleased."

I looked in her face, and, young and thoughtless as I was, I saw that there which made me turn away and look out of the window. She did not speak at once; but presently said in her own voice, or only a little changed, "Don't speak like that, Jakey dear! You know I'll care for your father all I can, without that;" and so put me quietly aside, and talked about Yvon, and how good Father L'Homme-Dieu had been to me.

But I, being a lad that liked my own way when it did not seem a wrong one (and not only then, perhaps, my dear; not only then!), could not let my idea go so easily. It seemed to me a fine thing, and one that would bring happiness to one, at least; and I questioned whether the other would mind it much, being used to Abby all his life, and a manner of cousin to her, and she my mother's first friend when she came to the village, and her best friend always. I was very young, Melody, and I spoke to my father about it; that same day it was, while my mind was still warm. If I had waited over night, I might have seen more clear.

[66]

"Father," said I; we were sitting in the kitchen after supper; it was a summer evening, soft and fair, but a little fire burned low on the hearth, and he sat near it, having grown chilly this last year.

"Father, would you think it possible to change your condition?"

He turned his eyes on me, with an asking look.

"Would you think it possible to marry Abby Rock?" I asked; and felt my heart sink, somehow, even with saying the words. My father hardly seemed to understand at first; he repeated, "Marry Abby Rock!" as if he saw no sense in the words; then it came to him, and I saw a great fire of anger grow in his eyes, till they were like flame in the dusk.

"I am a married man!" he said, slowly. "Are you a child, or lost to decency, that you speak of

this to a married man?"

He paused, but I found nothing to say. He went on, his voice, that was even when he began, dropping deeper, and sinking as I never heard it.

"The Lord in His providence saw fit to take away my wife, your mother, before sickness, or age, or sorrow could strike her. I was left, to suffer some small part of what my sins merit, in the land of my sojourn. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. But because my wife Mary,—my wife Mary" (he lingered over the words, loving them so), "is a glorified spirit in another world, and I am a prisoner here, is she any less my wife, and I her faithful husband? You are my son, and hers,—hers, Jakey; but if you ever say such words to me again, one house will not hold us both." He turned his head away, and I heard him murmuring under his breath, "Mary! Mary!" as I have said his way was; and I was silent and ashamed, fearing to speak lest I make matters worse; and so presently I slipped out and left him; and my fine plan came to naught, save to make two sad hearts sadder than they were.

[67]

But it was to be! Looking back, Melody, after fifty years, I am confident that it was the will of God, and was to be. In three weeks from that night, I was in France.

I pass over the wonder of the voyage; the sorrowful parting, too, that came before it, though I left all well, and my father to all appearances fully himself. I pass over these, straight to the night when Yvon and I arrived at his home in the south of France. We had been travelling several days since landing, and had stopped for two days in Paris. My head was still dizzy with the wonder and the brightness of it all. There was something homelike, too, in it. The very first people I met seemed to speak of my mother to me, as they flung out their hands and laughed and waved, so different from our ways at home. I was to see more of this, and to feel the two parts in me striving against each other; but it is early to speak of that.

The evening was warm and bright, as we came near Château Claire; that was the name of my friend's home. A carriage had met us at the station, and as we drove along through a pretty country (though nothing to New England, I must always think), Yvon was deep in talk with the driver, who was an old servant, and full of news. I listened but little, being eager to see all my eyes could take in. Vines swung along the sides of the road, in a way that I always found extremely graceful, and wished we might have our grapes so at home. I was marvelling at the straw-roofed houses and the plots of land about them no bigger than Abby Rock's best tablecloth, when suddenly Yvon bade pull up, and struck me on the shoulder. "*D'Arthenay, tenez foi!*" he cried in my ear; and pointed across the road. I turned, and saw in the dusk a stone tower, square and bold, covered with ivy, the heavy growth of years. It was all dim in the twilight, but I marked the arched door, with carving on the stone work above it, and the great round window that stared like a blind eye. I felt a tugging at my heart, Melody; the place stood so lonely and forlorn, yet with a stateliness that seemed noble. I could not but think of my father, and that he stood now like his own tower, that he would never see.

[68]

"Shall we alight now?" asked Yvon. "Or will you rather come by daylight, Jacques, to see the place in beauty of sunshine?"

I chose the latter, knowing that his family would be looking for him; and no one waited for me in La Tour D'Arthenay, as it was called in the country. Soon we were driving under a great gateway, and into a courtyard, and I saw the long front of a great stone house, with a light shining here and there.

[69]

"Welcome, Jacques!" cried Yvon, springing down as the great door opened; "welcome to Château Claire! Enter, then, my friend, as thy fathers entered in days of old!"

The light was bright that streamed from the doorway; I was dazzled, and stumbled a little as I went up the steps; the next moment I was standing in a wide hall, and a young lady was running forward to throw her arms round Yvon's neck.

He embraced her tenderly, kissing her on both cheeks in the French manner; then, still holding her hand, he turned to me, and presented me to his sister. "This is my friend," he said, "of whom I wrote you, Valerie; M. D'Arthenay, of La Tour D'Arthenay, Mademoiselle de Ste. Valerie!"

The young lady curtsied low, and then, with a look at Yvon, gave me her hand in a way that made me feel I was welcome. A proper manner of shaking hands, my dear child, is a thing I have always impressed upon my pupils. There is nothing that so helps or hinders the first impression, which is often the last impression. When a person flaps a limp hand at me, I have no desire for it, if it were the finest hand in the world; nor do I allow any tricks of fashion in this matter, as sometimes seen, with waggling this way or that; it is a very offensive thing. Neither must one pinch with the finger-tips, nor grind the bones of one's friend, as a strong man will be apt to do, mistaking violence for warmth; but give a firm, strong, steady pressure with the hand itself, that carries straight from the heart the message, "I am glad to see you!"

[70]

This is a speech I have made many times; I have kept the young lady waiting in the hall while I made it to you, thereby failing in good manners.

At the first glance, Valerie de Ste. Valerie seemed hardly more than a child, for she was slight and small; my first thought was, how like she was to her brother, with the same fair hair and dark, bright blue eyes. She was dressed in a gown of white dimity, very fine, with ruffles at the foot of the skirt, and a fichu of the same crossed on her breast. I must say to you, my dear

Melody, that it was from this first sight of her that I took the habit of observing a woman's dress always. A woman of any age taking pains to adorn herself, it has always seemed to me boorish not to take careful note of the particulars of a toilet. Mlle. de Ste. Valerie wore slippers of blue kid, her feet being remarkably slender and well-shaped; and a blue ribbon about her hair, in the manner of a double fillet. After a few gracious words, she went forward into a room at one side of the hall, we following, and here I was presented to her aunt, a lady who had lived with the brother and sister since their parents' death, a few years before this time. Of this lady, who was never my friend, I will say little. Her first aspect reminded me of frozen vinegar, carved into human shape; yet she had fine manners, and excused herself with dignity for not rising to salute us, being lame, as her nephew knew. For Yvon, though he kissed her hand (a thing I had never seen before), I thought there was little love in the greeting; nor did he seem oppressed with grief when she excused herself also from coming to sup with us.

[71]

At supper, we three together at a table that was like a small island of warm pleasantness in the great hollow dining-hall, Yvon was full of wild talk, we two others mostly listening. He had everything to tell, about the voyage, about his new friends, all of whom were noble and beautiful and clever.

"Figure to yourself, Valerie!" he cried. "I found our family there; the most noble, the most gigantic persons in the world! Thy cousin Jambon, it is a giant, eight feet high, at the least. He denies it, he is the soul of modesty, but I have eyes, and I see. This man has the soul greater than his vast body; we have discussed life, death, in short, the Infinite, we three, Jambon and Jacques and I. He has a father—both have fathers! it is the course of nature. The father of D'Arthenay here is a prince, a diamond of the old rock; ah! if our father of sainted memory could have known M. D'Arthenay *père*, Valerie, he would have known the brother of his soul, as their sons know each other. Not so, Jacques? But *le père* Bellefort, Valerie, he is gigantesque, like his son. These rocks, these towers, they have the hearts of children, the smiles of a crowing infant. You laugh, D'Arthenay? I say something incorrect? how then?"

[72]

He had said nothing incorrect, I told him; I only thought it would be surprising to hear Father Belfort crow, as he hardly spoke three times in the day.

"True! but what silence! the silence of fullness, of benevolence. Magnificent persons, not to be approached for goodness."

So he rattled on, while his sister's blue eyes grew wider and wider. I did not in truth know what to say. I hardly recognised our plain people in the human wonders that Yvon was describing; I could hardly keep my countenance when he told her about Mlle. Roc, an angel of pious dignity. I fancied Abby transported here, and set down at this table, all flowers and perfumed fruits and crimson-shaded lights; the idea seemed to me comical, though now I know that Abby Rock would do grace to any table, if it were the President's. I was young then, and knew little. And so the lad talked on and on, and his fair young lady sister listened and marvelled, and I held my tongue and looked about me, and wondered was I awake or asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

[73]

THE pictures come back fast and thick upon my mind. I suppose every life, even the quietest, has its picture-book, its record of some one time that seems filled with beauty or joy as a cup that brims over. Every one, perhaps, could write his own fairy story; this is mine.

