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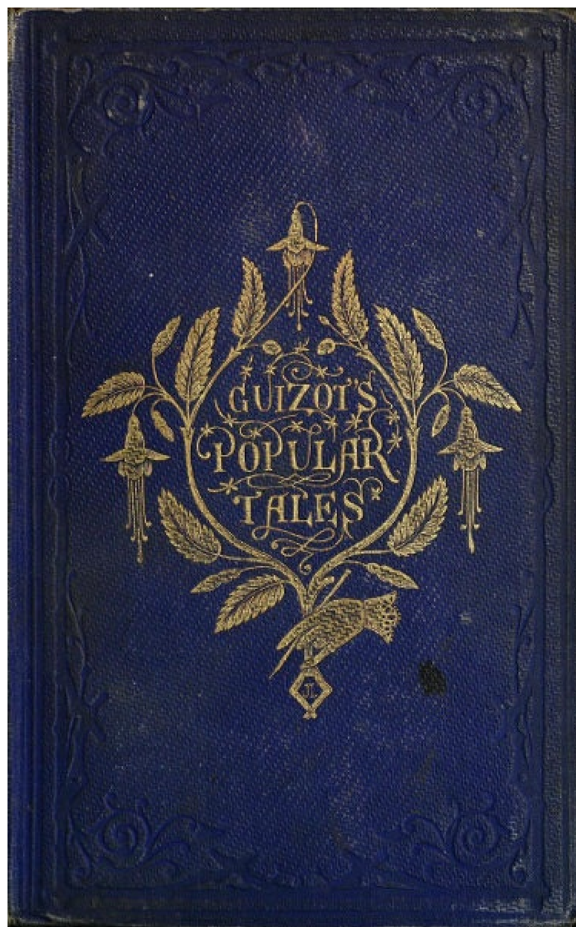

POPULAR TALES.

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Scaramouche, p. 27.

POPULAR TALES.

MADAME GUIZOT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH.
BY
MRS. L. BURKE.

LONDON:
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & CO.,
FARRINGDON STREET.
1854.

PREFACE.

The favourable reception accorded to our first introduction of Madame Guizot's Tales to the English Public, leads us to hope that our youthful readers will welcome with pleasure another volume from the pen of that talented writer.

This new series will be found in no respect inferior to the former; one of its tales, certainly, has even a deeper interest than anything contained in that volume, while the same sound morality, elevation of sentiment and general refinement of thought, which so strongly recommend the "Moral Tales" to the sympathies of the Parent and Teacher, will be found equally to pervade the present series.

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Scaramouche.

It was a village fair, and Punch with his usual retinue—Judy, the Beadle, and the Constable—had established himself on one side of the green; while on the other were to be seen, Martin, the learned ass, and Peerless Jacquot, the wonderful parrot. Matthieu la Bouteille (such was the nickname bestowed upon the owner of the ass, a name justified by the redness of his nose) held Martin by the bridle, while Peerless Jacquot rested on his shoulder, attached by a chain to his belt. His wife, surnamed *La Mauricaude*, had undertaken to assemble the company, and to display Martin's talents. Thomas, the son of La Mauricaude, a child of eleven years of age, covered with a few rags, which had once been a pair of trowsers and a shirt, collected, in the remnant of a hat, the voluntary contributions of the spectators; while in the background, sad and silent, stood Gervais, a lad of between fourteen and fifteen years of age, Matthew's son by a former marriage.

"Come, ladies and gentlemen," exclaimed La Mauricaude, in her hoarse voice, "come and see Martin; he will tell you, ladies and gentlemen, what you know and what you don't know. Come, ladies and gentlemen, and hear Peerless Jacquot; he will reply to what you say to him, and to what you do not say to him." And this joke, constantly repeated by La Mauricaude in precisely the same tone, always attracted an audience of pretty nearly the same character.

"Now then, Martin," continued La Mauricaude, as soon as the circle was formed, "tell this honourable company what o'clock it is." Martin, whether he did not understand, or did not choose to reply, still remained motionless. La Mauricaude renewed the question: Martin shook his ears. "Do you say, Martin, that you cannot see the clock at this distance?" continued La Mauricaude. "Has any one a watch?" Immediately an enormous watch was produced from the pocket of a farmer, and placed under the eyes of Martin, who appeared to consider it attentively. The whole assembly, like Martin himself, stretched forward with increased attention. It was just noon by the watch; after a few moments' reflection, Martin raised his head and uttered three vigorous *hihons*, to which the crowd responded by a burst of laughter, which did not in the least appear to disturb Martin. "Oh, oh! Martin," cried La Mauricaude, "I see you are thinking of three o'clock, the time for having your oats; but you must wait, so what say you to a game of cards, in order to pass the time?" And a pack of cards, almost effaced by dirt, was immediately extracted from a linen bag which hung at La Mauricaude's right side, and spread out in the midst of the circle, which drew in closer, in order to enjoy a nearer view of the spectacle about to be afforded by the talents of Martin. "Now then, Martin; now then, my boy," continued his instructress, "draw: draw first of all the knave of hearts, and present it to this honourable company as a sign of your attachment and respect;" and already the two or three wits of the crowd had nodded their heads with an air of approbation at this ingenious compliment, when Martin, after repeated orders, put forth his right foot, and placed it upon the seven of spades.

At this moment the voice of a parrot was heard in the midst of the crowd, distinctly pronouncing the words, "That won't do, my good fellow." It was Peerless Jacquot, who, wearied at not having been called upon to join in the conversation, repeated one of his favourite phrases. The appropriateness of his speech restored the good humour of the company, who were beginning to be disgusted with Martin's stupidity; and their attention would probably have been bestowed upon Jacquot, had not Punch's trumpet been at that moment heard, announcing that the actors were ready and the performances about to commence. At this signal Martin's audience began to disperse; the ranks thinned, and the remnant of the hat, which was seen advancing in the hands of Thomas, effectually drove away those who still lingered from curiosity or indifference. All took the same direction; and Matthew, Thomas, La Mauricaude, Martin, and Jacquot followed, with more or less of ill-humour, the crowd which had deserted them. Gervais alone, separating from them, went into a neighbouring street to offer his services, during the fair time, to a farrier engaged in shoeing the horses of the visitors.

A far different spectacle from any with which Martin could amuse them, awaited the curious on the other side of the green. An enormous mastiff had just been unharnessed from a little cart, upon which he had brought the theatre and company of the Marionettes; and now, lying down in front of the tent and at the feet of his master, he seemed to take under his protection those things which had thus far travelled under his conveyance. Medor's appearance was that of a useful and well-treated servant; his looks towards his master those of a confiding friend. Va-bon-train (this was the name of the owner of the Marionettes) might easily be recognized for an old soldier. The regularity of his movements added greatly to the effect of their vivacity; everything [Pg 4] happened in its proper turn, and at its proper time. His utterance was precise without being abrupt, and the tone of military firmness which he associated with the tricks of his trade, gave to them a certain degree of dignity. Words taken from the languages of the different countries through which he had travelled were mingled, with wonderful gravity and readiness, in the dialogue of the personages whom he put in action; and scenes in which he had been personally concerned, either as actor or witness, fired his imagination, and furnished incidents which enabled him to vary his representations to an unlimited extent. He was assisted by his son Michael, a fine lad about the age of Gervais, whom he very much resembled, although the countenance of the one was as serious as that of the other was cheerful and animated.

There was nothing strange in this resemblance, for Matthew and Va-bon-train were brothers, and Michael and Gervais therefore first cousins. Va-bon-train, whose baptismal name was Vincent, owed his nickname less to the regularity of his movements than to the vivacity of his disposition and the promptitude of his determinations. Having at the age of twenty-five lost his wife, to whom he was much attached, and who had died in giving birth to Michael, he could not endure even a temporary grief, and therefore determined, in order to divert his mind, to enter the army, which he did in the quality of substitute, leaving the price of his engagement for the support of his son, whom he confided to the care of Matthew's wife, who had just given birth to Gervais. She nursed both the children, and brought them up with an equal tenderness and in good habits, for she was a worthy woman. They went to the same school, where they learned to read and write, and were instructed in their religion; they began working together in Matthew's shop, at his trade of a blacksmith; and, in fine, they were united by a friendship which was no less ardent on [Pg 5] the part of the lively Michael than on that of the graver Gervais. At the age of thirteen, Gervais had the misfortune of losing his mother, and almost at the same time the additional one of being separated from Michael. Vincent Va-bon-train, who had obtained his discharge, had come for his son, whose assistance he required in carrying out his enterprise of the Marionettes, in which he had just engaged. Soon afterwards Matthew's affairs began to fall into confusion. While his wife lived she had kept a check on his love of drink, but no sooner was she dead than he gave himself up to it without restraint. At the tavern he became acquainted with La Mauricaude, a low, bad-principled woman, who had followed all sorts of trades. He was foolish enough to marry her, and they soon squandered the little that remained to him, already much diminished by his disorderly conduct. Then she persuaded him to give up the shop, and travel through the country with his ass and his parrot, assuring him that he would thereby gain a great deal of money. This wandering kind of life accorded better than regular labour with Matthew's newly-acquired habits; and he was the more ready to trust the assurances of his wife, as Va-bon-train had just reappeared in the country in a prosperous condition, the result of the success of his Marionettes. Matthew then formed the idea of entering into partnership with his brother; but the latter was not at all anxious for the connexion, as Matthew's conduct was not calculated to inspire him with any confidence. His second marriage had displeased him, and he disliked La Mauricaude, though he had seen her but casually; but a soldier is not apt to be deterred by trifles, nor to allow his antipathies to interfere with his actions; and besides, Matthew had rendered him a service in bringing up his son Michael. For this he was grateful, and glad, therefore, to have an opportunity of manifesting his gratitude. The caravan consequently set out, Michael delighted at being once more with his [Pg 6] beloved Gervais, and Gervais sad at leaving the respectable and regular course of life which suited him, viz. his trade of blacksmith, in which, notwithstanding his father's negligence in instructing him, he had already attained some proficiency. He was in some degree consoled, however, by the prospect of travelling, and travelling with Michael; and he was glad to leave a place where the misconduct of his father had ended in destroying the good reputation which until then his family had always enjoyed.

Unfortunately, the faults which had destroyed Matthew's reputation followed him wherever he went. Before the end of the first week, the two parties had disagreed. The baseness of La Mauricaude, and the wicked propensities of her son Thomas, who was always better pleased with stealing a thing than with receiving it as a gift, were soon discovered to Va-bon-train, in a manner which led him to determine to break his agreement with them as readily as he had made it; and when he said to his brother, "We must separate," just as when he said, "We will go together," the matter was settled, and all opposition was out of the question. Michael no more thought of opposing his father's resolution than any one else, he only threw himself weeping into the arms of Gervais, who pressed his hand sadly, but with resignation, having at least the comfort of thinking that his uncle would no longer be a witness of the disgraceful conduct of his family. La Mauricaude was furious, and declared that she was not to be shaken off in that easy style; and she determined to follow her brother-in-law, in spite of himself, in order to profit by the crowd he always attracted, and to endeavour at the same time to injure him, either by speaking ill of him in every way she could, or by trying to interrupt his performances, by the shrieks of the parrot, which she had taught to repeat insulting phrases, and to imitate the voice of the Marionettes. For [Pg 7] two months she persisted in her resolution, notwithstanding the remonstrances of Matthew, whose remonstrances, indeed, were usually of very little avail. At first, Va-bon-train was annoyed

with these things; but he soon reconciled himself to them with his usual promptitude. One day, however, he said to his brother, "Listen, Matthew: the roads are free; but let me not hear that you have allowed any one to think that that toad yonder has the insolence to call herself my sister." So saying, he showed La Mauricaude the whip with which he was accustomed to give Medor a slight touch now and then, in order to keep him attentive, and the handle of which had more than once warned Michael of some failure in discipline. From that time, Gervais no longer saluted his uncle, for fear of offending him; and La Mauricaude, notwithstanding her impudence, did not dare to run the risk of braving him openly. Besides, she would have found it no easy task to entice away his audience. Who could enter into competition with "the great, the wonderful, *il vero Scaramuccia*, Gentlemen, just come direct from Naples,[1] to present to you, *lustrissimi*, the homage of his colleagues, the *Lazzaroni*? *Baccia vu*, your hand, *Monsu* de Scaramouche." And Scaramouche bowed his head, and raised his hand to his mouth, with a series of movements capable of making you forget the threads by which they were directed. "Look, gentlemen, look at Scaramouche, look at him full in the face; it is indeed Scaramouche; he has not a *sou*, not a *pezzetta*, Gentlemen, but how happy he is! See him with his mouth extended from ear to ear; his foot raised, ready to run or jump: but one turn of the hand, one single turn of the wheel of fortune, and behold the metamorphosis! How anxious and grieved he looks! He is now the *Signor* [Pg 8] Scaramuccia, he has become rich, he is counting his money in his hand; he counts, and now he counts more still, and ever with increased vexation. Oh! what has happened to him now? His countenance is changed. Oh! what a piteous face! He weeps; he tears his cap. *Povero Scaramuccia!* What! *presso 'l denaro!* Your money has been stolen! Come, come, Scaramouche, *fa cuore*, take courage. No!... *Ammazarti?* You want to kill yourself! Very well then, but first of all a little *Macaroni*. Yes, poor fellow, he will enjoy his *Macaroni*. See, gentlemen, how piteously he stretches out his hand, how he eats with tears in his eyes; but, *pian piano, Scaramuccia*, gently, *vuoi mangiare tutto?* Would you eat the whole? Alas! yes; *tutto mangiare*, all, *per morire!* in order that he may die! What, die of indigestion! You are joking, Scaramouche; Macaroni never killed a Lazzarone. Stop, see, he revives again; how he draws up his leg as a mark of pleasure! How he turns his eyes every time he opens his mouth to receive *una copiosa* pinch *di Macaroni*! *O che gusto! che boccone!* How delightful! what a mouthful! Make your minds easy, gentlemen, Scaramouche is alive again." A variety of scenes succeeded, displaying Scaramouche under numerous aspects, each more admirable than the former. The last was that in which the German on duty stopped Scaramouche, with the exclamation *Wer da!* Scaramouche replied in Italian, vainly endeavouring to make himself understood, and avoiding, by dint of suppleness, the terrible bayonet of the German. Then Punch came up, arguing to as little purpose in French. At length, the Devil carried away the German, and Punch and Scaramouche went to enjoy a bottle together. The beauty of the invention drew forth enthusiastic and universal applause; the politicians of the place exchanged mysterious glances; and when Scaramouche presented to the assembled crowd the little saucer which had been placed in his hands, there was no one who did not hasten to offer [Pg 9] his sou, his liard, or his centime, for the pleasure of receiving a bow or a nod from Scaramouche.

The crowd slowly dispersed, conversing on the pleasure they had enjoyed. "His Scaramouche breaks my back," said La Mauricaude, in a tone of ill-temper.

"I have often told you, wife," replied her husband, "that by persisting in following them"....

"I have often told you, husband, that you are a fool," was the reply of La Mauricaude. To Matthew it appeared unanswerable; and Thomas, at a look from his mother, went off to visit Medor, who received him politely, and with an air of old acquaintanceship. Va-bon-train perceived him, cracked his great whip, and Thomas immediately ran away as fast as he could.

Gervais was passing along the green, leading back to its owner a horse, which he had helped to shoe. He did not approach, but Medor perceived him at a distance, got up, wagged his tail, and gave a slight whine, partly from the delight of seeing him, and partly from annoyance at not being able to go with him. Gervais gave him a friendly nod. Michael fondly kissed the great head of Medor, and a smile seemed to brighten the countenance of Gervais, at this expression of Michael's affection. It was only in such ways as this that any interchange of thought was permitted to them.

Though possessed of many good qualities, Va-bon-train had one defect,—that of forming precipitate judgments, and of being unwilling to correct them when formed. He came to a decision at once, in order that a matter might the sooner be settled; and when he had decided, he did not wish to be disturbed in his opinion, as it took up too much time to change his mind. The violence done to his feelings in enduring La Mauricaude for a whole week had so much increased his prejudice, that it had extended to the whole family. La Mauricaude was a demon, Matthew a [Pg 10] fool, Thomas a rascal, and Gervais a simpleton. These four judgments once pronounced, were not to be over-ruled. Va-bon-train was very fond of his son, whose disposition quite accorded with his own; but he kept him, in military style, under a strict and prompt obedience, aware that the kind of life he made him follow, might, without the greatest care, lead a young man into habits of irregularity and idleness. Fortunately Michael was possessed of good dispositions, had been well brought up, and preferred to all other company the society of his father, who amused him with his numerous anecdotes. Besides, he made it a matter of pride to assist his father as much as possible, and was never so delighted as when his exertions had contributed to the success of the day. Va-bon-train's industry was not confined to his Marionettes; he took advantage of his constant journeys to carry on a small traffic, purchasing in one canton such goods as happened to be cheap there, and selling them in some other, where they were of greater value. He taught Michael how to buy and sell, and make advantageous speculations; and Michael would have been

perfectly happy in following this kind of busy, useful life, had it not been for the grief he felt in being unable to share his pleasures with Gervais. But when, after having slept at the best inn which the town or village in which they happened to be, afforded, he saw Gervais in the morning, pale, from having passed a cold or rainy night with no other shelter than an old barn, his heart was pierced; and, notwithstanding his father's commands, he found means to get away, and, with a flask in his hand, hastened to offer a glass of wine to his friend, who refused it with a shake of the head, but with a friendly look. Michael sighed; yet this refusal only served to increase his affection for Gervais; for he well knew that his offer was refused from honourable feelings, not from pride or rancour. Nor was his mind relieved, except when Gervais succeeded in finding work; for then he knew that he would have a good day. When at work, the habitually sad expression of Gervais' countenance, gave place to an air of animation quite pleasant to behold; and even Va-bon-train himself had been unable to resist the temptation of stopping to look at him; and, observing the dexterity and courage with which he managed the horses, he remarked, "By my faith, that fellow works well." Then Michael hastened to reply, "Oh! Gervais is a capital workman;" and he was beginning to add, "and such a good boy too," when Va-bon-train passed on and spoke of other things. Michael then contented himself with remaining a little behind, watching Gervais at work; and when they had exchanged looks, they separated satisfied.

Up to that time Gervais had been unsuccessful in his efforts to find a master who would take him into regular employment. There was no one to be answerable for him; and those with whom he travelled were not of a character to give him a recommendation. However, he made the best he could of his wandering life, by endeavouring to perfect himself in his trade, losing no opportunity of gaining information, and examining with care the treatment employed in the various maladies of animals, and all the other operations of the veterinary art. He also managed to live on his daily earnings, which he economized with the greatest care, and thereby escaped the necessity of partaking of the ill-gotten repasts of La Mauricaude and her son. Sometimes even he shared his own food with his father, whose wretched life was spent in a state of alternate intoxication and want, giving himself up to drink the moment he had money, and the next day going without bread. As it suited La Mauricaude to have some one who could take care of the ass and the parrot, while she and her son attended to their own affairs, they were induced to treat Matthew with some degree of consideration, at least so far as to allow him a share in their profits, of which, however, they were careful to conceal from him the source, for Matthew, even in his degraded condition, preserved an instinct of honesty, which sometimes caused him to say with a significant air, but only when he was intoxicated, "As for me, I am an honest man;" for when sober, he had not so much wit. La Mauricaude had several times endeavoured to get from Gervais the money he earned, but her demands were always firmly resisted, and Gervais afterwards took especial care not to leave his money within reach of her or her son. She had likewise tried to breed dissensions between him and his father; but Matthew respected his son, and La Mauricaude found that it was not to her interest to excite too much the attention of Gervais, for his surveillance would have been very inconvenient to her. She therefore ended by leaving him in tolerable peace, one reason of which may have been that she saw little of him, as he usually left the party as soon as it was day, and did not return until bed-time, when he rarely slept under a roof, unless it was that of some deserted shed.

The performances of the morning were over, and Va-bon-train stood chatting at the door of the inn where he had dined with an old friend, a blacksmith from Lyons. They were then about twenty-five leagues distant from that town, on the road to Tournon, whither the blacksmith was going on some private business. Blanchet, such was this person's name, was clever at his trade, and well to do in the world. The blacksmith of the village in which they were then staying was a former apprentice and workman of his, and he had stopped to visit him as he passed through, and was now on the point of resuming his journey. The forge was at a short distance from the inn; and Gervais, who had just left it, as it was getting dark, came up to the spot where Va-bon-train and Blanchet were conversing. The street was narrow, and, moreover, partially blocked up by a horse that was tied in front of the inn. Va-bon-train chancing to turn his head in the direction by which Gervais was approaching, perceived him coming, and drew back to allow him to pass. Gervais blushed and hesitated; he had not been so close to his uncle for two months. At length he passed on, and, without raising his eyes, bowed to him as he would have done to a stranger, but with an expression of the most profound respect. Michael's eyes were suffused with tears, and for a moment those of Va-bon-train followed his nephew, who, turning round and encountering his uncle's looks, hastily withdrew his own and continued his way.

"Do you know that lad?" demanded Blanchet.

—"Why?"

"Because yonder at the forge, a short time since, they were talking about you."

—"And what did he say?" continued Va-bon-train, with an expression of rising displeasure.

—"He? Nothing:—but one of the men was relating something, I don't know what, about a woman with whom he had been drinking yesterday, some two leagues hence, and who told him that you had abandoned your brother in misfortune. This lad immediately tapped him on the shoulder, saying, '*Comrade, that is no business of yours. It is always best not to interfere in family quarrels.*' The man was silenced; and I, learning from what passed, that you were here, for I had not then been out upon the green, I wished to add my word, so I said, that if you did leave your brother in misfortune, it must be because he deserved it, for I well knew the kindness of your heart; whereupon, the young fellow gave me also my answer, though politely enough however,

for he said, '*Notwithstanding all that, Master Blanchet, it is much better not to interfere in family affairs*;' and the lad was right as to that; but from all this I thought he must know you, more especially when, a short time since, while passing the inn-yard, I saw him enter it, and draw some water for your dog to drink." [Pg 14]

Va-bon-train was visibly moved. Michael, whose heart beat violently, looked at his father.

"He was at work, then, at the blacksmith's?" demanded the latter with some degree of emotion.

"Yes; and hard at it too, I can tell you. It is vexatious that you do not know him. He was anxious to be taken as a regular hand there; but when asked who would be answerable for him, he replied, '*No one.*' Had it not been for this, I would have engaged him myself, for I am sure he will turn out a capital workman."

"You think so?"

"Oh! you should see how he sets to work; he would learn more about his business with me in six months, than with any one else in three years. But one cannot take him without a recommendation. I heard him say to one of his companions, that this was the third situation he had lost in this manner, nor will he ever get one."

"Oh dear!" exclaimed Michael, who could no longer restrain his feelings.

"Well!" said Va-bon-train. "My friend Blanchet will take him on my recommendation. Take him, friend; I know him, and will be answerable for him."

"Nonsense! what are you talking about?"

"Nothing; only that I shall see you at Lyons, whither you are returning:—but when?"

"I shall be there on Monday week."

"And so shall I; and I will come and dine with you: we will arrange this matter over our glasses. But, at all events, you will take the lad if I am answerable for him; do not make me break my word."

"No, no; the thing is settled; good bye till Monday week;" and they parted.

"But Gervais must be told," said Michael, trembling with joy. [Pg 15]

"Go, then, and make haste back; tell him to be at Lyons by Monday week, if possible; but, above all, he must take care that the old toad knows nothing about it." This was his usual epithet for La Mauricaude. Michael departed, and Va-bon-train went to a neighbouring tavern, into which he had seen Matthew and his company enter. The price of a pair of stockings worth fifty sous, which had been stolen from a shop at the fair, and sold a quarter-of-an-hour afterwards for twenty, served to defray the expenses of the party; and Matthew, owing to the cheapness of the wine that season, was just on the verge of intoxication, when Va-bon-train, coming up, said to him, "Matthew, there is but one word between you and me: when I go one way, you must take care and go the other; if you don't, your old toad and her young one will every morning get for their breakfast a sound dressing from this whip."

"As for me, Vincent, I am an honest man," stammered Matthew. La Mauricaude was about to vociferate; and the host took part with his customer.

"Friend," said Va-bon-train, "when you settle your account with that hussey, I will not interfere; but look well to the money she gives you:" and he walked out. As soon as he was gone, La Mauricaude poured forth a torrent of abuse. Those of her neighbours whose hearts began to be warmed and their wits clouded by the wine they had taken, agreed unanimously, that to come and insult in that manner respectable people, who were quietly taking their glass, without interfering with any one, was a thing not to be borne: and Matthew again repeated, "As for me, I am an honest man." The rest, as they looked at La Mauricaude and her son, made some reflections on Va-bon-train's speech, and the host thought it high time to demand payment. This completed the ill-humour of La Mauricaude.

As for Michael, he had hastened to Gervais, and delivered his message. A sudden flush of surprise and joy suffused the countenance of the latter, on learning that his uncle would be answerable for him; and when the voice of Va-bon-train was heard calling his son, the two friends pressed each other's hands, and parted, each cherishing the thought of the happiness which was about to dawn for both of them. [Pg 16]

All was quiet at the inn where Va-bon-train had taken up his abode for the night, when, awaking from his first sleep, he thought he heard Medor in the yard, groaning, and very uneasy. He went down stairs, and was surprised to find him tied by a cord to a tree that was near the cart, and so short that he could scarcely move. As he was accustomed to allow Medor his liberty at night, feeling quite sure that he would make use of it only to defend more effectually his master's property, he concluded that some one had thought to render him a service, by tying up the dog for fear of his escaping; for in the darkness he had not perceived that the other end of the cord which attached Medor to the tree, had been passed round his nose, so as to form a kind of muzzle. Eager to liberate the poor animal, he cut the cord, which was fastened round his neck by a slip knot, and which, but for the intervention of his collar, must have strangled him. The cord once cut, the knot gave way, and, by the aid of his fore paws, Medor was soon freed from his

ignoble fetters. No sooner had he regained his liberty, than he began to scent with avidity all round the yard, moaning the whole time; then he dashed against the stable door as if he would break it in. His master, astonished, opened it for him, supposing, from what he knew of his instinct, that some suspicious person might be concealed there; but Medor was contented with running across the stable, still scenting, to the opposite door, which led into the street, and which, by the means of this stable, formed one of the entrances to the inn. His master called him, [Pg 17] he came back with reluctance, and, still moaning, laid down at his feet, as if to solicit a favour; then he ran to the vehicle, again returned, and rushed with greater violence against the first door, which his master had in the mean time closed. Astonished at these manœuvres, Va-bon-train went to his cart; but everything was in order, the trunk locked, and nothing apparently to justify the dog's agitation. Then, presuming that Medor, notwithstanding his good sense, was, like all dogs and all children, impatient to set out on his journey, and had been seized with this fancy rather earlier than usual, he gave him a cut with his whip, sent him back to the cart, and returned to bed.

The next morning, when he went down, he called Medor, but no Medor answered. He sought for him everywhere, but without success; he then recollected what had taken place during the night, and feared that some one had stolen him.

"Was he there," demanded one of the travellers, "when you went down in the night to take something from your cart?" Va-bon-train declared that he had taken nothing from his cart.

"The heat was insufferable," continued the man, "and we had the window open. One of the workmen from the forge, who slept in my room, said: 'See, there is some one meddling with the box belonging to the exhibitor of the Marionettes.' 'His dog does not growl,' said I, 'so it must be the man himself. Never mind, friend; let us sleep.'"

Va-bon-train hastened to his box, which was still locked; he opened it, and found everything in disorder: Scaramouche had disappeared, as well as a dozen of Madras handkerchiefs, the remains of a lot purchased at the fair of Beaucaire, and the greater part of which had been sold on his journey. Who could have done this? Va-bon-train remembered having found a key upon the road, a few days after he had associated himself with Matthew, and which fitted his trunk. He [Pg 18] lost it again the next day, but had not troubled himself about it. Now he guessed into whose hands it had fallen, and felt assured that Medor would not have allowed himself to be approached and led away by any one but an acquaintance.

"That boy who was at work close by, at the blacksmith's," said the landlord of the inn, "did he not come in here, and give the dog some drink?"

"He who came with the woman and the ass?" said the hostess. "He seemed to be a respectable lad."

"*You* may think so," replied a neighbour; "but when I saw him enter the stable yonder, after dark, I said to Cateau, What is that little *vagabond* going to do there?"

"Gervais!" exclaimed Michael.

"Yes," said the landlord, "he was called Gervais at the blacksmith's." The flush of anger mounted to the face of Va-bon-train. The idea of having been duped was added to the annoyance of his loss, and he swore that he would never again be caught overcoming a prejudice. A less hasty disposition would have examined whether the innkeeper and the neighbour were not speaking of different persons, and whether suspicion ought not more naturally to fall upon Thomas and La Mauricaude. But the woman whose explanations would have thrown light upon the subject had gone home, and among those who remained there was no one who had seen them, or, at all events, who would acknowledge to have done so; for where there is not some falsehood to complicate matters, it is rare that truth does not break out, so great is its tendency to manifest itself.

La Mauricaude, who was never so persuasive as when she had been drinking, had formed acquaintance with one of the ostlers of the inn, who, on his side, was easily led by persuasion, when in the same condition. She had obtained from him a gratuitous place in the stable for Martin, and, though against his master's express orders, a corner also for Thomas. Hence, [Pg 19] furnished with some of the remains of the travellers' supper, which he had obtained from his protector, it was an easy matter for Thomas to enter the yard, and entrap the too confiding Medor, who had no suspicion of treachery from the hand of an acquaintance. At the moment when Medor, without abandoning his post, raised his head to smell what was presented to him, Thomas passed the muzzle on his nose, and the slip knot round his neck, and the poor animal found himself tied up to a tree, without having been able to make the least resistance; for, could he have made any, he would easily have triumphed over his adversary. Thus master of the field, Thomas had no difficulty in prosecuting his designs, by means of the key which, at all risks, he had possessed himself of at the first opportunity that offered. Martin, taken from the stable before daybreak, carried off the stolen goods, and scarcely had the morning begun to dawn, when Matthew, roused from the heavy sleep of intoxication, and, almost unconscious of what he was doing, left the arch of the bridge, beneath which he had slept, in the bed of a dried-up stream.

Gervais had obtained, from the blacksmith by whom he had been employed, the permission to pass the night in his woodhouse, upon a heap of vine twigs. Awakening from a sleep which, for the first time for two months, had revived hope in his bosom, he arose with a light heart, full of

eagerness to commence his journey towards his new destination. The evening before, he had told his father that he was going to leave him, for the purpose of seeking employment; and Matthew, whose paternal affections were greatly strengthened after the second bottle, gave him his benediction, with tears in his eyes, saying, "Go, my son, and gain an honest living; and wherever you go, you may declare that I am an honest man." As for La Mauricaude, she troubled herself very little about him, neither did he wish her to do so. His serious and reserved disposition had prevented anything like friendly feeling between them. [Pg 20]

He walked with a light heart towards Lyons, calculating that in order to get there, he would require on his journey some little work and a great deal of frugality; for even by sleeping in sheds, beneath bridges, or under trees, it was impossible that his twenty-one sous, the proceeds of his work the day before, and of his previous economy, should be sufficient for the maintenance of a lad of fifteen, during the ten days that must yet elapse, before the arrival of that happy Monday, which was to bring him the protection of his uncle and of Master Blanchet. But how should he be uneasy about the means of reaching his destination? He was already there in imagination. He was about to live with those who, every day and every hour, would recognize his probity. He was going to have an opportunity of proving his right to be esteemed, a necessity keenly felt by those who, like him, have known humiliation without deserving it, and without allowing themselves to be depressed by its influence. And then, how many delights were in store for him! That pair of shoes which he carried so carefully fastened to the end of his stick, whenever he had far to walk, he might soon be able to wear continually, for he foresaw the time when he should be in a condition to buy others. Nevertheless, he must endeavour to make them last until he had purchased a second shirt, so as to avoid the necessity of going without one occasionally, as was the case, when of an evening, taking advantage of some secluded nook, he took off the only one he had, washed it in the stream and dried it on the grass of the bank. The idea of possessing a pair of stockings to dance in on holidays presented itself to his imagination in the distant future, around which crowded in perspective the inexhaustible joys of life. Then came the thoughts of a more solid happiness, and all the ambitions of an honourable man. He was [Pg 21] able to set up for himself; to work on his own account; to withdraw his father from the wretched life his wicked companion forced him to lead, and secure to him a tranquil old age, due to his son who loved him notwithstanding his irregularities. Then, his thoughts rushing over intervening years, Gervais would quicken his steps as if to reach the future, and his imagination warmed, as the sun rose, and shed its brilliant beams over the horizon.

Whilst abandoning himself to these reveries, he felt something cool and moist pressing against his hand. It was the nose of Medor; who, after licking his hand, looked at him and wagged his tail, but with an expression which seemed to ask a question; and having smelt him from head to foot, he went on, his nose in the air, and smelling constantly with the same anxiety. Gervais called him back; Medor stopped, looked at him with an uneasy expression, and continued his journey in the same manner. It was quite evident that he was in search of something; but being ignorant of what had taken place during the night, Gervais was at a loss to conjecture what it could be. It struck him, that, separated perhaps by some accident, Medor and his master might now be in search of each other, and with this idea, he could not suppose that Va-bon-train was still at the inn, whither Medor would undoubtedly have returned; it seemed to him, therefore, the best plan, to allow the animal to obey his instinct, contenting himself with following him so as to prevent his going astray, and preserve him from the danger of being taken or killed as a dog without an owner. He rejoiced in the opportunity thus afforded him of rendering his uncle a service; and, imagining that Medor had had nothing to eat, he gave him a part of the bread he had bought for his day's provision, and which the poor thing devoured with as much appetite as his agitation would permit. They then continued their journey together, Medor being always in advance, except when, from time to time, some new fancy seemed to seize him. Then he would turn as if to [Pg 22] retrace his steps, again stop and moan: alternately swayed by the instinct and affection which drew him towards his master, and that which hurried him on to the recovery of what had been confided to his care. Gervais would then call him, and, decided by the voice of his friend, Medor would return and continue his pursuit.

They journeyed thus for about two hours, when all at once, at a part where the road, somewhat hollow, wound in such a manner as to prevent a distant view, Medor, rushing forward, dashed round the corner with such rapidity that Gervais could not doubt that he had found his master. Then redoubling his speed, he also advanced trembling between hope and fear, and was most disagreeably surprised, when, at the turn of the road, he perceived his father, La Mauricaude, the ass, and Thomas, in the greatest embarrassment, contending with Medor, who, without any provocation, and with all the consideration due to old acquaintanceship, had seized upon Thomas in such a manner, that the boy found it impossible to disengage himself from the animal's enormous claws, which, fixed upon the lad's shoulders, served as a support to Medor, who, by smelling about in all directions, at last discovered an old cloth bag lined with leather, which was placed upon the back of the ass, and the cords of which, unhappily for Thomas, had been wound round his arm. Medor's teeth laboured both at the cords and at the bag, which he endeavoured to open, almost upsetting Thomas at every effort; the latter, in despair, and screaming with terror, clung with all his strength to Martin's pack-saddle. "What is the matter with the dog?" quietly asked Matthew, who had been a calm spectator of a scene, which to him had the advantage of rousing him from his apathy. But La Mauricaude, at once furious and frightened, gave the animal some violent blows with a stick. Medor, however, did not seem conscious of them. At length, [Pg 23] seizing a large stone, she threw it at him; it struck him on the hind leg, and he fell howling, dragging down Thomas in his fall; the ass also was shaken, and even Matthew was astonished. Gervais only arrived in time to address a word of reproach to La Mauricaude, who was busied in

raising her son: he then ran after Medor, who had fled, howling, and limping on three legs. He succeeded in catching him, and found that one of his hind legs was broken. Submissive like a suffering animal to the friend who seeks to relieve him, Medor lay down close to him, and allowed him to examine his leg. Fortunately, Gervais was able to repair the mischief. Naturally kind hearted, it was to that branch of his business which treats of the cure of animals, that he had directed his attention with the greatest interest, and he had already been successful in a case somewhat similar. Matthew, who, when left to his own free will, was always inclined to sympathise with his son, and who, moreover, was delighted at having an opportunity of returning for a moment to his former occupations, willingly assisted his pupil, now become more skilful than himself. The instruments of his art, treasures which Gervais carefully preserved, together with some medicines which he had renewed, or added to, as opportunity permitted, were found sufficient for the emergency. By the united efforts of the two operators, whom La Mauricaude also consented to aid, for reasons which may perhaps be guessed, the leg was well set; and a piece of the last handkerchief that Gervais possessed, and the enormous rents of which he had often contemplated with a sigh, served as a bandage to confine the dressing; and Medor, led by Gervais, was enabled to continue his journey without much pain.

Somewhat cast down by his accident, however, poor Medor was no longer able to pursue his search with the same vigour; and besides, during the operation, Thomas, instructed by his mother, had transferred Scaramouche, together with the Madras handkerchiefs, into one of Martin's panniers, where, covered over with straw, they were less exposed to the keen scent of the animal. Nevertheless, some secret charm always attracted him to the side on which they were, and Gervais was astonished at the difficulty which he found in restraining him. Wishing to divert him from this fancy, and determined to go direct to Lyons, as the surest place of meeting with his uncle, Gervais seized the first opportunity offered by their stopping at a tavern, to separate himself from the troop, with which he had so unluckily come up. But he was not a little annoyed at perceiving, after a few moments, that he was followed in the distance by Thomas, who seemed commissioned to act as a spy upon his movements, while the rest of the caravan appeared soon afterwards. The fertile genius of La Mauricaude had immediately suggested to her the advantage to be derived from the possession of Medor, a magnificent dog in excellent condition, who might be sold at a very high price. The difficulty was to divert the vigilance of Gervais, whom at the same time it was necessary to keep in view, until she had accomplished her design. The following days, therefore, were passed in a perpetual struggle, Gervais endeavouring to recover his liberty, and La Mauricaude seeking to prevent his escape from their odious company. She was singularly seconded by Medor, whose instinct she aroused by taking advantage of every opportunity that offered to approach him unobserved, and permit him to get a distant scent of Scaramouche, the companion of all his travels, the one of all his master's mimic company with whom he had lived on the most familiar terms, when Va-bon-train and his son, in their leisure moments, had endeavoured to invent for him new attitudes, and to rehearse new performances. Then all Medor's affection would revive, he would rush with a plaintive cry upon the cords which restrained him; but before this movement could warn Gervais of what was passing, La Mauricaude had said to Thomas, "Hide Scaramouche," and Thomas, obedient to his instructions, had concealed the precious talisman. Matthew, who was sometimes a witness of these proceedings, demanded the meaning of them; but they deceived him with a feigned tale, told him to be silent, and he was so. But in his evening enjoyments at the tavern, purchased during these days, by the successive sale of the Madras handkerchiefs, he nightly repeated, with a degree of feeling amounting even to tears, "As for me, I have nothing to do with all this; for, at all events, it is certain that I am an honest man."

To the many annoyances which, at this time, fell to the lot of poor Gervais, was added the far greater one of being unsuccessful in his attempts to obtain work. In vain had he gone to the right and to the left, wherever he had been led to hope that it might be procured. Everywhere his hopes were frustrated, and, at the same time, the expense of keeping Medor had rapidly accelerated the consumption of his little store, although the condition of the poor dog sufficiently attested the frugality of his repasts. It grieved Gervais to the heart to see his downcast look, and a certain expression of sadness, which seemed to ask for what it was out of the power of his protector to bestow; for he had given him all he could give, scarcely reserving anything for his own support.

In consequence of his many deviations from the high road in these fruitless endeavours to obtain work, and to escape the inevitable Mauricaude; they at last reached Saturday, the 21st of August, and were still eleven leagues from Lyons. It was six o'clock in the evening, and neither Gervais nor Medor had eaten anything since the previous night. Exhausted by this fast, as well as by the low diet of the few preceding days, they walked with difficulty: and yet they had still a league to go before they could arrive at the village of Auberive, where Gervais had determined to stop, and where, as a last resource, he intended to sell his shoes, in order to have the means of reaching Lyons on the following Monday, the term alike of his hopes and resources. For some moments he had watched Medor with great anxiety, for he saw that he was panting more than usual. The day had been excessively oppressive; and the idea that the want of food, added to the heat and fatigue, exposed the dog to the danger of madness, presented itself to his imagination, and filled him with terror. While seated for a moment's rest, a peasant boy, of about his own age, happened to pass by, eating, with a good appetite, a piece of bread. This sight roused the desires of the half-famished Gervais, and Medor raised his now animated eye, and wanted to run to the boy, to ask him for a portion of his meal. Unable to resist the temptation he felt, and, above all, the appeal of the companion of his journey, Gervais asked the lad if he would buy his shoes, promising that he would sell them cheap.

"How much?" demanded the boy.

"If you have some bread, I will take that, and ten sous besides."

"I have only six sous," replied the rustic, roughly; "and, besides, I don't want your shoes."

"If you have any bread, comrade," continued Gervais, who could not resist the hope with which he had just flattered himself, "give it to me with the six sous, and the shoes shall be yours."

"As for the bread, there is no difficulty about that," replied the boy; and he took from his bag a piece, weighing about a pound, too eager to conclude so good a bargain to perceive that he might have made it still better. Three two-sous pieces terminated the affair, and two-thirds of the pound of bread were at once set apart as the portion of Medor, whom Gervais saw, with a melancholy pleasure, devour in a moment, a piece to which he had nothing to add. Medor's repast, in fact, [Pg 27] was ended, before Gervais had got half through his; and, with a longing eye, the poor dog watched the piece which the latter held in his hand, gently whined, and scratched his knee with his great paw, in order to obtain the little that remained. "You are very hungry, then, my poor Medor," said Gervais: "well then, this also shall be yours." He gave him the whole; and the sacrifice was sufficiently great, at that moment, to make him think he had acquired a right to the affection of his uncle. He then rose to continue his journey, hoping to be able to reach Auberive; but, whether from want of food, or because the heat of the day had exhausted him, after proceeding a few steps, he was obliged to lean for support against a tree, and, at last, sank to the ground, almost senseless. Induced either by curiosity or remorse, the young peasant who had bought the shoes occasionally looked back towards him. He saw him fall, and returned, but could give no assistance. He spoke to him, but Gervais was scarcely able to answer. Medor watched his friend with an uneasy look; and the peasant, who perhaps might have been little sensible to other evils, was moved by the sight of a misery which he could understand, and felt some comfort at the thought that, at all events, Gervais had not been rendered worse by having sold his shoes for a quarter of their value.

Providence at that moment directed to the spot another traveller, who came on at a vigorous pace, his coat neatly folded in a handkerchief, and suspended from a stick which he carried on his shoulder. It was Master Blanchet. He approached Gervais, but did not at first recognise him. "Has that boy fainted from hunger?" said he to the young peasant. "I think he has," replied the lad, "for he had but one bit of bread, and he gave almost all of it to his dog." Meanwhile, Master Blanchet drew from his bundle a small flask of brandy, with which he always took care to be provided when on a journey, and made Gervais swallow a few drops of it, while the addition of a [Pg 28] piece of bread and a slice of sausage completed his recovery. "A little patience," said Gervais to Medor, who wanted to share this repast also. "Poor Medor," he continued, caressing him, "all our troubles are over now," for he had recognised Master Blanchet, but did not as yet dare to express his joy except in this indirect manner. Struck by the name of Medor, and by the voice of Gervais, which was beginning to assume its natural tone, Blanchet recognized him, was greatly astonished, and put to him many questions; while the peasant lad, who thought he saw Gervais glance towards the shoes, which perhaps at that moment he regretted having parted with so easily, blushed, and walked away, persuaded that his further stay was no longer necessary to any one, and might be disadvantageous to himself.

Gervais' tale was simple enough; he had nothing but the truth to tell; the only difficulty was to explain the nature of his connexion with Va-bon-train. Seeing that the latter had not acknowledged him as his nephew, he felt that in their respective positions it was not for him to be the first to break the silence. Thus, when Blanchet asked him how he had become known to his friend, Gervais replied, "He will tell you that himself; it is not my business to speak of his affairs." Blanchet questioned him on all sides, but without being able to elicit any further information; nevertheless, his replies displayed so much integrity, together with so much good sense and caution, that he began to feel a great respect for him; a feeling which was much increased after he had examined Medor's paw, which was then in progress of cure, and which he found perfectly well set. He could not doubt, therefore, of the talents of Gervais in the different branches of his art. He took him with him to Auberive, where he intended to pass the night, so as to reach Lyons without fatigue on the next day but one. Plenty of onion soup, and a good omelette, procured for Gervais the best meal which had touched his lips for many a day. Medor [Pg 29] was also able to make up for his previous fast; and, to complete the happiness of Gervais, he found, at the inn where they stopped, the lad to whom he had sold his shoes. Master Blanchet commented so loudly on the disgrace of such a bargain in such circumstances, and his remarks were so fully approved of by all who heard them, that, whether from fear, or shame, or conscience, the lad consented to return the shoes at the price which he had given for them, and even made it a point of honour to refuse the value of the pound of bread, a sacrifice which procured for him from Blanchet a good draught of wine and a slice of sausage. Thus everything fell into order, and Gervais a second time thought himself at the summit of his hopes; but another day, and another trial, were still to be encountered.

The little room in which Master Blanchet and Gervais slept could not, manage as they would, accommodate a third guest, of the size of Medor. He was, therefore, lodged in the stable; and Gervais, confiding in his new-born happiness, the first earnest of which he had just received, resigned himself to sleep without any anxiety for the safety of his protegé; the more so as, since the morning, he had seen nothing of the odious Mauricaude, and therefore believed himself freed from her at last. Nevertheless, on the following morning Medor had again disappeared; whether in consequence of some new stratagem on the part of La Mauricaude, or from the instinct which

urged him to the pursuit of Scaramouche, or the desire to return to his master, could never be ascertained. But certain it is, however, that by this new imprudence he fell into the snare which had long been laid for him; and the first information which the inquiries of Gervais elicited made it certain, that it was only by following the traces of La Mauricaude that he could hope to recover those of Medor. A double affection made success a necessity for him. He therefore requested the permission of Master Blanchet, under whose authority he already considered himself, to go in search of the fugitive; and Blanchet appointed, as their place of meeting in the evening, the village of Saint Syphorien, or, as it is sometimes called, Symphorien, situated about four leagues from Lyons, where he intended to pass the night.

Gervais spent a part of the day in a fruitless search in the neighbourhood. At length some indications led him to the town of Vienne; there he lost them; but, on describing the retinue of La Mauricaude, he was informed, that in all probability she was gone to Saint Syphorien, as it happened to be its fête day. He made all possible haste to reach the place, and arrived there about seven o'clock in the evening. The first object which struck him as he entered the village was La Mauricaude, in conversation with a man to whom she seemed on the point of delivering over Medor, who, sorrowfully resigned to his new condition, appeared cast down by the vicissitudes of his fate. At the sight of Gervais, however, his animation returned, and he started as if to rush towards him.

"That is my dog," exclaimed Gervais, who at the moment thought only of his claims to Medor; and the dog, by the expression of his joy, seemed anxious to confirm his words.

"'Tis false, you thief," replied La Mauricaude, with her customary amenity. "Medor!" she added; and, thus addressed, the dog turned his head, as if to prove that he recognized his name, as well as the voice by which it was pronounced. "You see very well that he knows me," she continued, with a volley of abuse and oaths, which we need not repeat.

"Nevertheless, the dog does not belong to you," said Gervais.

"Nor to you either, liar," &c. &c.

The dispute had been carried on in so vehement a tone, that it was impossible for Gervais to expose the truth of the matter. A third interest, that of the purchaser of the dog, already compromised by a considerable sum paid in advance, was here introduced, as a further complication of the affair, when an exclamation from a terrible voice announced the approach of Va-bon-train, who, having reached Saint Syphorien, and learning the cause of the quarrel, came forward to cut short all disputes. He made his way through the crowd, and had already his left hand on Medor, while his whip, raised in the other, menaced Gervais, who, drawing back with indignation, though still with respect, endeavoured to avoid the necessity of defending himself otherwise than by words. Nevertheless, had it not been for Medor's transports of joy, which somewhat embarrassed his master's movements, Va-bon-train would have been already upon him, and Gervais must have submitted to the cruel alternative of either failing in respect to his uncle, or of enduring an ignominious treatment, the bare idea of which was insupportable to him.

"He is a thief," exclaimed the perfidious Mauricaude, taking advantage of this opportunity to turn upon another the accusation which she herself merited. "He said the dog was his!" and several voices simultaneously repeated, "Yes, he did say so."

"You have been seen all along the road," continued Va-bon-train, "dragging him after you in spite of his resistance;" and a voice repeated, "I saw him." It was in vain that Gervais endeavoured to make himself heard,—the public opinion was against him. Assailed by a crowd of painful emotions, and distressed above all by the treatment he received from him whose gratitude he so much merited, he felt his courage forsake him, and could no longer restrain his tears, tears which only seemed to be an additional evidence against him. Several persons interposed between him and his uncle, but he himself no longer thought of safety; and whilst the efforts of Va-bon-train were redoubled, in order to get near him, notwithstanding the endeavours of the crowd to prevent it, Gervais was exhausting his, in demanding as a suppliant the justice due to his innocence. Michael, whom his father had pushed away from him, not knowing what to think of his friend, but deeply distressed at the sight of the misfortunes which overwhelmed him, and the danger which still threatened him, seemed to appeal to all around to intercede for a reconciliation which every moment appeared to render impossible. However, Heaven again came to the assistance of Gervais, by directing Master Blanchet to the spot. Attracted by the noise, he came out from the house of a friend with whom he had supped; and Michael, perceiving him, ran to meet him. The name of Medor, mingled in the almost unintelligible explanations given by the agitated Michael, led Blanchet to suppose that his young friend Gervais might have something to do in the matter; he therefore hastened his steps, and arrived at the very moment when, by an increased exertion of strength and anger, Va-bon-train, forcing his way through the crowd, was about to rush upon Gervais. Blanchet seized him by the shoulders, and pushed him backwards, saying, "Stop! stop! there's time enough for anger, but not always for explanation."

Less disposed than ever to profit by this good advice, Va-bon-train was, in all probability, upon the point of turning his rage against him who offered it, when a new incident arose to change once more the face of the affair. Matthew approached the scene of action, and Martin and Jacquot, under his guidance, were added to the spectators. Jacquot had not been deaf to certain words, which for several days past had struck his attentive ears. Encouraged probably by the noise, he began to repeat, though in a timid and uncertain tone, and as if he were saying a lesson, which he was not quite sure of knowing,—"Thomas, hide Scaramouche!"

—"Scaramouche!" repeated Michael, who had heard him; and now Jacquot, more sure of what he was about, went on, and constantly raising his voice in proportion as the noise around him increased, and excited him, his words at length reached the ears of Va-bon-train, who turned round; while Medor, taking advantage of his first moment of liberty, rushed upon Martin, and this time rummaging, without obstacle, in the bottom of the pannier, dragged out the unfortunate Scaramouche, who, all crippled and disordered as he was, still retained sufficient life to express by his attitudes the distress of his condition. Medor advanced and placed him triumphantly in the hands of his master; who, in his surprise and joy, knew not to which of his two friends to offer his first caresses. But Medor had not finished his task; and returning to the pannier, notwithstanding the efforts of La Mauricaude, who hastened to the defence of her booty, he drew from it the last of the Madras handkerchiefs, which she had preserved for her own use.

"Infamous old toad!" exclaimed Va-bon-train, "'tis you, then, who have robbed me." And immediately turning towards Gervais, whom the presence of Blanchet had encouraged to approach, "Why were you with her?" he demanded, in a tone which already indicated his desire of finding him less in fault.

—"I was not with her," said Gervais. "They were not together," repeated several of the voices which had at first borne testimony against him.

"And why did you take away my dog?" again demanded Va-bon-train.

—"In order to bring him back to you, and to prevent him from following her." Then the accusations began to turn upon La Mauricaude. One recognized her as having given him on the previous evening a bad ten-sous piece; another had seen Thomas skulking about his house, and an hour after, found that a fowl had been stolen. La Mauricaude began to vociferate, and then to cry as she saw the storm increase, and direct itself against her; meanwhile Gervais drew near his father, who, already more than half intoxicated, and hardly able to understand what he heard, contented himself, without taking any part in the matter, by affirming, that, "as for him, he was an honest man."

"Get out of my way, you fool!" said his brother, pushing him behind him; then advancing towards La Mauricaude, who, still vociferating and crying, was endeavouring to make her escape, amid the hootings which pursued her, he contented himself with cracking his whip in her ears to hasten her steps. The crowd by which she was accompanied, diminished as she retreated, and by degrees the clamours of the little boys, who alone persisted in following her, died away. These assailants she dispersed by throwing stones at them, and they afterwards reported that they had seen both her and her son Thomas join a band of gipsies, who were on the point of departure. From that time she has never been heard of.

Quiet was once more restored at Saint Syphorien, and Va-bon-train received from Blanchet the explanations necessary to establish the good conduct of his nephew. "But where, in the name of Fortune, did you meet with him?" continued Blanchet. "He would never tell me."

"What, Gervais!" said Va-bon-train, "will you not acknowledge me for your uncle?" Michael, transported with joy, once more threw his arms round the neck of his friend, and Va-bon-train afterwards received the acknowledgments of his nephew's grateful affection. "Now then, what is to be done with Matthew," said Va-bon-train—"now that he has got rid of his old toad?" "He cannot live alone," said Gervais, casting down his eyes.

"Well, then, let him come with me," continued Va-bon-train; "Martin will, at all events, be learned enough to carry a part of my baggage, which is becoming too heavy for Medor. I will teach Jacquot many capital things, and we shall get on very well together."

These words rendered Gervais completely happy, and the gratitude inspired by his uncle's kindness towards himself, was far exceeded by what he now experienced, on account of his father. They went for Matthew to the tavern, where they found him still drinking, the longer to defer the moment of payment. This difficulty was removed by his brother, who thenceforth considered himself as charged with his care. The arrangement was proposed to him, and he accepted it, just as he would have done, had he been sober, only that he repeated a little oftener, and with rather more emotion than usual, "You, Vincent, know very well, that I at least am an honest man."

They had a joyful supper that night, Medor remaining at the side of the table, with his head upon his master's knee, which he left only to give a slight caress to Michael, or a look and a wag of his tail to Gervais. The following day, before their departure for Lyons, Gervais received from the generosity of his uncle, the pair of stockings, the shirt, and the two handkerchiefs, necessary to complete his outfit, and had the satisfaction of arriving with him at the workshop of Master Blanchet, not as a poor boy, received almost as an act of charity, but as a good workman, countenanced and recommended by respectable relatives.

He has justified their hopes and his own, having become Master Blanchet's head workman; he is about to marry his only daughter, and his father-in-law, rich enough to retire, has given up to him a business, which Gervais will not allow to decline under his care. Matthew, who only needs guidance, contents himself with being a little merry after his first meal, and a little sleepy after the last. He hopes to spend a peaceful old age with his son, while Va-bon-train, who, without being old, is also anxious for repose, has purchased a small property, married again, and given up his marionettes and the faithful Medor to his son Michael. Matthew has generously added the ass, and Jacquot, and has announced for Gervais' wedding-day, "*a performance for the benefit of*

friendship, in which is to be seen the wonderful dispute between peerless Jacquot and the incomparable Scaramouche."

Cecilia and Nanette;

OR,

THE ACCIDENT.

[Pg 37]

It was in the month of December; the church clock had just struck five, and the morning was very dark, when one of the servants of the inn came to inform Madame de Vesac, and her daughter Cecilia, that the carriage was ready, and that they could continue their journey. They had left Paris early on the previous day, for the purpose of visiting the estate of Madame de Vesac, to which she had been called by urgent business. The distance was a hundred and fifty leagues, and they had travelled by post; they had been on the road till ten o'clock on the previous evening, and were now about to resume their journey after having taken a few hours' repose. Madame de Vesac called her daughter; Cecilia, terribly sleepy, half opened her eyes, then let her head fall back again upon her pillow. Her mother was obliged to call a second, and even a third time, and she awoke up at last, exclaiming "Oh dear! dear! how disagreeable it is to get up at five o'clock in the morning at this time of year!" She would have said, had she dared, "Oh dear! what a misfortune!" for every contradiction or suffering, however slight, always assumed, with Cecilia, the character of a misfortune. At every little accident that befel her, she fancied that no one had [Pg 38] ever suffered so much as she did, and really believed that cold, hunger, thirst, and sleepiness, were with her quite different matters from what they were with other people. When laughed at for the disproportionate annoyance which the petty inconveniences of life occasioned her, she would say "Oh! you do not feel as I feel!" and, indeed, believed so.

Nevertheless, as Cecilia possessed a generous disposition, an elevated mind, a lively imagination, and a due share of pride, she had a passionate admiration for high and noble actions, and even a great desire to imitate them, sometimes saying that she would give everything in the world for an opportunity of becoming a heroine. "Provided," her mother would add with a smile, "that your acts of heroism never exposed you to the chance of being scratched by a thorn, or to the necessity of walking a few steps in uneasy shoes." And then Cecilia, a little vexed, would maintain that such things as these had nothing whatever to do with heroism.

Madame de Vesac had not been able to bring her maid with her, as she was ill at the time they left home. This rendered their arrivals at the inns, and especially their departures, more disagreeable, as they were themselves obliged to pack and unpack their luggage, and attend to a variety of troublesome details. Madame de Vesac spared her daughter these inconveniences as far as possible. On the present occasion, she had allowed her to sleep until the last moment, and when Cecilia awoke, almost everything was ready for their journey. Still it was necessary to arrange and pack up her night-things, and see that nothing was forgotten; and the cold and the darkness had so chilled her courage, that nothing but shame prevented her from shedding tears at every effort she made, and every step she took. And yet she was thirteen years old; but at no age do people cease to be children, if they allow themselves to attach importance to every whim [Pg 39] that may cross their minds, or to every trifling inconvenience which they may have to bear. Cecilia had much more trouble, and was much longer about what she had to do than would have been necessary had she set courageously to work. "Make haste," repeated her mother every moment, and Cecilia made haste, but with the air of one who had no heart for what she was about. To have given herself this, nothing was required but a slight effort, a slight exertion of her reason: she need only have said, "What I have to do at present is so far from being beyond my powers, as I try to persuade myself, that if I felt the least wish to do it I should find no difficulty in it." But Cecilia did not choose to desire what would have been so beneficial to her, and, for the sake of saving herself a single mental effort, sufficient to conquer her repugnance and idleness, she allowed herself to relapse into them every moment, and submitted to the continued exertions demanded by every action and movement.

At last, all was ready; Madame de Vesac and her daughter entered their carriage and departed. Cecilia's griefs, however, being still undiminished, the night was so dark, and so cold, and she had so little courage to resist the feeling of sadness which it induced. She shivered in her wadded dress, and beneath her two or three shawls; her fur shoes did not prevent her from complaining of the *deadly coldness* of her feet, nor could she sufficiently cover her hands with her dress, though already encased in fur gloves. At length, in spite of her distress, she fell asleep, and slept quietly until it was broad daylight. When she awoke, the sun had already dissipated the thick fog of the morning. It shone brilliantly over the country covered with snow, and was even felt through the windows of the carriage. Everything seemed to announce a fine winter's day, and her heart began to revive. They stopped for breakfast, and took it in a comfortable warm room, and this completely restored her energy and cheerfulness. Her mother then began to jest about the [Pg 40] despair she had manifested a few hours before. "I see," she said, "that for the acts of heroism to which you purpose to devote yourself, you will be careful to select the months of July and August, for cold is quite adverse to your virtue."

"But mamma," said Cecilia, "how can you expect one to stir, when one's fingers are benumbed with cold?"

"Since, though complaining the whole time, you did nevertheless manage to do so, I presume the thing was possible, but I perceive, at the same time, that such an effort must have something in it surpassing the highest courage, and were it not for the terrible fatality which has subjected you to so severe a trial, I should have been extremely careful not to have required anything of the kind from you."

"However, it is quite certain, mamma, that one might choose some better time for travelling than the month of December."

"Not if it happened to be in that month that one had business to attend to which required travelling. You will one day learn, my child, that there are things more impossible than enduring the cold, or even than moving one's fingers when they are benumbed. You remember what Cæsar said: *It is necessary that I should go, and it is not necessary that I should live*.

"One might very well expose one's life, on occasions of importance, and yet not be able to do impossibilities, however important they might be."

"Such as putting in a pin or tying a shoe when one is cold?"

"I do not mean that," replied Cecilia, a little out of humour, "and besides you will allow, mamma, that our affairs are not of such importance as those of Cæsar."

"How do you know that? the importance of things is relative; I am not called upon to overturn the world; such a thing would give me no pleasure, but I have to settle a matter to which your father attaches great importance, and to show myself worthy of the confidence he reposed in me, when, on leaving for the army he placed all his affairs in my hands; in fine, it is necessary for me that he should be pleased with me, for on this depends the happiness of my life; and on your part, it is necessary that you should prove yourself able to support with courage unavoidable inconveniences. All these things are important, and yet," added Madame de Vesac, smiling, "I do not think we run any risk of dying on account of them." [Pg 41]

"Oh, no! mamma," said Cecilia, smiling too, "but I assure you that even Cæsar would have found it very cold this morning."

"I have not the least doubt of it; but Cæsar was such a great man! Do you know, Cecilia, that if we were to examine with care, I feel sure that among his great actions we should find many which must have benumbed his feet and hands."

"In that case," said Cecilia, somewhat drily, "he must have been very fortunate if he could find matters to attend to which would prevent his thinking of the cold, for it is certainly very disagreeable."

"Undoubtedly," replied Madame de Vesac, carelessly; "but there are some persons who can manage to think of every thing. I am persuaded, for instance, that had you been in Clælia's place, when, flying from the camp of Porsenna, she crossed the Tiber on horseback, you would have found it excessively disagreeable, to have been obliged to wet your feet."

"Well, mamma," said Cecilia with animation, "you ought to be delighted at that, since you are continually telling me that instead of wishing to be a heroine, it is quite enough to attend to one's duties merely."

"Certainly; but I who make no pretensions to heroism, find that mere duty is sometimes quite sufficient to employ all our powers, and that it is impossible that we can always do what simple duty requires, unless we have learned to bear cold, fatigue, and even the misfortune of having to get up at five o'clock in the morning in the month of December." [Pg 42]

"It is nevertheless certain, mamma, that there are things which it is quite impossible to do, such as walking when one is tired."

"Or moving one's fingers when they are cold, for instance. Undoubtedly there are things which are impossible to every one, but the difference I find between Cæsar and you is, that in his case the impossibility came much later, and that at the degree of fatigue at which you would say *I cannot walk*, he would have said *I must walk*, and would have found strength to proceed. You are not aware how much strength people possess when they really wish to make use of it."

"I assure you, mamma," replied Cecilia, with some slight degree of temper, "that when I say I cannot do a thing I really cannot."

"I am sure of that, but I should like to know whence arises the impossibility. Pray think of this at the first opportunity. It is necessary that I should know whether you are really weaker than other people."

Cecilia made no reply; she was perfectly persuaded that no one understood her sufferings, and had never asked herself whether she were not made like other people, and consequently able to endure what they endured. The day passed well enough, and when night came she slept.

She was sleeping soundly, when a violent jerk suddenly aroused her. "Gracious! what is the matter?" she exclaimed. "We are upset," said Madame de Vesac; and in fact at that moment, the carriage, which had passed over a large stone, came to the ground with a violent shock, and turned completely over on one side. Cecilia screamed, and fell upon her mother. "Do not be frightened," said Madame de Vesac, who, notwithstanding the inconvenience of her position,

thought only of her daughter. The carriage was stopped, and the postilion dismounted, and came to their assistance. All this time Cecilia did not cease screaming. "Where are you hurt?" asked her mother, trembling lest she should be severely wounded. "Everywhere," replied Cecilia, unconscious of what she said, the fright had so bewildered her. When the postilion opened the door which happened to be uppermost, Cecilia knew not what to do to extricate herself from her position. "Get up," said the postilion. [Pg 43]

"Get up," repeated her mother, but Cecilia replied, "I cannot," without knowing whether she could or not, for she had not even tried. At last the postilion, who was active and strong, raising her up, lifted her out of the carriage, and thus freed her mother from a weight which almost overpowered her and made her feel ready to faint. Then Madame de Vesac, in her turn, getting out with the assistance of the postilion, hastened to her daughter, whom she was delighted to find standing up, although motionless, and not knowing whether she had a limb of which she could make use. In a little while, being somewhat reassured by her mother's voice, Cecilia began to answer the repeated questions put to her to ascertain where she was hurt. Both her knees were bruised, and her elbow grazed: she had a slight swelling on the head, a bonnet box had pressed her side, and her foot, which happened to be under the seat of the carriage, was a little swelled. "I am so bruised all over that I cannot move," she said, moving, however, the whole time in every direction to feel where she was hurt. She asked her mother whether she, too, were not hurt. "I think," replied Madame de Vesac, "I have sprained my wrist, for it is very painful, and I cannot use my hand."

"Just like my foot," replied Cecilia, and saying so, she began to walk. Madame de Vesac smiled, but said nothing. She wrapped her hand in her shawl, the ends of which she tied round her so as to support her wrist, and then busied herself with what was to be done. [Pg 44] Recovered from the first shock of their fall, and congratulating themselves on having escaped so well, they nevertheless found themselves placed in a very unpleasant predicament. Comtois, the only servant who had accompanied them, had gone on before, as a courier, to prepare the horses. The postilion, unable by himself to raise the carriage, was obliged to go for assistance to the post-house, from which they were still at a considerable distance. Madame de Vesac and Cecilia, therefore, as they could not follow him since he went on horseback, nor reach the post-house alone, as they were ignorant of the way, were obliged to remain on the road until his return. The night was extremely dark, and the cold, without being very intense, was sharp and disagreeable. A sleet was falling, which, as it reached the ground, was converted into ice. The carriage, completely overturned, afforded no shelter, and to the other inconveniences of their position, was added that of being quite alone at ten o'clock at night upon the high road. Madame de Vesac, however courageous, was not without uneasiness, but she knew it was useless to give way to it; and when Cecilia, a little terrified, asked her if they were to remain alone, "You see we must," she replied, in a tranquil voice, which gave her daughter to understand, that though she was aware of the inconvenience of the arrangement, she nevertheless submitted to it with calmness, because it was necessary. Cecilia herself saw this necessity so plainly that she made no reply; but when after unharnessing the horses, and securing two of them to a tree, the postilion mounted the third to go and seek assistance; when she saw him depart, when the sound of his horse's feet growing fainter and fainter at last ceased to fall upon her ear, then her heart shrank with terror, a cold perspiration covered her limbs, and she drew close to her mother. Madame de Vesac perceived her alarm, but made no remark, well knowing that nothing so much increases terror as speaking of it. [Pg 45] She merely endeavoured to restore her confidence a little, by giving her, on her own part, an example of courage and tranquillity.

The wind became more violent, the sleet increased, and a heavy fall of snow began to mingle with it: Madame De Vesac and her daughter went over to the side where the carriage offered some defence against the rain and snow which were beating into their faces; but this shelter did not long suffice, the gusts of wind became so violent, that Cecilia was twice on the point of losing her hat, notwithstanding the ribbons by which it was confined. It was with difficulty that they kept their shawls around them; the snow assailed them on all sides, melting upon them, and penetrating their clothes; and they were benumbed by a damp coldness, from which their inability to move left them no means of escape. Cecilia did not think of complaining, for no one could have assisted her; besides, she could not doubt that her mother suffered as much as herself, and complaints are seldom made except to excite the pity of those who seem better off than we are, and who, therefore, are able to think of us rather than of themselves. Cecilia now discovered how erroneous it is to suppose that any comfort is to be derived from complaining: perhaps even she suffered less from her position, than she would have done had she lamented it; but she did not make this reflection, and it was natural that the necessity of the case should render her more courageous.

Madame de Vesac, however, fearing lest her daughter should become ill, from the cold and damp which had penetrated her clothes, proposed to her to seek shelter in a wood which extended on both sides of the road, and the trees of which, though divested of their leaves, were at least sufficiently close to break the violence of the wind and snow; but this wood was the principal object of Cecilia's dread. Terrified at the proposition, she could only utter the words, "Oh! mamma, to go into the wood!"

[Pg 46] "Just as you like, my child," said Madame de Vesac, "but," she added, smiling, "who do you think would come after us in such weather as this? You may be quite sure there is nobody abroad but ourselves."

Cecilia made no reply, her thoughts terrified her to such a degree that she dared not utter them,

and had she pronounced the word *robbers*, it would have seemed to her that she was calling them; but at that moment there came a gust so violent, that the carriage appeared shaken by it; one of the blinds which happened to be down, was so violently agitated that the cords snapped, and being no longer upheld it was lifted by the wind, and struck Cecilia on the head. Seized with terror she sprang from her place; the storm continued, she was unable to resist it, yet dared not return to the carriage. Completely bewildered by the wind, she neither knew where she was, nor what she did: and her mother taking her by the arm led her into the wood, where she recovered a little of her self-possession. Here the wind was much less violent, and as always happens when we look at things closely, Cecilia having entered the wood felt much less terrified, than while merely considering it from the road. A copse where there happened to be a few trees, which still retained their leaves, although it was the month of December, had protected a few feet of ground from the snow, and afforded the travellers a shelter from the wet. The double trunk of a tree furnished them with a support, and they were at least in a situation where they could await without excessive discomfort the assistance which could not be far distant, when all at once Cecilia, whose eyes were turned towards the copse, probably seeing the branches agitated by the wind, fancied she perceived a figure moving and advancing towards them. Completely bewildered by fright she seized her mother's arm, and without saying a word dragged her on, as quickly as she was able, through the bushes, plunging deeper into the wood to avoid the terrible objects by which she believed herself pursued. Her mother, astonished, after having followed her for a few steps endeavoured to stop her. "Where are you going?" she said. "What is the matter?" But Cecilia, whose terror was only increased by the sound of her mother's voice, because she was afraid of its having been heard, continued to drag her along with an extraordinary degree of strength, and her mother, who would not leave her, was obliged to follow. At length, by dint of talking she recalled her to herself; she stopped a moment and said in a low tremulous voice, "Did you see him?"—"Who?" demanded Madame de Vesac.—"Among the trees ... a man...." "I have seen no one, you were mistaken, I assure you."—"Oh! I still hear him...." And she was once more on the point of starting off, but her mother restrained her. "My dear Cecilia," she said, greatly distressed at her condition; "my dear child, be reasonable, take courage; there is no one there, I assure you there is nothing to fear; confide in me who would not lead you into danger, and whose judgment is calmer than yours." A little restored by her mother's words, and the affectionate tone in which they were uttered, Cecilia, ashamed of her fears, stopped, and restored her mother's arm, which she still held, to its former position under her shawl.—"Let us retrace our steps," said Madame de Vesac, "lest we lose our way." Cecilia did not dare to say anything, but she shuddered at the idea of again passing so near the copse. At this moment they heard some one call them, and recognized the voice of Comtois. Cecilia breathed more freely, and hastened to reply; but Comtois had entered the wood at another part, and they stood still to discover whence the voice proceeded. [Pg 47]

"It is in that direction, mamma," said Cecilia, who, delighted at the thought of avoiding the copse, pointed to a road a little more to the right than the one they were on the point of taking. Madame de Vesac listened again, and the voice which still continued to call and answer, seeming, in fact, to proceed from the right, she took the direction indicated by Cecilia, and calling from time to time to Comtois, they walked on towards the spot whence the sound was still heard to proceed, but it seemed sometimes to approach, and sometimes to recede, for it appeared that Comtois altered his course according to the place where he thought they must be, and they themselves took first one direction and then another, without being quite sure which was the right. This state of uncertainty lasted for some minutes, but at length the voice sensibly approached, and they heard steps through the trees. "Is that you, Comtois?" It was he, and Cecilia in a transport of joy was ready to throw her arms round his neck; she forgot the cold, the sleet, and the wind; once freed from her former terror she now thought all her troubles were at an end. Comtois informed them that he had procured assistance, and that at that moment the men were engaged in raising the carriage, to which he was going to conduct them. But the question now was how to find the way, for, intent only on reaching each other, neither Comtois nor Madame de Vesac had thought of observing their route. They stopped to listen for some indication from the people at the carriage, but the wind bore the sounds another way, or when they did reach them, they were so faint and uncertain, that they concluded they must have advanced further into the wood than they had supposed. However, they directed their course towards the side on which they concluded the high road lay, listening every moment to discover whether the sounds increased in strength; sometimes Cecilia fancied she heard voices, and even maintained that she could distinguish that of the postilion: at other times hearing nothing she became uneasy, but the joy of having found Comtois sustained her courage. At length she exclaimed, "Mamma, I see an opening through the trees; that must be the road." Madame de Vesac looked, and perceived, indeed, a spot where the trees appeared to separate, but she did not think it was the high road, and was astonished at not hearing any noise. Cecilia made her hasten her steps, repeating, as she hurried her on, "There's the road, there's the road!" Her mother cautioned her not to rejoice too soon; but she did not listen to her, and was the first to reach a spot, open indeed, but so surrounded by the wood on all sides, that it afforded no means of egress, except by a path almost parallel to the one they had just left. She stood petrified. [Pg 48] [Pg 49]

"This is not the road," said Madame de Vesac.

"Indeed," said Comtois, "I don't know where we are now."

"What will become of us?" inquired Cecilia in a timid and anxious voice, but without those exclamations so habitual to her, for in the present moment of real fear and trouble her thoughts were more occupied with the situation itself, than with the desire of vividly displaying what she

felt.

"We must endeavour to get out of this place," replied Madame de Vesac. "The road cannot be far off; but we must take a different direction from the one we have come by."

They once more stopped to listen and consult together; but they could hear nothing whatever; and as to the path they were to take, there was no choice except between the one by which they had come and another which led in the same direction. Their consultation, therefore, could not be of long duration. The second path seemed much better than the one they had left, it was tolerably wide, and pretty well beaten; and they hence concluded that it must necessarily lead to some frequented place. They therefore determined to follow it, and recommenced their journey with renewed courage; but Cecilia perceived that her mother arranged in a different manner the end of the shawl, with which she had contrived to support her arm, and that she occasionally carried her other hand to it; and concluding from this that she must suffer increased pain, she asked her about it. [Pg 50]

"We must not think of this now," said Madame de Vesac; so that Cecilia was afraid to complain too much of her foot, which was beginning to give her pain. She only said, "My foot is rather painful." She had already endured sufficient real trouble during the night, to have learned to be silent about inconveniences not worth complaining of.

The snow fell with less violence, and the wind was somewhat abated, so that in the wood the cold was quite bearable. Madame de Vesac and her daughter, one on each side of Comtois, and supported by his arm, walked without much difficulty in a path tolerably smooth, and which the recently fallen snow prevented from being very slippery. Reanimated by this momentary relief, they pursued this part of their journey with tolerable cheerfulness, Madame de Vesac averring even that her arm was less painful since the cold had diminished, and Cecilia consoling herself with the hopes of soon being able to rest her foot in the carriage. Comtois from time to time raised his voice and called to the people at the carriage; but no one answered, and not a sound reached their ears. Again the travellers began to feel uneasy at thus continually advancing without any assurance that they were not going further away from the spot they wished to reach. However, proceed they must, for there was no reason to suppose that, in retracing their steps, they would be able to find any better way. At last they came to a point where the path was crossed by another precisely similar. They were now in the utmost perplexity, for there was no inducement for choosing one of the three paths rather than another, except perhaps that as the one they had come by did not seem to have brought them any nearer the road, it might be reasonable to choose between the other two. But on which of them were they to fix? [Pg 51]

Comtois attempted to climb a rather tall tree which happened to be at the entrance of one of the paths, hoping to be able to see from it the road and the carriage; but, not to mention that his boots did not allow him to climb with much agility, it happened that the first branch he clung to was decayed and broke, and he fell, fortunately without being much hurt; but Madame de Vesac, as well as Cecilia, whose own fall had rendered her excessively timid, prevented him from making any further attempt, by representing the frightful situation they would all be in if any accident befell him. There was no alternative, therefore, but to proceed, and let chance direct their course. They thought they remembered that in diverging from the road they had several times turned a little to the left; they consequently supposed that in returning they must take the contrary direction. On this, therefore, they fixed, not without much regret, however, at being unable to ascertain whither the opposite path led; but it was not a time for unavailing regrets, and they therefore made up their minds to trust that they had selected the best.

Nevertheless the spirits of the travellers began again to sink, Cecilia's foot was considerably swelled, and fatigue had greatly added to the pain of Madame de Vesac's arm, although her anxiety kept her in a state of agitation which prevented her feeling it as much as she would have done in calmer moments. Still this very anxiety was itself a serious evil: there was no certainty of their finding their way; and if chance did not guide them better than it had done thus far, she calculated with terror the number of hours they must pass in the wood, and the fatigues and sufferings they must endure whilst waiting for the light.

Cecilia, still more depressed, said nothing, and began to cease thinking: fatigue and sadness absorbed all her faculties.

[Pg 52] The path they had taken terminated in a kind of cross-way, from which branched off several narrower paths. They fixed upon what appeared the widest and best; but it soon contracted to such a degree that Madame de Vesac and her daughter were obliged to resign the arm of Comtois, and allow him to walk in front and clear the way a little for them. The density of the wood at this part had kept the ground moist, and this moisture was now converted into ice, while the snow had been prevented from falling sufficiently to cover the path. They walked one behind the other, slipping at every step, and only able to keep themselves from falling by laying hold of the trees. Every moment their feet struck against the roots, or were caught in the trailing branches; and Cecilia, constantly on the point of falling, soon became unable to restrain her sobs. At last, at a very slippery part, she lost her footing, and fell upon her knees. A bramble, which happened to be across the path, caught in her clothes; and when she had succeeded in extricating her dress from it, it became entangled in her shawl, then got fastened to her gloves, and deprived her of the use of her hands. She tried to rise, but no sooner had she put her foot upon the ground than she slipped and again fell. Worn out as she already was, this slight accident quite exhausted her courage. Madame de Vesac turned round to give her her hand; but being near falling herself, she was obliged to catch hold of a tree: she could only pity and endeavour to

encourage her daughter.

"Mamma," said Cecilia, "I cannot go on; it is impossible."

"My poor child," said Madame de Vesac, "are you quite sure it is impossible? Think seriously of it; this is not a trial to be made for pleasure merely, such as I proposed to you a short time since, but an exertion of courage absolutely indispensable. Only consider, my dear Cecilia," she added, in the most tender and caressing tone, "we have nothing but our courage to extricate us from these difficulties; but with courage I think we have still sufficient strength left to enable us to go through a great deal. Would it not then be better to call it forth than weakly to yield to our distress?" [Pg 53]

Thus saying, she assisted with her foot to extricate her from the bramble, while supporting her with her knees. Cecilia made no reply, but, raising herself up, continued her journey, and, feeling the truth of her mother's words, she exerted all her strength to avoid future complaints. Still she wept in silence; a weakness pardonable indeed, but one, nevertheless, which added to her sufferings, as weakness ever does.

Cecilia and Nanette, p. 53.

They at last reached the end of this difficult route, and once more found themselves at an opening in the wood, where several paths terminated, but without being any better able to decide which they were to take. Stopping for a moment to consider, they thought they heard at no great distance a faint sound, which was not that of the wind. They listened; "Good heavens!" exclaimed Cecilia, "I think I hear some one crying;" and she shuddered as she spoke.

They listened again, and fancied they could distinguish the voice of a child. At length, after looking in every direction, favoured by the light of the moon, which was beginning to disperse the clouds, they perceived in a corner, a little within the opening, a figure standing motionless, and leaning against a tree. Cecilia was frightened, and clung tightly to the arm of Comtois.

"Let us see what it is," said Madame de Vesac, the more anxiously, as she still heard the sounds.

On a nearer approach, they discovered that what they had seen was a poor woman, leaning motionless against a tree, and who had by her side a little girl about eight years old. The poor creature held something in her arms, which, as they came closer, they found to be an infant of about two months old, motionless like the mother. It seemed benumbed with cold; and its mother, [Pg 54] without making any movement, or uttering a word, stood with her head bent over it, as if to warm it. One could scarcely say whether they were dead or alive. The voice which had been heard proceeded from the little girl, who, also motionless by her mother's side, continued crying in a low tone. At this moment, the moon rendered them distinctly visible. Madame de Vesac and Cecilia approached quite close to the woman, but she did not change her position. They looked at each other and trembled, for they feared that both mother and infant were dead. At last, Madame de Vesac said to her, "My good woman, what are you doing here?" She made no answer.

The little girl, who, on perceiving them, began to cry and sob more violently, pulled her by the skirt, exclaiming, "Mother! mother! some ladies!"

The poor woman raised her head, and pointed by her looks to her child, whose face she again covered with her own; they had, however, time enough to discern the face of the infant, which was pale and still as death. Madame de Vesac wished to ascertain if it yet lived, but knew not how to ask the question. At last she said in a low tone, at the same time laying her hand gently upon him, "He is very cold." "I cannot get him warm again," said the mother, in a still fainter tone, at the same time pressing him more closely to her bosom, as if anxious to make a new effort to impart her warmth to him. "Is he dead?" asked Comtois. The only reply to these terrible words were cries of despair, as the unfortunate creature pressed her infant more firmly to her heart. Madame de Vesac found means of taking its hand: it was cold as ice; but she felt its pulse, and perceiving it beat, she said with animation, "No! most assuredly he is not dead; I feel his pulse beat."

"Oh my God!" exclaimed the poor woman, with a stifled sigh, at the same time raising towards Madame de Vesac eyes beaming with gratitude, and already beginning to be suffused with tears. But she again immediately turned them upon her child, whom she passionately kissed.

"Let us take him," said Madame de Vesac; "we are better able to warm him than you are."

"Give him to me. I will put him under my great coat," said Comtois, as he unfastened his thick, warm travelling coat. The poor woman hesitated. "Give him to me," he continued. "I have children of my own. I know how to manage them."

"Let him take the child," said Madame de Vesac; and the unhappy mother placed the infant in his arms, wrapping the coat round him. In order to make room for him, Comtois removed a bottle from one of the inside pockets.

"Stop!" said he; "this won't hurt him." It was a bottle of brandy; he opened it, and poured a few drops into the mouth of the child, who swallowed it.

"He swallows!" exclaimed the mother, in a transport of joy; and the child began to breathe more freely, and to move its little arms.

"I thought so!" said Comtois; "this would bring the dead to life. It would do you no harm either, to take a little, my good woman."