The next day Yvon had a thousand things to show me. The ladies sat in their own room in the morning, and the rest of the castle was our own. It amazed me, being a great building, and the first of the kind I had seen. Terraces of stone ran about the house, except on the side of the courtyard, and these were set with flowering shrubs in great stone pots, that would take two men to lift. Beyond the terraces the ground fell away in soft banks and hollows to where I heard a brook running through a wood-piece. Inside, the rooms, very lofty and spacious, were dark to my eyes, partly from the smallness of the windows, partly from the dark carved wood that was everywhere, on floor and walls and ceilings. I could never be at home, I thought, in such a place; though I never found elsewhere such a fine quality of floor; smooth in the perfect degree, yet not too slippery for firm treading, and springing to the foot in a way that was next to dance music for suggestion. I said as much to Yvon, and he caught the idea flying, as was his way, and ran to bring his sister, bidding me get my fiddle on the instant. We were in a long hall, rather narrow, but with excellent space for a few couples, let alone one. Mlle. de Ste. Valerie came running, her hand in her brother's, a little out of breath from his suddenness, and in the prettiest morning dress of blue muslin. I played my best waltz, and the two waltzed. This is one of the brightest pictures in my book, Melody. The young lady had perfect grace of motion, and had been well taught; I knew less about the matter than I do now, but still enough to recognise fine dancing when I saw it; her brother was a partner worthy of her. I have seldom had more pure pleasure in playing dance music, and I should have been willing it had lasted all day; but it was not long before a sour-faced maid came and said my Lady had sent her to say mademoiselle should be at her studies; and she ran away laughing, yet sorry to go, and dropped a little running curtsey at the door, very graceful, such as I have never seen another person make.

[74]

The room was darker when she was gone; but Yvon cried to me I must see the armory, and the

chapel, and a hundred other sights. I followed him like a child, my eyes very round, I doubt not, and staring with all my might. The armory was another of the long halls or corridors that ran along the sides of the courtyard. Here were weapons of all kinds, but chiefly swords; swords of every possible make and size, some of great beauty, others clumsy enough, that looked as if bears should handle them. I had never held a sword in my hand,—how should I?—but Yvon vowed I must learn to fence, and told some story of an ancestor of mine who was the best swordsman in the country, and kept all comers at bay in some old fight long ago. I took the long bit of springy steel, and found it extraordinary comfortable to the hand. Practice with the fiddle-bow since early childhood gave, I may suppose, strength and quickness to the turn of my wrist; however it was, the marquis cried out that I was born for the sword; and in a few minutes again cried to know who had taught me tricks of fence. Honesty knows, I had had no teaching; only my eye caught his own motions, and my hand and wrist answered instantly, being trained to ready obedience. I felt a singular joy in this exercise, Melody. In grace and dexterity it equals the violin; with this difference, which keeps the two the width of the world apart, that the one breeds trouble and strife, while the other may, under Providence, soothe human ills more than any other one thing, save the kindly sound of the human voice.

[75]

Make the best defence I could, it was not long before Yvon sent my foil flying from my hand; but still he professed amazement at my ready mastering of the art, and I felt truly that it was natural to me, and that with a few trials I might do as well as he.

Next I must see the chapel, very ancient, but kept smart with candles and crimson velvet cushions. I could not warm to this, feeling the four plain walls of a meeting-house the only thing that could enclose my religious feelings with any comfort; and these not to compare with a free hillside, or the trees of a wood when the wind moves in them. And then we went to the stables, and the gardens, laid out very stately, and his sister's own rose garden, the pleasantest place in the whole, or so I thought.

[76]

So with one thing and another, it was late afternoon before Yvon remembered that I must not sleep again without visiting my own tower, as he would call it; and for this, the young lady had leave to go with us. It was a short walk, not more than half a mile, and in a few minutes we were looking up at the tower, that seemed older and sadder by day than it had done in the evening dimness. It stood alone. The body of what had been behind and beside it was gone, but we could trace the lines of a large building, the foundations still remaining; and here and there were piles of cut stone, the same stone as that in the tower. Yvon told me that ever since the castle had begun to fall into decay (being long deserted), the country people around had been in the habit of mending their houses, and building them indeed, often, from the stone of the old château. He pointed to one cottage and another, standing around at little distance. "They are dogs," he cried, "that have each a bit of the lion's skin. Ah, Jacques! but for my father of blessed memory, thy tower would have gone in the same way. He vowed, when he came of age, that this desecration should go no further. He brought the priest, and together they laid a fine curse upon whoever should move another stone from the ruins, or lay hands on La Tour D'Arthenay. Since then, no man touches this stone. It remains, as you see. It has waited till this day, for thee, its propriety."

[77]

He had not quite the right word, Melody, but I had not the heart to correct him, being more moved by the thing than I could show reason for. Inside the tower there was a stone staircase, that went steeply up one side, or rather the front it was, for from it we could step across to a wide stone shelf that stood out under the round window. It might have been part of a great chimney-piece, such as there still were in Château Claire. The ivy had reached in through the empty round, and covered this stone with a thick mat, more black than green. Though ready enough to step on this myself, I could not think it fit for Mlle. de Ste. Valerie, and took the liberty to say so; but she laughed, and told me she had climbed to this perch a hundred times. She was light as a leaf, and when I saw her set her foot in her brother's hand and spring across the empty space from the stair to the shelf, it seemed no less than if a wind had blown her. Soon we were all three crouching or kneeling on the stone, with our elbows in the curve of the great window, looking out on the prospect. A fair one it was, of fields and vineyards, with streams winding about, but very small. They spoke of rivers, but I saw none. It was the same with the hills, which Yvon bade me see here and there; little risings, that would not check the breath in a running man. For all that, the country was a fine country, and I praised it honestly, though knowing in my heart that it was but a poor patch beside our own. I was thinking this, when the young lady turned to me, and asked, in her gracious way, would I be coming back, I and my people, to rebuild Château D'Arthenay?

[78]

"It was the finest in the county, so the old books say!" she told me. "There was a hall for dancing, a hundred feet long, and once the Sieur D'Arthenay gave a ball for the king, Henri Quatre it was, and the hall was lighted with a thousand tapers of rose-coloured wax, set in silver sconces. How that must have been pretty, M. D'Arthenay!"

I thought of our kitchen at home, and the glass lamps that Mère-Marie kept shining with such care; but before I could speak, Yvon broke in. "He shall come! I tell him he shall come, Valerie! All my life I perish, thou knowest it, for a companion of my sex, of my age. Thou art my angel, Valerie, but thou art a woman, and soon, too, thou wilt leave me. Alone, a hermit in my château, my heart desolate, how to support life? It is for this that I cry to the friend of my house to return to his country, the country of his race; to bring here his respected father, to plant a vineyard, a little corn, a little fruit,—briefly, to live. Observe!" Instantly his hands fluttered out, pointing here and there.

[79]

"Jacques, observe, I implore you! This tower; it is now uninhabited, is it not? you can answer me that, though you have been here but a day."

As he waited for an answer, I replied that it certainly was vacant, so far as I could see; except that there must be bats and owls, I thought, in the thickness of the ivy trees.

"Perfectly! Except for these animals, there is none to dispute your entrance. The tower is solid,—of a solidity! Cannon must be brought, to batter down these walls. Instead of battering, we restore, we construct. With these brave walls to keep out the cold, you construct within—a dwelling! vast, I do not say; palatial, I do not say; but ample for two persons, who—who have lived together, *à deux*, not requiring separate suites of apartments." He waved his hand in such a manner that I saw long sets of rooms opening one after another, till the eye was lost in them.

"Here, where we now are posed, is your own room, Jacques. For you this view of Paradise. Monsieur your father will not so readily mount the stairs, becoming in future years infirm, though now a tree, an oak, massive and erect. We build for the future, D'Arthenay! Below, then, the paternal apartments, the salon, perhaps a small room for guns and dogs and appliances." Another wave set off a square space, where we could almost see the dogs leaping and crouching.

"Behind again, the kitchens, offices, what you will. A few of these stones transported, erected; glass, carpets, a fireplace,—the place lives in my eyes, Jacques! Let us return to the château, that I set all on paper. You forget that I study architecture, that I am a draftsman, hein? Ten minutes, a sheet of drawing-paper,—pff! Château D'Arthenay lives before you, ready for habitation on the instant."

[80]

I saw it all, Melody; I saw it all! Sometimes I see it now, in an old man's dream. Now, of course, it is wild and misty as a morning fog curling off the hills; but then, it seemed hardly out of reach for the moment. Listening to my friend's eager voice, and watching his glowing face, there came to life in me more and more strongly the part that answered to him. I also was young; I also had the warm French blood burning in me. In height, in strength, perhaps even in looks, I was not his inferior; he was noble, and my fathers had stood beside his in battle, hundreds of times.

I felt in a kind of fire, and courted the heat even while it burned me. I answered Yvon, laughing, and said surely I would have no other architect for my castle. Mlle. de Ste. Valerie joined in, and told me where I should buy carpets, and what flowers I should plant in my garden.

"Roses, M. D'Arthenay!" she cried. "Roses are the best, for the masses. A few gillyflowers I advise, they are so sweet; and plenty of lilies, the white and yellow. Oh! I have a lily with brown stripes, the most beautiful! you shall have a bulb of it; I will start it for you myself, in a stone pot. You must have a little conservatory, too, for winter plants; one cannot live without flowers, even in winter. All winter, when no longer many flowers bloom out-of-doors, though always some, always my hardy roses, then I live half my day in the conservatory. You shall have some of my flowers; oh, yes, I can spare you plenty."

[81]

She was so like her brother! There was the same pretty eagerness, the same fire of kindness and good will, hurrying both along to say they knew not what. I could only thank her; and the very beauty and sweetness of her struck all at once a sadness on my merriment; and I saw for a moment that this was all a fleeting wreath of fog, as I said; yet all the more for that strove to grasp it and hold it fast.