The poor creature replied that she did not want anything; but Madame de Vesac persuaded her to take a little to warm her. Then the little girl, who since the arrival of Madame de Vesac had ceased crying, watching all that passed around her, again began to sob, in a low tone, but sufficiently loud to make herself heard. Cecilia was the first to observe her, and began to caress her, in order to quiet her, but the child still continued crying, with her eyes directed to the bottle. Cecilia asked if a little might not also be given to her, and Comtois declared that it would do her no harm. "Yes," said Madame de Vesac, "if she only takes a few drops; but if you give her the bottle, she will drink too much." Meanwhile the child still cried and watched the bottle, and her manner was so quiet and gentle, that the heart of Cecilia was vividly touched. At last, by an effort of which she could not have believed herself capable, Cecilia took off her glove, and told the child that she should drink out of her hand; but when the little girl had done so, she hid her hand again, observing that it was very cold; but when the child rejected the brandy, saying it burned her mouth, Cecilia observed to her that it was not worth while to have made her take off her glove. She was on the point of putting it on again, when the mother said that a bit of bread would have been much better for her, as she had eaten nothing since noon. At this the child began to cry more bitterly.

"Oh, dear!" said Cecilia, "if I had but the bun I bought this morning, and did not eat."

"Where is it?" asked her mother.

"In the carriage."

"I thought I told you to put it in your bag."

"Yes, but my bag...." She interrupted herself, and uttered a cry of joy. She had not observed that her bag had remained attached to her arm. She felt the strings, undid them, opened it, and found the bun. It was a little crushed, indeed, by her fall, but the pieces were good. She gave one of them to the mother, who, without saying a word, and thinking herself unobserved, put it into her pocket. Cecilia again felt in the bag, and taking off her other glove, asked whether, if she crumbled a little of the soft part in her hand, they could not make the infant take some of it.

"What he wants," said Madame de Vesac, "is his mother's milk; but even supposing she has any for him, he is not at present sufficiently strong to take it; we must endeavour to reach some inhabited place as speedily as possible, where we may be able to give him the attention he requires."

Then the poor woman, who, after a moment of intense joy, felt all her fears and grief revive, said weeping, "If he only lives until we reach Chambouri, I have my mother there, and she is very skilful in the care of children."

"Where is Chambouri?" inquired Madame de Vesac.

"It is a short league from here," replied the poor woman.

"It is the post town," added Comtois. "Do you know the way to it?"

"Do I know the way to it?" said the woman. "I was born there."

"Why did you not go there instead of remaining against that tree?"

"I fell three times upon the ice; the third time my poor baby gave a scream, and then was silent. At first I thought I had killed him; and then I thought if I fell again, I should be sure to kill him; besides, a moment after, finding he did not move, I believed him dead, and had no heart for anything."

"But now will you conduct us to Chambouri?"

"Certainly, provided we can get there in time," and the poor woman again began to weep.

"Yes, yes, we shall arrive in time;" said Madame de Vesac; "Comtois will carry the infant in one arm, and give the other to Cecilia. You and I," she added, addressing the mother, "will try to keep each other up."

They proceeded in accordance with this arrangement, Cecilia giving her hand to the little girl, and the poor mother walking by the side of her baby, every moment putting her hand upon its head, which was not covered by Comtois' coat, and redoubling her tears each time she felt it cold. Madame de Vesac, perceiving this, stopped to untie a small shawl, which she wore underneath her large one, and gave it to cover the head of the infant.

"It is indeed very cold," said Cecilia, who was beginning to think of her own troubles, and who found that by giving her hand to the little girl, she herself became very cold, from being unable to cover it with her shawl.

"How long have you been exposed to this cold?" inquired Madame de Vesac of the poor woman.

"We have not entered a house since noon," she replied. "I hoped to have reached Chambouri early this evening, but the bad weather and the bad roads have delayed us; and had it not been for you, my good lady, we must have passed the night in the wood."

"But would you have been able to endure the cold?" demanded Madame de Vesac.

"I don't know whether my poor little one would have survived it," she replied, with increased emotion, and then began to enumerate his perfections, as if she had already lost him. "He knew me," she said, weeping; "even this very morning he looked at me and smiled; the beautiful sunshine delighted him, and he raised his little arms, as if he wanted to jump; and then, after the sun had gone down, when, for the last time, I attempted to nurse him, he looked up at me, and tried to smile." At these words her tears again flowed with redoubled force.

"He will look at you; he will smile again," said Madame de Vesac.

"Oh!" continued the unhappy mother, "he has suffered so much; he looked at me, as if for help;" and in calling to mind the sad looks of her child, she could not restrain her sobs. Then Cecilia again, forgetful of her own troubles, withdrew her hand from Comtois' arm, and passing it under that part of his coat which enveloped the child, said to the mother, "Oh! he is very warm: feel him, he moves his little arms; I am sure he is comfortable." "Yes, he does move his arms, I can tell you," said Comtois; "see, he has pulled off the handkerchief which he had on his head;" and Cecilia let go the hand of the little girl to re-arrange the handkerchief. The poor mother knew not how to express her joy and gratitude; but the little girl, who had remained a short distance behind them, because Cecilia no longer held her hand, began to cry. "Come along," then, said her mother; but the poor little thing replied, "I cannot."

Cecilia went to her, and again took her hand, saying, "You must try to come along, my dear."

"How long have you been on foot?" inquired Madame de Vesac.

"Since noon," replied the poor woman. "I had no more money to pay for lodgings; we had eaten all the provisions I had brought for the journey, and I wanted to reach Chambouri."

"And has the child been walking all that time?"

"Yes, the whole time."

"Cecilia is right, my dear," said Madame de Vesac, addressing the little girl. "You must try to walk."

"If Comtois were not carrying the baby," said Cecilia, "I would beg him to take her up."

"Oh! I have another arm," said Comtois; "but then I could not support you, Miss Cecilia."

"Never mind me," said Cecilia. "I am much better able to walk without support, than this poor little thing is to continue the journey on foot."

Comtois then stooped down, and, seating the child upon his arm, raised her from the ground, saying, "You must take hold of my collar with both your hands;" to which the child replied, "I cannot."

"Why not?" demanded Cecilia. But on taking her hands to show her how she must hold the collar, she perceived that they were so cold that the child could not use them. "Oh dear!" she exclaimed, "she freezes me even through my gloves." Then, remembering that she had two pairs on, the outside ones lined with fur, she took them off, and after well rubbing the child's hands, put them on her; but, finding her still unable to hold the collar, she made her put her arms round Comtois' neck. The child, however, still continued to cry. "What is the matter," asked Cecilia; but she received no answer. "It is her poor feet," said her mother. "Her chilblains are broken, and yet she has walked barefoot the whole day; but now that she is no longer walking, she feels the cold more." Cecilia recollected the socks which she wore over her shoes; she took them off, and put them upon the feet of the little girl, who ceased crying. Then, taking the arm of the poor woman, Madame de Vesac having the other, she walked on courageously, complaining neither of the cold nor of the ice, though she found much more difficulty in maintaining her balance now that she was without her socks. [Pg 60]

"My dear Cecilia," said Madame de Vesac, "how much strength we have found since the moment we thought it impossible to go any further!"

"Oh mamma!" exclaimed Cecilia, satisfied with herself, "an occasion like this gives one a great deal of strength."

"No, my child: such occasions merely show us all that we actually possess; and since we do possess it, why not make use of it on all occasions?"

"But they are not all of such importance."

"It is always important to succeed in what we undertake, and to do so as speedily and as completely as possible; we ought therefore to make every effort in our power to ensure success. When we are wanting in resolution, and think we have not sufficient strength on a trifling occasion, there is but one thing to be done, and that is to call up all we should be sure to discover in a case of great emergency."

As she concluded these words they reached the boundary of the wood, and found themselves at the entrance of the village of Chambouri.

"Here it is," exclaimed Cecilia, in a transport of joy.

"Yes!" said the poor woman; "but my mother lives close to the post-house, which is at the other end of the village." [Pg 61]

"Oh dear!" cried Cecilia, in a mournful tone.

"Should we not be tempted," inquired Madame de Vesac, "to think it impossible to go any further?"

Cecilia, who was beginning to think so, recollected herself, examined her powers, and inwardly shuddered at the idea of all that she still felt able to endure. Trembling at the thought of being exposed to new trials, she was only re-assured when, after a quarter of an hour's further walking, she had entered the post-house, and was seated by the kitchen fire.

They had persuaded the poor woman to accompany them, to warm herself, and attend to her children, whilst waiting till her mother should be ready to receive them. The infant had fallen asleep in Comtois' arms, and when taken from them, the noise, the people, and the lights awoke him, and he began to cry.

"He cries!" exclaimed the mother, in a transport of joy; and falling on her knees with clasped hands, in front of Madame de Vesac, to whom Comtois had given the child, she repeated, "He cries!" while gazing at him intently, and kissing him. He ceased crying, and, pleased with the warmth of the fire, looked at his mother and smiled. "That is just how he looked at me this morning," she exclaimed, and burst into a flood of tears. They made him take a little milk whilst waiting until his mother was sufficiently rested to nurse him herself, and the pleasure which he manifested in taking it was a fresh subject of joy for the poor woman. Meanwhile Cecilia had taken possession of the little girl; she placed her upon her knees, and warmed her feet and hands, without even complaining that by so doing she was prevented from warming her own. At length the mother of the poor woman, hearing of her daughter's arrival, came for them and took them home, gratefully thanking Madame de Vesac, who would not suffer them to depart until they had a comfortable supper. She ordered her own supper in a private room, and sent for a skilful surgeon, who happened fortunately to be at Chambouri, and who set her arm. In the meantime Comtois had gone in search of the carriage, which he found set to rights, and waiting for them. As he returned with it, a traveller entered the inn, who proved to be Madame de Vesac's man of business. He had come from her estate to meet her, making inquiries for her at every stage on the way, in order to prevent her going farther, as the affair for which she had been summoned was arranged. Cecilia therefore retired to rest, with the satisfaction of knowing that she should not have to continue her journey on the following morning, as Madame de Vesac announced that since she had time she should remain a couple of days at the inn, in order to attend to her arm. The next day they sent for the poor woman, who was full of joy at being able to exhibit her infant, now beginning to regain both strength and colour; nor was she ever weary of looking at him and kissing him. She stated that she had been married at a village some distance from Chambouri, to a mechanic, who had turned out a worthless fellow, and, after wasting all their means, had enlisted a short time before the birth of her infant; and that as soon as she was [Pg 62]

able to travel, she had set out in order to return to her mother, who had a little property, and with whom she intended to live. Madame de Vesac told her that she should consider herself as godmother to the child, whose life she had been instrumental in saving, and that she took him under her protection. But as he must still remain with his mother, who indeed would not have consented to part with him, she contented herself with giving her some money to assist in their maintenance, and she also permitted Cecilia to beg that the little girl, whose name was Nanette, might be committed to her care.

[Pg 63] This proposition was gratefully accepted, and after a few days given to repose, Madame de Vesac set out on her return to Paris, with Cecilia and Nanette. From that moment Cecilia looked upon the child as her own, and so greatly was she delighted with her new possession, that she could speak of nothing else. Already had she disposed of all her old dresses in favour of Nanette. Already had she measured her in every direction, to ascertain whether in a dress stained with ink, and which she was delighted to part with, there would he sufficient to make a dress for Nanette, without employing the piece that was stained. Already had she thought, that by taking from her old black apron the part she had burned at the stove, there would be enough remaining to make an apron for Nanette. Already had she made her take off her cap of quilted cotton, to measure with a string the size of her head, in order to calculate how much cambric and muslin would be wanted to make her some neat little caps, while waiting until the return of the warm weather should enable her to go bare-headed, a habit which Cecilia intended she should acquire, it being so much more healthy for a little girl. Several times already had she said to her, "Nanette, hold yourself up;" but the child, who did not know what was meant by holding herself up, having never heard such an expression, only bent her head a little lower, as she always did when embarrassed. Then Cecilia raised it for her, with a quiet gentleness of manner, mentally repeating, as she did so, that patience is the first duty of one who wishes to bring up a child. Madame de Vesac smiled at her gravity; but counselled her, however, to relax it a little, if she wished to gain the confidence of her pupil.

Cecilia had formed the most extensive projects for the education of her protegée. "First of all," she said, "I will teach her to work well; this is absolutely necessary for a girl. I mean her to learn history and geography; perhaps even, if she has talent for them, I may teach her the piano and drawing. I am not sufficiently advanced myself to carry her very far, but I shall be improving [Pg 64] every day, and then, when I am married and rich, I will give her masters, for I intend her to be very accomplished:" and Cecilia became more and more excited as she advanced with her projects and her hopes. Her mother listened to her, and smiled. Cecilia, perceiving this, was a little annoyed, and asked whether she were not right in wishing to give Nanette a good education.

"Certainly," replied Madame de Vesac; "that is why I advise you to commence by teaching her to read."

"That is a matter of course; but perhaps she can read already. Nanette, can you read?"

The child looked at her, then bent her head without answering. Cecilia raised her chin with her finger, again repeating, "Can you read?" But Nanette's only answer was to bend a little lower than before, as soon as Cecilia had withdrawn her finger. Cecilia, with a look at her mother, which seemed to say, "What patience one must have with children!" drew from her bag a book, which she had brought to read on her journey, and opening it at the title-page, she placed it before Nanette, and pointing to an A, said, "What is that?" Nanette raised her eyes, glanced askance at the A, and then cast them down again, without saying a word. Cecilia repeated, "What is that?" But Nanette continued silent. "It is an A," said Cecilia, lowering her voice, like one becoming impatient, and anxious to restrain herself. The child looked at her earnestly, as if she would have said, "What does it matter to me if it is an A?" "It is an A," repeated Cecilia; but Nanette only looked at her without answering. Cecilia was beginning to lose patience, but she called to mind the self-control her new duties required from her, and, taking Nanette upon her knees, she began to caress her, saying as she did so, "Why will you not say A?" Nanette did not stir. "Say A," continued Cecilia, "and I will give you this plum." Nanette looked first at the plum [Pg 65] and then at Cecilia, and smiled. Cecilia smiled too, and repeated, "Say A." Nanette, still smiling, and with her head bent down, glanced slyly at the plum, and said A in a very low tone. Cecilia kissed her with delight. When the plum was eaten, she pointed to another A, but without being able to elicit any opinion on the matter from Nanette. "Say A," she repeated, in an affectionate manner, and Nanette looked round to see if there was another plum coming. However, whether in gratitude for the one she had already eaten, or from the hope of obtaining another, or from politeness to Cecilia, she once more consented to say A. This was a new joy for Cecilia, who, persuaded that Nanette was now quite perfect in the A, and enchanted at this first triumph in her education, returned with delight to the former A, expecting her to recognize it immediately; but this time it was impossible to obtain a syllable from her. Nanette had never seen a book—did not know what it was, nor what could be its use. She could not understand this fancy of making her say A. She had said it without regarding the form of the letter, and without thinking it was the name of the thing shown to her; and had all the A's in the world been placed before her, she would not have been any the wiser. After many useless efforts, Cecilia, completely discouraged, looked at her mother, with an expression of annoyance, saying, "What shall we do if she will not even learn to read?"

Madame de Vesac represented to her that she was beginning to despair very quickly, that it was quite natural that Nanette, astonished at the novelty of her situation, stunned by the carriage, and timid at finding herself among strangers, should have a difficulty in understanding what was

shown her, and that it would be better to wait for a quieter time before commencing her instructions.

Cecilia was a little consoled by these words, and glad, moreover, to have a sufficient reason for deferring lessons of which, for the moment, she was heartily tired. However, considering, in the meantime, that she must endeavour to correct Nanette of whatever faults she might have, she determined that on the following morning, when they would he obliged to start at five o'clock, she would not allow her to complain of being so early awakened, or of the cold; but she had no occasion to enforce her lessons. Nanette, accustomed to suffering, never murmured nor complained of anything; and Cecilia was at a loss to know what to do with a child so gentle and docile as not to need scolding, and so little intelligent that it was difficult to tell what method to adopt for her instruction. However, the desire she felt of setting Nanette an example, and the good opinion she began to entertain of her own sense, now that she found herself intrusted with the education of another, prevented her from even thinking of complaining of the cold, or of the annoyance of being disturbed at five o'clock in the morning. She busied herself in arranging her things, in order to show Nanette how to manage; and Nanette, who would rather have packed and unpacked a dozen parcels than have said A once, endeavoured to obey her, and did not acquit herself badly. Cecilia testified her satisfaction, and they resumed their journey, mutually pleased, and, in order to maintain this good understanding, nothing more was said about the A until their arrival in Paris. [Pg 66]

We may easily imagine how often, after her return home, Cecilia related the history of Nanette and the forest, and mentioned her intention of bringing up this little girl. The interest inspired by her narrative, and the importance she seemed to herself to acquire, whenever Nanette was asked for, revived those projects of education which the ill-success of her first attempts had somewhat cooled. Besides, she had felt so much pleasure in commencing Nanette's wardrobe, in trying on a dress which she had made for her in two days, and thought it so delightful to have some one to command and send about her little commissions in the house, that she became daily more attached to this species of property. She wished to have Nanette sleep in her room, that she might be completely under her protection, but this Madame de Vesac would not permit, as she felt it would give rise to a thousand inconveniences, which Cecilia, in her eagerness for present gratification, could not foresee. It was therefore arranged that she should sleep with Madame de Vesac's maid, and go down to Cecilia's room every morning to receive the lessons of her young instructress. Cecilia at first declared that this was not enough, and that if more time was not allowed, it would be impossible for her to teach Nanette all she wished her to learn. Her mother, however, advised her to be content with this as a beginning, promising that, if in a little while, she still wished it, the time should be increased. The day Cecilia tried on Nanette's dress and bonnet, which seemed to delight the child very much, and while still exhibiting the apron she had cut out, she took advantage of the opportunity to tell her that if she wished to gain all these pretty things she must learn to read. Nanette did not very well know what was meant by learning to read, but she had seen Cecilia look into books, and remembered that it was in a book she was made to say A. This recollection was by no means agreeable, but as she was becoming accustomed to obey Cecilia, she consented for once to repeat after her, first A, then B, then C; and at last, all the letters of the alphabet. Cecilia made her repeat them two or three times, showing them to her in the different styles; and greatly pleased at having so easily obtained Nanette's submission, which she had so much difficulty in doing at the commencement, she flattered herself that the most important point was gained, and that her education would now rapidly advance. The same day she put her fingers on the piano, and Nanette was at first delighted with the sounds she produced by striking the keys, but she did not find it quite so amusing to go through the gamut, and repeat after Cecilia a dozen times, *ut*, *re*, *mi*, *fa*, *sol*, *la*, *si*, *ut*. However, she obeyed, and all went on to the satisfaction of the teacher. Cecilia next gave her a thimble, some needles, and a pair of scissors, which she had bought for her, together with a piece of linen, which she was to learn to hem. Nanette was farther advanced in this department than in the others. She had seen her mother work, and had tried to imitate her. Cecilia was very well pleased with the manner in which she held her needle, and fixed her hem; and praised her accordingly; and, thus encouraged, the hem was finished pretty quickly and tolerably well. At length, after two hours spent in this manner, hours which appeared to the mistress somewhat tedious, Nanette was dismissed, and Cecilia, while congratulating herself on the success of her efforts, found, nevertheless, that the task of education was not the easiest of work. [Pg 67] [Pg 68]

The next day she resumed her lessons with renewed courage, hoping to advance still farther than on the preceding one, but she found that everything had to be begun again. Nanette was as much puzzled to say A as she had been the first time. She did not recognize one of the letters, which she had repeated mechanically after Cecilia, who, as she now made her say them again one after the other, had the utmost difficulty in getting her to give two or three times by herself the name of the letter which had been taught her the moment before. At the piano, when Cecilia wanted her to begin the scale of *ut*, she put her finger upon *sol*, and when asked the name of the note she had struck, it was impossible for her to find any name for it: she did not even understand that the notes had names. Thus, all the success obtained that day was, that after half-an-hour's study, Nanette named at random a *fa* for a *la*, or a *si* for a *re*. Cecilia became very angry, and Nanette, who could not bear to be scolded, made so much haste to finish her hem, in order to escape from her, that when Cecilia examined it, she found six stitches one over the other, and another half-an-inch long. [Pg 69]

The following days were not much more fortunate; for, on each occasion, Nanette had forgotten pretty nearly the whole of what little she had seemed to know on the previous day. As up to that

time, she had never been taught anything, she was not accustomed to apply her mind, or fix her attention on things of which she did not understand the use, for it could not be said that she was deficient in sense, or abilities, for her age. She was by no means awkward, and did all she was capable of doing carefully enough; for instance, if she carried a light, she did not, like most children of her age, hold it in such a manner as to let the grease fall upon the ground; she even took care to snuff it for fear of sparks, before removing it from one place to another, and she managed to snuff it without putting it out; if she had to carry anything rather heavy from one room to another, she first opened the door and removed whatever might be in her way; or if, while holding a jug of water, she happened to catch her dress in any object, she did not, like most children, give a sudden jerk, and spill the water, but quietly put down her jug, and removed the obstacle. It was evident that she was accustomed to act, and seek the means of acting in the most useful manner. Moreover, she rendered a thousand little services to Mademoiselle Gerard, Madame de Vesac's lady's maid, who was extremely fond of her, and who, from having her continually with her, contrived, without tormenting her, to teach her many things which Nanette willingly learnt.

As to the lessons with Cecilia, they went on worse and worse every day: the pupil knew not how to learn, nor the mistress how to teach; Cecilia often lost patience, and Nanette, who saw her only to be scolded and wearied, feeling but little desire to please her, became at last careless; besides, after having studied for a few minutes a lesson in which she took no interest, her ideas became so completely confused by the irksomeness of her task, that she did not know what she was doing; so that, after having said her letters, and spelt very well with the lady's maid, who endeavoured to teach her, in order that she might not be scolded, when she came to Cecilia everything went wrong, and it was but an additional annoyance to the latter to find that it was only with Mademoiselle Gerard that Nanette read well.

Thanks, however, to Mademoiselle Gerard, Nanette did make some progress in reading and needlework; but as for music, at the end of six weeks she was no farther advanced than on the first day, and Cecilia, who entertained the idea of giving her an education which would enable her to shine in the world, became disgusted with efforts which could have no higher result than that of fitting her to become a shopkeeper or a lady's maid. The lessons, therefore, were but a succession of irritabilities, which prevented Cecilia from seeking the best means of making herself understood, and which ended by worrying Nanette. These two hours, so uselessly employed, became equally disagreeable to mistress and pupil, and both were delighted when any accident occurred to shorten them; and shortened they often were; for Cecilia, being on one occasion busy, hurried over all the lessons in half-an-hour, and this, having once occurred, occurred often. Sometimes, too, she made Nanette repeat her lesson without listening to her, or put her before the piano and told her to play, while she went about her own affairs, so that during this time, Nanette amused herself at her leisure, in playing whatever happened to suit her fancy. Sometimes, in fine, when Cecilia was busy with her drawing or anything that amused her, she would tell Nanette to take her books or her work, and then think no more about her. Nanette, meanwhile, would either be looking out at the window or catching flies; and when at last, after half-an-hour had elapsed, Cecilia observed her, she would scold her for her idleness, and send her away, saying that she had now no time to attend to her lessons.

All this took place in Cecilia's room, which was close to her mother's. For some time Madame de Vesac said nothing; she had never expected that Cecilia would carry out her projects of education with any perseverance, and she relied much more upon Mademoiselle Gerard, who was a respectable and sensible person, and whom she knew to be quite capable of bringing up Nanette in a manner suited to her station. Still she did not wish her daughter to get into the habit of doing carelessly what she undertook, nor to fancy that the duties of the day were performed when they were only gone through in appearance. Cecilia herself felt that things were not as they ought to be; so that, after having several times complained to her mother of the trouble which Nanette gave, she ceased to speak of the matter. At length one day, Madame de Vesac, after listening for half-an-hour to Nanette, who was strumming on the piano according to her own fancy, without receiving any attention from Cecilia, she asked the latter, if it was by giving lessons in that style that she hoped to make Nanette a great musician. Cecilia blushed, for she felt she was wrong; but she assured her mother, that Nanette had not the slightest taste for music. Madame de Vesac observed, that, from the way in which she had been taught, it was impossible to know whether this was the case or not.

"Mamma," said Cecilia, "I assure you she has no talent whatever; and it is this which has discouraged me."

"But I do not think she displays less inclination to learn to read and work than other children of her age; and yet I do not see that you are at all more zealous in these branches of her education."

"Oh, I attended especially to her music. Mademoiselle Gerard can teach her the rest, as well as I can."

"So then, you have taken Nanette in order to have her brought up by Mademoiselle Gerard?"

"No, mamma; but I thought Nanette would be able to learn what I wanted to teach her."

"And because she does not learn what you want to teach her, you do not think it worth while to teach her what she can learn: to do for her, at least, all that is in your power."

"But still, mamma, it is, I think, a lucky thing for Nanette that we have taken her, and I certainly

shall always take care of her; but you must allow that there is no very great pleasure in teaching a little girl to read and sew, when it is evident that she can learn nothing more than that."

"To agree with you, I must first know precisely what kind of pleasure you expected when you took charge of Nanette?"

"The pleasure of being useful to her, by giving her a good education."

"And supposing her incapable of profiting by what you call a good education, you would not care to be useful to her by giving her at least such an education as she is capable of receiving."

"At all events, this would not give me so much pleasure."

"And to continue a good action which you have commenced, it is necessary that you should find it productive of much pleasure to yourself?"

"No, mamma; but...."

—"But, my child, there are many persons like you in that respect; they commence a good work with delight, and afterwards abandon it because their success is not as complete as they had expected."

"You must see, mamma," said Cecilia, a little piqued, "that it was not for my own advantage that I wished to give lessons to Nanette."

"I believe, indeed, it was for hers, and that you had fully reflected on the advantage she would derive from them." [Pg 73]

"Indeed, mamma, it is a very fine thing for a little peasant girl, who would have remained ignorant, vulgar, and illiterate all her life, to be well educated and accomplished, and to be able to become amiable and agreeable, and fitted to move in elevated society."

"Especially," said Madame de Vesac, smiling, "when she is destined to move in elevated society."

"Who knows, mamma? a good marriage," resumed Cecilia, with vivacity; for her imagination was always ready to rush into romantic ideas, because it is such ideas that require the least reflection.

"Have you seen many of these marriages?" asked her mother.

"Though I may never have seen any, still..."

"Still you suppose, probably, that they are not unfrequent."

"I do not say that, but..."

"But I say," continued her mother, seriously, "that we are not permitted to amuse ourselves with such child's play, when the welfare of one of whom we have taken charge is at stake; and if you had bestowed upon Nanette an education which would make her disdain the humble career to which she is no doubt destined, you would have rendered her a very mischievous service."

"So then, mamma, you did not think I ought to give lessons to Nanette?"

"Not at all; but I was quite easy about the matter."

"Besides," said Cecilia, blushing, "here I am always interrupted, and then two hours for all the lessons are nothing; but we shall be going into the country in a month, where, if you will allow it, she will be more frequently with me, and I shall easily find the means of giving her a proper education."

"Very well," said Madame de Vesac, smiling; for she did not place much more reliance on her daughter's perseverance in the country than in Paris. Cecilia did not observe this smile; quite absorbed in her plans for the future education of Nanette, she began by interrupting it for the present, as if the good that was to be done at some distant day exempted her from performing that which was in her power at the actual moment. She therefore told Nanette, that she would give her no more lessons until they went into the country; and Nanette, to whom a month seemed a lifetime, imagined herself for ever freed, both from Cecilia and her lessons. Cecilia, whose month was taken up with two or three balls, with purchases, packing, and receiving visits from the friends who called to bid her good-bye, completely lost the habit of thinking of Nanette; and this habit she found so unpleasant to resume, that they had been a whole week in the country when her mother said to her:— [Pg 74]

"And Nanette?"

"We are going to recommence our lessons," she replied, somewhat ashamed at not having done so earlier. "But you know," she added, "that on arriving in the country there are a thousand things to be done; besides, I do not think Nanette is very anxious."

"Nor you either, I suspect."

"It certainly does not amuse me much."

"But it will not amuse you more to-morrow than to-day; so that I do not see you have any more reason to begin to-morrow than you have had for the last week."

"But still you know, mamma, there is no need of being in a hurry when there is plenty of time."

"My child, we have never sufficient time before us to do all that ought to be done, for we can never be sure of time. A thousand accidents may deprive us of it; therefore we ought always to be anxious to do what has to be done, just as if we had only the time absolutely necessary for it. In this uncertainty as to the future, it was as necessary to have devoted to Nanette's education the week you have lost, as to give to it that which is to come." [Pg 75]

Cecilia made no answer, but resumed her drawing. Madame de Vesac took up the book she had been reading. After the lapse of half-an-hour, Cecilia interrupted her occupation, saying, with a heavy sigh, "I am afraid I shall not succeed."

"In what?" inquired her mother.

"In what we were speaking of a short time since," said Cecilia, wishing to be understood without being forced to explain; "in Nanette's education."

"And why should you not succeed, if you desire it?" replied Madame de Vesac, still reading.

"I cannot manage to make her study properly."

"I do not see why you may not do what another can do;" and the conversation was again dropped, much to Cecilia's annoyance, for she had an idea which she was anxious though afraid to express. At length, after a quarter of an hour's silence, she again continued. "There is one very simple plan," she said.

"What for?" asked Madame de Vesac, without laying down her book.

"To educate Nanette," said Cecilia, impatiently.

"That plan would be, I think, to give her lessons."

"Mamma, I assure you it is very difficult, extremely difficult. If you would permit me to send her to the village school she would learn to read, and they could give her the elementary lessons in writing, which you know I cannot do; and when we return to Paris she will be sufficiently advanced for me to continue with her."

"Cecilia," said Madame de Vesac, "if you alone were concerned, I should not consent to this, for you must acquire the habit of persevering in what you undertake, and learn to bear the consequences of your own determinations. But Nanette would suffer from it; because, as you are neither sufficiently reasonable nor sufficiently patient to adopt the proper means of ensuring success, you would scold her for learning badly what you taught her badly, and thus she would be ill brought up and unhappy. You may therefore send her to school." [Pg 76]

Cecilia, delighted at having obtained this permission, hastened to Mademoiselle Gerard, to beg her to inform the schoolmaster, and arrange with him the terms of Nanette's tuition. Mademoiselle Gerard, annoyed at being deprived of Nanette during so many hours in the morning, and foreseeing that this arrangement would displease her little pupil, declared that it was unnecessary, and wished to point out inconveniences in the plan. But Cecilia became angry at the first word (as always happens when we are not sure of being in the right), and said that it was Madame de Vesac's wish. The matter was therefore settled, and Nanette sent to school. For some time, Cecilia took an interest in her progress, and paid for her instruction cheerfully enough; and on her birthday, when Nanette recited some complimentary verses, composed by the schoolmaster, and in which she was styled her *illustrious benefactress*, Cecilia gave her a new dress, which Mademoiselle Gerard promised to make. But in course of time Cecilia had other fancies; and when the first of the month came round, she was annoyed at having to pay for Nanette's schooling. Mademoiselle Gerard had several times to remind her that Nanette required shoes; that she had worn and outgrown those she had; and that the small quantity of linen, and the caps and petticoats which had been made for her at first, were insufficient. Madame de Vesac had more than once contributed to her wardrobe; and Cecilia was one day a little ashamed at seeing the child in an apron made out of an old dress of Mademoiselle Gerard's. But in time she got reconciled to this, and began to see in Nanette only the *protégée* of the lady's maid. She never thought of her but when they happened to meet; and they became almost strangers to each other. [Pg 77]

When they were about to return to Paris, Mademoiselle Gerard, whose health had been much impaired for some time past, was not in a condition to undertake the journey: so that Madame de Vesac resolved to leave her in the country until she got well. Mademoiselle Gerard had become so much accustomed to Nanette, that she could not bear the thought of parting with her; she therefore asked permission to retain her. Cecilia, as may be imagined, seconded the request; and Madame de Vesac, being then without a maid, and seeing that Nanette would only be an additional inconvenience, thought it as well to leave her with Mademoiselle Gerard, to whom she would be useful.

Thus was Cecilia, for the moment, relieved from all care of Nanette, and fully determined to think of her as little as possible, for the recollection was troublesome, as she could not but feel that she had not done for her all that she might have done. However, every month brought Mademoiselle Gerard's bill for Nanette's schooling, and other necessary expenses incurred on her account. Then came demands for shoes, linen, &c.; and although Mademoiselle Gerard was in this respect extremely economical, and not unfrequently assisted Nanette from her own wardrobe, still

Cecilia found these expenses encroach sadly upon her allowance. Madame de Vesac, unknown to her, willingly undertook a part of them; but she would not undertake the whole, not thinking it right that her daughter should feel herself at liberty to transfer to her a duty which she had voluntarily imposed upon herself; and she insisted that Cecilia should not neglect the demands of Mademoiselle Gerard. But it happened that Madame de Vesac's husband was wounded while with the army, and though the wound was not dangerous, it was still of sufficient importance to prevent his being removed. His wife was therefore obliged to set off immediately to attend to him; and not wishing to take her daughter with her, she left her in the care of one of her aunts, who had two girls of her own, with whom Cecilia was delighted to have an opportunity of spending some time.

She had been with them about three days, when she received a letter from Mademoiselle Gerard. This letter could not have come at a more unwelcome moment, Cecilia having just taken a fancy to purchase a bonnet like one bought by her cousin, and imagining that Mademoiselle Gerard applied to her for money, "Oh!" she said, ill-temperedly, the moment she recognized the post-mark and handwriting, "I was quite sure this would not fail me; Mademoiselle Gerard always takes care to write whenever I want to buy anything for my own pleasure," and she threw the letter, unopened, upon the mantel-piece, and resumed her drawing, saying, "I shall read it quite soon enough."

"You had better spare yourself the trouble altogether," said the youngest of her cousins, who was very thoughtless, and, saying this, she took the letter, and threw it into the fire. Cecilia uttered a cry, and hastily rose to regain it, but before she had time to move her table, reach the fire-place, and seize the tongs, in spite of her cousin, who, laughing with all her might, endeavoured to prevent her, the letter was half destroyed. When, after having got it out, she wished to take hold of it, the flame burned her fingers, so that she let it fall, and, while vainly endeavouring to extinguish it with the tongs, her cousin, still laughing, took a large glass of water, and threw it over it. The letter ceased to burn, but the little that remained of it, was so blackened and impregnated with the water, that it was quite illegible, and Cecilia was, therefore, obliged to give up all thoughts of reading it. She scolded her cousin, telling her that she should now be obliged to write to Mademoiselle Gerard to know the contents of her letter, but, meanwhile, she bought the bonnet, and as, after having done so, she found herself without money, she was in no great hurry to know what Mademoiselle Gerard had written about; she, therefore, deferred writing from day to day, until a week or ten days had passed; then a fortnight elapsed, and the letter was still forgotten—finally, it remained unwritten at the end of three weeks. She little knew what was going on at the Château during this time.

Since their departure, the health of Mademoiselle Gerard had been constantly growing worse, she consequently became more fretful with every one except Nanette, of whom she was very fond, and who served her with zeal and intelligence. The only person who remained in the Château with her was the porter, an old servant named Dubois, a cross-grained, crabbed old man, though well enough disposed in the main. Mademoiselle Gerard, like the other servants, had frequently disputes with him, but as she was a sensible woman, these disputes were soon settled; now, however, that her temper became soured by illness, their disagreements increased in frequency and violence. It was part of Dubois' duty to supply her with everything she wanted, and when marketing for himself to buy what she required also. She was often discontented with his purchases, and, besides, if she asked for anything in the least out of the ordinary course, he told her it was too dear, and that Madame de Vesac would not permit such extravagance. Then Mademoiselle Gerard would cry, and bewail her misfortune in being left to the care of a man who would be the death of her. She had several times written to Madame de Vesac on the subject, who, well knowing her wishes to be unreasonable, endeavoured to calm her, and persuade her to wait patiently until her return; at the same time, she ordered Dubois not to vex her, as she was an invalid. Whenever the latter received these commands he became more ill-tempered than usual, because, he said, Mademoiselle Gerard had got him scolded by his mistress. At length their disagreements reached such a point, that Dubois would no longer enter the apartments of Mademoiselle Gerard, who, on her part, declared that, during the whole course of her life, she would never again speak to Dubois; so that she sent Nanette to get from him what she wanted. Poor little Nanette was often very much perplexed, as Mademoiselle Gerard, always dissatisfied with what Dubois sent her, never failed to break out into complaints whenever Nanette carried her the meat he had bought at the market, or the fruit and vegetables he had gathered in the garden. She declared he had chosen the very worst for her, and that he wanted to kill her; and such was her weakness on these occasions, that she would sometimes begin to cry. Nanette, who was very fond of her, was grieved at seeing her so much distressed, and would stand looking at her in perfect silence; then Mademoiselle Gerard would kiss her, and say, "If I were to die, who would take care of you?" for, in her weakness, she imagined there was no one in the world who would take an interest in Nanette but herself. The child returned her caresses, comforting her in her way, and assuring her that she would not die. She could not understand her friend's distress, but she would have done much to see her happy. But when Mademoiselle Gerard wanted to send her to Dubois to complain of what he had given her, she told her she dared not go, because on two or three occasions he had been so enraged with her that she was terribly frightened of him. Then she would repeat for the twentieth time what he had said the day she took back to him the decayed pears, and how, when she went to tell him that the slices of beet-root were bad, he flew into a furious passion, saying that servants were more difficult to please than their masters, then gave such a kick to his cupboard door, for the purpose of shutting it, and flung a carrot which he held in his hand with such violence across the room, that she ran away terrified, for fear of being beaten. She also repeated all that he had said about Mademoiselle Gerard herself, that he should

never have a moment's peace so long as she was in the house, and that he would willingly give five pounds out of his own pocket, if she were only so far out of his way that he might never hear her name mentioned again. Then Mademoiselle Gerard became alarmed at his hatred, and could not endure the thought of remaining alone with him in the Château, saying that unless her mistress returned very soon she should be lost. If on these occasions Dubois happened to pass near her apartment, she ran to bolt and barricade the door, as if he were going to murder her. It was in moments of fever that these ideas took possession of her mind, and more especially in the evening, because the room occupied by Dubois was close to her own. The mere idea of having to pass the night so near him threw her into a frightful state of agitation. Nanette, without knowing why, shared in her alarm, and as soon as it began to get dusk she would run and bolt the doors. During the day they were more calm, and Nanette even amused herself by playing tricks upon Dubois.

He kept his fruit and other provisions in a room on the ground floor, one window of which looked upon the court-yard of the Château, and another into the poultry-yard. When the weather was fine, he used each morning to open the window that commanded the court-yard, go his rounds of the kitchen-garden and poultry-yard, and then return and close the window. Nanette had several times watched for the moment of his departure, and, taking advantage of his absence, had climbed to the window, entered the room, carried back the apples he had sent to Mademoiselle Gerard, and with which she was dissatisfied, and taken finer ones in their stead. She was careful [Pg 82] whilst in the room to watch for Dubois through the window that looked into the poultry-yard, and the moment she caught a glimpse of him she made her escape. The first time this occurred, Mademoiselle Gerard gently reprimanded her for having gone through the window; but since her illness she had become too weak to be reasonable in anything, so that a few days later, being greatly annoyed at again receiving some apples which she declared were bad, she said to Nanette, "Could you not manage to get others for me?" Nanette desired nothing better, for she had been much amused with her first stratagem; she, therefore, again watched for Dubois' departure, clambered through the window, and accomplished her task with perfect success, and then diverted Mademoiselle Gerard, to whom her tricks had become a source of amusement, by mimicking the limping gait and surly expression of Dubois, as she had seen him returning in the distance. Nanette, who never took anything for herself, and even for her friend only made exchanges, did not feel the slightest scruple in respect to the propriety of her conduct; while to Mademoiselle Gerard, whose mind had become too far enfeebled to be capable of much reflection, it never occurred that she was encouraging the child in a bad habit, and exposing her to suspicion.

One day, when she had sent to Dubois for some dried grapes, she pretended, as usual, that he had chosen the worst for her, and, as children always see what they fancy they see, Nanette assured her that she had really observed him select the worst, and offered her good friend (as she always named Mademoiselle Gerard) to go and bring some better ones, from the cupboard in which she knew he always kept them locked up. Her friend consented, and Nanette having seen Dubois open the window and depart, started on her expedition. She got into the room, found the key of the cupboard, and began to make her selection. She was so busy that it did not occur to [Pg 83] her that the door of the press concealed from her the window which looked upon the poultry-yard, and consequently, that she could not peep out as usual to see if Dubois were coming. Two or three times, indeed, she did interrupt her occupation, to go and look out, but not at the right moment, so that Dubois passed unperceived, and just when she considered herself perfectly safe, she heard a voice of thunder exclaiming, "Oh! you little thief; I have caught you, then!" and saw before the window the terrible Dubois, barring her passage. For the moment, she thought herself dead; but, fortunately, Dubois was too fat and too heavy to be able to get through the window: he could only overwhelm her with reproaches. Pale and trembling, her heart sinking with fright, she stood silent and motionless. But, at length, watching the moment when he went round to the door, she leaped through the window, and ran round the yard, pursued by Dubois, who, with vehement exclamations, endeavoured to reach her with his stick. Mademoiselle Gerard, hearing the noise, opened her window, and seeing the danger of her favourite, she lost all self-control, and screamed out, "Help! Help! Murder!" Dubois, furious, raised his eyes, and not knowing much better than herself what he was about, threatened her with his stick, and then recommenced his pursuit of Nanette, who by this time had gained the staircase. He mounted after her, and arrived at the moment when she and Mademoiselle Gerard were trying to shut the door; he pushed it open, and forced an entrance, almost upsetting Mademoiselle Gerard, who threw herself before Nanette, as if to prevent his touching her. Still more enraged by this movement, which seemed to imply that he intended to hurt the child, and worse in words than in deeds, he stopped, suffocated at once by anger and by his chase: then, recovering breath, he poured forth a volley of invectives, both against Nanette, whom he called a jade, and against Mademoiselle Gerard, [Pg 84] whom he accused of encouraging her in stealing, and becoming a spy about the house. Mademoiselle Gerard, trembling at once with fear and indignation, told him that Nanette did not steal, that she only endeavoured to obtain something better than he had sent to *poison her*; that she was very unfortunate in being abandoned to a *monster* like him, but that her mistress would soon be back, and do her justice for all this.

"O yes!" said Dubois, "count upon Madame's return, but before she comes back you will have time to set out for the other world!"

After this piece of brutality, which satisfied his passion, he left them. Mademoiselle Gerard fell down almost insensible; and the surgeon who attended her found her, on his arrival, in a high state of fever. He had, besides, just been informed of M. de Vesac's wound, and of the departure

of his wife, and communicated this intelligence to Mademoiselle Gerard, who now perceived the import of Dubois' words; and the idea of having to remain perhaps for six months longer at the mercy of such a man, filled her mind with a terror and agitation which it was impossible to subdue. As her imagination was now disordered by fever, she said that Dubois would kill Nanette; and when the latter declared that she could never dare ask him for anything again, Mademoiselle Gerard expected nothing less than to be starved to death. She determined therefore to go to her brother, who was married and established as a shopkeeper in a neighbouring town. It was in vain that the surgeon endeavoured to oppose this caprice, by representing to her that she was too ill to be removed without danger. Her fever and agitation increased so much by contradiction, that he found it necessary to yield to her desire. He therefore sent to the farm for a horse and cart, settled her with as little inconvenience as possible, and thus accompanied by Nanette, and taking with her all her effects, she started for the town, where she arrived almost in a dying state. [Pg 85]

She remained several days in this condition; then became a little better, but was still so feeble that she began to give up all hope of recovery. Wishing to dispose of the little property she possessed, she sent for a notary. Her whole wealth consisted in a sum of a thousand crowns, the fruit of her savings, and which, from her suspicious character, she had been afraid of placing out at interest, for fear of being cheated, and therefore always kept in her own possession. She left two thousand four hundred francs to her brother, and six hundred to Nanette, with part of her effects. Then, on learning from the surgeon his belief that Cecilia had remained in Paris, she wrote to inform her of the condition she was in, begging her to make it known to Madame de Vesac, and to ask what, in the event of her death, was to be done with Nanette. This was the letter which Cecilia's cousin threw into the fire. Mademoiselle Gerard receiving no reply, supposed that Cecilia had left Paris; and feeling herself growing daily worse, she got the clergyman who visited her to write a long letter to Madame de Vesac. In this letter she recommended Nanette to her care, and without complaining of Dubois, whom the clergyman had prevailed upon her to forgive, she explained to her mistress that Nanette was not a thief, as Dubois had accused her of being.

Soon after this letter had been despatched she died; and thus was poor Nanette left utterly friendless. Mademoiselle Gerard's brother and his wife were selfish people; they had been annoyed at the affection she manifested for Nanette, because they were afraid she would leave her whatever she possessed. They supposed she must have amassed a considerable sum of money, and were confirmed in this opinion, when the day after her death they discovered in her apartment the thousand crowns. Knowing that she had made a will, the husband hastened to the notary, eager to learn its contents; and when it was opened in his presence he was very much astonished, and extremely dissatisfied, at finding that instead of being left a considerable legacy, as he expected, he should be obliged to give Nanette six hundred francs out of the thousand crowns, of which he had already taken possession. He returned home and communicated his information to his wife, who, being still more selfish than himself, was more enraged. She overwhelmed with abuse poor little Nanette, who, quite unconscious of what it all meant, remained terrified and motionless on the spot. Whilst giving vent to her passion the woman continued to arrange and sweep out her shop, and being near Nanette, she struck her with the broom, as if to make her get out of the way. The child ran crying to another corner of the shop. The broom which kept on its course seemed to pursue her; she jumped over it, and went to another part of the room, still it was after her. The activity of the shopkeeper seemed to increase with Nanette's terrors, and every movement she made was accompanied by threatening and abusive language. At length, not knowing where to fly for safety, the poor child ran to the threshold of the door; the woman pushed her out with her broom, saying, "Yes! yes! be off, you may be quite sure I shall not take the trouble to run after you;" and she closed the door upon her. Nanette remained for some time crying outside. At length, hearing some one about to open the door, and thinking it was her persecutor coming out to beat her, she ran off as fast as she could. [Pg 86]

The street in which she happened to be led to the entrance of the town; when she had advanced some distance into the country she sat down upon a stone, and, still crying, began to eat a piece of bread, the remains of her breakfast, which she happened to have in her hand at the moment of her expulsion from the shop. A little boy came up to her, and asked what was the matter. Nanette at first made no reply; he repeated his question, and she told him that she did not know where to go. [Pg 87]

"Come with me to Dame Lapie's," said the little fellow.

"Who is Dame Lapie?" demanded Nanette.

"Why Dame Lapie; she lives in the village yonder, but just now she is begging on the high road. Come along," and he wanted to take Nanette by the hand, but she drew back. The little boy was dirty and ragged, and Nanette had been accustomed to neatness. Moreover the sorrow she had endured the previous day, the death of her protector, the abuse of the shopkeeper's wife, and her own precipitate flight, had quite bewildered her, as is nearly always the case with children when anything extraordinary is passing around them. At those times, not knowing what to do, they remain in one spot, without coming to any decision. Nanette sat there on her stone without knowing what was to become of her, because at that moment her mind was not sufficiently clear to enable her to decide on leaving it. After several fruitless attempts to induce her to accompany him, the little boy left her, and Nanette remained still seated on the stone. Some time after, however, on looking towards the town, she saw a woman approaching, whom she mistook for the shopkeeper; she became afraid, got up, and again went on, still following the high road.

She walked for a full hour, without knowing whither she went, when at a turn in the road she perceived an old woman sitting at the foot of a tree, and surrounded by five or six little children, of from two to four years of age. The little boy who had spoken to her, and who might be about seven or eight, was standing talking to the old woman. The moment he perceived Nanette he pointed her out, saying, "See, there she is, that is her." Nanette crossed over to the other side of the road, for she was afraid of every one, but the old woman rose and went to her. Nanette would have run away, but the woman took her by the hand, spoke gently to her, and told her not to be frightened, for she would do her no harm. Nanette looked at her, felt reassured by her kind expression of countenance, and told her that she had run away from the town because they wanted to beat her.

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"It is your mother who wanted to beat you," said Dame Lapie; "well never mind, we will settle that; come, we will go and ask her to forgive you, and then she will not beat you;" saying this, she made a movement as if wishing to lead her back to the town. Nanette, terrified, began to scream and struggle, saying that it was not her mother, and that she would not return to the town. "Well, then, we will not go, you shall come with us," but Nanette still struggled to withdraw her hand; Dame Lapie let it go, and as Nanette went on, contented herself with following and talking to her. "Who will give you anything to eat to-day?" she demanded. Nanette, crying, replied, "I don't know." "Where will you sleep to-night?" asked Dame Lapie. "I don't know," said Nanette, still crying. "Come with me," continued Dame Lapie, "I promise you we will not return to the town." "Come with us," said the little boy, who had also followed her, and Nanette at last suffered herself to be persuaded. Dame Lapie led her back to the foot of the tree, gave her a piece of black bread and an apple, and while eating it, for she was beginning to feel hungry, she recovered her calmness a little.

Dame Lapie was an old woman to whom the people of the village intrusted their children, whilst they went to work in the fields. She had always five or six, whom she went for in the morning, and took home again at night. The little boy who had spoken to Nanette, and whose name was Jeannot, was one of those she had taken care of in this way. His parents dying whilst he was very young, Dame Lapie would not abandon him, but not being able to support him herself, she sent him to beg. She herself also went, and sat by the road-side, with the little children around her, and asked alms of the passers by; and the parents of the children were either ignorant of this, or did not trouble themselves about it, especially as Dame Lapie always shared with the little ones whatever she obtained.

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Jeannot seeing Dame Lapie receiving children every day, imagined that all who had no homes ought to go to her; and therefore he had sought to lead Nanette to her; and the dame, meeting with a little girl neatly clad, wandering about alone, without knowing where she went, was persuaded, notwithstanding Nanette's assertions that she had run away from her mother, to whom she should be rendering a service by restoring her. She intended, therefore, as soon as she had learned from Nanette who were her parents, to go and see them, promising to restore their daughter, on condition that they would not beat her, for Dame Lapie could not bear the idea of having children ill treated, or even annoyed. Meanwhile, when she returned at night to the village, she made Nanette accompany her, and gave her two of the children to lead; this amused Nanette, but she was not quite so much diverted, when at night the dame had nothing to give her for supper but the same kind of black bread which she had had for dinner, and this too without the apple. Neither did she feel much inclined to sleep with Dame Lapie, whose bed was very disagreeable; still it was necessary, and she slept very soundly after all. Jeannot, as usual, slept upon some straw in a corner of the hut.

During the night, Dame Lapie was seized with so violent an attack of rheumatism that she could not move a limb; and, as she was unable to go to the town, she told Nanette that she must return home to her mother. Nanette again began to cry, saying that her mother did not live in the town, that her good friend was dead, and that there remained no one but of her good friend's sister, and she wanted to beat her; she did not allude to the Château, for she was still more afraid of Dubois than of the shopkeeper. Dame Lapie asked where her mother was, but Nanette scarcely remembered the name of her native village; everything she said on the subject was so confused, and she cried so much, that the old woman could make nothing out, and resolved to let the matter rest for the present. On several occasions, during the following days, she renewed her questions, but always with the same result; and, too ill to insist much on the matter, she determined, as soon as she was better, to go to the town and make inquiries herself.

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Nanette, meanwhile, rendered her a thousand little services; she was gentle and attentive, and delighted in giving pleasure. The constant attention required by Mademoiselle Gerard had rendered her alive to the wants of sick people. She also took care of the little children, who were always brought to Dame Lapie's, and, accompanied by Jeannot, went out with them upon the road. Jeannot did all he could to cheer her; but she was sad. She remembered the good dinners she had with Mademoiselle Gerard, and the black bread became distasteful to her; nevertheless, there was nothing else for her, and not always enough even of that. On one occasion, she was obliged to go to bed supperless, and passed a part of the night in crying; but so as not to be heard by Dame Lapie, because, whenever the dame saw her crying from hunger, she scolded her, and asked her why she did not go and beg like Jeannot.

The winter had passed; the spring was very wet; and when it rained, the water penetrated into Dame Lapie's hut, which was somewhat below the level of the street. This rendered it very unhealthy. It was also unhealthy for Nanette to sleep with this old woman, who was an invalid. Nanette was naturally of a delicate constitution, and the misery in which her infancy had been

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passed left her in a state of but very moderate health at the time she was taken by Madame de Vesac. Under the care of Mademoiselle Gerard, she recovered her strength, but not sufficiently to enable her to bear the present relapse into misery. If Jeannot was able to endure the same inconveniences, it was because he was of a strong, lively, and active temperament, which prevented him from yielding to depression; whereas Nanette, mild, quiet, and even a little inclined to indolence, gave way to discouragement and sadness—a thing which always increases our troubles. Jeannot besides was a favourite with the neighbours; every one caressed him, and gave him something; but they had been greatly displeased by the arrival of Nanette, and thought it very wrong of Dame Lapie to take charge of a child of whom she knew nothing, and who, they said, was only an additional beggar in the village; so that not unfrequently, when Nanette went into the streets, she heard the women and children crying out against her. Under the combined influence of grief, unwholesome food, and want of cleanliness, Nanette soon fell ill. She was seized with a fever, and in the course of a few days became dreadfully changed. Dame Lapie, who was now able to leave her bed, and attend to the children, told her that, as she could not beg, she must at least go with Jeannot, who would beg for her; and that she would get the more when it was seen that she was so ill. Jeannot, who was much more quick and shrewd than Nanette, led her by the hand, and she suffered him to do so, for she had no longer the strength to resist anything. When they reached a spot where they could be seen by those who passed along the road, she seated herself on a stone, or at the foot of a tree, and Jeannot solicited alms for his little sister who was ill; and, indeed, she looked so ill and so unhappy, that she excited commiseration, and obtained for Jeannot additional contributions.

Meantime, Cecilia carried into execution her determination of writing to Mademoiselle Gerard; but as she, of course, addressed her letter to the Château, it was received by Dubois, who for some days had no opportunity of forwarding it to the town, and in the interval learned that Mademoiselle Gerard was dead. He was then grieved at having treated her with so much brutality the day before her departure; but as for Nanette, when told that she had run away from the shopkeeper's, and had not since been heard of, he took no further trouble in the matter, quite satisfied in his own mind that she was a thief, and that they were very fortunate to be rid of her. Of all these matters he sent an account to Madame de Vesac; but her husband having recovered and returned to active service, she had just left for Paris, and neither received this letter nor the one sent to her by Mademoiselle Gerard a few days prior to her death, and which, having passed through Paris, had been delayed a considerable time on the way. Madame de Vesac stayed only a few days at the capital, and then set out with her daughter for her country-seat, ignorant of all that had lately happened there. She had made inquiries of Cecilia respecting Mademoiselle Gerard; and Cecilia being unable to give her any information, was obliged to confess her negligence. Her mother severely reprimanded her, though little imagining the misfortunes this negligence had produced.

They were four days on their journey, and while changing horses at the last post but one, Cecilia descended from the carriage, and leaving the yard of the inn, went to breathe the fresh air on the high road. Immediately a little boy came towards her, asking charity for his little sister who was ill, at the same time pointing her out to Cecilia, who, in fact, beheld a little girl seated on the ground, with a dying look, and her head leaning against a stone; at that moment she was sleeping; her clothes were in rags, and so dirty, that their colour could scarcely be distinguished. Cecilia, while looking at her, was seized with pity, and struck by her resemblance to Nanette; but it never occurred to her that it could be Nanette. Just then she was called, and giving the little boy a penny, telling him it was for his sister, she returned to the carriage, her mind filled with the thought of the poor little girl she had just seen; yet she did not dare to speak of her to her mother, fearing that by recalling the memory of Nanette she might revive those reproaches which her conscience told her she deserved. What, then, was her consternation, when, on arriving at the Château, she was informed of the death of Mademoiselle Gerard, and the disappearance of Nanette. While Dubois was relating these particulars, Madame de Vesac fixed her eyes upon her daughter, who at one moment looked at her with an expression of great anxiety, and at the next cast down her eyes ashamed. As soon as Dubois had left the room, Cecilia, pale and trembling, with clasped hands, and a look of despair, said to her mother, "Oh! mamma, if it was that little girl I saw close to the post-house, who looked as if she were dying." Her mother asked her what grounds she had for such an idea. Cecilia informed her, and, while doing so, wept bitterly; for the more she thought of the subject, the less doubt did she entertain of its being poor little Nanette. "I am sure I recognised her," she continued; "and now I remember that she wore the blue dress I gave her. It was all torn, and I could scarcely tell the colour; but it was the same, I am sure. Poor little Nanette!" And with this, she redoubled her tears. She entreated that some one might be sent immediately to the inn, to make inquiries; but it was then too late in the day, and she dreaded lest the delay of a few hours should render Nanette so much worse as to be past recovery. Her agitation increased every moment. Madame de Vesac gave orders that the following morning, as soon as it was light, some one should go to the post-house, to ascertain if the people knew anything of the little girl who was begging at the door on the previous day. Cecilia passed a sleepless night, and rose the next morning before daybreak; and she was awaiting the return of the messenger even before he had started. He did return at last, but without any information. Nanette had never before been at the inn, and the people had not noticed her, and were at a loss to understand the object of all these inquiries. Cecilia was in hopes she would return there during the day, and a messenger was again sent to inquire; but Nanette did not make her appearance, for the post-house was situated at a considerable distance from the village in which Dame Lapie lived; and, in her feeble and suffering condition, the walk had so much exhausted her that she found it impossible to return. "Oh, mamma," exclaimed

Cecilia, "perhaps she is dead." At that moment she felt all the anguish of the most dreadful remorse; her agitation almost threw her into a fever. Inquiries were made in the town; and the shopkeeper's wife stated that Nanette had run away, and no one knew what had become of her. The neighbours were also applied to; and they, disliking the sister-in-law of Mademoiselle Gerard, and having heard of the will, said, that to avoid paying the six hundred francs to Nanette, she was quite capable of forcing her, by her ill treatment, to run away, and that perhaps even she had turned her out of doors. To this were added conjectures and rumours, some declaring that a little girl had been met one night in the fields, almost perished with cold; others saying that one had been found on the high road, nearly starved to death; but when questioned further on the point, no one could tell who had seen this little girl, nor what had become of her; for these were only false reports, such as are always circulated in cases of disaster. Cecilia, however, believed them, and they threw her into despair. At this time, Mademoiselle Gerard's letter reached them; it contained a complete justification of Nanette, whom Dubois persisted in regarding as a thief; it also proved that, if Cecilia had written immediately on the receipt of her first letter, Nanette would not have been lost. This redoubled Cecilia's distress. To complete it, there arrived another letter, bearing the post-mark of the village in which Nanette's mother lived. It was written by the clergyman, at the poor woman's request. In this letter, she said that they had several times heard —but not until it was too late,—that Madame de Vesac had passed by. This had very much grieved her, as she would have been glad to have seen her daughter for a moment; but she was told that Nanette was not with them, and feeling extremely uneasy, she entreated Mademoiselle Cecilia—to whom the letter was addressed—to send her some intelligence of her child. The clergyman concluded by saying: "God will bless you, my dear young lady, because you do not abandon the poor." This letter pierced Cecilia to the heart. She grew thin with grief and anxiety; every time the door opened, she fancied there was some news of Nanette. Her eyes were constantly directed towards the avenue, as if she expected to see her coming; and at night she woke up with a start at the slightest noise, as if it announced her return. At last her mother resolved that they would themselves make inquiries in all the neighbouring villages, and speak to all the clergymen, although still fearing that they were too late. They therefore set out one afternoon, and as they approached a village, but a short distance from the town, Cecilia, who was anxiously looking in every direction, uttered a cry, exclaiming, "Mamma, mamma, that's her! there she is! I see her! I see the same little boy!" and she caught hold of the coachman's coat, to make him stop the quicker, and darting out of the carriage, rushed towards Nanette, who was lying on the ground, with her head leaning against a tree, seeming scarcely able to breathe. Cecilia threw herself on the ground by her side, spoke to her, raised her up, and kissed her. Nanette recognised her, and began to weep; Cecilia wept also, and taking her upon her knees, she caressed her, called her her dear Nanette, her poor little Nanette. The child looked at her with astonishment, while a faint flush animated her cheeks. Madame de Vesac soon reached the spot. Cecilia wanted to have Nanette put instantly into the carriage, and taken home; but Madame de Vesac questioned Jeannot, who stood staring in the utmost astonishment, utterly unable to comprehend the meaning of what he saw. While Cecilia was arranging Nanette in the carriage, Madame de Vesac, conducted by Jeannot, went to Dame Lapie's cottage. The old woman was sitting at her door, still unable to walk, and related all she knew about the child. Madame de Vesac gave her some money, and returned to Cecilia, who was dying with impatience to see Nanette home, and in a comfortable bed. She got there at last. Cecilia nursed her with the greatest care, and for a whole week never left her bedside, frequently rising in the night to ascertain how she was. At last the surgeon pronounced her out of danger; but it was long before she was restored to health, and still longer before she recovered from the sort of stupidity into which she had been thrown by such a series of misfortunes and suffering. When quite well, Cecilia was desirous of resuming her education with more regularity than formerly; but this education had now become still more difficult than at first, and Cecilia could no longer assume her former authority; for, whenever she was going to scold Nanette, she remembered how much she had suffered through her negligence, and dared not say a word. She felt that to have the right of doing to others all the good we wish, and of ordering what may be useful to them, we must never have done them any injury. She therefore sent Nanette to school, and economized her allowance, in order to be able afterwards to apprentice her to a business. The brother of Mademoiselle Gerard was made to refund the six hundred francs; but Cecilia desired that the sum might be kept for a marriage portion for Nanette, when she was grown up. Madame de Vesac gave Jeannot a suit of clothes; and Dame Lapie had permission to send every week to the château for vegetables. Madame de Vesac spent not only this summer, but the winter also, and the following summer, in the country; so that Nanette had time to learn to read, and make some progress in writing. This was a source of great joy to Cecilia, who, for some time, feared that her mind was totally stupified. In conversing on the subject with her mother, after she had been relieved of all anxiety in regard to it, Madame de Vesac said to her: "We never know what injury we may do when we confer favours heedlessly and solely for our own pleasure, and without being willing to give ourselves any trouble. This is not the way to do good. Those whom you neglect, after having led them to expect assistance, find, when you have abandoned them, that they had calculated upon you, and are now without resource; so that you have done them more harm than if you had never aided them."

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THREE CHAPTERS

IN

The Life of Nadir.

CHAPTER I.

THE ROSE.

In the month of Flowers, in Farsistan, the Land of Roses, three youths inhaled the perfumed air of the morning, as they sported in the flower-covered fields, and amid the leaves, sparkling with dew. Pleasure directed their steps towards the depths of a dark grove, into which the heat of the first beams of day had not yet penetrated. A celestial fragrance mingled with the first exhalations of the verdure. One single sunbeam had pierced the thick foliage, as if to point out, with its golden finger, a Rose, the loveliest of roses. The dew-drops bathed it as they passed, or crept, for its refreshment, into its bosom, coloured with transparent tints of light and shade; and the zephyr of the grove seemed to have no other care than to balance it on its delicate stem. Proudly, but timidly, did it raise its head, expanding like the countenance of a young girl, whose lips scarce dare to smile, while already happiness is beaming in her eyes.

"Oh! lovely flower," said Zuléiman, "I will carry thee to Schiraz; this day shalt thou adorn the feast; the poets of Persia shall sing of thy perfume and thy beauty;" and already was his hand stretched forth to pluck the Rose.

"Stop!" cried Massour, "why thus cut short the bright hours of its life? Think, Zuléiman, think how, after shining for a few brief moments in the crown of a guest, or in the garland destined to adorn the vases of the feast, consumed by the burning breath of men, and sinking beneath the vapour of their cups, it will droop that head now so full of vigour, and let fall, one after the other, its fading petals, until at night, trodden under foot, it will scarcely leave upon the ground a faint trace of its existence."

"What matters it," continued the impetuous Zuléiman, "whether it perish amid the splendours of a court, or upon its slender stem? A single day is the term of its existence, and that day will at least have been a glorious one. Poor flower! I will not suffer thee thus to lavish in forgetfulness thy fragrant odour and soft beauty in this secluded spot, where thou art scarce known, even to the nightingale and the zephyr."

"And is it not enough," said Massour, "that it should possess an existence thus fragrant and beautiful, that it should enjoy the thick shade, and inhale the delicious freshness of this grove; here peacefully to bloom away its life, here gently to shed its leaves when, pale but not withered, they fall one by one, as vanish, without pain, blessings that have been enjoyed, as glide away the last days of a happy life, softly coloured by remembrance?"

"Wretched happiness," said Zuléiman; "noble flower, thou wilt not accept it! I see thee swell and unfold thy leaves, proud with the thought of shining in the world." And a second time he was about to pluck the flower.

"Stop!" cried Nadir, in his turn seizing the arm of Zuléiman; then for a moment he was silent, his eyes fixed upon the rose; a painful anxiety tormented his heart: he shuddered at the thought of abandoning to such sudden destruction that flower, so brilliant and so happy, while at the same time he sighed to see it waste, useless and unknown, the treasures of its precious existence. "Stop! Zuléiman!" he continued, "let us not thus rashly precipitate things into the abyss of our wills before examining what may be the destiny marked out for them by the Father of beings."

At this moment, a sage was seen approaching. The world had no secrets from him. He understood the language of the birds, and could divine the thoughts of the flowers. He knew what is still more difficult: how to select the narrow path of duty in the intricate ways of life, and to trace out its precise direction; the only rule capable of sustaining the mind of man, and of guiding his will amidst the uncertainties of desire. The three youths addressed him at once: "Father," said they, "enlighten our doubts, unfold to us the destiny of this Rose."

As the sage was about to reply, warlike sounds were heard. Zuléiman sprang forward, seized his arms, and hurried to range himself beneath the standard of the Sophi. Massour, with a smile, inhaled the perfume of the flower which he fancied he had preserved, and returned to the palace of his father, to enjoy the delights of life.

"My son," said the sage to Nadir, "this is the hour in which thy grandsire has need of thy assistance, that he may warm himself in the rays of the morning sun. Let not an old man lose one of those reviving beams." And Nadir hastened to obey the words of the Sage.

In the evening, his mind still perplexed with the same doubt, Nadir returned to the grove. The sage was there; and there, also, was the Rose. Its perfume was beginning to languish; its full-blown leaves seemed to have exhausted the plenitude of existence, and to be expending their last powers. "One night, at most, will terminate its life," said Nadir: "perhaps the morning zephyr is already commissioned to waft away its remains. Tell me, O father! if, in thus wasting on its stem, it has fulfilled the destiny appointed for it by the Most High, and to which it was called by its own nature."

"This morning, my son," resumed the sage, "it might have cast a look of sadness on the obscure retreat to which Providence had condemned it. It might have inquired of the Most High, wherefore that rich fragrance enclosed within its breast; wherefore the ravishing colours with which it is adorned? but at noon there came a traveller, overpowered by fatigue; his eyes,

distressed by the dazzling brilliancy of the day, demanded comfort; his sense of smell sought deliverance from the dust of the road; all his senses required refreshment, all his body called for repose. Attracted by the fragrance of the Rose, he penetrated into its retreat; it delighted his eye, and revived his senses; it remained suspended over his head while he slept, lavishing on him its rich perfume till the evening; and he departed, refreshed, happy, and blessing the Rose whose dying fragrance now rises in thankfulness towards the Most High, for the destiny he had assigned it." Nadir also raised his thoughts to heaven, and blessed the Lord of nature for the destiny of the Rose.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRIBE.

The next day Nadir returned to seek the sage, and thus addressed him:—"Father, man is not like the flower, fixed upon a stem, he can of himself advance towards his destiny; ought he then, like the Rose, to wait until the traveller demands his perfume? Tell me, oh! father, what is the destiny which God has assigned to man; what is the happiness to which it is the will of Heaven that he should aspire?"

"My son," replied the sage, "the virtue as well as the happiness of the plant consists in patience. There, in the retreat in which God has placed it, let it await his will, and if it die without having been made use of, if its salutary properties return with it into the earth, still let it not murmur; for God has seen it, and the Most High rejoices in his own works.

"The animal is destined for action, but in the interest, and under the direction of man. Obedience is his duty, it is the merit which will be accounted to him, the blessing of which he may avail himself. The horse whose submissive ardour obeys with joy the signal of his master, feels neither the whip nor the spur.

"Man, my son, has received the power of voluntary action. Let him not suffer either his deed or his will to perish uselessly, but let him earnestly seek out the portion of labour assigned to him by God in the work of the Universe. Let him submit to it with docility, under the guidance of the Most High, who deigns to make him the instrument of His decrees; and let him accept with resignation the measure of success, which it may be the will of Heaven to bestow."

"Oh! my father," demanded Nadir, "how, amidst this array of human activities, amidst this immense variety of labours which the world spreads out before me, how may I always distinguish the portion of the work to which it is the will of Heaven that I should devote my powers?"

"Always look around and see in what direction thou canst do the most good, without doing any evil.

"Ask of the creatures of God such assistance as they can render thee, without acting in contradiction to the destiny imposed upon them by their Father, and thine.

"Gather the fruit of the vine, but break not its stem to form thy staff. For the stem of the vine, left to its natural destiny, will still for many years offer a grape to the parched lips of the pilgrim. When thou no longer needest the axe, take not its handle to feed the flame of thy hearth, for though no longer useful to thee, the handle of the axe is not the less destined to fulfil a long service.

"Go, my son, be active as the fire that never sleeps, docile as the courser to the impulse of the hand which guides him, resigned as the solitary plant."

Such were the counsels of the sage; and Nadir departed to begin life.

Nadir was beautiful as the moon, when from the blue vault of heaven she silently looks down upon the earth; agile and proud as the stag, at the head of a troop of fawns and young deer; compassionate as a mother to the cries of her child. His words reverberated in the depths of the heart like the cymbal, whose every sound responds to the step of the warrior, burning with impatience to reach his enemy; and when his voice burst forth in song, or when his hand swept the lyre, it seemed as if one were transported to the borders of fountains where the sound melts away in rapture, to the harmonious voices of earth and air.

One day he had to make his choice between two paths. "The first," it was said, "will conduct you to the abodes of a happy people, rich in the joys of life, and skilful in using them: your talents and beauty will there secure to you pleasure, glory, and fortune. By following the other, you will find a tribe of savage men, wild as their native woods, hard as the rocks they scale." The young blood of Nadir rushed towards the spot where difficulty and labour awaited him. He recollected the words of the sage, and found them grateful to his heart. "There," he said, "is a good that I can accomplish, these happy people have no need of me." And he bent his steps towards the savage tribe.

For three days a terrible lion had spread desolation and terror throughout their neighbourhood: all night its roaring was heard around their dwellings: in the day he pounced silently upon his prey. The timid maiden, gathering wild roots, dreaded to see him spring from behind each bush; the mother dared not leave her child within the hut; and the warrior, who went forth with spear in hand, looked anxiously around, fearing to seek the game which he had wounded in the cavern or the pit, lest he should meet the terrible animal ready to dispute it with him. Nadir arrived; the temper of his scimitar, the vigour of his arm, the courage of his soul triumphed over the lion. The

people worshipped him as a god: the heads of the tribe came to him and said, "Thou art stronger than we are: command us; and with us thou shalt be the master of this people."

Nadir reflected: "I can impose wise laws upon this people: but, if they submit to them by force, they will act in opposition to the destiny which God has appointed for man, which is, to act in accordance with his own will." Therefore, before disclosing to them his thoughts, Nadir listened to theirs; and their thoughts, on the lips of Nadir, became a music enchanting to their ears. He did not force them to exchange the spear for the plough, nor the toil of the wandering huntsman for that of the industrious labourer; but he headed their chase, and at their feasts purchased at the price of fatigue and danger: he expatiated, in glowing language, on the luxury of fruits improved by culture, of cakes made from wheaten flour, of the presents conferred by the goat, who gives to man her milk, when he ceases to demand her blood. Clad like them, in the skins of the wild beasts he had slain, he taught the young men to place them on their shoulders with more elegance; and the women were eager to fashion them with grace, in order to give pleasure to the young men. Labour introduced among this people abundance, sociability, and innocent gaiety; and they sang: "Nadir is a gift more precious than a son to his mother; for he renders us happy without having ever caused us pain."

Nevertheless, there were some among them who rebelled against the power which the people had delegated to Nadir. First in this number was a young man named Sibal: he was seized. The chiefs who recognized the superiority of Nadir, and the old men, to whom he had taught the science of counsel, exclaimed, "Let Sibal die, that his death may be a warning to others!"

But Nadir replied: "Has he not received from God a destiny more suited to his nature than that of dying for the benefit of others, like the grain which they grind for food?" He ordered Sibal to be brought into his presence, and said, "Why dost thou seek to reject my laws? Is thy heart not strong enough to bear them?"

"Thy laws, like the honey of the bee," said Sibal, "may be sweet to him who has made them; but I cannot feed upon the honey from another's hive."

"Let him who is also capable of making honey," replied Nadir, "assist those who are occupied in filling the hive. Aid me in giving laws to this people, and govern them with me, if thou art competent; if thou art more competent, govern them in my stead."

Sibal fell prostrate before him. The words of Nadir had sunk deep into his heart, even as the shower which awakens the germs still sleeping in the bosom of the earth, and he said: "Oh, Nadir! I am worthy of something better than the death to which they would have condemned me;" and as the father begets the sons who increase his power, so Nadir taught wisdom to Sibal, and the wisdom of Sibal increased the strength of Nadir; and the life of Sibal was before the eyes of this people an example, which would have been lost by his death: for the voice of each morning raises a hymn to the glory of the sun, but the earth forgets in a few hours the cloud which passes away in storm.

The wonders accomplished by Nadir were related at the Court of the Sophi, on whom this tribe depended; and the Court wished to draw him to itself, as it does everything precious. He went, therefore, to the Court of the Sophi. There he beheld Zuléiman, who had distinguished himself in arms. He had surpassed every warrior in valour, every chief in discipline. The Sophi had just delegated to him the government of a province which he had conquered. "Govern it in peace," he said, "since thou hast gained it by war." But Zuléiman was only fit for subjugating men; a thing which may be done so long as war lasts. The huntsman traces out, according to his pleasure, the enclosure within which he wishes to shut up and pursue the beasts of the forest; but the shepherd leads his flocks to the pastures which they themselves prefer.

Zuléiman did not crush his people by his avarice; he did not subject them to unworthy favourites, neither did he force them to respect a degrading idleness; on the contrary, he required them to adorn their towns with religious edifices; he obliged them to construct, upon the path of the traveller, fountains, shaded by palm-trees; and to send their children to schools, in which they might be well educated. But since, in the means he took to obtain their obedience, he did not consult their character, but his own, they did not adapt their wills to his laws; but as the branch, of which the child forms his bow, when subjected to a curve contrary to its nature, wounds the hand which forces it, or, breaking loose, darts from his grasp; so they, being constrained by force to bend to his laws, obeyed his rule with hatred, or evaded it by stratagem.

"These men," said Zuléiman, "are perverse. I sow amongst them the good seed of virtue, and they return to me the tares of vice."

"Brave Zuléiman," replied Nadir, "men become perverse through hatred of a rule opposed to their inclinations. Think not to conduct them to good by laws at variance with the powers which God has bestowed upon them for its attainment. The will of a tyrant is like a thunderbolt hurled against a rock: the rock turns it off, and it strikes a temple."

One day a slave was labouring with his axe on the gnarled trunk of an oak which he wished to fell. It had already wearied his arm, and he demanded time for repose, but in vain; Zuléiman would not grant it. Then the slave, summoning his remaining strength, raised his axe—but only to let it fall in vengeance on the head of Zuléiman. Nadir hurried to the spot, and found him expiring. Zuléiman said to him: "If I sought to precipitate events, it was only that the short period of life might still leave me time for the accomplishment of great deeds."

"Oh! Zuléiman," replied Nadir, "nothing can be truly great, but that which accords with the destiny traced out for man by the finger of Him who alone is great." But Nadir mourned for Zuléiman: for he had been powerful in action, and only failed by depending too much on obedience.

Nadir also visited the Palace of Massour. He beheld him, like a fruit, nourished by the prodigality of a too fertile soil, by the abundance of the fountains, and the moist freshness of the shade; the purifying breath of heaven, the generous ardour of the sun, have never penetrated its retreat. Swelled with useless juice, insipid and discoloured, it hangs, bearing down by its weight the branch which supports it. Such appeared Massour. Life was to him dull and weary; for he knew not how to restore its vigour. In vain he sought for novelty in his luxuries: the cup of pleasure was filled to the very brim; to pour in more was but to make it overflow, without increasing its contents.

Massour, too, was threatened by misfortune; and he beheld it as we behold a phantom, which chills us with terror, though we know it is but a phantom. His riches no longer gave him joy; yet to preserve these riches, he abandoned, though with tears, to the hatred of a powerful enemy, the friend who had implored his aid.

Then Nadir departed from the Palace of Massour, saying, "God has given activity to man, as he has given the current to the waters, to preserve them from corruption."

CHAPTER III.

THE DESERT.

Nadir, in his turn, was visited by misfortune. Calumny pursued him: injustice extended high enough to reach him. He was banished from the wife of his bosom, from the son whose eyes were just opened to the light, and his life was dried up like the summer, when, although full of fire and vigour, it has lost its colours.

The people, whom he had taught to be industrious and happy, were given up to avaricious men, who converted their labour into an oppressive burden; and the memories which once refreshed the soul of Nadir now became to him a bitter and empoisoned spring.

He beheld iniquity spreading over his land, and was forced to behold it in silence. Iniquity dreaded even his silence, and Nadir was compelled to fly into barren deserts, where the devouring eyes of iniquity come not to seek their prey. He here met the sage, who said to him: "I wished to end my days in peace. These rocks, which have been piled immoveable one upon the other since the birth of the world, will not renounce their nature to rush down of their own accord and crush me. The rain may benumb my limbs with cold, without my accusing it of any want of obedience to the law which was given to it; therefore, I bear no hatred to these threatening rocks, nor to the rain which chills me; but the sight of iniquity wearies my soul into hatred of it: for there were twins produced at one birth—iniquity, which is the foe of order; and the hatred of iniquity, which is the re-establishment of order."

Shortly after he had uttered these words, the sage expired; and Nadir, beholding him close his eyes, exclaimed, "Now, indeed, I am alone."

The eyes of the sage once more opened, and he said: "My son, the plant knows that it is seen by God, but man bears God within himself; let him then never say I am alone;" and with these words the sage expired. Nadir left the cavern, and reflected on the meaning of his words. Seated upon a rock, he beheld a serpent gliding towards him from between the stones, now and then raising its head, and looking round as if seeking for some object on which to vent its fury. Nadir seized a piece of the rock, and crushed the head of the serpent, while the body writhed and struggled long after the head had remained crushed between the stones. At last it lay motionless, stretched along the rock. Nadir surveyed it: he also surveyed the lifeless remains of the sage extended in the cavern. "Both," said he, "are about to give back to the earth the dust which they took from it; but what advantage was there in taking the serpent from the dust?" And he questioned the work of the Most High.

Three Chapters on the Life of Nadir, p. 110.

The sun had just sunk behind the rocks which bounded the horizon. A cold wind arose, driven by dark clouds; it whistled through the rocks and penetrated even to the heart of Nadir, already filled with grief for the death of the sage. He remained motionless, abandoning himself, without defence, to the cold wind and to his grief. But a thought of the past arose to his mind: he remembered what he had been, and said, "Nadir shall not perish overpowered by affliction and the winds of night!" He arose, gathered the leaves and brambles scattered here and there in the clefts of the rock, where also grew the wild roots which served him for food. He obtained fire from a flint; a brilliant flame suddenly burst forth from the midst of a thick smoke; the light played upon the rocks, and seemed to people the desert. The features of the sage reposing in the cavern, were lighted up with a tint resembling that of life. Nadir gazed upon him, and tears flowed from his eyes, to the memory of friendship; but strength had once more returned to his soul. The flame grew dim, sank, and at last died away. A grey coating of ashes covered the still burning embers; but soon, of that great heap of brambles, there remained nothing but a faint trace, scarcely visible upon the spot on which they were consumed. "Behold," said Nadir, "they, too, have returned to the dust; but I, whom they have warmed, what right have I to ask why they were taken from it?"

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The wind had died away, bearing with it the dark clouds. The moon slowly unveiled her disk in the blue vault of heaven, where trembled myriads of glittering stars. Each one of these heavenly orbs seemed to shed a ray upon the heart of Nadir. "Glorious works of the Most High!" he exclaimed, gazing on them, "what mortal will dare to lift his voice to ask what purpose ye serve in the Universe?"

And his eye sought that faint white trace, scarcely visible in the azure heavens, formed by masses of stars, innumerable as the sands of the sea-shore, lying in the depths of space, where the eye of man cannot distinguish them, where they do not even serve to gladden his sight; and still beyond these almost invisible stars, float perhaps, in spaces stretching out to infinitude, others of whose existence even sight gives us no intimation. Nadir dwelt upon these things, then withdrew his gaze, and turning his thoughts inward, upon himself, he said, "Even as these stars are lost to me in space, so the good which I have done will be lost in time. Already perhaps, it no longer exists; perhaps already it may have been productive of evil: for if those men are rendered wicked whom I had rendered good, what I have taught them will only have given them increased power of doing evil. And yet I do not ask of my conscience "To what purpose have I done good:" for if, when I have paid my creditor, he should throw the gold he has received of me into the sea, I should not say, "To what purpose have I paid my debts?" Sovereign Ruler of the Universe, every creature bears to thee in tribute, his existence, which is the fulfilment of thy will; and of this tribute, of which thou formest thy treasures, oh! Great Lord of Life! who will dare to ask of thee the use?" By the clear moonlight Nadir beheld the body of the serpent, stretched along the rock, and said, "Thou hast lived for evil, but even evil pays its tribute to the will of Heaven. Man knows not its use, as the insect destroyed by the icy wind of this night knows not that that wind would dispel the clouds. Oh! serpent, thou hast paid thy tribute: for God had willed thy existence, and

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thou hast accomplished by it the intentions of the Most High."

Nadir also glanced upon the slight stratum of ashes which the flame had left upon the rock, and said, "While the flame devoured these brambles, it warmed my limbs and my heart. When God drew man from the treasures of his power, he said to him, 'Thou hast the choice of being either the flame which devours the trunk of the oak, or the heat which emanates from it, and rejoices the heart of man.' The wicked replied, 'I will be the devouring flame;' and he thinks only of devouring; but God has forced him to produce the heat. It is the will of God which has created good. It is the will of the wicked which creates evil, out of which God extracts good."