The sun went down behind the low hills, and the young lady cried that she must hasten home; her aunt would be vexed at her for staying so long. Yvon said, his faith, she might be vexed. If Mlle. de Ste. Valerie might not go out with her brother, the head of her house and her natural guardian, he knew not with whom she might go; and muttered under his breath something I did not hear. So we went back to the château, and still I was in the bright dream, shutting my eyes when it seemed like to break away from me. The evening was bright and joyous, like the one before. Again we three supped alone, and it seemed this was the custom, the Countess Lalange (it was the name of the aunt) seldom leaving her own salon, save to pass to her private apartments beyond it. We spent an hour there,—in her salon, that is,—after supper, and I must bring my violin, but not for dance music this time. I played all the sweetest and softest things I knew; and now and then the young lady would clap her hands, when I played one of my mother's songs, and say that her nurse had sung it to her, and how did I learn it, in America? They were the peasant songs, she said, the sweetest in the world. The lady aunt listened patiently, but I think she had no music in her; only once she asked if I had no sacred music; and when I played our psalm-tunes, she thought them not the thing at all. But last of all, when it was time for us to go away, I played lightly, and as well as I knew how to play, my mother's favourite song, that was my own also; and at this, the young girl's head drooped, and her eyes filled with tears. Her mother, too, had sung it! How many other mothers, I ask myself sometimes, how many hearts, sad and joyful, have answered to those notes, the sweetest, the tenderest in the world?

[82]

"Il y a longtemps que je t'aime;
Jamais je ne t'oublierai!"

CHAPTER IX.

[83]

THIS was one day of many, my dear. They came and went, and I thought each one brighter than the last. When I had been a month at Château Claire, I could hardly believe it more than a week, so quickly and lightly the time went. The mornings, two children at play; the afternoons, three. I suppose it was because the brother and sister were so strangely like each other, that I grew so soon to feel Mlle. Valerie as my friend; and she, sweet soul, took me at Yvon's word, and thought me, perhaps, a fine fellow, and like her own people. That she never fully learned the difference is one of the many things for which I have to thank a gracious God.

Abby Rock told me, Melody,—in after-times, when we were much together,—how my poor father, at sight of my mother Marie, was struck with love as by a lightning-flash. It was a possession, she would say, only by an angel instead of an evil spirit; at the first look, she filled his life, and while she lived he wanted nothing else, nor indeed after she died. It was not so with me. And perhaps it might seem strange to some, my dear child, that I write this story of my heart for you, who are still a slip of a growing girl, and far yet from womanhood and the thoughts that come with it. But it may be some years before the paper comes to you, for except my poor father, we are a long-lived race; and I find singular comfort, now that I cannot keep myself exercised as much as formerly, by reason of growing years, in this writing. And I trust to say nothing that you may not with propriety hear, my dear.

[84]

When I had been a month at Château Claire, then, a new thing began to come slowly upon me. From the first I had felt that this young lady was the fairest and the sweetest creature my eyes had seen; like a drop of morning dew on a rose, nothing less. I dwelt upon the grace of her motions, and the way the colour melted in her cheek, as I would dwell upon the fairest picture; and I listened to her voice because it was sweeter than my violin, or even the note of the hermit-thrush. But slowly I became aware of a change; and instead of merely the pleasure of eye and ear, and the warmth at the heart that comes from true kindness and friendship, there would fall a trembling on me when she came or went, and a sense of the room being empty when she was not in it. When she was by, I wanted nothing more, or so it seemed, but just the knowledge of it, and did not even need to look at her to see how the light took her hair where it waved above her ear. This I take to have been partly because the feeling that was growing up in me came not from her beauty, or in small part only from that, but rather from my learning the truth and purity and nobleness of her nature; and this knowledge did not require the pleasure of the eyes. I thought no harm of all this; I took the joy as part of all the new world that was so bright about me; if voices spoke low within me, telling of the other life overseas, which was my own, while this was but a fairy dream,—I would not listen, or bade my heart speak louder and drown them. My mind had little, or say rather, my reason had little to do in those days; till it woke with a start, if I may say so, one night. It was a July night, hot and close. We were all sitting on the stone terrace for coolness, though there was little enough anywhere. I had been playing, and we had all three sung, as we loved to do. There was a song of a maiden who fell asleep by the wayside, and three knights came riding by,—a pretty song it was, and sung in three parts, the treble carrying the air, the tenor high above it, and the bass making the accompaniment.

[85]

"Le premier qui passa,— 'Voilà une endormie!'"	The first who rode along,— "Behold! a sleeping maid."
"Le deuxième qui passa,— 'Elle est encore jolie!'"	The next who rode along,— "She's fair enough!" he said.
"Le troisième qui passa, 'Elle sera ma mie!'"	The third who rode along,— "My sweetheart she shall be!"
"La prit et l'emporta, Sur son cheval d'Hongrie."	He's borne her far away, On his steed of Hungary.

I was thinking, I remember, how fine it would be to be a knight on a horse of Hungary (though I am not aware that the horses of that country are finer than elsewhere, except in songs), and to stoop down beside the road and catch up the sleeping maiden,—and I knew how she would be looking as she slept,—and ride away with her no one could tell where, into some land of gold and flowers.

[86]

I was thinking this in a cloudy sort of way, while Yvon had run into the house to bring something,—some piece of music that I must study, out of the stores of ancient music they had. There was a small table standing on the terrace, near where we were sitting, and on it a silver candlestick, with candles lighted.

Mlle. Valerie was standing near this, and I again near her, both admiring the moon, which was extraordinary bright and clear in a light blue sky. The light flooded the terrace so, I think we both forgot the poor little candles, with their dull yellow gleam. However it was, the young lady stepped back a pace, and her muslin cape, very light, and fluttering with ruffles and lace, was in the candle, and ablaze in a moment. I heard her cry, and saw the flame spring up around her; but it was only a breath before I had the thing torn off, and was crushing it together in my hands, and next trampling it under foot, treading out the sparks, till it was naught but black tinder. A pretty cape it was, and a sin to see it so destroyed. But I was not thinking of the cape then. I had only eyes for the young lady herself; and when I saw her untouched, save for the end of her curls

singed, but pale and frightened, and crying out that I was killed, there came a mist, it seemed, before my face, and I dropped on the stone rail, and laughed.

[87]

"You are not burned, mademoiselle?"

"I? no, sir! I am not touched; but you—you? oh, your hands! You took it in your hands, and they are destroyed! What shall I do?" Before I could move she had caught my two hands in hers, and turned the palms up. Indeed, they were only scorched, not burned deep, though they stung smartly enough; but black they were, and the skin beginning to puff into blisters. But now came the tap of a stick on the stone, and Mme. de Lalange came hobbling out. "What is this?" she cried, seeing me standing so, pale, it may be, with the young lady holding my blackened hands still in hers.

"What is the meaning of this scene?"

"Its meaning?" cried Mlle. Valerie; and it was Yvon's self that flashed upon her aunt.

"The meaning is that this gentleman has saved my life. Yes, my aunt! Look as you please; if he had not been here, and a hero,—a *hero*,—I should be devoured by the flames. Look!" and she pointed to the fragments of muslin, which were floating off in black rags. "He caught it from me, when I was in flames. He crushed it in his hands,—these poor hands, which are destroyed, I tell you, with pain. What shall we do,—what can we ever do, to thank him?"

The old lady looked from one to the other; her face was grim enough, but her words were courteous.

"We are grateful, indeed, to monsieur!" she said. "The only thing we can do for him, my niece, is to bind his hands with soothing ointment; I will attend to this matter myself. You are agitated, Valerie, and I advise you to go to your own room, and let Felice bring you a potion. If M. D'Arthenay will follow me into my salon, I will see to these injured hands."

[88]

How a cold touch can take the colour out of life. An instant before I was a hero, not in my own eyes, but surely in those tender blue ones that now shone through angry tears, and—I knew not what sweet folly was springing up in me while she held my hands in hers. Now, I was only a young man with dirty and blackened fingers, standing in a constrained position, and, I make no doubt, looking a great fool. The young lady vanished, and I followed madame into the little room. I am bound to say that she treated my scorched hands with perfect skill.

When Yvon came rushing in a few minutes later,—he had heard the story from his sister, and was for falling on my neck, and calling me his brother, the saviour of his cherished sister,—I know not what wild nonsense,—Mme. de Lalange cut his expressions short. "M. le Marquis," she said, and she put a curious emphasis on the title, I thought; "M. le Marquis, it will be well, believe me, for you to leave this gentleman with me for a short time. He has suffered a shock, more violent than he yet realises. His hands are painfully burned, yet I hope to relieve his sufferings in a few minutes. I suggest that you retire to your own apartments, where M. D'Arthenay will join you, say in half an hour."

[89]

Generally, Yvon paid little heed to his aunt, rather taking pleasure in thwarting her, which was wrong, no doubt, yet her aspect invited it; but on this occasion, she daunted us both. There was a weight in her words, a command in her voice, which I, for one, was not inclined at that moment to dispute; and Yvon, after an angry stare, and a few muttered words of protest, went away, only charging me to be with him within the half-hour.

Left alone with the ancient lady, there was silence for a time. I could not think what she wanted with me; she had shown no love for my society since I had been in the house. I waited, thinking it the part of courtesy to let her begin the conversation, if she desired any.

Presently she began to talk, in a pleasanter strain than I had yet heard her use. Was the pain less severe? she asked; and now she changed the linen cloths dipped in something cool and fragrant, infinitely soothing to the irritated skin. I must have been very quick, to prevent further mischief; in truth, it was a great debt they owed me, and she, I must believe her, shared the gratitude of her niece and nephew, even though her feelings were less vivaciously expressed.