With such thoughts Nadir calmly slept, and awoke the next morning as if to a new existence: for he had reposed upon the will of God the uncertainties of his spirit, and he contemplated, with a steady eye, the desert and its extent, its solitude and its aridity. He closed up the cavern where rested the remains of the sage: he returned the serpent to the earth; and the breath of the morning had scattered in the air the ashes of his hearth; but their lessons remained in his heart, and he said, "All nature deposits germs in the heart of man, and man nourishes them and elevates them to the thought of God." Nevertheless, this thought of God sometimes troubled him. Filled with it, his soul longed to rush towards him; and he prostrated himself, saying, "My God, I know thee but as the friend whose eyes languish for the sight of his friend." [Pg 113]

Nadir was again uplifted by the returning wave of fortune. Iniquity had passed over his country like a storm, and his people revived in the freshness of repose after trouble. He again beheld the wife whom he cherished, and the child already able to clap his hands and utter cries of joy when he heard pronounced the name of Nadir. He was again invested with great power to do good; and the more he experienced the mercies of God, the more he felt the necessity of his presence; and he sought him in all things.

One day he beheld his son, filled with anger, rush upon an animal which was on the point of biting his nurse, and he said, "God has spoken to this child, for whence could he have learned love and courage?"

He surprised the wicked, endeavouring to delude himself with pretences, in order to colour an injustice, which he could commit without danger; and he said, "God is there before the wicked; for the wicked dare not go straight to the commission of evil;" and he added, "Great God, whom I see everywhere, let me feel thy presence still nearer to my heart."

One day Nadir, deceived by false appearances, condemned to be scourged a good man, who had been unjustly accused before him, and he pronounced sentence with his eyes closed, as one who in a dream, unmindful of what is around him, acts and reasons in accordance with the ideas which during his sleep exist in his imagination. Whilst submitting to his punishment, this good man said to his friends, whose indignation burst forth in bitter invectives, "Let not the commission of one injustice lead us to commit another in accusing the virtuous Nadir." [Pg 114]

One of the friends of Nadir hastened to him with these words. Struck with astonishment, he instantly ordered the punishment to be suspended, and the supposed culprit to be brought into his presence. Then his eyes were opened, and he beheld before him an innocent man, whom he had condemned; and the truth burst forth, as a burning light, inflicting poignant grief upon his heart. In his agony, he wept, and, prostrate, implored the forgiveness of the good man, who said to him, "Oh! Nadir, thou hast not injured me, for thou hast not rendered me unjust towards thee; neither hast thou injured thyself, for it was thy error, and not thyself, that was unjust towards me."

Nadir's grief was increased by these words, when he saw what virtue he had condemned; but, at the same time, the sight of so much virtue filled his mind with an ineffable pleasure, and his grief passed away with his tears. In the fulness of his joy, he said to the virtuous man, "Thou art my brother;" and prostrating himself again, he raised his thoughts to heaven, saying, "Oh! God, thou livest in us. The perfection in which thou delightest exists in thyself. It is thy own happiness which thou communicatest to man, when his soul is lifted up in ecstasy at the sight of virtue. Father of all Good, Nadir, repentant, recognizes thee in the delight he experiences in contemplating the virtue which condemns him." Then he arose, saying, "God lives in us, and man feels him in himself, and rejoices in his presence;" and the rapture of the blessed beamed in his countenance.

[Pg 115] The books, in which were recorded the remaining acts of Nadir's life, have not been preserved; but the sages, who in their old age still remembered to have listened to his words, relate, that from that moment peace never departed from his heart, nor serenity from his brow; and that, at the moment when full of years, he felt his soul ready to take its flight into the arms of God, even as a child who, in the midst of its games beholding its father approach, extends his arms to him from afar, and running to meet him, already relates to him his joys and pleasures; so did Nadir, with hands and eyes raised to heaven, exclaim, in holy ecstasy, "Thanks be to thee, O merciful Father! who hast granted to Nadir every blessing that man can attain upon this earth:" and his hands dropped, and he sank into repose, for his earthly portion had fulfilled its destiny.

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The Mother and Daughter.

Marietta was full of grief, because her mother insisted on her writing a second copy, her first having been badly done; and she had already spent nearly half-an-hour, in crying and pouting, a period long enough to have finished her task in, had she been so disposed. In fact, Marietta, though nine years old, and possessed of many good qualities, was often very unreasonable, and the slightest whim or irritability was sufficient to make her forget her best resolutions.

"My dear child," said Madame Leroi, who had been quietly working at the other end of the room, "as there is no help for it, I would advise you to make up your mind to do what I require."

"No help for it!" exclaimed Marietta, pettishly; "and where is the great necessity for my writing this copy?"

"It must be done, because I wish it."

"And why do you wish it, mamma?"

"Because it is necessary."

"It is necessary because you wish it. Can you not do just what you please about it?"

"No, certainly!"

Then Marietta broke out into a new fit of passion, and throwing herself back in her chair, she repeated, as she struck her clenched hands upon the table, "You cannot do as you please, you cannot do as you please! when I am obliged to obey you in everything. And then the other day, you said to Madame Thibourg, in speaking of me: I belong to that child. To say that you belong to me when you are constantly contradicting me!"

"It is precisely because I do belong to you," said Madame Leroi, smiling, "that I am obliged to contradict you."

"Then, mamma," said Marietta, turning to her mother, with her arms folded, and speaking in a tone which her anger had rendered impertinent, "will you have the kindness to explain that to me?"

"I shall explain nothing to you at present," replied her mother, in a severe tone; then ordering her to be silent, she compelled her to resume her work, which, as may be imagined, did not tend to calm Marietta's irritation; she rebelled in silence, wrote badly, incurred fresh punishments, and spent the day in alternate faults and despair. But the next morning she awoke in such good humour, dressed so quickly, said her prayers with so much fervour, and had so soon put all her things in order, and completed her early tasks, doing even more than was required, in order to repair her past misconduct, that at breakfast-time she at last perceived a smile lighten the countenance of her mother, who had not laid aside her severity since the previous day. "At last, mamma," she cried, "you are once more pleased with me."

"And tell me why I am pleased. Is it on your account, or on my own?"

"I know it is because I have done my duty; nevertheless, mamma, it is still true that my duty is your pleasure, and that you are always mistress, and can do whatever you like with me."

"What! even drown you as they did the kittens born in the attic last night."

"Oh! mamma, I do not mean that; but you can make me do whatever you wish."

"So, then, if I should wish you to steal our neighbour's sugar, when she leaves her door open, or her syrup, or her cups, I should have a right to order you to do so?"

"What an idea, mamma! as if you could wish me to do such things!"

"That is to say, then, that there are things which I have no right to wish for, nor, consequently, to order you to do. This certainly is a fine sort of authority. But can I help wishing? If I had not wished to teach you to read and write; if, when you were an infant, I had not wished to attend to your wants, or to get up at night when you cried, should I have had a right to do as I pleased?"

"But, mamma, you know very well that it would have done me harm if you had not."

"Oh! then I must not wish anything that can do you harm, I must only wish what will be for your good, and this you call following my own will?"

"But still, mamma, it is your will that I always obey; since it is you who command me."

"And when do I command you to do anything?"

"When you think it is right."

"And have I, then, the power of believing just as I please that a thing is right or wrong?"

"Certainly, mamma, nobody hinders you."

Madame Leroi made no reply, but a moment after she said to her daughter, "Marietta, I am thinking next week of beginning to teach you to draw with your elbow."

"What, mamma!" exclaimed Marietta, with a burst of laughter, "To draw with my elbow! And how shall I hold my pencil?"

"With the point of your elbow; nothing is easier."

"Why, mamma, what are you talking about?" continued Marietta, laughing still more vehemently.

"Something, my dear, which I beg you to believe for my sake."

"But, mamma, how am I to believe that?"

"Did you not tell me just now that we can believe what we please?"

"But, mamma, that is quite a different matter."

"For you, perhaps, my child, but as for me I can assure you that when your copy is badly written, it is impossible for me to believe it well done, let me examine it as I will. And when you do not choose to do what you ought, it instantly comes into my head that I must force you to do it by punishment. How am I to manage? I cannot believe otherwise, and I am just as much compelled to obey my judgment, as you are to obey my will. It is no more in my power to bring you up badly than it is in yours to disobey me."

Marietta was accustomed to regard duty as an inevitability, though, for all that, she often failed in it; neither did she think that any reasonable person could escape from it, any more than they could escape from superior force. "At all events, mamma," she said, "you must allow that it is not correct to say that you belong to me."

At this moment, Madame Thibourg entered. "Come, make haste," she said to her friend, "I have a ticket for Malmaison; my little girls are waiting for me in the coach, and I have brought a basket of provisions for dinner, so make haste."

"But I have promised to send home this piece of tapestry this week," replied Madame Leroi, looking anxiously first at her frame and then at her daughter, who, after having hailed the proposal of Madame Thibourg with a cry of delight, now stood motionless with anxiety, on beholding her mother's hesitation.

"I would with pleasure take charge of Marietta," said Madame Thibourg, "but my nurse is ill, and as there is water there, I shall have quite enough to do to take care of my own little girls. You must work a little more the following days."

"But if I am ill, as I was last week?... I am afraid it is not right."

"Oh! you won't be ill, and it is quite right. There are some splendid pictures there, which you really ought to let Marietta see. Come!"

"Well then, I suppose I must, since it is right," said Madame Leroi, smiling, as she looked at her daughter, whose countenance had changed colour half-a-dozen, times in the course of a minute.

We may easily imagine what were the raptures of Marietta, how rapidly her toilet was performed, and how perfect were the enjoyments of the day. It is needless to expatiate on the delights of a dinner spread upon the fresh grass, without cloth and without plates; on the deliciousness of a salad gathered by one's own hands; or upon the surpassing pleasure of running after every draught to rinse one's glass in the clear fountain at the entrance of the garden. Marietta, always affectionate when she was happy, kissed her mother fifty times in the course of the day, and at night, notwithstanding her fatigue, the pleasure of talking of these delights kept her so wakeful, that Madame Leroi was almost obliged to scold her to make her go to bed. "You forget," she said, "that for having afforded you this gratification, I shall be obliged to get up at four o'clock for several successive mornings."

"But you know, mamma," said Marietta, "that it was for my good; it was absolutely necessary that I should see the pictures at Malmaison."

"And why, my child," inquired Madame Leroi, smiling, "must I prefer your advantage to my own? Am I made for your use? Tell me, do you think I belong to you?"

"Oh! mamma," said Marietta, embracing her, "do belong to me, I shall be so delighted, since it is to do what will give me pleasure." And Marietta went to sleep upon this idea, which added a new charm to her dreams.

No mother, indeed, could have more completely belonged to her child than Madame Leroi. She was the widow of a clerk, who had left her unprovided for while Marietta was still an infant. It had never occurred to her that she had any other object in life than to educate her daughter, to render her an estimable member of society, and to enable her to earn for herself a respectable livelihood. The education of her child was her first object, and to it she sacrificed all the advantages she might have derived from the exercise of her talents. Madame Leroi was a skilful musician; in her youth, she had been destined to teach singing and the harp, but, when eighteen years old, her chest became so much weakened in consequence of an attack of measles, that she was obliged to abandon this pursuit. She then turned her attention to painting, which was natural enough, as her father was an artist, and had given her lessons in her childhood. But not long afterwards, she lost her father, and having such limited means, she considered herself fortunate in marrying M. Leroi, a man already advanced in years, and of an eccentric character, who would, on no account, have consented that his wife should pass her time away from home in giving lessons. As his income was sufficient for their maintenance, she confined her occupations to the care of her household, and to the cultivation of her mind, the better to prepare herself for

the education of any children she might be blessed with. After losing two, she gave birth to Marietta, and from that time all her affections were concentrated on this child. At the death of her husband, she found herself once more without resources, or very nearly so, for M. Leroi having had no idea of marrying until late in life, had sunk all his savings in the purchase of an annuity, and since his marriage had not been able to add anything of consequence to them. She now, therefore, had to consider whether she should not resume the pursuit for which she had been previously destined, but to do so it would be necessary to abandon Marietta to the care of strangers, to give up all thoughts of making her profit by the knowledge, the ideas, and the sentiments which she had in a manner acquired expressly for her sake, and to suffer the excellent tendencies which her maternal eye already detected, to become perverted, or at least weakened. [Pg 122] She considered that the point of most consequence to her daughter's welfare, in the difficult path of life, which she was probably destined to tread, was to be fortified, at an early age, by the principles of a virtuous and solid education. She therefore limited the exercise of her talents to the instruction of Marietta, whose taste for music seemed to promise great success in that art. "I shall have lived for her! I shall have made her happy!" she would sometimes repeat to herself.

But meanwhile, it was necessary to live. She therefore endeavoured to discover some sedentary occupation, which would enable her to provide for their simple wants. She applied herself to tapestry, and her knowledge of painting rendered her very successful in tracing and shading every variety of design, whether of flowers, figures, or landscape. Chance favoured her in this respect; she had soon as much work as she could attend to, and was well paid for it, for her work was very superior to that of ordinary hands, and, while affording her the means of subsistence, it had the additional advantage of enabling her to attend almost without interruption to the education of her daughter. Marietta would sometimes say to her, "Mamma, when will you leave off working so much?"

"When you are able to work for me," she replied. And if Marietta happened to be in good humour, this answer made her run to her harp.

Marietta's tendencies varied within very wide limits. Though possessed of an elevated character, and great tenderness of heart, she sometimes yielded to fits of passion, and obstinacy, which rendered her a totally different being from what she ordinarily was, and made her wish to annoy her mother, as much as at other times she was anxious to please her; so that one was alternately charmed by her natural love of excellence, or indignant at her perversity. Nevertheless, by a mixture of kindness and firmness, her mother had succeeded in subduing, to a great degree, all [Pg 123] that was harsh in her disposition, and the day preceding the excursion to Malmaison was the last time Madame Leroi had seriously to complain of her.

Still, the morning following this treat, on getting up she began to feel the effects of the previous day's fatigue. She dressed listlessly, threw herself into every chair which happened to be in her way, and when the portress, who came up every day to do their household work, knocked at the door, she rose so languidly to let her in, that one might almost have said she was glued to her chair. Then, as if unable any longer to support herself, she sank into a large arm-chair near the door, and said to her mother:

"Indeed, mamma, if you really belonged to me, as you say you do, I should certainly make you do all my work to-day."

"Oh! my child," replied her mother, in a half-serious, half-playful tone; "I expect something much more fatiguing, which is to make you do it yourself."

"Really, mamma, that will fatigue you very much!"

"You cannot think how tired I am, yet for all that I shall be obliged to say to you, 'Marietta, go and open the door, or go and close the window, or pick up my ball.'"

"Well, mamma, and is it you that will be fatigued by these things?"

"But think, Marietta, how cross you will be! Think how often I shall be obliged to scold you, in order to make you do your duty; for you know I must make you do it in order to fulfil my own: for although we have been to Malmaison, we must nevertheless do our duty. What a day I shall have! for you are not the girl to spare me in these things."

"And what makes you think that?" inquired Marietta, somewhat piqued.

[Pg 124] "Oh! it would be all very well," replied Madame Leroi, "if you were older, and had more sense; I should then say to you, 'My child, so long as I was necessary to you, I devoted myself to you; now it is your turn to devote yourself to me, and endeavour to be useful to me; do, therefore, what I ask you, in order to spare me the trouble;' and you would do it, for you would be reasonable."

Marietta immediately got up, put away her things so quickly, and commenced her lessons with such a firm determination to overcome her lassitude, that she soon quite forgot it. She carried out her resolution bravely during the whole morning, and at all points. She never once hesitated to get up the moment her mother required her to do so, and even anticipated her commands and wishes as often as she could. Noticing that Madame Leroi was looking for her footstool she was the first to perceive it, and hastened to place it under her mother's feet. On another occasion, when the ball of worsted had rolled to the farther end of the room, Marietta was there as soon as it, and brought it back to her mother, who said to her, smiling, "Indeed, Marietta, I shall be tempted to believe, that to day it is *you* who belong to *me*;" and Marietta, full of joy, threw her

arms round her mother's neck. However, the moment after, having stumbled through a passage on the harp, she became cross with her mother because she made her repeat it.

"Marietta," said Madame Leroi, "do not force me to remember that it is *I* who belong to *you*, and that if you persist I shall be obliged, in spite of myself, to scold you."

Marietta immediately resumed her task, and this morning, which had commenced so unfavourably, terminated without a cloud, and in the happiest manner possible.

At their dinner, which was always very simple, they had two mutton cutlets. "Mamma," said Marietta, "will you give me the one with a bone?"

"Certainly not, my child," replied her mother, "for you know that I like it best; and," she added, smiling, "I have your interest too much at heart to permit you to contract the bad habit of thus preferring yourself to others."

"And yet, mamma, you pretend to belong to me."

"Oh! my child, I know my duty too well to allow you to abuse my devotion:" and she helped herself to the cutlet.

"Well," said Marietta, "you profit by it, at all events."

"Certainly," replied Madame Leroi, in the same strain; "there is nothing like doing one's duty." Marietta shook her head; but she was too well satisfied with herself this day to feel any temptation to be out of humour, and when, soon afterwards, while eating their half-pound of cherries, Madame Leroi only took two or three, saying, that she did not care for them, Marietta easily understood that it was only because she wished to leave more for her.

In the afternoon, a friend came to pay them a visit; he was old and uninteresting, and remained the entire evening, much to the annoyance of Marietta, who was so completely rested from the fatigues of the previous day, by her morning's labour, that she was very anxious for a walk: she, therefore, ventured some hints upon the subject, but they were instantly checked by the severe looks of her mother, while the deafness of M. Lebrun prevented him from noticing them. Poor Marietta therefore endeavoured to be patient, and settled herself down as well as she could. "Mamma," she said, as soon as their visitor was gone, "has M. Lebrun amused you very much?"

"No, my child, but he is a man to whom I owe respect; he has come a great distance, and on no account would I have shortened his visit."

"Well, then, mamma," replied Marietta, with a confident air, though with a heavy sigh, "I am, at all events, glad to find that there are some things which you can do contrary to my interests; for most assuredly it was not to do me a service, that you deprived me of my walk, a thing beneficial to my health."

"Ah, my child! you little think how much it was to your interest that I did not take you for a walk to-day."

"Come, mamma, let me see how you will prove that."

"You will not die in consequence; at least I trust not; consider, then, how injurious it would have been to your education had I granted a request which you ought not to have made, for you must allow that you ought not to have asked, or even wished me to be in any manner wanting in respect towards M. Lebrun."

"Very well, mamma, I see that you find duties on all sides, which oblige you to contradict me."

"And make yourself quite easy, my dear child," said her mother, patting her cheek caressingly, "I will not fail in a single one."

Marietta pouted a little, though with a smile; the good conduct of the morning guaranteed that of the evening.

The following day she accompanied her mother, to purchase some dresses which they required. They were first shown two remnants exactly similar, which were very cheap, and contained sufficient to make Marietta a dress, with a jacket for the winter, leaving besides a good deal for mending. Marietta was greatly tempted by another piece, very much prettier, but as it did not seem that Madame Leroi's dress could be got out of the two remnants, it was necessary that she should be contented to take them for her share. While she was vainly exerting her eloquence, to induce the draper to let her have a dress cut from the pretty piece at the same price as the remnants, Madame Leroi, by dint of measuring and calculating had come to the conclusion, that by joining the sleeves, and by making a plain dress instead of a pelisse as she had at first intended, the remnants would answer for her, and she could thus leave the other for her daughter. Marietta at first opposed this arrangement, but at length allowed her scruples to be overcome, and full of joy carried off her pretty dress under her arm, opening the paper every moment on her way back to have a peep at it. When, on reaching home, she spread it out upon her bed to admire it, and allow the portress to do so too, she cast her eyes upon her mother's remnants, and sighed; then seating herself upon Madame Leroi's knees, and throwing her arms around her neck,—"Mamma," she said, in a somewhat saddened tone, "was it also for the sake of duty that you allowed me to have the pretty dress?"

"No, my darling," replied her mother, tenderly embracing her, "it was for my pleasure." And

Marietta, her heart beating with delight, yielded without restraint to the happiness she felt in the acquisition of her new dress, for she saw that the more it was admired, the greater was her mother's satisfaction at having made this sacrifice for her.

In proportion as Marietta increased in sense, she perceived more clearly that, if it be the joy of a mother to sacrifice herself for her children, it is her duty to teach them not to abuse her kindness; and being at length persuaded that her mother contradicted her only when she was obliged to do so, she exerted herself to spare her this necessity, and succeeded so well, that their mutual confidence increased daily, and they were almost like two friends.

However, when about fourteen years of age, Marietta having grown very fast, fell into a kind of languor, which made her sad and fretful. Although she had acquired sufficient self-control to overcome some portion of her irritability, there still remained quite enough to exercise the affectionate indulgence of Madame Leroi, who, fearing to excite to a dangerous degree the irritable disposition of her daughter, displayed the utmost patience in bringing her back to reason; and Marietta, when her better feelings returned, was almost ready to adore her mother for her condescension.

One day, Madame Thibourg happened to be present at one of these outbursts of temper. She began by reasoning with Marietta; then becoming provoked by her asperity, and unreasonableness, and the tone which she assumed towards her mother, who was endeavouring to quiet her, she ended by telling her a few severe truths, which threw Marietta into such a state of excitement, that she rushed out of the room with cries and tears, and almost in convulsions. Her mother, who went to seek her after the departure of Madame Thibourg, found her still trembling, but calm, and deeply ashamed of what had taken place; though she endeavoured to excuse herself by urging that Madame Thibourg had taken a pleasure in pushing her to extremities.

"She took pleasure, my child," replied her mother, "in proving to you, that she was right and that you were wrong. You wished to do the same with regard to her; and even supposing that you both considered yourselves right, was it not your place to yield?"

"Oh, mamma! that is not how you act towards me," said Marietta, melting into tears at the conviction of her error, for at that moment she remembered all her mother's kindness.

"My child," said Madame Leroi, "it is because I belong to you that I ought to sacrifice every personal feeling, rather than cause you a single emotion capable of injuring your character, or your health; but tell me, Marietta, do you think there is any one else in the world who belongs to you, except your mother?"

Deeply moved, and still excited by the scene which had just occurred, Marietta threw herself, sobbing, into her mother's arms. "Oh, mamma!" she exclaimed; "it is you who treat me with indulgence and consideration, you to whom I ought always to yield more than to any one else."

"Yes, my child, you ought to do so, and you will do so. What I sacrifice to you now, you will return to me one day with interest. Be calm, my dear child, be calm; your mother has patience enough to wait for you." Marietta vowed in her heart to devote herself to the happiness of her mother, and consoled by her gentle words, she gradually returned to her ordinary state of feeling. From that day, also, she laboured with increased diligence to overcome her faults, and, with her mother's assistance, succeeded in obtaining an almost complete self-control. But she became daily more thin and melancholy, and at last the physician declared, that unless she had country air he could not answer for her life.

This was a terrible sentence for Madame Leroi, whose slender funds were already well nigh exhausted in the purchase of the necessary remedies for her daughter. Madame Thibourg, to whom she related her grief and embarrassment, proposed that they should hire in common a small country house at Saint Mandé, which she knew was to be let for six hundred francs. "We shall easily," she said, "save the hundred crowns it will cost us each, by the advantage of living in common." Madame Leroi, however, knew very well that her expenses would be quite as heavy, to say the least, in living with Madame Thibourg, who was better off, and less economical, than herself; but, too happy to discover any practical means of overcoming her difficulty, she trusted to make up for any additional expense that might be necessary, by working harder, and now only thought of procuring the hundred crowns, which it was necessary to pay in advance, for the hire of the house. For this purpose she sold her coverlet of eider-down, together with four beautiful engravings which ornamented her room, and she made up the remainder of the sum, as well as what was necessary for the expenses of the journey, with the money destined for the purchase of a stove to be placed in the little room where they usually took their meals, for as she would not admit into her sitting-room anything likely to soil her work, and was very sensitive to the cold, she was obliged in the winter to take her meals in the kitchen, where the fumes of the charcoal frequently gave her headaches, and pains in the chest.

These arrangements, which could not be concealed from Marietta, gave her great annoyance. She had become excessively sensitive on all points, and notwithstanding her ardent desire to go into the country, the sale of the coverlet of eider-down, which she knew to be so necessary to her mother's comfort, threw her into such a fit of despair, that Madame Leroi was obliged to remonstrate with her, even with some degree of severity, in order to bring her to herself. "Do you forget, Marietta," she said, "that it is your duty to endeavour to regain your health and strength, in order that you may one day be useful to me."

This idea had a beneficial effect, by diverting her thoughts towards other objects. She busied herself in preparations for their departure, with an alacrity and zeal which revived a ray of joy and hope in her mother's breast; and, indeed, scarcely were they beyond the barriers of the city, than she seemed to regain new life; and at the end of a week, after their arrival in the country, she was hardly to be recognized for the same person, to such an extent had that thin and pallid form, which before seemed ready to sink into the grave, regained the freshness and vigour of health. Madame Leroi, her eyes filled with tears of happiness, was never weary of looking at her; and the eyes of Marietta constantly sought those of her mother, as if to confirm the hope that gave her this happiness. With health returned the cheerfulness and buoyancy natural to her years, accompanied by an energy of purpose which enabled her to accomplish whatever she undertook. As her judgment was remarkably developed, she employed the new powers, which she felt rising within her, in the attainment of those acquirements of which she stood in need, and of those qualities in which she was deficient. The devoted tenderness of her mother had made upon her, especially of late, an impression so profound, that she was tormented with the desire of being able, in her turn, to consecrate to her all her faculties. With this thought ever before her, she applied herself with a kind of passion to regain, in her studies, the time she had lost through her illness; and the pleasure of satisfying her mother was, besides, the daily recompense of her efforts. Nevertheless, when the smiles and words of Madame Leroi expressed this satisfaction, "It is all very well, mamma," she would say, with a kind of impatience; "you are pleased, but it is for my sake, and because you think the progress I make is advantageous to me. When shall I be able to do something solely for you?"

"Patience!" replied her mother; smiling, "I promise you the time will come."

"May it come speedily, then!" continued Marietta, with an eager sigh; and she applied herself to her labours with redoubled energy. She also endeavoured, with great care, to regain the good opinion of Madame Thibourg, which she had forfeited by the late display of temper, of which that lady had been a witness; for young people know not the injury they do themselves when they give way to their faults in the presence of strangers, who can only judge of them by what they casually see, and who, in consequence, often receive an impression very unfavourable to them, and very difficult to be removed. At first Madame Thibourg was prejudiced against her, and attributed to her faults which she did not possess. Marietta was amazed at this, but her mother explained to her the cause of the injustice.

"Well, if she is unjust," said Marietta, with the natural pride of her age, "so much the worse for her."

"No, my child! so much the worse for you, since it is your fault that has made her so. Had you not been the cause of this injustice, by appearing before her in an unfavourable light, you need not have troubled yourself about it, provided you bore it with gentleness; but since you have caused it, you ought to endeavour to remove it."

After a few outbursts of impetuosity, which her naturally hasty disposition led her to indulge in, but which her good sense always overcame in the end, she perceived the truth of her mother's words, and strove so earnestly to watch her temper, that in a short time she gained such a complete mastery over her feelings, that she could barely be reproached with an occasional momentary irritability, which a look or a word from her mother was always sufficient to repress. Sometimes, even, Madame Leroi only cast down her eyes, when Marietta, warned by this movement, instantly recollected herself, and with charming grace and frankness hastened to repair the incipient fault; so that in the opinion of Madame Thibourg, as well as in that of all who knew her, Marietta, after a residence of some eight or nine months at Saint-Mandé, was in every respect so completely changed for the better, that she was scarcely to be recognised for the same person. At this time she was nearly sixteen years of age.

They returned to Paris at the commencement of the winter, Madame Thibourg not wishing to pass it in the country, and the bad weather rendering more inconvenient the journeys which Madame Leroi was obliged to make to town to obtain or return work, especially as they had often to be made on foot. These journeys, too fatiguing for her at all times, had already injured her health; the winter, which was very severe, laid her up completely. Marietta, persuaded that the loss of the coverlet of eider-down contributed to her mother's sufferings, was sometimes seized with a sort of feverish impatience, at seeing so long delayed the time when she should be able to add to her comforts, and her only consolation was to apply to her studies with redoubled energy. The spring was cold and late; their provision of wood had come to an end. Madame Leroi, who had been prevented by the state of her health from working as much as she wished during the winter, and was not willing to get into debt, pretended to be able to do without a fire; but Marietta, who saw her suffering, wept with vexation and anxiety when, on opening her window each morning, she found the weather as cold as on the previous day. She would have been very glad if her mother would have allowed her to assist her; but although she worked very fairly, Madame Leroi, who did not wish her to waste her time in becoming a proficient in this kind of work, was afraid to trust her, and always sent her back to her studies, saying, "Never mind, Marietta, you will have time enough to work for me by-and-by."

One day, when Madame Leroi had been obliged to lie down on account of a violent head-ache, an order came for a piece of tapestry, intended to replace a similar piece of her execution, which the fall of a lamp had covered with oil. The chair corresponding to the one spoiled was also brought, in order that the latter might be covered exactly like it. Marietta received the order, and promised that it should be executed by the next week, as it was much wanted; and, trembling

with a thought which had just occurred to her, she carefully put away all the things in a place where her mother could not find them.

Madame Leroi, being asleep at the moment, had heard nothing of all this. Marietta flew to the box where her mother kept her silks, and with a transport of joy discovered, as she had expected, all that was necessary for her undertaking. An old frame, which she had often noticed, was removed from the attic, with the assistance of the portress, who was taken into her confidence, and who lent her for her work an empty room of which she had the key, and before Madame Leroi awoke, the frame was set up, the chair placed in front of it, and her needle threaded. The following morning as soon as it was light, Marietta, awakened by her impatience, slipped away without any noise and commenced her work. The two hours during which she usually walked out with Madame Thibourg and her daughters, were consecrated to the same labour, Marietta, however, merely informing them of her desire to surprise her mother by an unexpected talent, and carefully avoiding all allusion to the privations she was so anxious to save her, and of which Madame Thibourg was to remain ignorant. For the first few days, the harp suffered somewhat from Marietta's preoccupation, for while repeating her difficult passages, she thought only of the assortment of her silks, but at last she triumphed over her difficulties. As it was only necessary to copy, and as Marietta, like all persevering persons, possessed that love of excellence which is not to be repelled by any difficulty, her first attempt was completely successful, and on the seventh day, the portress, Madame Thibourg and her daughters, assembled in consultation, decided that the copy could not be distinguished from the original. The portress was immediately commissioned to take home the work, and to receive its price, which was destined for the purchase of half-a-load of wood.

The following morning, while Madame Leroi was still in bed, Marietta, who that day felt inexpressible joy that the weather was even colder than usual, noiselessly arranged the wood in the fire-place, whilst the portress, almost as pleased as herself, brought a large pan of burning charcoal. Madame Leroi, awakened by the crackling of the flame, inquired what it was, and scolded Marietta for having, as she imagined, bought a faggot. "A faggot indeed!" exclaimed the portress, proudly. "Come into your kitchen, Madame Leroi, and see whether there are any faggots of that kind;" and Marietta, opening her mother's curtains, displayed to her a fire such as she had not seen for two months before; then, without answering her questions, she threw a dress over her mother's shoulders, and made her accompany her into the kitchen, where the kind portress had already arranged the half-load of wood. She then led her back to the fire-side, and, in a voice broken by joyful emotions, related to her what she had done.

"Dear child!" said her mother, placing her hand on her shoulder. She could say no more. Marietta took her hand, and, with an earnest and animated voice, said, "Dear mamma, now, at last, it is I who belong to you."

"Yes, my child," said Madame Leroi, with deep emotion, "I take possession. Your time has come, Marietta; it is now your turn to devote yourself to your mother." And Marietta, kneeling before her, kissed her hands in a delirium of joy impossible to be described.

From that day, she assisted her mother without encroaching on her other studies; her strength and activity were equal to everything, for their source lay in an inexhaustible affection. At the age of eighteen, she was in a condition to give lessons; indeed, for some time previously, she had exercised herself successfully in teaching Madame Thibourg's youngest daughter. Her first regular pupils were in a ladies' school, but by degrees her connexions extended, and she taught in private families of respectability. At the beginning, the portress accompanied her to her pupils, and also went for her; but in time, her great prudence, her modesty, and the reserved and somewhat distant deportment which the consciousness of her position induced, satisfied Madame Leroi that she might go alone without any inconvenience, an arrangement which permitted her to take more pupils. She was soon able to earn sufficient to cover their household expenses, and when on her return home she found her mother a little fatigued, she would take the work out of her hands, saying, "Since it is now my turn to work for you, you must obey my wishes." The health of Madame Leroi grew daily worse. "It is all the same to me," she would sometimes say. "Marietta has to keep well for me;" and at such moments Marietta, with indescribable joy, felt rising within her the consciousness of her youth and vigour.

An advantageous offer of marriage was made to her, but it was a marriage which would have separated her from her mother, deprived her of the pleasure of working for her, and deprived Madame Leroi of the interest and happiness which she experienced in the society of her daughter. Fortunately, the subject was first broached to Marietta herself, who begged that nothing might be said about it to her mother, as she felt persuaded that Madame Leroi would not consent to the rejection of such an offer. Having given her refusal, she then informed her mother of what she had done, and, seeing her deeply grieved, and indeed, almost angry, she knelt before her, and said with affectionate earnestness, "My dear mother, there is but one privilege in the world which I have to beg of you, and that is, that you will let me continue to belong to you."

"Go! Marietta," replied her mother, with a sigh; "be happy in your own way;" nevertheless, the remembrance of this sacrifice long continued to pain her.

Some time afterwards, mention was made, in Marietta's presence, of an officer whose wounds had compelled him to retire from the service, though still under thirty years of age. His left arm had been shot off, his right leg broken, and although it had been set, it left him lame, and caused him a great deal of pain. Such an accumulation of evils had destroyed the natural attractions of his person. Resigned, but melancholy at seeing his career so early closed, he devoted himself to

solitude, and even refused to marry, considering as he said, that he was but a poor present to offer to a woman. Marietta, whose cast of thought rendered her susceptible to every generous sentiment, replied with vivacity, "That for all that, to entrust to a woman's keeping the entire happiness of her husband, was to make her a very noble present." These words were repeated to M. de Luxeuil, the officer in question, and the remarks added, relative to the character of Marietta, made him curious to learn more about her. On hearing that she had consecrated her life to the happiness of her mother, it occurred to him that to aid her in this task would be a means of obtaining her gratitude and affection. The person who had spoken of her, and who had not done so without design, penetrated his thoughts, and took care to encourage them, and in fact, managed so well, that from first feeling a pleasure in hearing of Marietta, he began to wish that Marietta should also hear of him, and at last ended by believing that it might not be impossible for him to render her happy. In short, the proposal was made, and accepted with mingled feelings of joy and gratitude, and immediately after his marriage, M. de Luxeuil conducted his wife and mother-in-law to his country residence, situated about thirty leagues from Paris. On arriving, he immediately led Madame Leroi to the apartment destined for her use, and Marietta's first movement, on entering it, was to give a look of grateful affection to her husband, for all the care he had taken to render it convenient and pleasant. The remainder of the house was visited with feelings of gratitude, which every moment became more intense. In the drawing-room, in the dining-room, the place reserved for Madame Leroi's easy chair was always the one most likely to be agreeable to her. The greatest care had been taken that in all the details of their daily life, every thing should be conformable to her health, her tastes, and her habits. "My friends!" she said, with emotion, to her son-in-law and daughter, "I see that you have already talked a great deal about me." [Pg 137]

Marietta was truly happy, and for M. de Luxeuil commenced a felicity such as he had never hoped for, nor even thought of. It has but increased with time. Formed by their mutual virtues for a union which every day renders more intimate, and constantly more grateful for the happiness they mutually bestow, they have arrived at that point of felicity which leaves no pain, beyond the fear of its being disturbed. As for Madame Leroi, she is scarcely able to bear the twofold affection of which she is the object. "Let me alone!" she sometimes says, playfully, "How can you expect me to bear two happinesses at once?" [Pg 138]

The Difficult Duty. [Pg 139]

MORAL DOUBTS.

Monsieur de Flaumont one day said to his children:—"I am going to relate to you a circumstance which has come to my knowledge, in order that you may give me your opinion on it."

Henry, Clementine, and Gustavus hastened to take their seats near him, when he related what follows:—

"A workman named Paul, the father of several children, who were dependent on his industry, was walking by the side of a very rapid river, then greatly swollen by recent rains. The water formed a whirlpool under one of the arches of a neighbouring bridge, and drew into it, with a great deal of noise, the remains of a boat laden with planks, which it had already dashed to pieces. Paul gazed upon the torrent and thought, 'If I were to fall into it, I should have some difficulty in getting out again.' Yet Paul was an excellent swimmer, and had even saved the lives of several persons who had been near drowning in that very river; but at that moment the danger was so great, that in spite of his natural courage, he felt there was sufficient cause for fear. Then his thoughts reverted to his children, who were entirely dependent upon him for support: to his eldest boy, a lad of some twelve years of age, who promised to be a good workman, but who, if deprived of his father, would have no one to instruct or protect him. He thought of his daughter, whom he hoped soon to be able to apprentice out, and of his little one just weaned, whom his sister took care of, for the children had lost their mother. It was delightful to him to reflect how neat and clean they were kept; how well fed they were, and what good health they enjoyed; and he said, 'All this would be greatly changed were I taken home dead!' and, so saying, he involuntarily withdrew from the river's edge, as if there were really some danger of his being dragged into the water. As he walked on, he observed upon the bridge a man bearing on his shoulders a bundle of old iron rails. He was looking into the water, and watching a plank on the point of passing under the bridge. He bent over to see if it cleared the arch well, but, leaning too far, his head turned giddy, the load on his shoulders threw him off his balance, and he was precipitated into the water, uttering a fearful cry. Paul also uttered a cry of distress, for he felt himself chained to the shore by the remembrance of his children, while his kind feelings made him anxious to aid the unfortunate being whom he beheld on the brink of destruction. He looked around him with inexpressible anguish, and perceiving a long pole, he seized hold of it, and endeavoured, by advancing into the water, without losing his footing, to push a plank to the unfortunate man, who was trying to swim towards him. But all in vain; the torrent was furious, and after a few efforts, the poor wretch sank, rose again to the surface, and then disappeared altogether. Paul remained motionless at the side of the river, with his eyes fixed on the spot where the miserable man had been engulfed. He continued there until it became quite dark, then returned home, a prey to the most intense melancholy, but still saying to himself, 'I do not think I have done wrong.' For several days he refused food; sleep fled from his eyes, and he scarcely [Pg 140] [Pg 141]

spoke to any one. His neighbours, seeing him in this condition, inquired the cause, and he told them. The greater part considered that he had done right, some few were of a contrary opinion, but he himself always said, 'Still, I do not think I have acted wrong.'—What is your opinion, my children?"

Clementine.—Certainly, he did quite right, to preserve his life for the sake of his children.

Henry.—Oh! yes! that is a most convenient excuse for not doing one's duty.

Gustavus.—But he owed nothing to this man who was so clumsy as to fall into the water: he did not even know him.

Henry.—Papa has always told us that we ought to do all the good we can to our fellow-creatures; and Paul might at least have tried to save the poor man: he was not sure of perishing with him.

Clementine.—Oh! but it was very likely.

Henry.—There would be great merit, certainly, in doing courageous deeds, if we were quite sure there was no danger in them!

M. de Flaumont.—But, consider my boy, that by exposing himself to the danger, which was very great, and in which he would in all probability have perished, he also exposed his children to the risk of dying of hunger, or of becoming rogues, for the want of an honest means of obtaining a living. Do you not think this a consideration of sufficient importance to counterbalance the desire he felt to save the drowning man?

Henry.—Perhaps so, papa,—but it is nevertheless certain, that we hold a man who courageously exposes his life to save a fellow-being in far higher estimation than we do one who so carefully calculates all the reasons that can be found for not doing so.

M. de Flaumont.—That is quite natural: the courage of the man who performs a brave deed is self-evident; whereas, we cannot be so sure of the motives of him who refuses to perform one. But, supposing it to be clearly proved that Paul really wished to throw himself into the water to save this man, and was only withheld by the interests of his children, do you not think he merited esteem rather than reproach?

Henry.—One thing, at least, is certain: I should not have liked to be in his position.

Clementine.—It would certainly be a most difficult matter to know what to do.

Gustavus.—Well, and while you were reflecting, the poor man would be still in the water; and so it would come to the same thing.

M. de Flaumont.—Hesitation is undoubtedly the very thing that should be most avoided in such a case, for it prevents all action; and for this reason it is that we ought to accustom ourselves to reflect upon the relative importance of our duties, in order to know which of them ought to take precedence.

Henry.—But when there happen to be two of equal importance?

M. de Flaumont.—That can never be the case; for we are never called upon to do impossibilities. Do you think, for example, that Paul could at one and the same moment, throw himself into the water, and *not* throw himself into it?

Gustavus, *laughing*.—That would, indeed, be an impossibility.

M. de Flaumont.—Do you think, then, that he could be obliged to perform an action, and at the same time to do what would render that action impossible?

Henry.—Certainly not.

M. de Flaumont.—It is, then, quite evident, that if it was his duty to perform one of these actions, he ought to have put aside everything calculated to interfere with it; even what would be a duty under other circumstances.

Clementine.—And you think, papa, do you not, that the duty of providing for one's children ought to take precedence of every other?

M. de Flaumont.—No, not of every other, certainly. The first of all duties is to be an honest man, to do no wrong to any one, never to betray the interest committed to one's charge.

Clementine.—But the interests of one's children are surely committed to one's charge.

M. de Flaumont.—But we are first of all responsible for the interests of our own probity, for no one can be charged with these but ourselves. The first thing prescribed to us is, not to be unjust to others; but we are not necessarily unjust to them when we do not render them all the assistance they require; and though the drowning man stood in need of Paul's assistance, it was not an injustice in him to withhold it, for the sake of his children.