I told her it was nothing, and less than nothing, that I had done, and I thought there had been far too much said about it already. I was deeply thankful that no harm had come to Mlle. de Ste. Valerie, but I could claim no merit, beyond that of having my eyes open, and my wits about me.

[90]

She bowed in assent. "Your wits about you!" she said. "But that in itself is no small matter, M. D'Arthenay, I assure you. It is not every young man who can say as much. Your eyes open, and your wits about you? You are fortunate, believe me."

Her tone was so strange, I knew not what reply to make, if any; again I waited her lead.

"The young people with whom I have to do are so widely different from this!" she said, presently. "Hearts of gold, heads of feather! you must have observed this, M. D'Arthenay."

I replied with some warmth that I had recognised the gold, but not the other quality. She smiled, a smile that had no more warmth in it than February sunshine on an icicle.

"You are modest!" she said. "I give you credit for more discernment than you admit. Confess that you think our marquis needs a stronger head beside him, to aid in his affairs."

I had thought this, but I conceived it no part of my duty to say as much. I was silent, therefore, and looked at her, wondering.

"Confess," she went on, "that you saw as much, when he came to your estate—of which the title escapes me—in North America; that you thought it might be well for him to have a companion, an adviser, with more definite ideas of life; well for him, and possibly—incidentally, of course—for the companion?"

[91]

"Madam!" I said. I could say no more, being confounded past the point of speech.

"It is because of this friendly interest in my nephew," the lady went on, taking no notice of my exclamation. "In my *nephew*, that I think to give you pleasure by announcing a visit that we are shortly to receive. A guest is expected at Château Claire in a few days; in fact, the day after tomorrow. My nephew has doubtless spoken to you of the Vicomte de Creçy?"

I said no, I had heard of no such person.

"Not heard of him? Unpardonable remissness in Yvon! Not heard of the vicomte? Of the future husband of Mlle. de Ste. Valerie?"

I took the blow full and fair, my dear. I think my father in me kept me from flinching; but I may have turned white as I saw myself an hour after; for after one glance the woman turned her eyes away, and looked at me no more as she spoke on. "It seems hardly credible that even my nephew's featherpate should have kept you a month in ignorance of what so nearly concerns his sister and our whole family. The vicomte is a charming man, of high polish and noble descent. His estate adjoins ours on the south. The match was made by my late brother, the father of Yvon and Valerie, shortly before his death. It had been his cherished plan for years, ever since Providence removed the vicomtesse to a better world than this; but Valerie was very young. The matter was arranged while she was still in the convent, and since then the vicomte has been travelling, in Russia, India, the world over, and is but just returned. The betrothal will be solemnised, now, in a few days."

[92]

I feared to speak at the moment. I snuffed the candle, and, finding my hand steady, tried my voice, which had a good strength, though the sound of it was strange to me.

"Do they—does she know?" I asked.

The lady cleared her throat, and looked—or I fancied it—a trifle confused. "I have not yet told my niece and nephew. I—the letter came but this evening. There was a letter also for you, M. D'Arthenay; I ordered it sent to your room. I think your hands will do well now, and I need no longer detain you from your friend."

I stood up before her.

"Madam," I said, "permit me a word. I have to thank you for your kindness, and for the hospitality which I have received under this kindly roof, whether it were with your will or not. For Mlle. de Ste. Valerie, I wish her all joy that earthly life can know. If her—if her husband be one half so noble as herself, she cannot fail of happiness. It is only a princely nature that should be matched with the purity of an angel and the goodness of a saint. For myself"—I paused a moment, finding myself short of breath; but my strength was come back to me. I sought her eye and held it, forcing her to look at me against her will. "For myself, I am no noble, though there is good blood in my veins. I am a plain man, the son of a peasant. But God, madam, who sees your heart and mine, created, I make bold to remind you, both noble and peasant; and as that God is above us, you have done bitter wrong to an honest man. There is no heart of a woman in you, or I would commend to it that fair young creature, who will need, I think, a woman's tenderness. I thank you again for your assistance, and I take my leave. And I pray you to remember that, whatever the D'Arthenays may have been in France, in my country, in America, madam, they pass for men of honour!"

[93]

I bowed, and left her; and now, methought, it was she who was white, and I thought there was fear in her eyes when she dropped them. But I turned away, and, passing Yvon's door, went to my own room.

CHAPTER X.

[94]

THE shock of my awakening was so violent, the downfall of my air-castles so sudden and complete, that I think for awhile I had little sense of what was going on. Yvon came to my door and knocked, and then called; but I made no answer, and he went away, thinking, I suppose, that I had forgotten him, and gone to bed. I sat on the side of my bed, where I had thrown myself, great part of that night; and there was no thought of sleep in me. My folly loomed large before me; I sat and looked it in the face. And sometimes, for a few moments, it would not seem altogether folly. I felt my youth and strength in every limb of me, and I thought, what could not love do that was as strong as mine? for now I knew that all these quiet weeks it had been growing to full stature, and that neither gratitude nor friendship had any considerable part in my feeling, but here was the one woman in the world for me. And would it be so hard, I asked, to take her away from all this, and make a home for her in my own good country, where she should

be free and happy as a bird, with no hateful watchers about her path? And would she not love the newness, and the greatness and beauty of it all, and the homely friends whom her brother so truly loved? Could I not say to her, "Come!" and would she not come with me?

[95]

Ah! would she not? And with that there fell from my eyes as it were scales,—even like the Apostle Paul, with reverence be it said,—and I saw the thing in its true light. My heart said she would come; had not her eyes answered mine last night? Was there not for her, too, an awakening? And if she came,—what then?

I saw her, the delicate lady, in my father's house; not a guest, as Yvon had been, but a dweller, the wife and daughter of the house, the wife of a poor man. I remembered all the work that my mother Marie had done so joyfully, so easily, because she was a working-woman, and these were the things she had known all her life. This form of grace that filled my eyes now was no lighter nor more graceful than hers; but the difference! My mother's little brown hands could do any work that they had strength for, and make it a woman's work in the doing, because she was pure woman in herself; but these white fingers that had caught mine last night,—what could they do? What ought they to do, save work delicately with the needle, and make cordials and sweets (for in this my young lady excelled), and beyond these matters, to play the harp and guitar, and tend her roses, and adorn her own lovely person?

"But," cried the other voice in me, "I am young and strong, and I can work! I can study the violin, I can become a musician, can earn my bread and hers, so that there will be no need of the farm. It would be a few years of study, a few years of waiting,—and she is so young!"

[96]

Ah, yes! she was so young! and then that voice died away, and knew that it had no more to say. What—what was this, to think of urging a young girl, still almost a child, to give up the station of life in which she had lived happy and joyous, and go away with a stranger, far from her own home and her own people, to share a struggling life, with no certain assurance of anything, save love alone? What was this but a baseness, of which no honest man could be capable? If,—if even I had read her glance aright,—last night,—or was it a year ago? Still, it was but a thing of a moment, the light springing up of a tiny fire of good will, that would die out in a few days after I was gone, for want of fuel; even if it were not snatched out strongly by other hands, as I had put out those climbing flames last night. How her startled eyes sought mine! How the colour flashed into her face when I spoke. No! no! Of that I must not think, if my manhood was to stay in me!

This other, then, who was coming,—this man would turn her thoughts. She would yield, as is the custom for young maidens in France, with no thought that it might be otherwise. He was no longer young,—he had already been once married,—I looked up at this moment, I do not know by what chance, and my eyes fell on a long glass, what they call a cheval-glass in France, my dear, showing the whole figure. I think no harm, seeing this was so long ago, in saying that I appeared to advantage in such a view, being well-made, and perhaps not without other good points. This will seem strangely trifling to you, my child, who see nothing but the soul of man or woman; but I have always loved a good figure, and never felt shame to thank God for giving me one. My clothes were good, having been bought in Paris as we came through. I have never made any claim to pass for a gentleman, Melody, but yet I think I made a fair enough show of one, that night at least. And being so constituted, I sat staring at my image in the mirror, and wondering like a fool if the other man were as good-looking. This would be like a slight crust of contentment,—sad enough at that,—forming for a moment over the black depth of sorrow that was my heart; and next moment the pain would stab through it again, till I could have cried out but for the shame of it; and so the night wore by, and the morning found me still there. I had learned little, save the one thing that was all the world,—that I could not commit a baseness.

[97]

It was strange to me, coming down to breakfast, to find Yvon unchanged, his own gay self simply. I was grown suddenly so old, he seemed no more than a child to me, with his bits of song that yesterday I had joined in with a light heart, and his plans for another day of pleasure, like yesterday and all the days. Looking at him, I could have laughed, had there been any laughter in me, at the thought of his aunt that I had come over with a view to bettering myself at his expense. It seemed a thing of so little moment; I had half a mind to tell him, but held my peace, wishing her really no evil, since what she had done had been through love and care for her own. There might be such men as she had thought me; I have since found that there are indeed.

[98]

Yvon was full of plans; we were to ride this afternoon, to such and such a place; it was the finest view in the country, there was nothing to approach it. Pierre should drive over and meet us there, with peaches, and cream, and cakes, and we would sup, we three together, and come home by moonlight. It would be the very thing! if I really could hold the bridle? it was the very thing to remove the recollection of last night from his sister's mind, impressionable, as youth always is. (He said this, Melody, with an air of seventy years, and wisdom ineffable, that was comical enough.) "From my own mind," he cried, "never shall the impression be effaced. Thy heroism, my Jacques, shall be inscribed in the annals of our houses. To save the life of a Demoiselle de Ste. Valerie is claim sufficient for undying remembrance; to save the life of my sister, my Valerie,—and you her saviour, the friend of my heart,—the combination is perfect; it is ideal. I shall compose a poem, Jacques; I have already begun it. '*Ciel d'argent*—' you shall hear it when it has progressed a little farther; at present it is in embryo merely."

[99]

He sent for his sister, that they might arrange their plans before she passed to her lessons, which were strictly kept up. She came, and my heart spoke loud, telling me that all my vigil had brought to me was true, and that I must begone. There was a new softness in her sweet eyes, a tone in her voice,—oh, it was always kind,—but now a tenderness that I must not hear. She would

see my hands; could not believe that I was not seriously wounded; vowed that her aunt was a magician; "though I prayed long, long, last night, monsieur, that the wounds might heal quickly. They are really—no! look, Yvon! look! these terrible blisters! but, they are frightful, M. D'Arthenay. You—surely you should not have left your room, in this condition?"

Not only this, I assured her, but I was so entirely well that I hoped to ride with them this afternoon, if the matter could be arranged. She listened with delight while Yvon detailed his plan; presently her face fell a little.

"Walk back!" she said. "Yes, Yvon, what could be more delightful? but when I tell you that the sole is sprung from my walking-shoe, and it must go to the village to be mended! How can I get it back in time?"

A thought came to me. "If mademoiselle would let me see the shoe?" I said. "Perhaps I can arrange it for her." Yvon frowned and pshawed; he did not like any mention of my shoemaking; this was from no unworthy feeling, but because he thought the trade unsuited to me. I, however, repeated my request, and, greatly wondering, the young lady sent a servant for the shoe. I took it in my hand with pleasure; it was not only beautiful, but well made. "Here is an easy matter!" I said, smiling. "Will mademoiselle see how they mend shoes in my country?" A hammer was soon found, and sitting down on a low bench, I tapped away, and soon had the pretty thing in order again. Mademoiselle Valerie cried out upon my cleverness. "But, you can then do anything you choose, monsieur?" she said. "To play the violin, to save a life, to mend a shoe,—do they teach all these things in your country? and to what wonderful school did you go?"

[100]

I said, to none more wonderful than a village school; and that this I had indeed learned well, but on the cobbler's bench. "Surely Yvon has told you, mademoiselle, of our good shoemaker, and how he taught me his trade, that I might practise it at times when there is no fiddling needed?" I spoke cheerfully, but let it be seen that I was not in jest. A little pale, she looked from one of us to the other, not understanding.

"All nonsense, Valerie!" cried Yvon, forcing a laugh. "Jacques learned shoemaking, as he would learn anything, for the sake of knowledge. He may even have practised it here and there, among his neighbours; why not? I have often wished I could set a stitch, in time of need, as he has done to-day. But to remain at this trade,—it is stuff that he talks; he does not know his own nature, his own descent, when he permits himself to think of such a thing. Fie, M. D'Arthenay!"

[101]

"No more of that!" I said. "The play is over, *mon cher!* M. D'Arthenay is a figure of your kind, romantic heart, Yvon. Plain Jacques De Arthenay, farmer's son, fiddler, and cobbler, stands from this moment on his own feet, not those of his grandfather four times back."

I did not look at my young lady, not daring to see the trouble that I knew was in her sweet face; but I looked full at Yvon, and was glad rather than sorry at his black look. I could have quarrelled with him or any man who had brought me to this pass. But just then, before there could be any more speech, came the sour-faced maid with an urgent message from Mme. de Lalange, that both the young lady and the marquis should attend her in her own room without delay.

Left alone, I found myself considering the roses on the terrace, and wondering could I take away a slip of one, and keep it alive till I reached home. In the back of my head I knew what was going on up-stairs in the grim lady's room; but I had no mind to lose hold on myself, and presently I went for my fiddle, which was kept in the parlour hard by, and practised scales, a thing I always did when out of Yvon's company, being what he could not abear. To practise scales is a fine thing, Melody, to steady the mind and give it balance; you never knew, my child, why I made you sing your scales so often, that night when your aunt Rejoice was like to die, and all the house in such distress. Your aunt Vesta thought me mad, but I was never in better wits.

[102]

So I was quiet, when after a long time Yvon came down to me. When I saw that he knew all, I laid my violin away, agitation being bad for the strings,—or so I have always thought. He was in a flame of anger, and fairly stammered in his speech. What had his aunt said to me, he demanded, the night before? How had she treated me, his friend? She was—many things which you know nothing about, Melody, my dear; the very least of them was cat, and serpent, and traitress. But I took a cool tone.

"Is it true, Yvon," I asked, "about the gentleman who comes to-morrow? You have already known about it? It is true?"

"True!" cried Yvon, his passion breaking out. "Yes, it is true! What, then? Because my sister is to marry, some day,—she is but just out of her pinafores, I tell you,—because some day she is to marry, and the estates are to join, is that a reason that my friend is to be insulted, my pleasure broken up, my summer destroyed? I insist upon knowing what that cat said to you, Jacques!"

"She told me what you acknowledge," I said. "That I can be insulted I deny, unless there be ground for what is said. Mme. de Lalange did what she considered to be her duty; and—and I have spent a month of great happiness with you, marquis, and it is a time that will always be the brightest of my life."

[103]

But at this Yvon flung himself on my neck—it is not a thing practised among men in this country, but in him it seemed nowise strange, my blood being partly like his own—and wept and stormed. He loved me, I am glad to believe, truly; yet after all the most part was to him, that his

party of pleasure was spoiled, and his plans broken up. And then I remembered how we had talked together that day in the old grist-mill, and how he had said that when trouble came, we should spread our wings and fly away from it. And Ham's words came back to me, too, till I could almost hear him speak, and see the grave, wise look of him. "Take good stuff, and grind it in the Lord's mill, and you've got the best this world can give." And I found that Ham's philosophy was the one that held.

There was no more question of the gay party that afternoon. Mlle. de Ste. Valerie did not dine with us, word coming down that her head ached, and she would not go out. Yvon and I went to walk, and I led the way to my tower (so I may call it this once), thinking I would like to see it once more. All these three months and more (counting from the day I first met Yvon de Ste. Valerie at the priest's house), I had played a second in the duet, and that right cheerfully. Though my own age, the marquis was older in many ways from his knowledge of society and its ways, and his gay, masterful manner; and I, the country lad, had been too happy only to follow his lead, and go about open-eyed, seeing all he would show, and loving him with honest admiration and pride in him. But it was curious to see how from this moment we changed; and now it was I who led, and was the master. The master in my own house, I thought for a moment, as we sat on the shelf under the great round window, and looked out over the lands that had once belonged to my people. Here once more the dream came upon me, and I had a wild vision of myself coming back after years, rich and famous, and buying back the old tower, building the castle, and holding that sweet princess by my side. The poet Coleridge, my dear, in describing a man whose wits are crazed, makes use of this remarkable expression:

[104]

"How there looked him in the face
An angel beautiful and bright,
And how he knew it was a fiend,
That miserable knight."

This knowledge was also mercifully mine. And I was helped, too, by a thing slight enough, and yet curious. Being in distress of mind, I sought some use of my hands, as is the case with most women and some men. I fell to pulling off the dead leaves of ivy from the wall; and so, running my hand along the inside of the window, felt beneath it a carving on the stone. I lifted the leaves, which here were not so thick as in most places, and saw a shield carved with arms, and on it the motto I knew well: "*D'Arthenay, tenez foi!*"

[105]

I told my friend that I must be gone that night; that I knew his aunt desired it, and was entirely in her right, it being most unfitting that a stranger should be present on such an occasion as this. Doubtless other friends would be coming, too, and my room would be wanted.

Here he broke out in a storm, and vowed no one should have my room, and I should not stir a foot for a hundred of them. And here had she kept him in the dark, as if he were a babe, instead of the head of the house. It was an affront never to be forgiven. If the vicomte had not been the friend of his father, he would break off the match, and forbid him the house. As it was, he was powerless, tied hand and foot.

I interrupted him, thinking such talk idle; and begged to know what manner of man this was who was coming. Was he—was he the man he should be?

He was a gallant gentleman, Yvon confessed; there was no fault to find with him, save that he was old enough to be the girl's father. But that was all one! If he were twenty viscounts, he should not turn out his, Yvon's friend, the only man he ever cared to call his brother,—and so on and so on, till I cut him short. For now I saw no way, Melody, but to tell him how it was with me; and this I did in as few words as might be, and begged him to let me go quietly, and say no more. For once, I think, the lad was put to such depth of sorrow as was in him. He had never guessed, never thought of this; his sister was a child to him, and must be so, he supposed, to all. How could he tell? Why had he brought me here, to suffer? He was a criminal! What could he do? And then there struck him a thought, and he glanced up sharply at me, and I saw not the face of my friend, but one cold and questioning. Had I spoken to his sister? Did she—

[106]

I cut him short at the word. Of that, I said, he could judge better than I, having been in my company daily for three months. He fell on my neck again, and implored my pardon; and said, I think, that twenty viscounts were less noble than I. I cared little for my nobility; all I asked was to get away, and hide my wound among my own friendly people.

And so it was arranged that I was to go that night; and we walked back to the château, speaking little, but our hearts full of true affection, and—save for that one sting of a moment—trust in each other.

CHAPTER XI.

[107]

THE disturbance of my mind had been so great, that all this while I had forgotten the letter of which Mme. de Lalange had spoken the night before. I had seen it when I first went to my room, but was in no mood for village news then; I saw that it was in the large round hand of Ham Belfort, and thought it kind in him to write, seeing that it cost him some effort; then I forgot it, as I said. But now, going again to my room, and with nothing much to do save wait the hour of my

departure, I took the letter up, idly enough, thinking I might as well do this as another thing. This is what I read, Melody. No fear of my forgetting the words.