Henry.—Because his children had need of it also. But, papa, according to this argument, neither would it have been an injustice not to do for his children all the good they stood in need of; for he was not more necessary to them than he was to the drowning man, who had no one but him to look to for assistance.

M. de Flaumont.—Certainly not; but do you think it possible to do good to every one?

Gustavus.—To do that, we should have to pass our days in running about the streets, in order to assist all the poor.

Clementine.—Or even wander over the earth to discover those who might require our aid, and spend our whole fortunes in doing so.

Henry.—This, certainly, is a point which has often puzzled me.

M. de Flaumont.—It is because you have not considered that each man, forming but a very small portion of the world, can be specially trusted with only a very small portion of the good to be done in it. Were it otherwise, it would be impossible to do any good at all; for if every one wanted to do everything, there would be nothing but confusion. Each one must therefore endeavour to discover for himself what is the portion of good he is naturally expected to do. Thus, even if it were not a duty of justice to make the existence and well-being of our children our first care, still it would be a duty of reason, since it would be absurd to neglect the good we might accomplish in our own homes, for the sake of going elsewhere to do good. This duty, therefore, we must first of all fulfil, and afterwards consider what means are left for the accomplishment of any others which may present themselves; such as kindness and devotion towards those who have no other claim upon us, than that of standing in need of our aid.

Henry.—Notwithstanding all that, papa, I shall always find it difficult to understand, that because a man has children who require his protection, he must therefore give up the idea of assisting others if, by so doing, he exposes himself to danger.

M. de Flaumont.—You are right not to understand it, for it is not true. We can, and we certainly ought, even in that case, to expose ourselves to a moderate danger for the sake of a great good. Thus, for example, if the river had been tranquil, or even had there been only a considerable probability of escape, Paul would have done wrong not to throw himself into the water.

Clementine.—But, papa, since he might still have perished, he would still have exposed himself to the danger of failing in his duty towards his children.

M. de Flaumont.—Undoubtedly; but would he not also incur great risk of losing an opportunity of saving a fellow-being, when, to all appearance, he might have done so without injuring his children?

Clementine.—Yes; and now the case becomes again embarrassing.

 M. de Flaumont.—It is under such circumstances that duties may be compared and weighed one against the other. But if you were assured, that by exposing your children to some slight inconvenience,—such, for example, as being worse fed or clothed for a time,—you would thereby save the life of another, do you not think that you ought to do so?

Clementine.—Certainly.

M. de Flaumont.—Impossible as it is for us to discover what will be the result of things subjected to chance, we ought I think to lean to that side which seems to offer the greatest probability of producing the greatest good, and to regard a slight danger as a slight inconvenience, to which we subject our children in order to secure to another a very great advantage. Are you satisfied, Henry?

Henry.—Well, papa, I shall try to become very expert, so that the danger may always be slight.

M. de Flaumont.—That is quite right; but now let me conclude my story.

Clementine.—What! is it not finished?

Gustavus.—Oh, go on, then, papa.

M. de Flaumont.—Paul, as I have already told you, had the utmost difficulty in overcoming his distress. He sometimes said to himself, "The river was not so very much swollen; I took fright too easily; we might both have escaped;" and he had not the courage to return to the side of that river,—he preferred making wide circuits in order to avoid going near it. He often heard of persons being drowned while bathing in this river, a thing by no means unusual; for those who did not know it well, imprudently ventured too near the whirlpool under the arch, and were ingulfed. At these times, Paul's conscience smote him, and he felt almost degraded. But what was most singular was, that his last adventure had given him a dread of the water—he who had hitherto been so courageous; but he constantly thought, "It would be a terrible thing, if, now that I have done so much for my children, I were to be taken away from them;" and thus he avoided every danger with extreme care. He scarcely seemed to be the same man, so timid and cautious had he become. His neighbours said among themselves, "How extraordinary! Paul has become a coward!" and they imagined that it was from fear that he had not plunged into the water. In other respects, he was more industrious than ever, and lost no opportunity of putting his children in a condition to earn their own living, as if he was afraid of dying before the completion of his task. He succeeded in bringing them up remarkably well. His eldest son became a clever workman, and was about to marry and establish himself in another town; his daughter became the wife of a shopkeeper with a good trade; and the schoolmaster of the town, who became attached to the youngest boy, because he was diligent in his studies, requested his father to allow him, when fifteen years of age, to aid him in the duties of his school, and promised, if he conducted himself

well, to give it up to him in the course of a few years.

The day on which Paul had established his son with the schoolmaster, and on which he could consequently say that his children no longer stood in need of his assistance, that they would no longer be exposed to misery if he were taken from them, he felt his mind relieved from a heavy burden, and in the joy which he experienced, he seemed to have recovered all the courage which for twelve years had deserted him; for twelve years had now elapsed since the occurrence of the accident which had rendered him so unhappy. He left his work at an earlier hour than usual, and went for a solitary ramble. For the first time these twelve years he directed his steps towards the river, recalling to mind the different persons whom he had saved from it, before the fatal day which had deprived him of his daring. It was an autumn evening; the weather was dull and cold; the river, swollen by the rains, was agitated by a violent wind, and appeared in much the same condition as when he had last beheld it. He approached, and considered it attentively. "The river is much swollen," he said; "nevertheless, if I were to throw myself into it to-day, I am sure I should escape;" and he said this because, having no longer the dread of failing in his duty to his children, he did not think of the danger, but only of the means of overcoming it. On raising his eyes mechanically towards the bridge, to the spot whence he had seen the poor man whom he had been unable to aid, fall, he saw, as it was not yet dark, some one approach the parapet, who appeared to him a very young man. This young man stood gazing at the water for some time, and all the while Paul kept his eye fixed upon him. At last, seeing him climb the parapet, and observing him totter, he cried out, "You will fall," but at the same moment the young man took a spring and dashed into the water. Paul, as if he had a presentiment of what would happen, had already his hand upon his coat; he tore it off, dashed it from him, and was in the river almost as soon as the young man, and, swimming towards the spot where he had seen him fall, he endeavoured to catch him before he reached the whirlpool, where he knew they must both perish. He reached him while he was still struggling under the water: he plunged; but by a movement natural to those who are drowning, even when they drown themselves intentionally, the young man seized hold of him, grasping his legs so tightly, that he prevented his swimming. They must both have perished, had not Paul happily succeeded in disengaging one of his legs, with which he gave the other such a violent kick, that he was forced to relax his hold. Paul then seized him by the hair, and remounted to the surface of the water. The young man was insensible, but Paul dragged him on while swimming with one hand. At that moment the wind was terrible, and with it was mingled a violent rain, which intercepted his sight. The wind and the current of the river hurried them towards the whirlpool. He redoubled his efforts: he felt animated by an extraordinary vigour. At last, he succeeded in escaping the danger, reached the bank, landed, and they were saved.

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The Difficult Duty, p. 148.

The young man was like one dead, but Paul, who had saved many persons from a watery grave, knew what were the means to be adopted in order to restore him to life. He carried him to the foot of a large tree, the dense foliage of which sheltered them from the rain, and rendered him every assistance which the circumstances permitted. He succeeded in restoring him in some

degree, and the moment he heard him breathe, he placed him on his shoulders, and bore him with all possible speed to his own house, where, by dint of care, the young man completely recovered his senses. He was about seventeen years of age, and seemed wasted away by want and illness. As soon as he was able to speak, Paul asked him what had induced him to throw himself into the river. The young man, who was named André, replied that it was want and despair. He stated, that twelve years before, his father, who was a travelling blacksmith, had been drowned by accident, as it was supposed, in that same river, his body having been discovered there some days after. Paul shuddered while he listened to this recital, but said nothing. André went on to state that up to the age of ten, he had lived with his mother, who provided for him as well as she could by her labour, but that, having lost her, he endeavoured to gain a living for himself by working whenever he could find employment. Sometimes at the harvest, sometimes at the barns, sometimes in assisting the masons; that he had endured great hardships, and often wanted food; that, at last, he had fallen ill, and on leaving the hospital, while still convalescent, having neither home, nor money, nor employment, he had been obliged to sleep in the fields, and to pass two whole days without food, so that he felt completely exhausted; that finally, towards the close of the second day, happening to be upon the bridge, from which it was said that his father had fallen, and, feeling unable to proceed farther, and impelled by despair, he had thrown himself into the water. While listening to this recital, Paul mentally exclaimed, "Since I have saved this man, I might have saved the other also;" but then he thought, "We might both have perished, and then my children would have been as destitute as André." He was greatly rejoiced at having been able to save André, and determined, after this new trial of his strength, never again to fear the water nor the swelling of the river, especially now that he was no longer necessary to his children.

However, he could not carry his good resolutions into effect, for the following day he was seized with a violent fever, accompanied by severe pains in all his limbs. On coming out of the river, intent only on restoring André, he had not been able to dry himself, and, indeed, he had not even thought of doing so; thus the damp clothes he had kept so long about him had brought on an attack of rheumatic gout. For the next two days he grew worse and worse, and his life was despaired of. He had moments of delirium, during which he was tormented by anxiety for his children, but when his senses returned he remembered that they were well provided for, and appeared truly happy. Notwithstanding his sufferings, André, who gradually regained his strength, tended him with the greatest assiduity, and wept beside his bed when he beheld him getting worse. Paul did not die; but he continued subject to pains, which sometimes entirely deprived him of the use of his limbs. "Ah!" he would sometimes exclaim, when a sharp pain shot through an arm or a leg; "if I had become like this before I had provided for my children!" André, whom he had kept with him, and who was intelligent and well-disposed, learned his trade sufficiently to assist him when he was able to work, and to work under his direction when he was ill. The shop continued to prosper, and his business was even increased by the interest taken both in himself and André, and when speaking of André's father, he would say, "Poor fellow! may God receive his soul; but I am sure he has forgiven me, for he has seen that I could not have acted otherwise."

M. de Flaumont ceased, and the children waited for a moment in silence, to see if the story was ended.

"Oh!" said Henry, at length, with a heavy sigh, "I am glad the story has ended thus."

Clementine.—Yes! but think of poor Paul remaining a martyr to rheumatism!

Gustavus.—Most assuredly his good action was not too well rewarded.

M. de Flaumont.—He received such a reward as ought to be expected for a good action—the consciousness of having done well. This is its natural recompense, and this recompense is quite independent of the consequences which may otherwise result from it.

Clementine.—Nevertheless, it is painful to see an honest man suffering from having performed a good action.

M. de Flaumont.—But it would have been far more painful if he had done wrong. Would you have preferred his leaving André to perish?

Clementine.—Oh! certainly not.

M. de Flaumont.—It was even possible that Paul might have died. Even in that case, could one have regretted his exposing his life to save André?

Henry (*with animation*).—No, certainly not: that could not be regretted.

M. de Flaumont.—That proves to you that the reward, as I have said, is quite independent of the consequences. Thus, for instance, if a workman had executed a piece of work for a person who refused to pay him: you would regret that he had done the work, because the payment is the natural recompense of his toil; whereas, you would never think of regretting that a man had performed a generous action, even though it turned out badly for him, because you would feel that he was rewarded by the action itself.

After all, my children, added M. de Flaumont, do not think that virtue is always so difficult. Our true duties are usually placed within our reach, so that they may be performed without much effort; still, as cases may arise in which effort is necessary, we ought to be prepared with means

of supporting those efforts. We ought to accustom ourselves to consider duty as being quite as indispensable when it is difficult as when it is easy; and we ought, also, to have our minds so prepared, that we shall not magnify difficulties to such a degree as to render them insurmountable. Thus, we should not exaggerate the importance of any one duty, as we shall thereby be led to neglect others; but, after having fully persuaded ourselves that it is impossible there can exist at one and the same time two contradictory duties, let us, in cases of difficulty, lean to that which seems the most important, and, while regretting our inability to do all that we could wish, let us not regard as a duty that which another duty has prevented us from performing.

MORAL DOUBTS.

FIRST DIALOGUE.

M. de Flaumont; *Henry*, *Gustavus*, *and Clementine*, *his Children*.

M. de Flaumont.—Children, would you like me to relate to you two stories, which I have just been reading in a foreign newspaper?

The Children.—Oh! yes, papa! are they very long?

M. de Flaumont.—No! but you may perhaps be puzzled to give me your opinion on them.

The Children.—How do you mean, papa?

M. de Flaumont.—You will see, here is the first:—

An English stage-coach, filled with passengers, was proceeding towards a large town. The conversation of the travellers turned upon the highwaymen by whom the road was infested, and who frequently stopped and searched travellers. They debated amongst themselves as to the best means of preserving their money; each boasted of having taken his measures, and being quite safe.

An imprudent young woman, wishing, doubtless, to display her superior cleverness, and forgetting that frankness, in such circumstances, is very ill-placed, said, "As for me, I carry all my wealth about me in a bank note for two hundred pounds, but I have so well concealed it, that the robbers will certainly never be able to find it, for it is in my shoe, under my stocking."

A few minutes after they were attacked by highwaymen, who demanded their purses, but, discontented with the little they found in them, they declared, in menacing tones, that they would search and ill-treat them unless they immediately gave them a hundred pounds; and they seemed prepared to put their threats into execution.

"You will easily find twice that sum," said an old man seated at the back of the coach, who during the whole journey had remained entirely silent, or had spoken only in monosyllables, "if you make that lady take off her shoes and stockings."

The robbers followed this advice, took the banknote, and departed.

What think you of the old man?

Clementine.—Oh, papa! what villany!

M. de Flaumont.—All the travellers were of your opinion. They loaded him with reproach and insult, and even threatened to throw him out of the coach. The young woman's grief exceeded description. The old man appeared insensible to these insults and menaces, and once only excused himself by saying, "Every one must think of himself first."

In the evening, when the coach reached its destination, the old man contrived to make his escape before his fellow-passengers had an opportunity of visiting their displeasure upon him. The young woman passed a frightful night. What was her surprise on the following morning, when a sum of four hundred pounds was placed in her hands, together with a magnificent comb, and the following letter:—

"Madam,—The man whom, yesterday, you detested with reason, returns to you the sum you have lost, with interest which makes it double, together with a comb nearly equal in value. I am exceedingly distressed at the grief I was compelled to cause you. A few words will explain my conduct. I have just returned from India, where I have passed ten weary years. I have gained by my industry thirty thousand pounds, and the whole of this sum I had yesterday about me in bank-notes. Had I been searched with the rigour with which we were threatened, I must have lost everything. What was I to do? I could not run the risk of having to return to India with empty hands. Your frankness furnished me with the means of escaping the difficulty. Therefore I entreat you to think nothing of this trifling present, and to believe me henceforth devotedly, Yours."

Gustavus.—Well, papa, the young woman had no longer any reason to complain, and the old man did not do wrong, since he returned much more than she lost.

Clementine.—Yes; but in her place I would much rather have been without the comb, and not have

had to take off my shoes and stockings in the presence of highwaymen.

Gustavus.—Oh! that did not do her much harm.

Henry.—But, papa, if the robbers, notwithstanding their promise, had searched every one, and had taken his thirty thousand pounds away from the old man, it would have been out of his power to restore the two hundred pounds to the young woman, and yet it would have been through his means that she would have lost them. [Pg 154]

M. de Flaumont.—Henry is right: the injury inflicted by the old man was certain, while he had no certainty of being able to repair it.

Henry.—Assuredly the word of a robber is not to be depended on.

Gustavus.—But still it was certain that had he not acted as he did, they would have taken his thirty thousand pounds.

M. de Flaumont.—That is true; but do you think, my dear Gustavus, that, in order to escape some great calamity ourselves, we have a right to inflict an equally serious injury on another? for the loss of the two hundred pounds was as great a calamity to the young woman as that of the thirty thousand would have been to the old man, since it was the whole of her wealth.

Gustavus.—Yes, papa; but he knew very well he would return them.

M. de Flaumont.—He wished to do so, no doubt; but Henry has shown you how he might have failed in the accomplishment of his wishes. Other accidents might also have prevented him. He might have lost his pocket-book by the way: he might have died suddenly, &c.

Clementine.—Oh yes, indeed; and then the young woman would neither have had her own two hundred pounds, nor the two hundred pounds additional, nor her beautiful comb.

M. de Flaumont.—He thus surrendered his honesty, and the fate of his fellow-traveller, to the chance of a future, always uncertain, and all this to spare himself a misfortune, very great, no doubt, but the certainty of which gave him no right to injure another. Here lies the difference between prudence and virtue. Prudence commences by studying how to escape a difficulty, and thinks it has done enough when it has promised itself to repair the injury inflicted on another. Virtue does not content itself with the hope of repairing this wrong at some future day: it does not commit it; and thus, though it is often more unfortunate, it is always more tranquil. So that virtue alone has no occasion to dread the future. It is in doing evil, even with the idea of its resulting in good, or with the firm determination of repairing it, that men often plunge into difficulties and errors, from which they are afterwards unable to extricate themselves. No one can flatter himself, however prudent he may be, that he has foreseen all chances, and so managed matters that nothing can turn out wrong; while, by laying it down as a law to ourselves to be virtuous before all things, we are certain of never having to reproach ourselves with any intentional wrong. [Pg 155]

Gustavus.—But, papa, what ought to be done in such a case?

M. de Flaumont.—I cannot pretend to say; all I know is, that we ought not to do what our old man did. You will one day perceive how many misfortunes happen in the world from the false idea, so frequently entertained by men, that they are able to direct events according to their own wishes: they regulate their conduct with this hope, and afterwards events multiply, become involved, and turn out in so unforeseen a manner, that they behold their projects often, and their virtue always, wrecked beyond the possibility of recovery. Whereas, on the contrary, we ought first of all to make sure of our virtue, and then take all the advantage we can of circumstances. Besides, who knows all the resources that may be discovered, by a man resolutely determined to do nothing which his conscience disapproves? It is very convenient, no doubt, to take the first resource which presents itself to the mind; but can we be sure that it is the only one to be found, and that, by giving ourselves a little additional trouble, we might not discover another equally efficacious and more honest. Let us, after remaining firm in virtue, be ingenious and energetic, and we shall almost always be able to extricate ourselves from our difficulties. If all who are ruined were to turn robbers, they would doubtless adopt the most easy and expeditious mode of repairing their fortunes, still this is a mode which honest people do not take; and, being compelled to seek other resources, they rarely fail to discover them. I do not, at this moment, very well see what plan our old man might have hit upon to save his thirty thousand pounds; but, perhaps, if he had not so hastily adopted the idea of denouncing the young woman, some other and better expedient might have suggested itself. [Pg 156]

Gustavus.—I agree with you, papa; but you promised us another story.

M. de Flaumont.—Here it is. You will see, that if we ought not to do a wrong because we can never be sure of being able to repair it, neither must we do wrong with a good intention.

An English nobleman was journeying to one of his estates, when he was attacked in a wood by six highwaymen; two of them seized the coachman, two others the footmen, and the remaining two, placing themselves at the doors of the carriage, presented each a pistol to his breast.

"Your pocket-book, my lord," said one of the robbers, who had a most repulsive expression of countenance.

The nobleman took a rather weighty purse from his pocket, and handed it to him. The man

examined its contents, but did not seem satisfied. "Your pocket-book, if you please, my lord," and he cocked his pistol.

The nobleman quietly gave up his pocket-book. The highwayman opened it; and during this time the nobleman examined his countenance. Never had he beheld eyes so small and piercing, a nose so long, cheeks so hollow, a mouth so wide, nor a chin so prominent. [Pg 157]

The robber took some papers from the pocket-book, and then returned it. "A pleasant journey, my lord;" and he set off rapidly with his companions.

On reaching home the nobleman examined his pocket-book, to see what had been taken from it, and found that bank notes to the amount of two thousand five hundred pounds had been extracted, and that five hundred pounds had been left. He congratulated himself on this, and said to his friends, that he would willingly give a hundred pounds could they but have seen the fellow. Never had highwayman a countenance so suited to his calling.

The nobleman soon forgot his loss, and thought no more of the occurrence; when, some years afterwards, he received the following letter:—

"My Lord,—I am a poor Jew. The prince in whose dominions I lived robbed us of everything. I went to England, accompanied by five other Jews, that I might at least save my life. I fell ill at sea; and the vessel in which we sailed was wrecked near the coast.

"A man wholly unknown to me was upon the shore: he leaped into the water, and saved me at the peril of his life. This was not all; he led me to his house, called in a physician, and took care of me until I was cured; and asked nothing in return. This man was a woollen manufacturer, who had twelve children. Some time afterwards, I found him very sad. The disturbances in America had just broken out, and the American merchants with whom he traded were base enough to profit by this circumstance, and refused to pay him. 'In a month,' he said to me, 'I shall be completely ruined; for I have bills coming due which I am wholly unable to meet.' [Pg 158]

"His grief threw me into despair: I formed a desperate resolution. 'I owe my life to him,' I said, 'and I will sacrifice it for him.' With the five Jews who had followed me to England, I placed myself upon the highway. You know what happened. I sent to the man of whom I have spoken the money I took from you, and saved him for that time. But his creditors never paid him; and about a week ago he died, without having discharged all his debts.

"The same day I gained four thousand pounds in the lottery. I return to you all I took from you, with interest. Forward the remaining thousand pounds to the unfortunate family of the manufacturer (he gave their address at the end of the letter), and make inquiries of them respecting a poor Jew, whom they so generously saved and entertained.

"P.S.—I solemnly declare that, when we attacked you, not one of our pistols was charged, and that we had no intention of drawing a cutlass from its scabbard.

"Spare yourself all search. When this letter reaches you I shall again be upon the ocean. May God preserve you."

The nobleman made inquiries, and found that the Jew's account was strictly true. From that time forward he took the family of the manufacturer under his protection. He frequently said, "I would give a hundred pounds to any one who would inform me of the death of my terrible Jew; and a thousand pounds to any one who should bring him to me alive."

Henry.—But why did he wish for his death, papa?

M. de Flaumont.—Because this Jew was a very dangerous person. A man capable of doing such things, even from generous motives, is always to be dreaded. The safety and happiness of society depend upon the submission and respect due to the laws, which maintain order, and preserve the persons and property of all. The laws cannot take into account the motives which induce a man to injure another in person or property. In such cases they can only judge and punish the act itself. If this nobleman had been a judge, and the Jew had been brought before his tribunal, he could not, even when all the facts of the case were before him, have avoided condemning him to the penalty prescribed by the law, though he might afterwards have endeavoured to obtain his pardon from the sovereign. [Pg 159]

Gustavus.—The Jew, however, had not loaded his pistols: he did not intend to commit murder.

M. de Flaumont.—Consequently, he would have been sentenced to a punishment less severe than that inflicted upon murderers; but still he committed robbery.

Clementine.—Yes; but it was to save the life of his benefactor: he exposed his own from gratitude; this was assuredly a great sacrifice. He would not have robbed from any other motive.

M. de Flaumont.—Therefore this Jew was doubtless susceptible of very generous sentiments and of noble devotion; this ought to count for much in the opinion we form of him: it would probably have obtained for him his pardon, or at least a great mitigation of his punishment; but, in a moral point of view, and for the interests of society, justice and firmness of principle are still more necessary than generosity of sentiment. It would be impossible to allow every man the privilege of making use of whatever means he pleased to gratify his feelings and display his generosity. Even virtue itself is subject to laws, whose wisdom is recognised and whose advantages are unquestionable. These prescribe the route in which it must exercise itself, and the bounds which

it must not overleap. Thus, in the conduct of our Jew, everything which preceded and followed his act, and some of the circumstances of the act itself, were praiseworthy; his sole object was to preserve his benefactor: he took only what was required for that purpose: he kept nothing for himself, he scrupulously repaid the sum with interest, he did not even reserve any portion of the prize gained in the lottery, since, after having returned to the nobleman the two thousand five hundred pounds and interest, he gave the remainder to the manufacturer's children. All this was very well, and very disinterested, but it does not prevent the action itself from being blameable. And this is what often happens, when we allow ourselves to be governed by our feelings, however good they may be, instead of regulating our conduct by steady principles, which, though they may sometimes restrain the feelings, always insure virtue.

Henry.—Still, papa, the nobleman promised more to him who should bring him the Jew alive, than to him who should inform him of his death.

M. de Flaumont.—That was because he knew that a man capable of such generous sentiments and remarkable devotion was one who, to be rendered altogether virtuous, only required firmer principles, and a less embarrassing position. He doubtless wished to make him feel, that if it be noble to sacrifice one's life for gratitude, that sacrifice ought never to be made at the expense of honesty; perhaps, too, he wished to take him into his service, to place him in easy circumstances, to remove him, in fact, out of the way of those temptations in which generosity of feeling so easily deceives us in regard to the true nature of our duties. Generosity may carry us farther than mere duty; but it should always go in a right line, and never lead us to neglect duty.

SECOND DIALOGUE.

Caroline—Madame de Boissy, working.

Madame de Boissy.—Caroline, did you really require that sash, which you induced your uncle to give you, by asking him to lend you the money to buy it?

Caroline.—I am very glad to have it, mamma, since it has cost me nothing.

Madame de Boissy.—You knew, then, that your uncle would make you a present of it?

Caroline.—Mamma, I only asked him to lend me the money.

Madame de Boissy.—I know that; but did you expect you would have to repay him?

Caroline.—Certainly! if he wished it.

Madame de Boissy.—But did you think he would wish it?

Caroline (*embarrassed*).—I do not know, mamma.

Madame de Boissy.—Tell me candidly,—when you asked your uncle to lend you the money to purchase this sash, which you did not want, and which, in all probability, you would not have bought had you been alone,—did you not know that it was a means of obtaining it as a gift?

Caroline.—Dear me, mamma! you make me examine my conscience as if I were going to confession.

Madame de Boissy.—And it is thus you should always examine it, my child.

Caroline.—Yes, mamma, when one has done anything wrong.

Madame de Boissy.—Or to ascertain whether one has done wrong.

Caroline (*much confused*).—But what wrong can I have done? My uncle could act as he pleased, and it was certainly quite true that I had no money in my purse.

Madame de Boissy.—There was one thing, however, which was not quite true, but which you, nevertheless, wished to make him believe, and that was, that you really intended to buy this sash yourself.

Caroline (*still confused*).—But, mamma, my intentions do not concern any one but myself.

Madame de Boissy.—You seem to fear the contrary, since you conceal them. You would not have been willing that your uncle should have discovered them; therefore, while you were really actuated by one motive, you led him to suppose that you were influenced by another. You would not have asked him to give you this ribbon, because you know that we ought not to accept a gift, unless we feel that the giver has as much pleasure in presenting it as we have in receiving it, and, in that case, it will occur to him as readily as to ourselves. You have, therefore, allowed your uncle to believe that you had the delicacy not to desire a present, which it had not occurred to him to make you, while, at the same time, you endeavoured to make him think of it by underhand means. You have sought to obtain, at one and the same time, both the esteem which delicacy merits, and the gift which it would be necessary to sacrifice in order to deserve this esteem. It is evident that both cannot belong to you, and that you have committed a theft in the transaction.

Caroline (*shocked*).—Oh! mamma, we only commit theft when we injure some one, and I have not injured any one.

Madame de Boissy.—You have extorted from your uncle a present, which he probably would not

have made to any one whom he believed capable of subterfuge. You have cheated his intentions of giving you an unexpected pleasure.

CAROLINE.—He cannot know that; therefore his pleasure will be all the same.

MADAME DE BOISSY.—Caroline, would you think you were not stealing, if you took money from the coffers of a rich man who made no use of it, and did not know how much he had? If you did not do him an injury of which he was conscious, you injured those to whom his money would one day go, and who might not be either so rich or so indifferent as himself. In like manner, if you did not do your uncle any positive wrong, by usurping an esteem which was not your due, you at least were unjust to those whom he might place on a level with you in his esteem, or whom he might set beneath you; for either you must share with them an esteem which you did not merit, and which is always more flattering when obtained alone, or you must diminish the consolation they would otherwise have in finding an additional example to excuse them. Be well assured that we can never deceive without injuring some one, and that there can be no unfair advantage which is not gained at the expense of our neighbours. [Pg 163]

CAROLINE.—But really, mamma, this advantage is so very trifling.

MADAME DE BOISSY.—The case is trifling, but the principle is the same, and you would no more wish to steal needles than diamonds. Besides, my child, we must attach some value to, and derive some advantage from, a thing which we take the trouble to steal; and who can, with propriety, desire an advantage which he has not merited? Listen, Caroline: you are now growing a great girl, and it is time you should understand all that is due to yourself and others, in regard to uprightness and honesty in the most trifling things, and how mean it is to wish to deceive others, or to think it necessary to do so.

CAROLINE.—Mamma, I have never wished to deceive any one, I assure you.

MADAME DE BOISSY.—I grant you that we do not say to ourselves, *I wish to deceive*; we should be horrified; but, without telling absolute falsehoods, people often pass their lives in endeavouring to make others believe things which are untrue. If we are cold, or hot, or tired, we complain of our sufferings; we exaggerate them in order to attract attention, and gain pity, or at least to make people think of us. We laugh louder than we feel inclined to do, to make it appear that we are very gay; we look in the glass, and exclaim, "How, I am sunburnt!" in order that we may be told that it is imperceptible, and be complimented on our complexion. We complain of a dress that fits badly, and say, "What a fright I look to-day," in the hope of finding some sycophant who will assure us that we look well in everything. Or, finally, we give expression to some worthy sentiment in order to be praised for it. [Pg 164]

CAROLINE.—But, mamma, if the sentiment be sincere?

MADAME DE BOISSY.—My dear child, there is always insincerity in the means employed to obtain praise for it; for good feelings are not intended to gain us admiration, but to make us do what is right. We should not esteem the benevolence of a man, who did good merely for the sake of obtaining commendation; nor the fraternal sentiments of him whose sole object in displaying them was to be praised for his attachment to his brothers and sisters. Thus, those who make a display of feeling for the sake of being praised, must take care to conceal their intentions; consequently, if they obtain the praise, it is quite clear that they have stolen it.

CAROLINE.—But one must then watch every movement of the mind, for these things may escape us without our in the least intending it.

MADAME DE BOISSY.—To prevent them from doing so, it is only necessary to think, once for all, of two or three things. First, that we display very little respect or consideration for ourselves when we stoop to deceive others, in order that they may condescend to pay attention to us. Secondly, that we place ourselves in a very humiliating position when we thus beg for a flattery, a compliment, or a mark of attention, which is usually granted from mere politeness, or for the sake of pleasing us, just as we give a penny to a beggar in the street. Finally, that these kinds of stratagems, when they are discovered—and they are discovered oftener than people imagine—may overwhelm us with ridicule, or even with shame, and that the most trifling untruth exposes us to a risk far greater than the pleasure which it procures. Tell me if your sash would ever afford you a pleasure as great as the annoyance you would feel, if your uncle were to discover the subterfuge you employed in order to induce him to make you a present of it. [Pg 165]

CAROLINE.—Oh! mamma, you have made me absolutely hate it. I will never even look at it again.

MADAME DE BOISSY.—There you are wrong, my child; you must look at it, and think of it, in order that it may remind you of the necessity of always acting honourably.

THIRD DIALOGUE.

Monsieur de Bonnel—Augustus, his Son.

M. DE BONNEL.—Augustus, I hope you have returned to George, as I told you, that little cart you took from him?

AUGUSTUS (*ill-temperedly*).—I was obliged to do it, since you desired me, but I did not take it from him; I paid him what it cost. If he was so obstinate as to refuse the money, that was not my fault.

M. de Bonnel.—He did not want your money, and he wished to keep his cart; you had no right to force the bargain upon him.

Augustus.—I have a right to make him do as I please.

M. de Bonnel.—And how came you by this right?

Augustus.—His father Antony is your servant.

M. de Bonnel.—And is that any reason that George should have no will of his own?

Augustus.—No; but it is a reason why he should give up to me; and the best proof that he very well knows this, is that he always does give up to me. To-day, though he would not sell me his cart, he did not think of preventing me from taking it; and had it not been for you he would certainly not have got it back again. [Pg 166]

M. de Bonnel.—Very well; but, what is singular in the matter is that for the future he will think differently, and that henceforward he will be obliged to resist you.

Augustus.—I should like to see him do that.

M. de Bonnel.—Well, you shall be gratified. Antony had forbidden his son to use force against you for fear of hurting you. I have just told him that if he did not order George to defend himself against you when you torment him, as he would defend himself against one of his own companions, George should not come here again. You will now see whether it is his duty to humour you, and whether it is from respect that he has hitherto yielded to you.

Augustus.—It would be a fine thing for George to treat me like one of his comrades.

M. de Bonnel.—Very well; you need not make free with him.

Augustus.—Making him obey me is not making free with him.

M. de Bonnel..—When you have no right to exact obedience, you can only obtain it from his politeness by requests such as we use towards an equal, or exact it by force, which he will repel with his fist, and that is the greatest familiarity I know of.

Augustus.—But George is to be my servant one day: he has told me so a hundred times: he will have to be submissive and respectful then.

M. de Bonnel.—He will only be submissive in those things in which he has agreed to obey you: he will only be respectful so long as you fulfil your obligations to him. A servant agrees to obey in everything that concerns the service of his master, and that does not injure himself. Thus, if a master commanded him to go and fight for him, or to give him up the money which he had saved, the servant would no longer be obliged to obey. [Pg 167]

Augustus.—But people do not require such things from servants.

M. de Bonnel.—It is quite as unjust and absurd to expect them to labour for you beyond their strength, or to compel them to give up what belongs to them at a price which does not suit them. If you force them to do anything against their inclinations, they then lay aside their respect, and resist you as well as they can, for they have only agreed to obey your orders in certain things; nor have they consented to incur any other risk, in case of disobedience, than that of being reprimanded or sent away. If you go further than this, you break a covenant of which insults formed no part any more than blows; both equally exempt a servant from all duty.

Augustus.—Nevertheless, there are servants who remain in their places, although their masters overwork or ill-treat them. I have heard my cousin Armand say all sorts of insulting things to Jack, his groom, and even threaten to horsewhip him, because he harnessed his horse badly. Jack went on with his work without saying a word, because he knew that he must bear it.

M. de Bonnel.—And what would have happened to Jack if he had answered his master impertinently, as he deserved to be answered?

Augustus.—Why, Armand would have turned him out of doors without a character, so that he would have been unable to get another situation.

M. de Bonnel.—At this rate, masters have the means of treating their servants as ill as they please; and if all masters were to do so, all servants would be obliged to submit to it, I suppose?

Augustus.—Certainly they would.

M. de Bonnel.—But if all servants were to take it into their heads to resist their masters, then the latter would either have to put up with this or do without servants. [Pg 168]

Augustus.—But that would never happen.

M. de Bonnel.—That would happen, if service became so intolerable that servants had no interest in humouring their masters. But as masters and servants stand mutually in need of each other, they have felt it to be to their advantage that the former should be kind and the latter obedient and respectful. It is, therefore, because there are many good masters whom it is to their interest to serve, that they serve respectfully even those who are bad. Consequently, he who abuses this respect is a coward, who shelters himself behind others to take advantage of their good actions,

and commit wrong with impunity.

New Year's Night.

[Pg 169]

On the New Year's night of 1797, a man, over whose head had passed sixty winters, was standing at a window. He raised his mournful eyes towards the azure vault of heaven, where floated countless stars, as float the white blossoms of the water-lily on the bosom of a tranquil lake; then he looked down upon the earth, where there was no one so destitute of happiness and peace as himself, for his tomb was not far distant. He had already descended sixty of the steps that led to it, and bore with him from the bright days of his youth nothing save errors and remorse. His health was destroyed; his mind a blank, and weighed down with sorrow; his heart torn with repentance, and his old age full of grief. The days of his youth rose up before him, and brought back to his memory that solemn moment when his father placed him at the entrance of those two paths, of which the one leads to a peaceful and happy country, re-echoing with sweet song, and cheered by an ever-cloudless sun, whilst the other leads to the abodes of darkness—to a chasm without issue, peopled by serpents, and filled with poison.

Alas! the serpents had coiled around his heart; the poison had polluted his lips, and he now awoke to the reality of his condition.

He again raised his eyes to heaven, and exclaimed, with inexpressible anguish, "Return, oh, Youth! Return, oh, Father! place me once more at the entrance of life, that I may make a different choice." But his youth had passed away, and his father slept with the dead. He beheld a marsh-fire arise, dance over the morass, and disappear; and he said, "Such were my days of folly!" He beheld a falling star shoot along the sky, tremble, and then vanish; and he exclaimed, "Such am I;" and the sharp arrows of repentance sank deeper into his heart. [Pg 170]

Then his thoughts turned upon all those men who had attained to his years, who had been young when he was young, and who now, in different parts of the world, were spending, in peace and tranquillity, this first night of the year, as good fathers of families and friends of truth and virtue. The pealing of the bell which celebrated the new step of time, vibrated on the air from the turret of the neighbouring church, sounding to his ear like a pious song. This sound re-awakened the memory of his parents,—the wishes they had breathed for him on that solemn day,—the lessons they had inculcated:—wishes which their unhappy son had never fulfilled,—lessons from which he had never profited. Overwhelmed with grief and shame, he could no longer gaze into that heaven where his father dwelt: he turned his grief-worn eyes towards the earth; tears flowed from them, and fell upon the snow which covered the ground; and finding nothing to console him in any direction, he again cried, "Return, oh, Youth! Return!"

And his youth did return; for all this was but a troubled dream, which had disturbed the slumbers of this first night of the year. He was still young,—his faults alone were real. He thanked God that his youth was not passed, that he had still the power to leave the path of vice—to regain that of virtue; to return into that happy land covered with abundant harvests.

Return with him, my young readers, if, like him, you have strayed; this terrible dream will henceforward be your judge. If, one day, overwhelmed with grief, you should be found to exclaim, "Return, oh, happy Youth!" the prayer will be vain, for youth will not return.

The Curé of Chavignat.

[Pg 171]

The Curé of Chavignat was an excellent man. He was very fond of children, and was, consequently, a great favourite with them. He chatted with them as if it were for his own amusement, and whilst thus engaged he gave them useful advice, with which they, in their turn, were highly delighted; because his instructions were usually accompanied by stories, which accustomed them to reflect on their own characters, on the best means of correcting their faults, and on the pleasure arising from the possession of good qualities. Whenever the Curé of Chavignat met with a story of this kind, he wrote it down, that he might afterwards give it or relate it to those children to whom it might prove useful. He went frequently to the château of Chavignat, where the children received him with demonstrations of the greatest delight, whilst the parents were continually thanking him for his kindness to their children.

One day he perceived that Juliana, the eldest of the children, who was scalloping a piece of muslin, was quite out of temper because her mother had reproved her.

"When I see," said he, "a little lady who is out of humour with her mamma, I begin to think what would be the state of matters if mammas, on their side, were to be out of humour with their little girls."

"It would be strange, indeed," said Juliana, "if papas and mammas were out of humour, when they are masters, and can do exactly as they please! That would he very just, truly!" [Pg 172]

"People do not then get out of humour without just cause, Miss Juliana?" asked the Curé. "I was

not aware of that."

"Witness Madame Gonthier, our housekeeper," cried Amadeus, "who, this morning, when her coffee overturned into the fire, scolded the girl who has charge of the poultry-yard, because the hens' eggs were so small."

"Just, Monsieur le Curé," said little Paul, raising his finger to his face, "as if it was the poultry girl that made the hens' eggs."

"Yes, my little friend; or, as if your mamma were to give Miss Juliana a slap on the face because the apricots do not ripen this year."

The children began to laugh, with the exception of Juliana, who, shrugging her shoulders, said in a disdainful tone, "Fortunately, people do not have relations so ill-bred as Madame Gonthier."

"Indeed, young lady," replied the Curé, "there are, I assure you, many persons in that unfortunate predicament. Besides," he added, "it is possible that a young lady very well brought up, like Miss Juliana, who just now gave her little brother a kick because her mamma had found fault with her—it is quite possible, I repeat, that when she grows up to be a woman, she may pull her little daughter by the ears because her footman failed to execute a commission properly."

"Oh, she did not hurt me," cried Paul, "I drew back."

"True," said the Curé, "but when it is the mamma who gives the blow it is not always so easy to draw back. I was once acquainted with a youth whose aunt was extremely ill-tempered, and who when she was dissatisfied with one person would vent her anger on another; and I can assure you, the young gentleman found this anything but agreeable."

"Oh, a story! a story! Monsieur le Curé," exclaimed both the little boys at once; "pray relate it to us."

"I will," said the Curé, giving a side glance at Juliana, "some day when nobody is out of humour here, for a certain person might take it to herself, and I do not wish to be uncivil to any one."

"Oh! pray relate your story, by all means, Monsieur le Curé," said Juliana, very sharply; "people can take it as they please."

"Young lady," replied the Curé, "when I relate a story, I wish it to be taken as I please." Juliana was silent, for she clearly perceived that she had spoken impertinently.

The next day, as soon as the Curé arrived, the little boys failed not to remind him of the promised story: he did not wait to be pressed, for he had brought the manuscript with him.

He seated himself at the table where Juliana was at work; she neither advanced nor drew back her chair. Amadeus placed his as close to the Curé as possible, and little Paul established himself between his knees, with upturned eyes and open mouth: the Curé then related what follows:—

THE QUARRELS.

One day Louis entered his mother's room quite beside himself; his eyes sparkled with anger, and his whole countenance expressed the strongest resentment.

"I saw her! there is no gainsaying it, I saw her with my own eyes," cried Marianne, the cook, who rushed in after him, and who was almost as much excited as himself. "Madame Ballier attempted to give him a box on the ear," she continued; "fortunately he drew back in good time, but trust me, if he did not feel the wind of it——"

"Had it not been my grand aunt," said Louis, pacing the room with hasty strides and folded arms; "had it not been my aunt——"

"Oh, he would have strangled her for certain," rejoined Marianne; "I saw that clearly, and in my opinion she would only have had what she deserved, the horrid thing."