FRIEND JAKEY:

I am sorry to have bad news to send you this first time of my writing. Father says to prepare your mind, but I never found it work that way myself, always liking to know straight out how things was, and I think you are the same. Your father has been hearty, for him, till about a week ago. Then he begun to act strange, and would go about looking for your mother, as if she was about the place. Abby kep watch on him, and I happened in once or twice a day, just to pass the word, and he was always just as polite, and would read me your letters. He thought a sight of your letters, Jakey, and they gave him more pleasure than likely he'd have had if you'd have ben here, being new and strange to him, so to speak. He was a perfect gentleman; he like to read them letters, and they done credit to him and you. Last night Abby said to me, she guessed she would take her things over and stay a spell at the house, till your father was some better, he was not himself, and she owed it to you and your mother. I said she was right, I'd gone myself, but things wasn't so I could leave, and a woman is better in sickness, however it may be when a man is well. She went over early this morning, but your father was gone. There warn't no hide nor hair of him round the house nor in the garding. She sent for me, and I sarched the farm; but while I was at it, seems as if she sensed where he was, and she went straight to the berrin-ground, and he was layin on your mother's grave, peaceful as if he'd just laid down a spell to rest him. He was dead and cold, Jakes, and you may as well know it fust as last. He hadn't had no pain, for when I see him his face was like he was in heaven, and Abby says it come nearer smiling than she'd seen it sence your mother was took. So this is what my paneful duty is to tell you, and that the Lord will help you threw it is my prayer and alls that is in the village. Abby is real sick, or she would write herself. She thought a sight of your father, as I presume likely you know. We shall have the funeral to-morrow, and everything good and plain, knowing how he would wish it from remembering your mother's. So no more, Friend Jakey; only all that's in the village feels for you, and this news coming to you far away; and would like you to feel that you was coming home all the same, if he is gone, for there aint no one but sets by you, and they all want to see you back, and everybody says it aint the same place with you away. So I remain your friend,

[108]

HAM BELFORT.

P.S. I'd like you to give my regards to Eavan, if he remembers the grist-mill, as I guess likely he doos. Remember the upper and nether millstones, Jakey, and the Lord help you threw.

H. B.

It is sometimes the bitterest medicine, Melody, that is the most strengthening. This was bitter indeed; yet coming at this moment, it gave me the strength I needed. The sharp sting of this pain dulled in some measure that other that I suffered; and I had no fear of any weakness now. I do not count it weakness, that I wept over my poor father, lying down so quietly to die on the grave of his dear love. In my distraction, I even thought for a moment how well it was with them both, to be together now, and wished that death might take me and another to some place where no foolish things of this world should keep us apart; but that was a boy's selfish grief, and I was now grown a man. I read Ham's letter over and over, as well as I could for tears; and it seemed to me a pure fruit of friendship, so that I gave thanks for him and Abby, knowing her silent for want of strength, not want of love. I should still go home, to the friendly place, and the friendly people who had known my birth and all that had fallen since. I had no place here; I was in haste to be gone.

[109]

At first I thought not to tell Yvon of what had come to me; but he coming in and finding me as I have said, I would not have him mistake my feeling, and so gave him the letter. And let me say that a woman could not have been tenderer than my friend was, in his sympathy and grieving for me. I have told you that he and my poor father were drawn to each other from the first. He spoke of him in terms which were no more than just, but which soothed and pleased me, coming from one who knew nobility well, both the European sense of it, and the other. Upon this, Yvon pressed me to stay, declaring that he would go away with me, and we would travel together, till my hurt was somewhat healed, or at least I had grown used to the sting of it; but this I could not hear of. He helped me put my things together, for by this time night was coming on. He had found his sister so suffering, he told me, that she felt unable to leave her bed; and so he had thought it best not to tell her of my departure till the morrow. And this was perhaps the bitterest drop I had to drink, my dear, to leave the house like a thief, and no word to her who had made it a palace of light to me. Indeed, when Yvon left me, to order the horses, a thought came into my mind which I found it hard to resist. There was a little balcony outside my window, and I knew that my dear love's window (I call her so this once, the pain coming back sharp upon me of that parting hour) opened near it. If I took my violin and stepped outside, and if I played one air that she knew, then, I thought, she would understand, at least in part. She would not think that I had gone willingly without kissing her sweet hand, which I had counted on doing, the custom of the country permitting it. I took the violin, and went out into the cool night air; and I laid my bow

[110]

across the strings, yet no sound came. For honour, my dear, honour, which we bring into this world with us, and which is the only thing, save those heavenly ones, that we can take from this world with us, laid, as it were, her hand on the strings, and kept them silent. A thing for which I have ever since been humbly thankful, that I never willingly or knowingly gave any touch of pain to that sweet lady's life. But if I had played, Melody; if it had been permitted to me as a man of honour as well as a true lover, it was my mother's little song that I should have played; and that, my child, is why you have always said that you hear my heart beat in that song.

[111]

"Il y a longtemps que je t'aime;
Jamais je ne t'oublierai!"

Before we rode away, Mme. de Lalange came out to the door, leaning on her crutched stick; the horses being already there, and I about to mount. She swept me a curtsy of surprising depth, considering her infirmity.

"M. D'Arthenay," she said, "I think I have done you an injustice. I cannot regret your departure, but I desire to say that your conduct has been that of a gentleman, and that I shall always think of you as noble, and the worthy descendant of a great race." With that she held out her hand, which I took and kissed, conceiving this to be her intention; that I did it with something the proper air her eyes assured me. It is a graceful custom, but unsuited to our own country and race.

I could only reply that I thanked her for her present graciousness, and that it was upon that my thought should dwell in recalling my stay here, and not upon what was past and irrevocable; which brought the colour to her dry cheek, I thought, but I could say nothing else. And so I bowed, and we rode away; my few belongings having gone before by carrier, all save my violin, which I carried on the saddle before me.

[112]

Coming to the Tour D'Arthenay, we checked our horses, with a common thought, and looked up at the old tower. It was even as I had seen it on first arriving, save that now a clear moonlight rested on it, instead of the doubtful twilight. The ivy was black against the white light, the empty doorway yawned like a toothless mouth, and the round eye above looked blindness on us. As I gazed, a white owl came from within, and blinked at us over the curve. Yvon started, thinking it a spirit, perhaps; but I laughed, and taking off my hat, saluted the bird.

"*Monsieur mon locataire*," I said, "I have the honour to salute you!" and told him that he should have the castle rent free, on condition that he spared the little birds, and levied taxes on the rats alone.

Looking back when we had ridden a little further, the tower had turned its back on me, and all I saw was the heaps of cut stone, lying naked in the moonlight. That was my last sight of the home of my ancestors. I had kept faith.

CHAPTER XII.

[113]

HERE ends, my dear child, the romance of your old friend's life; if by the word romance we may rightly understand that which, even if not lasting itself, throws a brightness over all that may come after it. I never saw that fair country of France again, and since then I have lived sixty years and more; but what I brought away with me that sorrowful night has sweetened all the years. I had the honour of loving as sweet a lady as ever stepped from heaven to earth; and I had the thought that, if right had permitted, and the world been other than it was, I could have won her. Such feelings as these, my dear, keep a man's heart set on high things, however lowly his lot may be.

I came back to my village. My own home was empty, but every house was open to me; and not a man or a woman there but offered me a home for as long as I would take it. My good friend Ham Belfort would have me come to be a son to him, he having no children. But my duty, as he clearly saw when I pointed it out, was to Abby Rock; and Abby and I were not to part for many years. Her health was never the same after my father's death; it was her son I was to be, and I am glad to think she found me a good one.

[114]

Father L'Homme-Dieu made me kindly welcome, too, and to him and to Abby I could open my heart, and tell them all that had befallen me in these three life-long months. But I found a strange difference in their manner of receiving it; for whereas the Father understood my every feeling, and would nod his head (a kind hand on my shoulder all the while), and say yes, yes, I could not have done otherwise, and thus it was that a gentleman should feel and act,—which was very soothing to me,—Abby, on the other hand, though she must hear the story over and over again, could never gain any patience in the hearing.

"What did they want?" she would cry, her good homely face the colour of a red leaf. "An emperor would be the least that could suit them, I'll warrant!" And though she dared not, after the first word, breathe anything against my sweet young lady, she felt no such fear about the old one, and I verily believe that if she had come upon Mme. de Lalange, she would have torn her in pieces, being extraordinary strong in her hands. Hag and witch were the kindest words she could give her; so that at last I felt bound to keep away from the subject, from mere courtesy to the

absent. But this, as I have since found by observation, was the mother-nature in Abby, which will fill the mildest woman with desire to kill any one that hurts or grieves her child.

For some time I stuck close to my shoemaker's bench, seeking quiet, as any creature does that is deeply wounded (for the wound was deep, my dear; it was deep; but I would not have had it otherwise), and seeing only those home friends, who had known the shape of my cradle, as it were, and to whom I could speak or not, as my mind was. I found solid comfort in the society of Ham, and would spend many hours in the old grist-mill; sometimes sitting in the loft with him and the sparrows, sometimes hanging over the stones, and watching the wheat pour down between them, and hearing the roar and the grinding of them. The upper and nether millstones! How Ham's words would come back, over and over, as I thought how my life was ground between pain and longing! One day, I mind, Ham came and found me so, and I suppose my face may have showed part of what I felt; for he put his great hand on my shoulder, and shouted in my ear, "Wheat flour, Jakey! prime wheat flour, and good riz bread; I see it rising, don't you be afeard!" But by and by the neighbours in the country round heard of my being home again; and thinking that I must have learned a vast deal overseas, they were set on having me here and there to fiddle for them. At first I thought no, I could not; there seemed to be only one tune my fiddle would ever play again, and that no dancing tune. But with using common sense, and some talk with Father L'Homme-Dieu, this foolishness passed away, and it seemed the best thing I could do, being in sadness myself, was to give what little cheer I could to others. So I went, and the first time was the worst, and I saw at once here was a thing I could do, and do, it might be, better than another. For being with the marquis, Melody, and seeing how high folks moved, and spoke, and held themselves, it was borne in upon me that I had special fitness for a task that might well be connected with the pleasure of youth in dancing. Dancing, as I have pointed out to you many times, may be considered in two ways: first, as the mere fling of high spirits, young animals skipping and leaping, as kids in a meadow, and with no thought save to leap the highest, and prance the furthest; but second, and more truly, I must think, to show to advantage the grace (if any) and perfection of the human body, which we take to be the work of a divine hand, and the beauty of motion in accord with music. And whereas I have heard dancing condemned as unmanly, and fit only for women and young boys, I must still take the other hand, and think there is no finer sight than a well-proportioned man, with a sense of his powers, and a desire to do justice to them, moving through the figures of a contra-dance. But this is my hobby, my dear, and I may have wearied you with it before now.

I undertook, then, as my trade allowed it,—and indeed, in time the bench came to hold only the second place in the arrangement of my days,—to give instruction in dancing and deportment, to such as desired to improve themselves in these respects. The young people in the villages of that district were honest, and not lacking in wits; but they were uncouth to a degree that seemed to me, coming as I did from the home of all grace and charm, a thing horrible, and not to be endured. They were my neighbours; I was bound, or so it seemed to me, to help them to a right understanding of the mercies of a bountiful Providence, and to prevent the abuse of these mercies by cowish gambols. I let it be understood wherever I went that whoever would study under me must be a gentleman; for a gentleman is, I take it, first and last, a gentle man, or one who out of strength brings sweetness, as in the case of Samson's lion. To please, first the heart, by a sincere and cordial kindness, and next the eye, by a cheerful and (so far as may be) graceful demeanour; this disposition will tend, if not to great deeds, at least to the comfort and happiness of those around us. I was thought severe, and may have been so; but I lived to see a notable change wrought in that country. I remember the day, Melody, when a young man said to me with feeling, "I cannot bear to see a man take off his hat to a woman. *It makes me sick!*" To-day, if a man, young or old, should fail in this common courtesy, it would be asked what cave of the woods he came from. But let fine manners come from the heart, I would always say, else they are only as a gay suit covering a deformed and shapeless body. I recall an occasion when one of my pupils, who had made great progress by assiduous study, and had attained a degree of elegance not often reached in his station, won the admiration of the whole room by the depth and grace of his bow. I praised him, as he deserved; but a few minutes after, finding him in the act of mimicking, for the public diversion, an awkward, ill-dressed poor lad, I dismissed him on the instant, and bade him never come to my classes again.

In these ways, my child, I tried, and with fair measure of success, to ease the smart of my own pain by furthering the pleasure of others; in these ways, to which I added such skill as I had gained on the violin, making it one of my chief occupations, when work was slack, to play to such as loved music, and more especially any who were infirm in health, or in sorrow by one reason or another. It was a humble path I chose, my dear; but I never clearly saw my way to a loftier one, and here I could do good, and think I did it, under Providence. As an instance,—I was sent for, it may have been a year or two after my trouble, to go some distance. A young lady was ill, and being fanciful, and her parents well-to-do, she would have me come and play to her, having heard of me from one or another. I went, and found a poor shadow of a young woman, far gone in a decline, if I could judge, and her eyes full of a trouble that came from no bodily ailment, my wits told me. She sent her people away, saying she must have the music alone. I have seldom found a better listener, Melody, or one who spoke to me more plain in silence, her spirit answering to the music till I almost could hear the sound of it. Feeling this, I let myself slip into the bow, as it were, more than I was aware of; and presently forgot her, or next thing to it, and was away in the rose-garden of Château Claire, and saw the blue eyes that held all heaven in them, and heard the voice that made my music harsh. And when at last I brought it down to a whisper, seeing the young woman's eyes shut, and thinking she might be asleep, she looked up at me, bright and sharp, and said, "You, too?"

I never saw her again, and indeed think she had not long to live. But it is an instance, my dear, of what a person can do, if the heart within him is tender to the sorrows of others.

After Abby's death,—but that was years after all this,—I found it wise to leave my native village. I will not go into the cause of this, my child, since it was a passing matter, or so I trusted. There was some one there who had great good will to me, and, not knowing my story, may have fancied that I was one who could make her happy; I thought it right to tell her how I had fared, and then, she being in distress, I left my home, and from that time, I may say, had many homes, yet none my own. I have met with rare kindness; no man of my generation, I would wager, has the number of friends I can boast, and all kind, all hearty, all ready with a "welcome to Rosin the Beau." And now here, at your aunts' kind wish and your prayer, my dearest Melody, dear as any child of my own could be, I am come to spend my last days under your roof; and what more could mortal man ask than this, I truly know not. My violin and your voice, Melody; they were made for each other; everybody says that, my dear, and neither you nor I would deny it. And when the *obligato* is silent, as shortly it must be in the good course of nature, it is my prayer and hope that you will not miss me too much, my dear, but will go on in joy and in cheer, shedding light about you, and with your own darkness yielding a clear glory of kindness and happiness. Do not grieve for the old man, Melody, when the day comes for him to lay down the fiddle and the bow. I am old, and it is many years that Valerie has been dead, and Yvon, too, and all of them; and happy as I am, my dear, I am sometimes tired, and ready for rest. And for more than rest, I trust and believe; for new life, new strength, new work, as God shall please to give it me.

[120]

"I've travelled this country all over,
And now to the next I must go;
But I know that good quarters await me,
And a welcome to Rosin the Beau."

THE END.

Footnotes

[1]

There were three sailor-lads of Groix,
There were three sailor-lads of Groix,
They sailed in the Saint François,
Tra la derira, etc.

[2] Little Marie, Mother Jeanne! Little Marie who loves you.

[3] Pronounced Jakes Dee Arthenay.

Transcriber's Notes:

Obvious punctuation errors corrected.

The remaining corrections made are indicated by dotted lines under the corrections. Scroll the mouse over the word and the original text will appear.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ROSIN THE BEAU ***

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

Creating the works from print editions not protected by U.S. copyright law means that no one owns a United States copyright in these works, so the Foundation (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth in the General Terms of Use part of this license, apply to copying and distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works to protect the PROJECT GUTENBERG™ concept and trademark. Project Gutenberg is a registered trademark, and may not be used if

you charge for an eBook, except by following the terms of the trademark license, including paying royalties for use of the Project Gutenberg trademark. If you do not charge anything for copies of this eBook, complying with the trademark license is very easy. You may use this eBook for nearly any purpose such as creation of derivative works, reports, performances and research. Project Gutenberg eBooks may be modified and printed and given away—you may do practically ANYTHING in the United States with eBooks not protected by U.S. copyright law. Redistribution is subject to the trademark license, especially commercial redistribution.

START: FULL LICENSE
THE FULL PROJECT GUTENBERG LICENSE
PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE YOU DISTRIBUTE OR USE THIS WORK

To protect the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting the free distribution of electronic works, by using or distributing this work (or any other work associated in any way with the phrase “Project Gutenberg”), you agree to comply with all the terms of the Full Project Gutenberg™ License available with this file or online at www.gutenberg.org/license.

Section 1. General Terms of Use and Redistributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

1.A. By reading or using any part of this Project Gutenberg™ electronic work, you indicate that you have read, understand, agree to and accept all the terms of this license and intellectual property (trademark/copyright) agreement. If you do not agree to abide by all the terms of this agreement, you must cease using and return or destroy all copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in your possession. If you paid a fee for obtaining a copy of or access to a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work and you do not agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement, you may obtain a refund from the person or entity to whom you paid the fee as set forth in paragraph 1.E.8.

1.B. “Project Gutenberg” is a registered trademark. It may only be used on or associated in any way with an electronic work by people who agree to be bound by the terms of this agreement. There are a few things that you can do with most Project Gutenberg™ electronic works even without complying with the full terms of this agreement. See paragraph 1.C below. There are a lot of things you can do with Project Gutenberg™ electronic works if you follow the terms of this agreement and help preserve free future access to Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. See paragraph 1.E below.

1.C. The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation (“the Foundation” or PGLAF), owns a compilation copyright in the collection of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works. Nearly all the individual works in the collection are in the public domain in the United States. If an individual work is unprotected by copyright law in the United States and you are located in the United States, we do not claim a right to prevent you from copying, distributing, performing, displaying or creating derivative works based on the work as long as all references to Project Gutenberg are removed. Of course, we hope that you will support the Project Gutenberg™ mission of promoting free access to electronic works by freely sharing Project Gutenberg™ works in compliance with the terms of this agreement for keeping the Project Gutenberg™ name associated with the work. You can easily comply with the terms of this agreement by keeping this work in the same format with its attached full Project Gutenberg™ License when you share it without charge with others.

1.D. The copyright laws of the place where you are located also govern what you can do with this work. Copyright laws in most countries are in a constant state of change. If you are outside the United States, check the laws of your country in addition to the terms of this agreement before downloading, copying, displaying, performing, distributing or creating derivative works based on this work or any other Project Gutenberg™ work. The Foundation makes no representations concerning the copyright status of any work in any country other than the United States.