"Marianne!" said Madame Delong, in a severe tone, and Marianne left the room shrugging her shoulders. Then addressing her son, "Are you quite sure, Louis," she said, "that you are not in some degree to blame?" Louis continued to pace the apartment without making any reply. Madame Delong repeated the question, but Louis had not yet sufficiently recovered himself to understand exactly what his mother was saying. At this moment Madame Ballier made her appearance; she looked confused, and speaking hurriedly, like a person who is afraid of being prevented by some disagreeable speech, she said, "Louis, will you go with me to the play this evening?"

Louis started and appeared surprised; but after a moment's hesitation, he replied, in a gloomy manner, turning away his head, "No, thank you, aunt."

"There are two actors arrived from Paris," added Madame Ballier, still more embarrassed.

"I am aware of it: I saw the notice posted up as I came from the college, and they are going to perform *The Templars*."

"Well, will you not come?"

"No, aunt," replied Louis again, rather sharply. Excited at once by resentment and the regret of losing the play, he was about to add some angry expression, but he restrained himself, and replied in the calmest tone that he could command, "I have to work for the examination of the inspectors who are coming this day week."

"Very well, I can go by myself," said Madame Ballier, still more annoyed. She went to the window as if to look at something, and then left the room without saying another word. [Pg 175]

"If any one else had asked me," said Louis, in a tone of vexation, as soon as she was gone, "nothing would have delighted me more. Ever since I read the announcement I have been thinking how much I should like to see *The Templars*; but," he added, in an altered voice, "I will not give her the pleasure of thinking she can afford me the slightest gratification."

His anger increased from the sacrifice which it had induced him to make. His mother, wishing to calm him a little, said caressingly, as she took his arm, "But you will give *me* the gratification, will you not, of taking a walk with me? I have a headache, and want the air;" and, seeing that he did not take any notice, she added, with a smile, "I shall not resign myself to going out without you, so readily as my aunt does."

Louis never refused his mother anything, and, although only fourteen years of age, he was so right-minded, and possessed so noble and generous a disposition, that Madame Delong treated him with entire confidence, and never, in any thing she required of him, appealed to any other motive than his own good sense and affection. Louis immediately took his hat, went to fetch his mother's parasol, and, without saying a word, offered her his arm to go out. Madame Delong saw the effort he was making to control himself, and said, "Thank you, my dear." These words began to restore peace to the soul of Louis. He was devotedly fond of his mother, and felt proud of being able to make her life more agreeable and happy. Almost always absent from her husband, and continually anxious and trembling for the dangers to which his military life exposed him, Madame Delong required the exertion of much fortitude to preserve her equanimity; and Louis, witnessing her trials, had early learned to avoid whatever might render her resignation more difficult. Very different in character from those children who imagine they obtain a species of triumph over their superiors when they have excited their displeasure, Louis took a pride in being able to ward off troubles and annoyances from his mother. It was not in a few instances, but in all cases that he was in the habit of doing this. If he gave her his arm in the street or the fields, he would avoid a rough path where she might hurt herself, lead her away from the herd of cows she did not like to venture amongst, or remove the horse she had to pass. Quick, and even thoughtless in his own case, he became prudent where his mother was concerned. Madame Delong would observe, with a smile, "Louis is my protector;" and Louis would smile also, and at the same time slightly blush, but not from annoyance; at such moments he felt himself a man, and in a position to be useful to others. [Pg 176]

This kind of relation between Louis and his mother had not in the least diminished the respect due to her maternal authority and the superiority of her understanding. To this authority Louis submitted the more cheerfully, because the possibility of her at any time abusing it never entered his mind. He could not for a moment believe that his mother could ever be unjust or unreasonable; scarcely could he even believe that she could ever be mistaken; and if at any time he hesitated to perform his duty, the moment she said, "My dear, it must be done," Louis thought he heard the voice of his own conscience.

Nevertheless, since Madame Ballier had become an inmate of the house, Louis had more frequently experienced the difficulty of submission; and, upon certain points, all his affection for his mother was scarcely sufficient to supply what was wanting in his yet immature reason. Madame Ballier, who was formerly a mercer at Paris, had never received the advantage of a good education; she was sister to Monsieur Delong's mother, and when, at twelve years of age, he was left an orphan, she had given him a home. At fifteen he entered the army, obtained promotion by his bravery and good conduct, and neglecting no opportunity of improving himself and acquiring knowledge, he rose to the rank of colonel, and to the reputation of a distinguished man. Madame Delong, though without fortune, had been extremely well educated, and the congeniality of their minds and characters had established between them the most tender and perfect union. [Pg 177]

When, two or three years before the time of our story, Madame Ballier, then a widow, had retired from business, in rather indifferent circumstances, Madame Delong proposed to her husband to offer her a home with them. Monsieur Delong at first hesitated, from the fear of giving his wife an associate by no means agreeable; but he soon yielded to the noble motives by which she was influenced in making this proposal, and to his conviction, that the mingled gentleness and firmness of her character would greatly diminish the inconveniences which might otherwise result from such an arrangement. Madame Ballier accordingly joined the family of her niece in the small town where the latter resided, in the absence of her husband, and where with a very moderate income she endeavoured, by strict economy, to meet the expenses occasioned by the war, and provide for the education of her son. A good-hearted woman in the main, but often weary of her position, and, notwithstanding the deference with which she was treated by Madame Delong, dissatisfied at not being the mistress, Madame Ballier was frequently out of humour, and found means of showing her temper on a thousand occasions; for persons who have no taste for serious occupation are apt to become very fanciful about trifles. The two greatest sufferers were Louis and his black wolf-dog Barogo: as for Marianne, a quarrel was not positively disagreeable to her, and it was a pleasure which Madame Ballier seldom hesitated to afford her. Madame Delong would by no means have permitted Marianne to fail in respect to her aunt, but [Pg 178]

neither did she like that Madame Ballier should uselessly torment Marianne, an old and faithful servant, who had been in the family ever since her mistress was born, and who was determined to end her days in it; both, therefore, were equally interested in keeping their quarrels secret, and thus being sure of each other, they observed no mutual consideration; and a coffee-pot placed on the fire precisely where it would most inconvenience Marianne, or removed at the very time Madame Ballier wished to have it heated; a commission given inopportunely, and received with a bad grace, and, above all, the delinquencies of Robinet, Madame Ballier's cat, who was afraid of mice and devoured every thing in the larder, kept up a fund of animosity, and underhand quarrels, which interestingly occupied one half of their lives.

But between Louis and his aunt, the game was by no means so equal.

As Madame Ballier had no authority whatever over him, she made a point of contradicting him in everything. His shoes were too tight, or his trowsers too wide; he wore his hair too short, or his sleeves too long: and as the next day neither hair, nor sleeves, nor shoes, nor trowsers, differed in any degree from what they were the night before, the remarks were repeated with as much acrimony as if Madame Ballier were herself obliged to wear the things in question. Madame Delong, perfectly mute during these disputes, in which she never took any part, was not equally reserved with her son, whom she scrupulously compelled, much against his inclination, to restrain his conduct within the bounds of proper respect; but all her authority, and her severe looks, were scarcely sufficient to effect this, when the injustice fell upon Barogo, whom Madame Ballier regularly turned out of the room, two or three times a day saying that he gave her fleas. Louis would then immediately follow, in order to be with his dear Barogo, and usually found him engaged in avenging upon Robinet the insults received from her mistress. Warned by the noise he made in pursuing her favourite, Madame Ballier would fly to the rescue; snatch up, in her alarm and anger, a broom, a pair of tongs, or whatever came to hand, as a weapon against the aggressor, and while the latter made his escape growling, Madame Ballier, drawn away by a deeper interest, ran to seek and console her cat. Then Barogo, satisfied with having proved his right of resistance, by displaying his white teeth through his black moustaches, would return and take quiet possession of the sitting-room, where he soon became the object of a fresh contest. [Pg 179]

"Why should we be obliged to submit to my aunt's caprices and ill-humour?" Louis would sometimes exclaim in a fit of uncontrollable indignation. "Why should we be obliged to live with our relations at all?" asked Madame Delong one day in reply. "Why should we be obliged to keep up any ties of kindred? Why should not brothers and sisters, fathers and children, go each their own way, without troubling themselves about each other? If I were to become peevish, morose, and difficult to please, tell me, Louis, would you be obliged to retain any regard for me?"

"Oh! my dear mother!" cried Louis, wounded at such a supposition.

"My child," replied his mother, "when we once believe that we may quarrel with our duties, because they are difficult, there is none of them that may not be brought into question, for there is none of them, the fulfilment of which may not at some period or other occasion us some inconvenience. Do you not think a nephew owes to his aunt, and an *aged* aunt, respect and complaisance?"

"Undoubtedly, but—"

"But you would prefer that your aunt should be careful to render this duty more agreeable to you:—this I can conceive; yet a duty is not the less a duty because it is painful."

"I should think my aunt has duties also," said Louis, with a little asperity. [Pg 180]

"My son," returned his mother, very seriously, "when you have found out a suitable manner of representing them to her, you will be quite justified in thinking of them."

"What is to be done, then?" Louis would sometimes exclaim, quite out of patience at seeing no means of avoiding what he knew not how to endure. One day, when the heat was extreme, and he was continually wiping his face during a discussion of this kind, his mother said to him, "Six or seven years ago, my dear, you would not have been able to bear such heat as this without repeating every moment, *Oh, how hot it is!* but now you scarcely pay any attention to it, because you know that it is unbecoming in a man not to show himself superior to petty inconveniences."

Louis was quite old enough to understand his mother's arguments, but he had not yet acquired sufficient resolution to submit to them. When his aunt was out of humour with him, he became angry in his turn; if she wished to subject him to some caprice of hers, he was the more obstinately bent on a contrary whim; and to make him feel it a matter of great importance that his hat should remain on the table, it was only necessary that Madame Ballier should take it into her head to throw it upon a chair.

When out of his mother's presence, and no longer restrained by her looks, which habitually followed him, and which he dared not avoid, Louis was always more disposed to forget himself, and did not often escape the danger, particularly as he was then more openly attacked by Madame Ballier, who was no longer held in check by the fear of disobliging her niece. The last quarrel had been occasioned by one of those trifles which so often occasioned them, and Louis, exasperated to the utmost by his aunt's ill-humour, and perhaps not very well disposed himself that day had taken the liberty to indulge in remarks so little measured, that the anger of Madame Ballier had gone beyond all bounds. She was sorry for it afterwards; not that she considered it anything extraordinary for an aunt to box the ears of a nephew who had spoken impertinently to [Pg 181]

her; but such things were not in accordance with the tone of the family, and although she herself constantly found fault with her niece, she would not have liked her niece to find fault with her.

She thought to repair all by the offer of taking Louis to the theatre, and could not understand his retaining so much resentment as to refuse. Consequently, she was much out of humour the whole of dinner-time, and when upon leaving the table a fresh proposal was again met by a refusal on the part of Louis, she went off shrugging her shoulders with a sigh of indignation.

She had only just left the room, when in came M. Lebeau, a friend of Madame Delong's.

"Come, come, my boy!" he said to Louis, "to the theatre:—quick! there is not a moment to lose, or we shall not find places. Charles and Eugenia are on the way with their mother; we will overtake them."

Louis and his mother looked at each other without making any reply. "Well! are you coming?" said M. Lebeau, impatiently. "I do not think that Louis can go to the play this evening," said Madame Delong, at length, looking earnestly at her son.

"And why not?"

"He has work to finish."

"I worked hard enough when I was young, and learned my profession as a notary as well as any one else, but I did not give up my amusement, for all that. Why, my lad, at your age, when I wanted to go to the play, I spent the night in work, and there was an end of it."

"That would not be very difficult," said Louis, looking at his mother, whilst his face was scarlet with anger and anxiety. Madame Delong suppressed a sigh, called forth by the sight of her son's vexation, and said to him; "You know very well, my dear, that that is not the difficulty:" then, turning to M. Lebeau, she added, in a firmer tone, "It is impossible; Louis has refused to go with his aunt."

"His aunt! his aunt! What then? He has changed his mind; surely he has a right to be more amused with my children than with his aunt. Come, come, I will undertake to make her listen to reason, though we do not generally understand one another particularly well."

Louis seemed in suspense. "M. Lebeau," said Madame Delong, very seriously; "since it must be confessed, Louis has had a slight quarrel with his aunt, and it was for that reason that he declined going with her to the theatre. I do not blame him for it, it was the most respectful manner of letting his aunt know that she had wounded his feelings; but I leave him to judge," she added, looking at Louis, "whether it be becoming in him to go and brave her as it were, and as if he said to her, 'I did not choose to accept your favours, I can dispense with them.'"

"Such punctilios are only fit for a girl," cried M. Lebeau. "My dear friend, I tell you plainly, you will make a milksop of that son of yours."

"I am not aware," said Madame Delong, still looking at her son, "that Louis feels himself any the weaker, or the less worthy of esteem, when he submits to his duty, than when he fails in it in order to follow his pleasures."

Louis shook his head; he knew very well that his mother was right; but he found it impossible to make any answer. At this moment Charles rushed into the room: quite out of patience at not seeing his friend Louis arrive, he had run to look for him. "Come, make haste!" he cried; "you will make us lose the first scene, and perhaps even our places."

Louis, with eyes cast down, pressed his hand, and not daring to trust his voice, said, in a tone scarcely audible,—"I am not going to the theatre."

"Not going! and why not?" asked Charles, much astonished.

"On account of my aunt."

Charles, in consternation, looked alternately at his father and at Madame Delong; the latter hastened to observe: "It is a voluntary sacrifice which my son makes to his sense of propriety, and one which I hope we shall be able to make up to him another time."

"Another time!" cried M. Lebeau, striking the floor with his cane; "another time! why, they are going away to-morrow; I tell you they set off to-morrow."

Louis started. Madame Delong, looking at him, sorrowfully, but firmly, said, "Is that any reason, my son?" Louis hurried out of the room; he was choking. Charles left the house in grief, and M. Lebeau, as he took his departure, repeated, "I always said so; the most sensible woman in the world knows nothing about bringing up boys."

Madame Delong immediately went to her son's room and found him leaning against the corner of the mantel-piece; his fortitude was completely overcome; the poor boy was in tears, and his mother felt much disposed to join him. As if suddenly struck with resentment upon her entrance, he exclaimed, "You wished to punish me because I dared to be angry with my aunt when she tried to box my ears;" and these last words were uttered in a still more passionate manner.

"To punish you!" said Madame Delong, putting her arm round her son's neck, "to punish you! Oh, my dear child, it is a very long time since I have even thought it possible that I could have

occasion to punish you!"

The tears of Louis were now flowing abundantly. Madame Delong leant her head on his shoulder, saying, with much emotion, "My dearest child, overcome this weakness, I entreat you. What will [Pg 184] become of me who have the responsibility of making you acquainted with your duties, if you have not resolution enough to fulfil them? How cruel will be my task, Louis! I have laboured all your life to inspire you with fortitude, in order that your courage might sustain my own."

"This disappointment cannot grieve you as much as it does me," said Louis, still a little angry, though already in some degree softened by his mother's words.

"My dear boy," replied Madame Delong, "if you were now at the theatre, I should be watching the clock, and although alone, should fear to see the hours pass, for I should say, 'he is now enjoying himself,' and that would render my whole evening delightful." Louis kissed her hand. "But," she continued, "if after having refused your aunt, you had been weak enough to accompany M. Lebeau, and I weak enough to consent to your doing so, we should both of us have had our pleasure destroyed; the sight of your aunt at the play would have disturbed you the whole time; on your return we should not have dared to converse together on what would have been a subject of self-reproach to both, and you would have gone to bed without having anything to relate to me."

Louis was insensibly calmed by the conversation and affection of his mother; nevertheless, he had some difficulty in applying steadily to anything during this evening, and he dreamed all night that he had gone to the theatre, and was wandering round and round the house without being able to find the entrance, whilst all the time the play was going on, and he could hear the applause.

Madame Ballier, on her part, had returned home much dissatisfied with the manner in which she had passed her evening. She had the misfortune to be seated in a box close to the one occupied by M. Lebeau and his family: there was already a good deal of bitterness between them, for M. [Pg 185] Lebeau, though a good-natured and upright man, was little disposed to think that people should inconvenience themselves for the sake of others; he had never approved of Madame Delong's plan of having Madame Ballier with her, and consequently had taken an aversion to the latter almost before he had made her acquaintance. Never would he consent to show her the slightest attention calculated to attract her to his house, and as this prevented Madame Delong from visiting there as frequently as she had previously done, M. Lebeau was the more dissatisfied; and the grievances of Louis, who was a great favourite of his, and even those of Barogo, with whom he cultivated a certain degree of intimacy, did not tend to soften matters. When, upon entering the theatre, he saw Madame Ballier in the next box to that which his family had taken, he felt so annoyed that he would have changed his place had it been possible. His excitement, and the explanations given to his party in no very low tone, soon informed Madame Ballier of what had taken place, and the name of "poor Louis," which, at every pause in their pleasure, was repeated by the children in a tone of regret, and with a side glance towards her, rendered her evening extremely disagreeable. On returning home she complained of a headache, and retired to her own room without seeing any one. The next day she made no allusion whatever to the play; and if Louis was wrong in somewhat enjoying this little revenge, he was at all events justified in congratulating himself on having escaped a similar embarrassment. Two days afterwards, at the house of M. Lebeau, the latter again attacked Madame Delong on the subject of the play; Louis defended his mother with so much eagerness, that M. Lebeau, provoked at finding in him an opponent, exclaimed, "Young man! this is the way you spoil your mother." Everybody laughed, and M. Lebeau amongst the rest, while Madame Delong gave her son a smile of affectionate pride, which seemed to say, "Persevere, my dear Louis, let us continue to aid each other in [Pg 186] fulfilling our duty."

The Curé here paused. "Is that all?" exclaimed the two little boys.

"That is not a story," said Juliana, drawing up her head with an air of pretension. "It has neither beginning nor end."

"As to the end," replied the Curé, "I have not told you that my story was ended: I wished merely to show you how very disagreeable it is for young persons when their relations happen to be bad-tempered, and at the same time to point out to you that when such is the case it is the duty of the young to make every sacrifice rather than displease their relations."

"It was not very difficult for Louis to do what his mother wished," said Juliana, in a tone which betrayed a little vexation; "she always spoke to him so gently."

"Well! that is good!" cried Amadeus. "The other day when you were in a passion, and nurse very gently begged you to listen to reason, did you not tell her to march off with her reason?"

"Mr. Amadeus," replied Juliana, colouring violently, "mind your own affairs if you please, or I shall tell, in my turn, what naughty words you made use of in the grove, when papa called you to write your exercise."

"I see," said the Curé, "that you would neither of you have been as reasonable as Louis, though he was nothing to boast of."

"Yes," observed Amadeus, "for he obeyed the wishes of his mother only when she was present."

"I don't behave like him, Monsieur le Curé," said Paul, touching the clergyman's arm to make him

listen to him; "when mamma goes away and says, 'Paul, don't go near the water,' I don't go near it at all."

"I should like to know," said Juliana, "what would have happened if Louis had remained for some time *tête-à-tête* with his aunt?"

"That is precisely the sequel of my story," replied the Curé. The children having expressed their wish to hear this sequel, the Curé promised it, and a few days afterwards he thus resumed the adventures of Louis. [Pg 187]

ABSENCE.

Madame Delong received intelligence from Germany which caused her the greatest affliction. Her husband had been dangerously wounded, and she immediately set off to attend on him, deeply grieved at the necessity of leaving her son to his own discretion, as it were, with a person who was incapable of maintaining any authority over him.

Being also perfectly well aware that whilst Madame Ballier had to command, and Marianne to obey, there would be little peace in the household, we may easily imagine what were her parting admonitions, and what the promises and good resolutions made to conform to them. But, scarcely was she out of sight, when Madame Ballier, eager to take possession of her authority, positively exacted of Marianne that the soup tureen, which from time immemorial had been placed on the sideboard, should for the future be put away in the closet, and that, contrary to the practice hitherto observed, the glasses should be rinsed before the decanters. From this moment all hope of agreement was at an end; and when Louis returned home to dinner, he found Marianne in a state of the greatest excitement. "Master Louis," she said, "this will never do; that woman will drive me out of my senses. I tell you, Master Louis, we can never go on in this way."

"Louis," said Madame Ballier, very composedly, to her nephew, when he came to take his place at the dining-table, "I beg you for the future to be more punctual to the time."

Louis looked at his watch, then at the time-piece, and was much surprised to find that they did not agree; he had set them together in the morning, and now perceived that, without any intimation to him, Madame Ballier had advanced the time-piece after his departure. He showed his watch, and said coolly, but not without some intention of annoying, "This is the time by Monsieur Lebeau's clock, which is the best in the town, and which everybody follows since the town clock has been out of order." [Pg 188]

Madame Ballier replied, pettishly, that Monsieur Lebeau's clock went like his head, and that the house clock was the one to which he must conform.

"To render that possible," said Louis, "it ought not to be altered every moment without necessity."

Silence ensued till about the middle of dinner, when Madame Ballier said to her nephew, "I hope, Louis, that you do not intend to take advantage of your mother's absence to run about and idle away your time, instead of attending to your studies."

"Run about! Where, aunt?" inquired Louis, greatly astonished, for he was noted for his exactitude in the performance of his duties.

"Why, to Monsieur Lebeau's, for example."

"My mother has given me permission to go there," replied Louis, in a careless tone.

"Morning and evening?" demanded Madame Ballier, sharply.

"As often as I please," replied Louis, drily.

"As often as you please!" cried Madame Ballier. "Very fine, truly; if you have permission to do whatever you please, sir, it was not worth my while to take charge of you."

"You take charge of me, aunt!" exclaimed Louis, in his turn, with an indignation which completely exasperated Madame Ballier.

"And who, then, is to take charge of you, pray, sir?"

Louis was silent: he had raised a difficult question; for he could not possibly suppose that at his age he could avoid being responsible for his conduct to some one or other; nor could he tell Madame Ballier that it was not to her that he owed this responsibility, as this would neither have been respectful nor true; for, in fact, if he had been guilty of any impropriety, if he had neglected his studies, and spent his time away from home in the absence of his mother, it was undoubtedly the duty of his aunt to repress such misconduct by every means in her power. Louis' mistake consisted in not remembering, that it is not only a duty to yield, in matters of importance, to those who have a right to exact obedience; but that we ought likewise to yield to them in trifles also; because it is but reasonable that we should avoid giving them annoyance. [Pg 189]

They again relapsed into silence; but on rising from table Madame Ballier said to her nephew, at the same time carefully emphasizing every word, "Notwithstanding all your permissions, you will be so good as to remember, Master Louis, that I am amenable for you in the absence of your mother, and that I shall not allow you to commit any follies; do you understand that?" She took

care to close the door as she pronounced these last words, so as to avoid having to hear any reply to them. Louis had no thought of answering her; all his ideas were in confusion. Not having the slightest inclination to commit any follies, as Madame Ballier expressed it, he was surprised to find himself so extremely offended at her prohibition of them.

"Do but look at that woman, now," said Marianne, folding her arms, and fixing her eyes on the door by which Madame Ballier had made her exit.

"If this is the way she begins," resumed Louis, slowly setting down the glass which in his surprise he had held suspended near his lips. It seemed as if a thunderbolt had fallen at their feet, so little were they prepared for their proper course of action, which was simply to allow things and words of no importance to pass quietly by. [Pg 190]

Louis went to M. Lebeau's to console himself for his vexations, by relating them to Charles and Eugenia. "Let her grumble as much as she pleases; you take your own way," said Charles.

Eugenia scolded Charles and then Louis. "Ask mamma," she said, "whether that is the proper manner of behaving to your aunt."

"In what respect, then, do you find I behave so much amiss?" returned Charles, hastily. "You would do just the same in my place."

"I! by no means; when I want to do anything I ask permission; there is surely no great trouble in that."

"But what permission have I to ask of her?"

"That you know best,—permission to look out at the window, if she requires it; it would be no great hardship after all."

"That, certainly, would be very pretty for a boy!" said Charles.

"It would seem, then, that it is more becoming in a boy to be unreasonable, than it is in a girl?"

"Pshaw! Eugenia," said Louis, ill-humouredly, as he took Charles by the arm to lead him away from his sister; "you know nothing about the matter; and besides, what you say is only an affectation."

"I am sure," replied Eugenia, offended in her turn, "that you give yourself airs; it costs you but little to make rude speeches."

They quarrelled, then became reconciled. Louis found in Eugenia's advice much that resembled the counsels of his mother; and he was only the more distressed by dimly perceiving that he was in the wrong, without exactly knowing how to set himself right. The fact was, that Louis was disposed to comply with the wishes of his aunt, provided she required nothing that was troublesome to him; and willing to treat her with complaisance, provided she never interfered with his inclinations; which certainly was setting himself no very difficult task. [Pg 191]

A few days after this occurrence, Louis received a letter from his mother, written at the end of her first day's journey.

"Bear in mind, above all things, my dear son," she said in this letter, "never to swerve from the respect you owe your aunt. You may sometimes think she demands a greater degree of submission than she has a right to exact; yet you must submit to this, in order to please her; for it is your duty to make her satisfied with you.

"Should you sometimes think she opposes you unreasonably, or from ill-humour, the best way of showing yourself a man is by not allowing yourself to be irritated by this conduct; for it is little children only that people are anxious not to oppose unreasonably, for fear of spoiling their tempers; but when they become men, they must in their turn conform to the tempers of others.

"In a short time, my dear son, you will have to conduct yourself properly, not only towards those who behave well to you, but towards all with whom you have any intercourse. So long as you are unable to fulfil your duty, unless you have to deal with just and reasonable persons, so long will you be unfit to dispense with the guidance of your father and mother; for you will meet with no one else in the world who, for the sake of sparing you the commission of a fault, will be careful to treat you on all occasions with kindness and justice."

The day that Louis received this letter he was more assiduous in his attentions to his aunt; he took care not to leave the door open when she was in the draught, and he prevented Barogo from eating up the food prepared for Robinet—an occurrence which the evening before had occasioned great offence. Left to himself, Louis was naturally disposed to be obliging; but he wanted that self-control which can alone secure us against the caprices of others. He was consequently never so much at the mercy of his aunt's whims as when he allowed her to put him in a passion, in spite of his good resolutions. Now, as her caprices became every day more frequent, in proportion to the effect they produced on him, and as in proportion to their frequency his resolution became every day weaker, his desire of maintaining peace soon gave way to a complete abandonment of himself to all those emotions which naturally excite discord. The counsels of his mother now produced only a feeling of irritation, for he had persuaded himself that what she required of him was impossible. His home became insupportable, and he was always anxious to escape from it; nor could his mind rest with pleasure on anything but the [Pg 192]

idea of the enjoyment which he promised himself in going to spend the three holidays of Whitsuntide with Madame Lebeau in the country.

This excursion had been arranged before the departure of Madame Delong. Louis had often mentioned it, and considered it as a settled affair, but Madame Ballier took it into her head, as the best possible means of annoying him, to oblige him to ask specially for her permission.

It had been arranged that on the Saturday preceding Whitsunday Louis was to dine with M. Lebeau, in order to be ready to set out with the family for the country immediately afterwards.

On the day in question, the moment before he returned home to dress for dinner, and make up his little package of what was to be taken with him, Madame Ballier left the house, carrying with her the keys of the wardrobe. Louis, greatly annoyed at not finding the keys when he came in, asked Marianne for them, and then inquired for his aunt. Marianne had not seen her go out, and knew not where to find her. They separated in search of her. Louis ran out, boiling with impatience; and, perceiving her seated on one of the benches in the promenade, he could scarcely restrain himself sufficiently to avoid demanding his keys before he came up to her, or ask for them, when he did arrive, in terms of proper politeness. Madame Ballier quietly inquired what he wanted them for?

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"I want to dress, aunt—I am in a great hurry—pray give them to me immediately;"—and he held out a hand tremulous with impatience.

"To dress! you never dress but on Sundays," replied Madame Ballier with the utmost coolness.

"But, aunt! you know I am going into the country."

"I know nothing about it: you have not told me."

"I have spoken of it a hundred times in your presence."

"I am not accustomed," said Madame Ballier, "to take to myself what is not directly addressed to me."

"Well, then, aunt, I tell you now; I repeat it," replied Louis, with redoubled vehemence.

"I have an idea, sir," said Madame Ballier, very gravely, and rising at the same time, "that you will ask me for them in a different manner."

Louis half bent his knee, and in a tone which in his anger he endeavoured to render derisive, said, "Will my aunt have the kindness, the magnanimity, the clemency to give me my keys?"

Madame Ballier made a movement as if to go away. Louis threw himself before her: the clock was striking four, the hour appointed for the rendezvous at M. Lebeau's. "Aunt," he exclaimed, and without perceiving that the tone of his voice had become almost menacing: "Aunt, I entreat you ... where are my keys?"

"In a place," replied Madame Ballier, who on her part was beginning to lose her self-control; "in a place where you will not get them until it suits me."

"You will not give them to me, then?"

Madame Ballier walked on without condescending to reply. Louis darted off like an arrow, taking with him, in his way home, the locksmith usually employed in the house, who, knowing him, made no difficulty about opening the drawers; he then dressed himself, made up a small parcel, and, meeting Marianne, who had just come in, told her to carry to M. Lebeau, in the course of the day, the rest of his things, that they might not be locked up again.

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Surprised at such an order, and disturbed at seeing all the drawers open, Marianne would fain have questioned him as to what had occurred, but he was already at a distance, and she stood at the door gazing after him in complete bewilderment.

Louis was eager to arrive; eager to shake off the agitation which tormented him. Since the departure of his mother he had never felt satisfied with himself, at the present moment he was less so than ever, and knew not what the future was likely to bring forth, for he had not the courage to scrutinize the state of his mind. He concealed his uneasiness as well as he could, not liking to mention to M. Lebeau his disagreement with his aunt, and the idea of being for three whole days quite free from his vexations made him speedily forget them. As soon as dinner was over, it was announced that the asses were at the door. Louis was appointed to lead Eugenia's, and Charles that intended for his mother, excepting when M. Lebeau was to take the place of one or the other, so as to let them, by turns, mount his horse. The weather was delightful, and the young people, already animated by the prospect of pleasure, were running down the steps, laughing and jumping, when Marianne appeared at the door, much excited, and carrying in her arms a large parcel, which she held out to Louis: "Here, Master Louis," she said, "here are your clothes; when your aunt saw that I was going to take them, she threw them in my face, saying that when they were once out of the house they had better remain so, and you too. Then, said I, 'And I too;' for now that you are gone, Master Louis, she may manage as she can. I will not set foot in the house till my mistress returns. Here is the account of every thing left under my care—it may easily be seen that all is right; besides, she has taken all the keys, and I will no longer be answerable for anything."

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"But, Marianne," said Louis, who was excessively disturbed, "I am not going away—I am to be

absent only two days."

"Oh! indeed! but she declared that you should remain where you are—that she was going to write to your mother—that she would no longer be answerable for you—and I don't know what besides."

"You will stay with us," said Charles, with great glee.

"What nonsense!" said Madame Lebeau, impatiently, "his aunt will never drive him away from the house."

"Oh! as for that, she said that if he came back, she should go away," replied Marianne, "not that she will do any such thing—but it is all the same to me. I remained there only for your sake, Master Louis, and now I have done with her. Didn't she say it was I that forced the lock, and that she would take me before the Justice of the Peace! Let her do so! I am not afraid of her; I am better known in the town than she is. The Justice of the Peace, indeed! I am at my sister's, in the next street, let her come for me there:—Good-by, Master Louis."—Then turning back—"Oh! stay! here is a letter from your mamma, which, with all this bother, I forgot to give you;" and she went away, repeating to herself, "The Justice of the Peace! Much I care for her and her Justice of the Peace!" Thus she went on, becoming more and more irritated every time this idea recurred to her mind.

Louis was thunderstruck; he turned his mother's letter mechanically in his hand—it seemed already to pain him, as if it contained a reproach.

"What is all this?" demanded M. Lebeau, who came up in the midst of Marianne's harangue; and Louis scarcely knew how to give him an explanation, so trifling was the subject in dispute.

"Come with us all the same," said Charles, in an under-tone, "you can settle all that on your return."

"Write her a very submissive letter from the country," said Eugenia. Louis heard not a word that was said, he had just opened his mother's letter.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, in a tone of grief, whilst he hid his face in his hands.

"What has happened?—your father!" cried Madame Lebeau, alarmed.

"On the contrary," said Louis, blushing at the exclamation which had just escaped him, "my father is better;" and he added, in a subdued tone, "An hour ago this letter would have rendered me extremely happy."

Madame Delong had written to inform her son that her husband was out of danger, and in a fit state to bear the journey; she was to set out with him in a few days on his return home, where it would be necessary for him to remain, to complete his recovery, and to pass the time of his convalescence, which was expected to be long.

"I shall soon, therefore, my dear son," added Madame Delong, "present you to your father, who has not seen you these four years. He is continually speaking of you, and I scarcely dare to reply: I fear to trust my own affection; I fear to speak of you more favourably than the event may justify. Nevertheless, dear Louis, I trust he will be pleased with us. One thing alone disturbs me," she continued, "I am not satisfied with the tone of your last letter when speaking of your aunt. My dear child, I must warn you that your father, who is much weakened by long-continued exertion and severe suffering, is unable to bear the slightest agitation; it is necessary for him that the whole house should be as tranquil as the apartment of an invalid. Be on the watch, therefore, that on his arrival every thing may wear the aspect of harmony, and nothing arise to disturb him. Examine carefully, my dear son, whether you have prepared for us the reception I require, and whether you feel yourself thoroughly disposed to fulfil your duty."

Louis was overwhelmed. "Well!" said M. Lebeau, who was waiting, and who was not fond of waiting, "Are you coming or not?"

"What will my mother say?" said Louis, who hardly heard the words addressed to him.

"What will she say? Why, you are not in fault, are you?"

"I really don't know anything at all about it."

"Oh; if you don't know, that is another matter. Come, my boy, you should always know what you mean or what you don't mean; whether you are right or whether you are wrong, and then act accordingly."

Louis now presented his mother's letter, not, however, that M. Lebeau might decide for him, for his resolution was already taken.

"Yes," said M. Lebeau, after having read the letter, "you will do well to arrange matters if you can;" and Louis, without speaking another word, took the parcel which Marianne had brought, fastened to it the one which he had made up to take into the country, and passing his stick through them, put it on his shoulder, pressed the hand of Charles, nodded to Eugenia, with a sigh, and walked to the door.

"Is he going away?" asked Charles and Eugenia, in consternation.

"You will come back to us," said M. Lebeau, who liked to make the best of every thing. Louis again nodded, and departed. He soon heard the noise of the donkeys as they were mounting, and of M. Lebeau's horse pawing the ground, impatient to set out; he turned his head, and saw them all preparing for their departure, but in silence; and he watched them to the very end of the street, without hearing a single burst of laughter.

He walked on, without very well knowing what was to be done; he thought, however, that he must in the first place seek Marianne, and prevent her from sleeping out of the house; and, afterwards, go and inform his aunt that it was he who had caused the locks to be forced, and thus prevent her from going to the Justice of the Peace. He found Marianne extremely excited, relating what had passed to her sister, who was vainly endeavouring to pacify her. [Pg 198]

"Stop!" she said, when she saw Louis enter; "there is Master Louis himself, who will tell you that it is quite impossible to live with that woman."

"But what are you doing here, Master Louis? and your parcel?—you should not have made me carry it to Monsieur Lebeau's; I would have brought it straight here myself. My sister will lock it safe up in her chest, I promise you, Master Louis; you may be quite easy about it."

"But Marianne," repeated Louis several times impatiently, in vain attempting to interrupt her; "but Marianne, it is not that; I come to tell you that you must return home."

"Return home! and for what, pray, Master Louis? It was all very well, whilst you were there; but as for your aunt, she can do well enough without me, and I can do without her. Go, then, Master Louis, and take your pleasure in the country; you need not be afraid, we shall not bite one another in your absence."

"But, Marianne," replied Louis, more and more out of patience, yet still hesitating to engage himself, "I tell you it is not certain—it is indeed very possible that I may not go into the country at all."

"How!—not go into the country! Oh! that is quite another affair! It was well worth while to open the drawers in such a hurry! Well, if that is the case, I will go and make your bed to-morrow, Master Louis; you may be very sure I shall not leave your room in disorder; you may depend upon that beforehand; your bed shall be ready." [Pg 199]

"And dinner also, Marianne?"

"Dinner for your aunt? oh! she can dine well enough without me, the dear creature! If she had nobody to cook her dinner but me, I warrant you it would not make her ill;" and Marianne's passion beginning to revive, she talked to herself and to every one around, without their being able to stop her tongue.

"But listen to me, do, pray, Marianne," cried Louis, almost losing temper himself; "I tell you that my father and mother are coming."

"What! the colonel!—my mistress!" exclaimed Marianne. "Gracious me! when?—where are they?" and she seemed ready to run and meet them.

"Oh, not yet, Marianne," said Louis; "but they are on the road; here is the letter which gives me the intelligence, and you must see that if they find all the house out of sorts in this manner——"

"Ah yes! you are quite right, Master Louis, that is very true. The poor colonel!—and my mistress! How happy she must be!—how is he, now? What! they are really coming!" and the exclamations of Marianne, mingled and succeeded each other with as much rapidity in her delight as in her anger. The whole course of her ideas was completely changed, and perhaps on a closer consideration of the arrival of her master and mistress, she might feel some uneasiness as to the consequences of her late conduct, which in the heat of the moment she had not very attentively examined. There was no difficulty in inducing her to return. "Must we not be preparing the house for their arrival?" she said. "Come, Master Louis; duty before all things;—duty before all things!"

They departed, Marianne carrying the parcels, which she insisted on taking under her charge. "We are going back," she said, "like traders who have been unlucky at the fair; we are as heavily laden as when we set out." [Pg 200]

They found the door of the house locked; for, as Marianne was no longer there to attend to it, Madame Ballier had carried away the key with her when she went out. This incident, which Louis might have expected, vexed him exceedingly; he had not yet entirely given up all hopes of going to join his friends in the country, after having reinstalled Marianne at home; but this now became, at least, doubtful, and every moment of delay increased the chance of its being impossible. However, nothing was to be done but to wait; so Louis seated himself on the bench at the door, and did wait, but with a degree of bitterness which every minute of impatience rendered worse. Madame Ballier did not return till ten o'clock at night. Louis sprang up hastily, and his aunt uttered a cry of alarm, for she had not seen either him or Marianne in the dark corner in which they had seated themselves. However, the servant of one of Madame Ballier's friends, who had accompanied her home with a lantern, and to whom she had given the key, began to unlock the door: Louis did not feel sure of being admitted without a contest; fortunately, however, Barogo, who poked his nose in at the door the moment it was a little opened, immediately got scent of Robinet, and pushing it back still farther with his head, bounded into the house, barking with all his might, as he pursued the cat. Madame Ballier rushed in after him,

Louis followed his aunt, and Marianne followed him; the door was closed, and every thing fell naturally into its place.

Madame Ballier's Return, p. 200.

Nevertheless, it was necessary for Louis to come to some explanation with his aunt. He prepared himself for it, and endeavoured to summon all the moderation of which he was capable, when he met her at the door of his room, carrying Robinet in her arms. She asked him sharply why he had not brought the locksmith to open the street door as well as that of the wardrobe?

"Since you knew that it was I who had the drawers opened," cried Louis, his anger already excited, as his principal motive for returning had been to explain this matter, "why, aunt, did you threaten to take Marianne before the Justice of the Peace? I came back purposely to prevent you from making such a scandal."

"You are much needed, truly, young gentleman, to prevent scandals," replied Madame Ballier, more and more irritated; "if you came here only to tell me that, you had better return into the country."

"That is what I purpose doing to-morrow morning," said Louis.

"But not, I beg," replied Madame Ballier, "until I have written a letter to Monsieur Lebeau, which you will be so good as to deliver to him, requesting him to take charge of you, as I will have nothing more to do with you."

"I will carry no such letter!" exclaimed Louis, who again began to think of the arrival of his father and mother.

"If you do not carry it, I shall send it."

"That will be of no use, for I shall not stay with Monsieur Lebeau."

"If you go there to-morrow you will stay there."

"And what is to compel me to do so?"

"I will compel you; for I will leave this house, and send word to your mother for what reason I do so."

Louis returned to his room, slamming the door violently. "No," he said, pacing the room, and stamping till the floor shook; "it is useless trying: if one wishes to behave properly, she will not let one."

"It is useless trying, that's certain," said Marianne, as she put the room in order.

The Curé having laid down his manuscript, "Well, tell us," demanded the children, "did he not go into the country?"

"What would you have done in his place?" inquired the Curé.

Amadeus shook his head, as he replied, "I really do not know; it was certainly a very puzzling situation."

"Not at all," replied Juliana, in a very decided tone; "I should the next day have said to my aunt, 'If you still choose to hinder me from going into the country, I shall remain here, and tell every one that it is because I am more reasonable than you are.'"

The Curé smiled. "That would have been very agreeable to her, indeed!" said Amadeus.

"Neither should I have wished it to be agreeable to her," replied Juliana.

"For my part," said Paul, "I would have written immediately to mamma, in Germany, to ask her permission to go next day to Monsieur Lebeau's."

Every one laughed at Paul's expedient, and the Curé continued his narrative.