1.E. Unless you have removed all references to Project Gutenberg:

1.E.1. The following sentence, with active links to, or other immediate access to, the full Project Gutenberg™ License must appear prominently whenever any copy of a Project Gutenberg™ work (any work on which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” appears, or with which the phrase “Project Gutenberg” is associated) is accessed, displayed, performed, viewed, copied or distributed:

This eBook is for the use of anyone anywhere in the United States and most other parts of the world at no cost and with almost no restrictions whatsoever. You may copy it, give it away or re-use it under the terms of the Project Gutenberg License included with this eBook or online at www.gutenberg.org. If you are not located in the United States, you will have to check the laws of the country where you are located before using this eBook.

1.E.2. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is derived from texts not protected by U.S. copyright law (does not contain a notice indicating that it is posted with permission of the copyright holder), the work can be copied and distributed to anyone in the United States

without paying any fees or charges. If you are redistributing or providing access to a work with the phrase “Project Gutenberg” associated with or appearing on the work, you must comply either with the requirements of paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 or obtain permission for the use of the work and the Project Gutenberg™ trademark as set forth in paragraphs 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.3. If an individual Project Gutenberg™ electronic work is posted with the permission of the copyright holder, your use and distribution must comply with both paragraphs 1.E.1 through 1.E.7 and any additional terms imposed by the copyright holder. Additional terms will be linked to the Project Gutenberg™ License for all works posted with the permission of the copyright holder found at the beginning of this work.

1.E.4. Do not unlink or detach or remove the full Project Gutenberg™ License terms from this work, or any files containing a part of this work or any other work associated with Project Gutenberg™.

1.E.5. Do not copy, display, perform, distribute or redistribute this electronic work, or any part of this electronic work, without prominently displaying the sentence set forth in paragraph 1.E.1 with active links or immediate access to the full terms of the Project Gutenberg™ License.

1.E.6. You may convert to and distribute this work in any binary, compressed, marked up, nonproprietary or proprietary form, including any word processing or hypertext form. However, if you provide access to or distribute copies of a Project Gutenberg™ work in a format other than “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other format used in the official version posted on the official Project Gutenberg™ website (www.gutenberg.org), you must, at no additional cost, fee or expense to the user, provide a copy, a means of exporting a copy, or a means of obtaining a copy upon request, of the work in its original “Plain Vanilla ASCII” or other form. Any alternate format must include the full Project Gutenberg™ License as specified in paragraph 1.E.1.

1.E.7. Do not charge a fee for access to, viewing, displaying, performing, copying or distributing any Project Gutenberg™ works unless you comply with paragraph 1.E.8 or 1.E.9.

1.E.8. You may charge a reasonable fee for copies of or providing access to or distributing Project Gutenberg™ electronic works provided that:

- You pay a royalty fee of 20% of the gross profits you derive from the use of Project Gutenberg™ works calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. The fee is owed to the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, but he has agreed to donate royalties under this paragraph to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation. Royalty payments must be paid within 60 days following each date on which you prepare (or are legally required to prepare) your periodic tax returns. Royalty payments should be clearly marked as such and sent to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation at the address specified in Section 4, “Information about donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation.”
- You provide a full refund of any money paid by a user who notifies you in writing (or by e-mail) within 30 days of receipt that s/he does not agree to the terms of the full Project Gutenberg™ License. You must require such a user to return or destroy all copies of the works possessed in a physical medium and discontinue all use of and all access to other copies of Project Gutenberg™ works.
- You provide, in accordance with paragraph 1.F.3, a full refund of any money paid for a work or a replacement copy, if a defect in the electronic work is discovered and reported to you within 90 days of receipt of the work.
- You comply with all other terms of this agreement for free distribution of Project Gutenberg™ works.

1.E.9. If you wish to charge a fee or distribute a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work or group of works on different terms than are set forth in this agreement, you must obtain permission in writing from the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the manager of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark. Contact the Foundation as set forth in Section 3 below.

1.F.

1.F.1. Project Gutenberg volunteers and employees expend considerable effort to identify, do copyright research on, transcribe and proofread works not protected by U.S. copyright law in creating the Project Gutenberg™ collection. Despite these efforts, Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, and the medium on which they may be stored, may contain “Defects,” such as, but not limited to, incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

1.F.2. LIMITED WARRANTY, DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES - Except for the “Right of Replacement or Refund” described in paragraph 1.F.3, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, the owner of the Project Gutenberg™ trademark, and any other party distributing a Project Gutenberg™ electronic work under this agreement, disclaim all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees. YOU AGREE THAT YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE, STRICT LIABILITY, BREACH OF WARRANTY OR BREACH OF CONTRACT EXCEPT THOSE PROVIDED IN PARAGRAPH 1.F.3. YOU AGREE THAT THE FOUNDATION, THE TRADEMARK OWNER, AND ANY DISTRIBUTOR UNDER THIS AGREEMENT WILL NOT BE LIABLE TO YOU FOR ACTUAL, DIRECT, INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGE.

1.F.3. LIMITED RIGHT OF REPLACEMENT OR REFUND - If you discover a defect in this electronic work within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending a written explanation to the person you received the work from. If you received the work on a physical medium, you must return the medium with your written explanation. The person or entity that provided you with the defective work may elect to provide a replacement copy in lieu of a refund. If you received the work electronically, the person or entity providing it to you may choose to give you a second opportunity to receive the work electronically in lieu of a refund. If the second copy is also defective, you may demand a refund in writing without further opportunities to fix the problem.

1.F.4. Except for the limited right of replacement or refund set forth in paragraph 1.F.3, this work is provided to you ‘AS-IS’, WITH NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR ANY PURPOSE.

1.F.5. Some states do not allow disclaimers of certain implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of certain types of damages. If any disclaimer or limitation set forth in this agreement violates the law of the state applicable to this agreement, the agreement shall be interpreted to make the maximum disclaimer or limitation permitted by the applicable state law. The invalidity or unenforceability of any provision of this agreement shall not void the remaining provisions.

1.F.6. INDEMNITY - You agree to indemnify and hold the Foundation, the trademark owner, any agent or employee of the Foundation, anyone providing copies of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works in accordance with this agreement, and any volunteers associated with the production, promotion and distribution of Project Gutenberg™ electronic works, harmless from all liability, costs and expenses, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following which you do or cause to occur: (a) distribution of this or any Project Gutenberg™ work, (b) alteration, modification, or additions or deletions to any Project Gutenberg™ work, and (c) any Defect you cause.

Section 2. Information about the Mission of Project Gutenberg™

Project Gutenberg™ is synonymous with the free distribution of electronic works in formats readable by the widest variety of computers including obsolete, old, middle-aged and new computers. It exists because of the efforts of hundreds of volunteers and donations from people in all walks of life.

Volunteers and financial support to provide volunteers with the assistance they need are critical to reaching Project Gutenberg™’s goals and ensuring that the Project Gutenberg™ collection will remain freely available for generations to come. In 2001, the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation was created to provide a secure and permanent future for Project Gutenberg™ and future generations. To learn more about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation and how your efforts and donations can help, see Sections 3 and 4 and the Foundation information page at www.gutenberg.org.

Section 3. Information about the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3) educational corporation organized under the laws of the state of Mississippi and granted tax exempt status by the Internal Revenue Service. The Foundation’s EIN or federal tax identification number is 64-6221541. Contributions to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation are tax deductible to the full extent permitted by U.S. federal laws and your state’s laws.

The Foundation’s business office is located at 809 North 1500 West, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 596-1887. Email contact links and up to date contact information can be found at the Foundation’s website and official page at www.gutenberg.org/contact

Section 4. Information about Donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation

Project Gutenberg™ depends upon and cannot survive without widespread public support

and donations to carry out its mission of increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine-readable form accessible by the widest array of equipment including outdated equipment. Many small donations (\$1 to \$5,000) are particularly important to maintaining tax exempt status with the IRS.

The Foundation is committed to complying with the laws regulating charities and charitable donations in all 50 states of the United States. Compliance requirements are not uniform and it takes a considerable effort, much paperwork and many fees to meet and keep up with these requirements. We do not solicit donations in locations where we have not received written confirmation of compliance. To SEND DONATIONS or determine the status of compliance for any particular state visit www.gutenberg.org/donate.

While we cannot and do not solicit contributions from states where we have not met the solicitation requirements, we know of no prohibition against accepting unsolicited donations from donors in such states who approach us with offers to donate.

International donations are gratefully accepted, but we cannot make any statements concerning tax treatment of donations received from outside the United States. U.S. laws alone swamp our small staff.

Please check the Project Gutenberg web pages for current donation methods and addresses. Donations are accepted in a number of other ways including checks, online payments and credit card donations. To donate, please visit: www.gutenberg.org/donate

Section 5. General Information About Project Gutenberg™ electronic works

Professor Michael S. Hart was the originator of the Project Gutenberg™ concept of a library of electronic works that could be freely shared with anyone. For forty years, he produced and distributed Project Gutenberg™ eBooks with only a loose network of volunteer support.

Project Gutenberg™ eBooks are often created from several printed editions, all of which are confirmed as not protected by copyright in the U.S. unless a copyright notice is included. Thus, we do not necessarily keep eBooks in compliance with any particular paper edition.

Most people start at our website which has the main PG search facility: www.gutenberg.org.

This website includes information about Project Gutenberg™, including how to make donations to the Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation, how to help produce our new eBooks, and how to subscribe to our email newsletter to hear about new eBooks.