THE RECONCILIATION.

Louis was left alone in his apartment, in a state of terrible agitation, and he passed nearly an hour in thinking only of his annoyance, and giving way to passion, without coming to any decision.

The last words of Marianne rang disagreeably in his ears. "It is useless to try," he repeated; "Is it, then, impossible to be reasonable?" and the idea displeased him; for he would rather have believed that it was impossible. He began to reperuse his mother's letter; but in his present disposition he several times stopped impatiently, for he felt as if his mother were there, giving him advice which he was unwilling to follow. Once he even threw the letter on the table in a passion; but suddenly recollected, that one day when he was vexed at some advice which his mother gave him, she said, "My dear Louis, are you displeased with my advice because it is bad, or because it is good?" and he acknowledged that people quarrel only with good advice, because it is that alone which one is obliged to follow. [Pg 203]

But although acknowledging to himself that his mother's advice was good, Louis was not the less inclined to dispute: was he not only to renounce so great a pleasure, and one, too, on which he had so long counted, but also give way to his aunt, and especially in a thing so unreasonable! Then another recollection presented itself. One day during his childhood, when he had given a kick to Barogo, for not learning his exercise, saying, "What a stupid brute you are!" his mother replied, "If he be a brute, why do you expect him to do things which require reason?" This reflection now struck him, and he said, "Since my aunt is so unreasonable, it is foolish in me to expect her to require of me nothing but what is reasonable;" and he added, "If I do not yield to her in what is unreasonable, I shall never have to yield at all, for as to other things, I should do them of my own accord."

His agitation began to subside in consequence of the pleasure which he experienced in feeling himself a reasonable person, and this kind of pleasure always inspires the wish to become still more so. He remembered also that his mother had often said to him: "Sensible people have a great task imposed on them, for they have to be reasonable, not only for themselves, but for those also who are unreasonable;" and he began to consider it as something very honourable to feel one's self intrusted with a duty of this kind. Then he felt a pleasure in reading over again, not only the last letter which he had received from his mother, but all she had written to him since her departure. He was struck with the following sentence: "Your misfortune, my dear son, consists in your having completely forgotten, in your intercourse with your aunt, how we ought to conduct ourselves towards those whose approbation we desire. Now, it appears to me, that approbation is always desirable, and that there may be some pleasure in gaining it where it costs an effort." In his present disposition, this idea particularly struck Louis. "It would be amusing, after all," he said, "to force my aunt to praise me." His imagination was so excited by this project, that he could scarcely go to sleep. [Pg 204]

The next morning he awoke in the best disposition possible. The weather was delightful; he heard in the streets sounds indicative of a festival-day, and this made him feel rather heavy-hearted; but he had other things to think of, and did not permit these recollections to distress him. He entered his aunt's room with an air of serenity which she had not expected. He knew that she had already inquired of Marianne whether he was going into the country, and had been answered in the negative. Her demeanour, accordingly, was rather stiff than angry. When he had informed her of the news which he had received: "It is for this reason, then, I suppose, young gentleman," she observed, "that you have put water into your wine."

The colour mounted into Louis' cheeks, but he had so well prepared himself, that he did not lose his temper; besides, he could not but acknowledge to himself that his aunt had spoken the truth. "At all events, aunt," he said, "I should certainly be much grieved, if my father and mother, on their return, should find you dissatisfied with me."

Madame Ballier was astonished; she had not calculated on such an answer, and contented herself with muttering in a low voice, that she might not appear at a loss, "I shall soon, then, be released

from my charge:" she then hastened to make inquiries respecting the health of her nephew, and the time of his return; then, presently recurring to the subject on which it was easy to see she wished to enter without very well knowing how to begin, she said, in a tone which merely simulated displeasure, "Then you will have no one to hinder you from going into the country." [Pg 205]

"But you know, aunt," said Louis, gently, "that my mother had granted me permission to go."

"And for that reason," said Madame Ballier, again growing angry, "you considered that you might dispense with the permission of every one else."

"You may see very well, aunt," replied Louis, in the same mild tone, "that that is not the case, for it was because you did not wish it that I have not gone; and yet I wanted very much to go," he added, with a sigh, which was not feigned.

"How he is playing the hypocrite at present!" said Madame Ballier, turning away her head.

"No, aunt, I am not playing the hypocrite," replied Louis, rather hastily. "You know very well, that I calculated upon going into the country, and I expected to enjoy myself extremely, I can assure you."

"Louis," replied Madame Ballier, gravely, "I do not wish to deprive you of your enjoyment, when you can ask for it in a proper manner." She evidently expected a reply.

Louis hesitated a moment, and then said, "Well, then, aunt; will you ... permit me to go?" The words cost him an effort, but when they had passed his lips, he hastened to add, in order to conceal his repugnance, "I shall be very much obliged to you."

"You may go," said Madame Ballier, somewhat embarrassed herself with the victory she had gained; and by way of preserving her dignity, she added, "To say the truth, it is more than you deserve after your conduct yesterday."

"Come, aunt, let us talk no more of that," said Louis, in a tone of mingled playfulness and submission; and Madame Ballier, who could scarcely believe her senses, shrugged up her shoulders, as she said, "Go, then, and be quick." Louis did not wait to be told a second time. In running to dress, he met Marianne, and, wild with joy, he seized her by the shoulders, and spinning her round, cried out, "Marianne, I am going into the country." [Pg 206]

But Marianne was in no laughing mood. Robinet had just overturned a jug of water, and she had all her kitchen to clean up. She declared she would wring the cat's neck the very first time she could catch him; and as she uttered these words, a single door only, and that scarcely closed, separated her from Madame Ballier. Louis trembled; he put his hand before her mouth, coaxed her, spoke of the necessity of maintaining a good understanding in the house, and even read to her a passage from his mother's letter; and Marianne, quite enchanted, began to moralize on the duties of servants towards their masters, which led her on, from one good sentiment to another, till she came to protestations of attachment to Madame Ballier, and even to Robinet. Louis had hardly reached his room upstairs, when he heard his aunt calling to him, "Come, make haste, Louis, you will be killed with the heat;" and, on going down, he found her brushing his hat: touched with this mark of kindness, he kissed her hand, whilst Marianne hastened to take the brush from her. Never had anything of the kind been seen before in the family.

Louis set off, his heart as light as his heels; he felt not the sun, he felt nothing but his delight. Quite astonished at his own happiness, he asked himself if it was legitimate, and after the most strict self-examination, could find nothing to reproach himself with,—nothing that had not been prompted by the best intentions; he could not but wonder how all had been settled with two words, when he had long been wasting so many in throwing every thing into confusion. He felt grateful to his aunt for giving way so promptly, and he was pleased with himself for experiencing this sentiment, for a feeling in harmony with our duties is something akin to virtue. On his arrival, he saw, in the distance, Charles standing at the door, and called out so loud, "Here I am," that Eugenia heard him and ran to the door. M. Lebeau came also, and Louis plainly perceived that he had been the subject of conversation since the preceding evening. [Pg 207]

"Did your aunt make a great fuss?" inquired M. Lebeau.

"No, no," replied Louis, in a tone which sufficiently marked his present disposition: in his new plan of conduct towards his aunt, he would have considered as treachery on his part a word spoken against her in her absence.

The three days passed delightfully, and yet Louis was not grieved to see them come to a close. The new task which he had set himself occupied his mind, and filled it with that interest always accorded to a project the success of which depends on our own exertions. He represented to himself the happiness of his mother when, on her arrival, she would witness the good understanding which had replaced the appearances of animosity which made her uneasy; he took pleasure in thinking that she would feel obliged to him for this; and happy in the idea of being able to procure her this satisfaction, the efforts by which it was to be obtained began to assume a pleasant aspect in his mind. On his way homewards, he was surprised to find himself thinking, with satisfaction, of meeting his aunt, and of seeing her reconciled to him, and he was consequently a little agitated when he arrived. It was very near eleven o'clock at night, and Madame Ballier, whose imagination had not been excited like that of her nephew, received him ill enough on account of his coming home so late. Louis, though disconcerted by this reception, was so full of his good sentiments that he had no difficulty in keeping his temper, and he replied [Pg 208]

gently that he was very sorry to have kept his aunt waiting. Madame Ballier, who had not expected such an answer, had not a word to say in reply. On the succeeding days, the case was the same: when Madame Ballier scolded, Louis apologized, so that she ceased to scold, or did so only from habit. One day, at dinner, she was seen to give a bone to Barogo, and even advised Louis to make him wear a muzzle, in order to prevent him from eating the poisoned balls which were thrown into the streets during the extreme hot weather. Barogo, however, could not endure a muzzle, and Louis did not like to inconvenience his favourite, so he replied that Barogo did not go out till late, and after the balls had been eaten by other dogs. Upon this, Madame Ballier, day after day returned to the subject of the muzzle, and Louis persisted, with some warmth, in defending Barogo's opinion. Hence, it happened that Madame Ballier, having once mentioned the subject, was perpetually recurring to it indirectly, and with some degree of asperity. Louis had at first said to himself, "The dog is mine, and it is no concern of my aunt's," but he afterwards considered, "If it did concern her, it would be my duty to do it, since she required it, and, since she has no right to interfere, I ought to do it to please her." It gave him some pain to follow this determination, particularly when it was necessary to overcome the resistance of Barogo, who had not made the same progress as himself in the art of obliging. "Barogo," he said, as he fastened on the muzzle, "we must please my aunt;" and, instead of waiting, as perverse people often do, until his aunt again complained of his injuring his dog, in order to obtain a triumph over her, he showed her the muzzle, saying, "Aunt, I have put a muzzle on Barogo," and, as he was now daily improving, he added, "and he does not mind it nearly so much as I feared he would." Madame Ballier contented herself with replying, somewhat ungraciously, "I knew very well it would be so," and never failed to remind him every day to put the muzzle on his dog. But every day, also, at dinner, Barogo received a bit of meat from Madame Ballier, and as Barogo was sensible of this kindness, and did not know that it was she who was the cause of his being muzzled, he began at table to wag his tail, and fix his bright eyes upon her, which was quite a new thing on his part, and Louis was filled with amazement to see him. Good sense and gentleness seemed to spring up on all sides since he had thought of introducing them into the house.

Nevertheless, he one day found Marianne in a fury. Madame Ballier had just told her that she had seen some ripe cherries, and ordered her to go and purchase some. Marianne had maintained that they were not ripe, and protested between her teeth that she would not go, flying into a violent passion, as if she had been thrust out by the shoulders. Louis, at first, endeavoured to persuade her that it was not very difficult to try at least to get some cherries; but this only increased Marianne's anger. Then he said that he was sure Marianne would do difficult things for his sake, and that he particularly wished for some cherries. "Nonsense!" said Marianne, "that is only to prevent your aunt from making an outcry."

"Yes, Marianne," he replied, smiling, "for fear that my father, who is on his journey, should hear the noise." Then, gently patting her on the shoulder, he added, "My good Marianne, you would not wish to give my father a headache?" Marianne shook her head, told him he was a wheedler, and went to fetch the cherries.

Since Louis had given up the idea of employing any but gentle means in the attainment of his wishes, he discovered a vast number of such means, which would never otherwise have occurred to him. This evening he found an opportunity of telling Marianne that the cherries were excellent, and from this point went on to speak of the pleasure it would give his mother to find there were so much fewer quarrels in the house; and Marianne was so pleased at having contributed to this pacification, that the same evening she placed, of her own accord, the lamp upon the table, instead of on the mantel-piece, a thing she had never before consented to do, without having been first scolded about it by Madame Ballier.

Time passed, and M. Delong was approaching home, although slowly, being obliged to travel by short stages, and to rest frequently. They had now but one week more to wait, and the day before his arrival was the fête-day of the village in which M. Lebeau's country house was situated. This fête was a celebrated one in the neighbourhood; there was a grand fair, dancing in a pretty meadow, games, and boating on the river. Louis was to pass the day with the Lebeau family, and promised himself great pleasure, enhanced by the assurance of still greater happiness, a few days afterwards, on the arrival of his father and mother. He had spoken of this party to his aunt, and she had consented to his going, with an expression of vexation which had not escaped Louis, but the cause of which he had not courage enough to investigate. He soon perceived, however, that his aunt was herself embarrassed about going to this fête. Those persons with whom she was most intimate in the town were absent; others had made up their parties, which she could not join, or which did not suit her, and during three days she had a fund of ill-humour, and Louis a feeling of discomfort, for which he dared not venture to account. At length he confessed to himself, that if he was ill at ease, it was because he was not performing his duty; and from this moment the only question was, how to summon resolution for its performance: a difficult duty is more than half accomplished when we have once acknowledged its necessity. Yet, to renounce his engagement with the Lebeau family, and give up his whole day to his aunt, was a sacrifice which, three weeks before, would never have entered his mind. But now that the arrival of his mother drew so near, he was more than ever engrossed with the desire of proving to her that he had conducted himself well in her absence; and it would have been vexatious to spoil all his labour by leaving with his aunt a sufficiently legitimate cause of complaint. Still he hesitated, grieved at the idea of relinquishing the delightful prospect in view, but a letter from his mother put an end to his uncertainty. A sensible amelioration had permitted M. Delong to hasten his journey, and he was to arrive the day after the fête. Madame Delong at the same time mentioned to her son her anxiety respecting his conduct to his aunt, of which the last letters received from

her gave but an indifferent idea. Louis triumphantly smiled to himself at his mother's fears, and at the happiness he was preparing for her; and, full of these delightful thoughts, he so vividly transported himself in imagination to the day of her arrival, that it was easy for him to leap over that of the fête. He ran to his aunt, who was already informed by letter of his father's more speedy arrival, and hastened to propose to take her to the fête with him. When she objected, by saying that he would have much more amusement with the family of M. Lebeau, he was on the point of answering "Very well, aunt;" happily, however, he checked himself in time, and simply replied that he should have great pleasure in escorting her; and this was quite true; for at this moment all was pleasure to him. He then went to M. Lebeau, to excuse himself from his engagement. M. Lebeau was annoyed, and inquired, "How is it that your aunt can find no one to take charge of her?"

"All her acquaintances are in the country," replied Louis; "there is perhaps no one left in town with whom she is so well acquainted as with yourself."

"And I am not going to take her, I assure you," said M. Lebeau.

"That I am quite aware of," said Louis, somewhat offended in his turn; for he probably thought that a little good-nature on the part of M. Lebeau would have settled everything satisfactorily. [Pg 212]

"What a pity!" said Eugenia, in a low tone, glancing timidly at her father: "there is abundance of room in the boat."

"There is no room for any one but ourselves," said M. Lebeau, hastily, for he had overheard or guessed what she said: "and suppose it should upset—do you imagine I want to have to run after Madame Ballier?"

"There is no question about the matter," said Louis, still more displeased; "I am going with my aunt."

"It is the best thing you can do." For the first time M. Lebeau was offended with Louis, because Louis had placed him in the wrong, and, for the first time also, Louis found that M. Lebeau was to blame for his disobliging conduct towards his aunt.

The next day, he would have set out in a somewhat sad mood, had he not chanced to notice his mother's room, which had been left open for the purpose of airing it, as well as his father's, which Marianne had just been putting in order. This recalled his resolution to make every thing pleasant to his aunt, who, on her side, was all good humour. Even Barogo, who, in the transports of his joy, leaped several times upon her, was allowed to do so without being angrily repulsed. Louis, compelled at the fête to give his arm to his aunt, who could neither walk fast nor go far, could not help looking at the various groups of pedestrians so full of vivacity and mirth. People were hastening to the river-side, and crowding into boats, in order to go and dine on an island at a short distance, whence they were to return afterwards to dance in the meadow. Madame Ballier wished to engage a boat, but there was not one to be had, nor even a place in one. Louis saw, with a sigh, that he should be obliged to sacrifice his whole day completely, and Madame Ballier was herself rather disconcerted, not knowing very well how to pass the time. At some distance they perceived M. Lebeau, ready to embark with all his family. Louis observed them without stirring from his place, till M. Lebeau beckoned to him, when he begged permission from his aunt to go and speak to him. [Pg 213]

"Have you a boat?" asked M. Lebeau. Louis replied in the negative. "Confound it!" said M. Lebeau, with a look of annoyance which Louis very well understood; for his boat would have accommodated half-a-dozen more persons.

"Could not your aunt," said M. Lebeau, "join some other party? I see some of her acquaintance yonder. Then you could join us." Louis could not forbear looking in the direction pointed out, but immediately recollecting himself, he replied, "Indeed, Monsieur Lebeau, I could not think of proposing such a plan to her; you must see yourself that it would not be right," and he was turning away, but Eugenia held him gently by his coat.

"Confound it!" repeated M. Lebeau. He stopped, and then suddenly resumed, "Well, then, if it cannot be otherwise arranged, bring your aunt with you; we will try and find a place for her."

Louis hesitated, not knowing whether he ought to accept the invitation. "Go, Charles, and propose it to her," said Madame Lebeau, who had long wished to see an end to the bickerings between her husband and Madame Ballier; and Eugenia, without waiting for a command, set off with Charles to invite Madame Ballier to come into their boat, adding, like a person of discretion as she was, that her mother would herself have come, had she not to take care of her little sister. Madame Ballier made a few difficulties, just sufficient to support her dignity; but Louis came up, took her arm, and cutting short all objections, had no sooner said, "Come, let us make haste, pray," than they were already on the way, Madame Ballier walking as fast as she could, and Charles with Eugenia running and skipping before them with cries of triumph. The bustle of arrival, and of entering the boat, saved Madame Ballier the embarrassment of showing either too much eagerness or too much resentment; and M. Lebeau, in saying to her, "Come, Madame Ballier, place yourself there, quite at your ease," was not more abrupt in his manner than he would have been to one whose society was the most agreeable to him. Madame Lebeau was all kindness and attention, and Eugenia hastened to place under her feet the board which was laid across the bottom of the boat, to preserve the ladies from the wet. Louis, meanwhile, pressed the hand of M. Lebeau, with an expression which moved him. "Come," said the latter, "you are a good [Pg 214]

boy; I am very glad to have given you pleasure;" and off they went.

The day passed delightfully. They dined on the island. M. Lebeau exerted himself to amuse Madame Ballier. Madame Ballier was soon in high spirits, and her gaiety quite accorded with that of M. Lebeau. On rising from table they were the best friends in the world; and M. Lebeau said to Louis, "After all, your aunt is at heart a good sort of woman." "No doubt of it," replied Louis, in a tone which showed that he would not have the good qualities of his aunt called in question. On bringing her amongst his friends, he had taken care that his friends should be agreeable to her. His attentions naturally attracted those of others, and the kind Eugenia seemed to have no thought but that of seconding him. As to Madame Ballier, she was good-nature itself; she remained as late as they wished at the dancing, and scarcely complained of fatigue on their way home, particularly as Louis took care to say something laughable, whenever they came to any bad parts in the road. To crown all, on entering the house, they found a letter announcing the exact hour at which they might expect their friends the next day; and Madame Ballier declared that she would herself carry the intelligence to M. Lebeau, to whom she owed this civility, as he had been so extremely obliging to her. [Pg 215]

The morning came at last; then noon; then four o'clock; then they heard the sound of the carriage; then it stopped. How often had they repeated to themselves that they must restrain their joy to avoid overpowering the invalid; yet, at the moment the doors were opened, and that they rushed down stairs, the excitement was so great, that Barogo began to bark, Robinet took to flight, and Marianne knew not where she was; but all was hushed at the sight of M. Delong, who, still feeble, and deprived of the use of his limbs, required support on all sides, and of Madame Delong, pale and worn out by the sufferings of her husband. The invalid was carried upstairs so gently that even the steps of those who bore him were inaudible. They seated him in an easy-chair, and quietly placed themselves around him. Louis, standing before his father, sometimes raised his eyes to him, and then cast them down as he encountered those of his father examining him attentively. His heart beat, for this first interview with a father who had left him a mere child and now found him almost a man, was to him a great and imposing moment. Madame Delong, with a mixture of anxiety and confidence, looked alternately at her son and at her husband. At length, Madame Ballier, who willingly translated into words these mute scenes, said to the colonel,—"I can assure you, nephew, that you have a very amiable son;" and then addressing herself to Madame Delong; "You cannot imagine, niece, how much he has improved during your absence."

Louis eagerly kissed his mother's hand, whose pale features were now lit up with a flush of joy. This moment convinced her that they had not ceased to understand each other.

[Pg 216] "Louis," said M. Delong, as he held out his hand to him, "your mother has told me much good of you; I know she thinks still more, and I am always disposed to think as she does." Louis, in stooping his head over his father's hand, half bent one knee in this first act of gratitude towards a parent whose approbation he so ardently desired. His eyes then met those of his mother. The necessity of restraining their feelings rendered them only the more intense. This was a moment which could never be forgotten.

M. Lebeau came in, and declared that as soon as the colonel could bear another removal, he must come and establish himself at his house in the country, and in the sequel of his speech he included in his invitation Madame Ballier, who graciously bowed her acquiescence. Madame Delong looked with astonishment at her son, who smiled, and Madame Ballier having quitted the apartment; "This wizard, Louis," he said to Madame Delong, "has absolutely forced me to be on good terms with his aunt;" then turning to M. Delong, he added—"Colonel, this son of yours will be a remarkable man; remember, I tell you so."

How happy was Madame Delong, and with what heartfelt pleasure did the eyes of Louis meet the delighted looks of his mother, which were constantly fixed upon him! Nor was their felicity momentary. Louis found no difficulty in acknowledging to her his faults, because he had repaired them. He confessed how greatly he had felt relieved since, instead of seeking out failings in his aunt, he had been engaged in considering her good qualities, and the respect he owed her of which he had been too forgetful; for children and young people are not sufficiently aware of the harm they do, when, even without talking to others, their thoughts are occupied in examining the defects of those to whom they owe respect, instead of going backward, like the children of Noah, to cover them with their mantle. Louis had learnt by experience, that when we look at things as they really are, it is almost always possible to find something good in persons of whom at first we [Pg 217] were disposed to think only evil. He gradually attached himself to his aunt through his desire of pleasing her; and Madame Ballier, on her side, acquired so strong an affection for him, that she would not suffer any one to blame him or oppose him in her presence; and when he found her in dispute with Marianne or Barogo, he had only to interpose, and all was at an end. This new mode of proceeding has brought back peace into the domestic circle of Madame Delong, and Louis continually experiences the advantage of having acquired the power of self-control, which is the surest means of obtaining influence over others; for he who advances thoughtfully, observing carefully where he steps, instead of following his humour and heedlessly rushing into any mire that may obstruct his path, is sure to become at last the leader of his party.

When the Curé had concluded his story, he raised his head, took off his spectacles, and looking round at the children, said, "Well, now, which would you rather be,—Madame Ballier or Louis?"

"Oh! there is no great difficulty in deciding that question," replied Amadeus.

"You know, Monsieur le Curé," said Paul, "that everybody would like better to be an amiable person than one who is not so."

"I think," remarked Juliana, with her disdainful tone, "it was hardly worth while to ask such a question."

"Indeed," said the Curé; "for my part, I thought that there were persons to be met with occasionally, who would rather not be amiable."

Juliana shrugged her shoulders, and Amadeus burst into a loud laugh.

"Ah! that is Juliana," cried Paul, jumping about, and clapping his hands.

"By no means," replied the Curé; "for I perceive that Miss Juliana is displeased when any one appears to think her less amiable than usual, and this proves that she wishes to be amiable." [Pg 218]

Juliana blushed: she was not sure whether the Curé was speaking in jest or in earnest, for it was perfectly true that many times when her ill-humour was over, she felt sorry for having given way to it, especially in the presence of persons who appeared shocked by it. "Oh, yes!" said Amadeus, "when she has done any thing foolish she is so vexed that it makes her immediately do something else just as bad. Don't you remember this morning, Juliana, throwing your work into Zemira's porringer, because mamma had rung for you twice whilst you were busy undoing a knot in your thread?"

"Yes, and only think! Monsieur le Curé," cried Paul; "she was so angry—so very angry, at having wetted her work with the water in the porringer, that when I picked it up to bring it back to her, she snatched it out of my hands, and scratched my finger so with her needle."

And Paul, excited by the recollection of his misfortune, pointed to the scratch on his finger, whilst Juliana could hardly restrain her tears, so much was she ashamed and grieved that her fault should be made known to the Curé.

"You know very well I did not do it on purpose," she said, in a broken voice; "but Amadeus is always finding fault with me;" and her tears began to flow in earnest.

"Come, calm yourself, my good girl," said the Curé, in an affectionate tone; "these little folks do not know how vexatious it is to a sensible young lady to feel that she has not been quite so reasonable as she ought to have been: but I will teach you how to silence them."

Juliana shook her head with a sigh.

"You shall hear my story," added the Curé, "which shall be for you alone, and we will afterwards discuss the matter."

[Pg 219] The next day the Curé brought the following tale, which he read to Juliana in private, because he perceived, that as she was growing up, the best way of gaining her confidence was to avoid wounding her self-love, more especially in the presence of her brothers, who, in this case, especially, would not have failed to draw comparisons extremely disagreeable to her.

THE PRINCESS.

"This is really insupportable," said Adela, walking, in a hurried manner, from the window overlooking the court, to the terrace which led into the garden.

"What is the matter?" said her mother, who entered at the moment and overheard her.

"Why, you see, mamma," replied Adela, a little confused, "it is past ten o'clock,—(it was five minutes over the hour,)—and papa is not returned from hunting. We shall never get our breakfast."

"Do you think so? that would be very unfortunate, certainly."

"But papa said he would be back by ten o'clock."

"Certainly, five minutes longer are too much to be endured."

"Mamma! I am hungry."

"Well, my dear, you are not obliged to wait for our breakfast; the bread is upon the table, you can take as much as you please; it is surely better to breakfast upon dry bread than bear any longer what is *insupportable*."

Adela made no reply; for she must have confessed that although she was hungry enough to complain, she was not hungry enough to breakfast on dry bread, which would have been a proof that she was complaining about a mere trifle. This was Adela's chief defect. The least disappointment appeared to her, to use her habitual expression, insupportable. For the slightest indisposition or hurt, she would lament, disturb everybody, and require to be pitied,—not that she so much feared pain, but that whatever incommoded or put her the least out of her way, seemed [Pg 220] to her the most grievous and extraordinary thing possible. She must be attended to at the very moment appointed, even things that did not depend on any one must fall out precisely as she desired, or all was wrong. Her nurse used to laugh at her, and say that it was very wrong of the rain to come on the day she wished to go out; for it seemed, in fact, as if every thing must happen

so as to suit her convenience and fancy; nor did she seem able to bear the consequences even of what she had most desired, as soon as they occasioned her the slightest inconvenience. Thus, for example, she would take a long walk, and as soon as she began to feel fatigued, she would complain as if others were in fault. She would repeat fifty times over, "This tiresome château will never come," for she seemed almost to believe that the château ought to come to her. She considered herself much aggrieved when her mother would not permit her to hang on her arm, or lean on her sister's shoulder; for her only concern was for herself. Thus she could not conceive why they should do without the carriage when the horses were engaged in helping to bring home the hay; or why her nurse was not ready to dress her, when she had been sent out on a message to the village. Her little sister Amelia would sometimes say, "Adela is always sure of having some one to love her, for she loves herself so well."

This remark Amelia had probably heard from some of the servants, for those even who were attached to Adela, in consequence of the kindness of her parents, were so provoked by her ill-humour and exacting disposition, that they lost no opportunity of laughing at her expense. Her mother endeavoured to make her feel the absurdity of her conduct, and when she heard her complain of some trifling inconvenience, as for example, of being obliged to fetch her bonnet, which Amelia had taken up stairs to their room, by mistake, she said to her:

"Adela, does it hurt your feet to walk up stairs to your room?"

"No, mamma; but——"

"Or perhaps you are afraid of meeting by the way a wolf that will eat you up?"

Adela would have shrugged her shoulders if she had dared.

"Surely, my dear, it must cause you some great pain, otherwise you would not be so displeased about the matter."

"But, mamma! it puts me out of the way."

"And does it hurt you to be put out of the way?"

"I don't like it."

"Why not, if it does you no harm?"

Adela could find nothing more to say, excepting that "Amelia might have spared herself the trouble of taking it up stairs." Then Madame de Vaucourt would no longer listen to her; she merely took care that no one should suffer from her ill-humour, or pay any attention to it. However, it often happened that the servants, in order to get rid of her, did immediately what she required, and little Amelia who loved above all things to laugh and be merry, and who hated to hear complaints, was extremely afraid of doing any thing that might displease her sister.

Monsieur and Madame de Vaucourt saw very little society in the country. It happened, however, that a Polish Princess, with whom they had been formerly acquainted, having arrived in Paris, sent them word that she would come and spend a week with them. At this news the children were in the greatest commotion. Adela, like most little girls, imagined that a princess must be a very extraordinary personage, and Amelia could not picture her otherwise than in dresses embroidered with gold. Adela had no doubt that her mother would order a new bonnet for her on the occasion, and inquired how she was to dress during the princess' visit. She was astonished when her mother, laughing at her, told her she was to dress just as usual. "What, mamma! even in my common cambric frock for the morning?" Her mother assured her that she saw nothing in her dress that required change. This time Adela was indeed out of humour; she was seriously grieved even, but she dared not show her feelings, because she saw that she should be laughed at. However, during the whole week which preceded the arrival of the princess, she was more than ever inclined to indulge in her habitual complaints, crying out, whenever any one came near her, that they would soil her dress, and screaming aloud if a drop of rain touched her bonnet. Little Amelia said it was because she was afraid it would not be nice enough for the arrival of the princess, and also remarked that her sister, who could never be persuaded to put on a pair of shoes in the least worn down at heel, pretending that she could not walk in them, during this whole week wore none but old shoes, in order to keep the new ones for the arrival of the princess.

At last the princess came. The little girls, who were upon the terrace, were greatly astonished to find her dressed much in the same style as their mamma, but then she had a coat of arms on her carriage, and the liveries of her servants were richly laced; this greatly impressed Adela, who had besides been so long prepared to consider her as a person of great importance, that she could not give up the idea she had formed. When therefore little Stanislas, the son of the princess, trod on her foot, in coming up the steps, Adela, for the first time in her life, bore the accident without a murmur. Nay, more, for when her sister happened accidentally to strike her elbow in passing quickly into the drawing-room after the princess, in order to obtain a better view of her, Adela opened her lips to complain, but immediately checked herself, on finding that the princess looked round at the moment.

Scarcely had they entered the room when the princess' little dog put its paws into Adela's work-basket, threw down her thimble, her scissors, and needle-case, and scampered about the room, carrying her work in his mouth, and shaking it about his ears. Amelia screamed. On ordinary occasions such a misfortune would have been a subject of distress and lamentation for an hour,

but Adela did not give way to anger. She picked up all her things, ran after the dog, but not too hastily, for fear of appearing out of temper, and although when she at last caught him, she was quite crimson with impatience, she did not say a single word to Stanislas, who was laughing heartily at the trouble she had to get back her work. Stanislas asked to go into the garden, and upon Madame de Vaucourt's desiring her daughters to accompany him, Adela did not begin by replying that he could go very well by himself. When in the garden, Stanislas, who was a spoiled child, threw sand into her shoes, without her uttering a complaint, and on her return to the drawing-room the first thing he did was to seat himself in the chair which she had appropriated to herself, and which was a continual source of disputes between her and her sister, whom she would never allow to sit in it, except by Madame de Vaucourt's express command. Amelia, who began to be on familiar terms with Stanislas, pulled him by the arm, saying, "Come away, that is my sister's chair," and Adela, quite ashamed, touched her sister's arm, and whispered to her to mind her own business.

"But he is upon your chair," said Amelia.

"What is that to you?"

"Oh! very well, then I shall sit there after him;" and as soon as Stanislas quitted the chair, she took possession of it, while Adela, in the presence of the princess, did not even think of preventing her. Amelia soon left the chair, to run and take from Stanislas her sister's draught-board, which he was preparing to open. "I want to play with the draughts," cried the little fellow, while Amelia exclaimed in return, "But my sister will not let any one touch them." Adela, quite alarmed at the idea the princess might form of her, hastened to take the draught-board from the hands of Amelia and gave it to Stanislas.

"Very well, then, I shall play with them too," said Amelia. Stanislas began to roll the draughts about on the floor. Amelia at first tried to check him, and then began rolling them still faster herself. When he was tired of playing with them, she wished to persuade him to put them away in order, but he dragged her to the garden, and called out from the door, that they must leave the draughts where they were, as he meant to come back and play with them again. The next day two of them were missing. Amelia came to tell the news, looking terribly frightened, and as no one seemed to listen with much attention, she said, "But they belong to my sister's draught-board?"

"What does that signify?" said Adela quickly.

"Ah! if I had lost them!" said Amelia: but a sign from her sister imposed silence on her.

"Adela seems very gentle and sensible," observed the princess. Adela cast down her eyes, not daring to look at her mother or sister.

All this lasted several days. At table, Madame de Vaucourt's old servant, who was not very alert, and had more to do than usual, could not wait on Adela as attentively as on other occasions, and was surprised not to hear her say sharply, "Chambéri, do you not mean to give me a plate?" He remarked to her, "Gracious! Miss Adela, how gentle and well-behaved you have become lately!" "That is because she is afraid of the princess," said the mischievous little Amelia, laughing. Adela, who began to lose patience, was sometimes on the point of forgetting herself, but Amelia would then take flight and run into the drawing-room, laughing, as she knew that Adela would not venture to scold her there, while Stanislas, of whom she had made an intimate friend, joined in her laughter without understanding its cause. Adela, though burning with impatience, endeavoured to smile lest some indiscretion on Amelia's part might betray to others the cause of her ill-humour. Her temper, however, would have obtained the mastery at last; and she was beginning sometimes to treat Stanislas and the little dog rather harshly, when, fortunately, the princess took her departure. For the first few days afterwards the effect of the habit which Adela had acquired of restraining her temper was still visible; but as Amelia had also got the habit of fearing her less, and laughing at her, it was not long before the old disputes were renewed. They first began about the chair, which Amelia took without ceremony, even removing her sister's work, which had been left there, as if to keep the place in her absence.

Adela became angry. "I thought that fancy was over?" said Madame de Vaucourt.

"Oh, mamma," replied Amelia, "that was only on account of the princess."

Madame de Vaucourt observed that Adela must have felt there was something very absurd in such childishness, since she was ashamed to show it before the princess; and she hoped, therefore, that they should hear no more of it. The argument was unanswerable, and besides Madame de Vaucourt's tone forbade reply. Adela therefore contented herself with leaving the room, slamming the door with all her might. Her mother called her back.

"My dear," she said, "when the princess was here you used to shut the doors gently, and as that proves to me that you can do so without great inconvenience, I beg you will do it in future."

Thus obliged to close the door quietly, Adela went into the garden to exhale her ill-temper, since she saw that it was now determined to allow no excuse for it. During their evening walk, it happened that the path they had to take was very dirty. Adela said it was insupportable.

"Surely," replied her mother, "you do not mean to let that disturb you? The other day when we were walking with the princess, the mud was ten times as bad, yet you never made the least complaint."

"I found it very disagreeable though."

"Why then did you not complain?"

"It was not necessary."

"And is it necessary to-day?"

"Must one never say a word then about what is unpleasant?" replied Adela in a very impatient tone.

"I would ask you that question, my dear; you best know the reasons which induced you to refrain from murmuring whilst the princess was present."

After some reflection, Adela could find nothing better to say than that her mother had enjoined her to behave well before strangers. Madame de Vaucourt observed that she had enjoined her to behave well at all times. "But," she added, "since you think you ought to refrain from complaints in order to maintain a proper appearance before strangers, why did you, when you cut yourself the other day, whilst the princess was present, say that you were hurt, and hold your finger in water, and then keep it wrapped up in a handkerchief for an hour?"

"But, mamma, it pained me very much."

"You believe then that one may complain before strangers of things which give real pain? Suppose now that you had received a letter from the school, saying that your brother was ill, would you not have thought it allowable to show your grief on such an occasion before the princess?"

"Yes, indeed, mamma," replied Adela quickly.

"You see then that when we suffer real evils we may complain of them before strangers, it is only when things are too trifling to deserve notice, that it is ridiculous to make complaints in their presence, and since they do not deserve notice, it is just as ridiculous to complain of them when strangers are not present."

Adela might not perhaps have been convinced by this reasoning, but thenceforth whenever she said that anything was *insupportable*, her mother replied, "You did not find it so when the princess was here." Nor would Amelia suffer herself to be harshly treated without talking of the princess: even Chambéri, if Adela scolded him, would say, "Ah! Miss Adela, I see we want the princess here again." Adela began to be terribly annoyed with this raillery; then she got frightened, lest from its being so often repeated it might at last reach the ears of the princess; so that to avoid these constant allusions to her name, she endeavoured to be less impatient. When she had once become convinced that it was possible to repress her angry feelings, she found it was easy to do so; she perceived that three fourths of the things which vexed her, were in reality of no consequence to her, and that the only real harm she experienced from them, was that which she inflicted on herself by losing her temper. Some years afterwards, she saw the princess again, and could not help blushing a little when she thought of all the taunts which her first visit had brought upon her; but these things were now forgotten by her friends, for Adela had ceased to be a grumbler.

"Well!" said the Curé to Juliana, when he had finished his story. "What do you think of it?"

"I think," replied Juliana, a little discontented, "that she was a very ridiculous girl with her princess."

"What! ridiculous for correcting herself?"

"No, but for doing so on account of the princess."

"When we correct our faults it must be for some motive."

"There are many more important motives," said Juliana a little proudly, "which ought to have induced her to correct herself."

"Since you are so well acquainted with these things, Miss Juliana, let me know them," said the Curé, "and we will make a story about them."

"A story?" asked Juliana, uncertain whether to laugh or be offended.

"Certainly: I shall begin it from the point where Miss Juliana made the discovery that there were many good reasons for inducing her to correct her faults, and I shall terminate it by saying—Miss Juliana, whose only serious fault was that of losing her temper when anything was disagreeable to her, corrected herself completely, and became a most amiable young lady."

At this moment, the two little boys, quite disappointed that the Curé would not admit them to his conversation with Juliana, came to teaze him to tell them at least the story. "You shall hear it," he said, "when you have quite left off tormenting your sister," for in correcting Juliana he would not encourage bad habits in her brothers; then turning towards her, "you know now, Miss Juliana, what you have to do in order to silence them."

"That will not be giving them much trouble, at all events," said Juliana.

"But who will have the advantage?" said the Curé; and Juliana appeared pleased at the idea of being some day free from a defect which made her pass many unhappy moments; besides she felt touched and flattered by the pains which the Curé took to be useful to her.

It began to rain; Juliana, whose bonnet was almost new, was anxious to return to the house; but before they could reach it they had to cross a large flower garden, and in an instant the shower became so violent that it was impossible to escape it. Juliana, in running, caught in some trellis work, which tore her dress and threw her down. The Curé, though not running, came up however in time to assist her in rising, and thinking her much disposed to be angry, said to her, "Providence has soon given you an opportunity, Miss Juliana, of introducing a fine passage into our story."

Juliana had sufficient command over herself to make no reply, and that was a great deal for her, as besides spoiling her bonnet, and tearing her frock, she was covered with dirt from head to foot, and had also hurt her knee in her fall. The Curé gave her his arm to assist her to the house, and she might have remarked that although by touching her he had soiled the sleeve and skirt of his coat, and that on their way she had accidentally splashed some water into his shoe and almost filled it, he did not show the slightest mark of displeasure. When, however, they entered the drawing-room, and Zemira came jumping upon her to testify his joy at seeing her again, she was very near giving him a kick, but she checked herself, and the Curé who observed this, said to her, "I shall write on my tablets that Zemira did *not* receive a kick." If Juliana smiled, it was perhaps against her will, and her brothers, who now entered and began laughing when they saw the plight she was in, would no doubt have felt the weight of her long repressed vexation, if the Curé had not said, "I perceive, Miss Juliana, that these little rogues will not deserve to hear the story of the princess, till you have succeeded in curing them of their faults." Juliana made her escape to her own room, where she changed her dress, not, it is suspected, without more than once showing her impatience to her nurse, who was eagerly busied in assisting her. At all events it is certain that when she came down stairs, and her mother had complimented her on the patience with which she had endured her accident, Juliana could not help blushing.

From that day forward, whenever the Curé came to the château, he asked Juliana if there was anything to be added to the story; sometimes Juliana shook her head, having nothing good to relate; at others, she would smile, because she felt satisfied with herself. On such occasions, she liked to converse with the Curé about the temptations to which she had been exposed; but in recounting them she found them far less serious than they had appeared at the time, and felt more completely how foolish it would have been to have yielded to them. This confirmed her in her good resolutions; and she was further confirmed in them by the satisfaction which her friends testified in her improvement. She afterwards went with her parents to Paris, and remained there three years; during which time she kept up a regular correspondence with the Curé of Chavignat. On her return she was seventeen, and felt happy in the thought that he would find her cured of her childish fault. Amadeus, instead of teazing, now treated her with respect, for she no longer scolded him unjustly; he was consequently accustomed to listen to her when she warned him gently of any fault. Neither did she make any difficulty in relating to him the story of the princess; and Amadeus, when talking of it to the Curé on the day of his return, said, "At all events Juliana was never so disagreeable as that;" and the good Curé rejoiced to find that Juliana's defects were so well concealed that they had even been forgotten. During this time Juliana was looking for her bag, which she had mislaid, and although it was half-an-hour before she could find it, and Paul was all the while tormenting her with a thousand childish tricks, she was not in the least put out of temper.

"Since my story is so well ended, Miss Juliana," said the Curé, when she had found her bag, "pray inform me how you have managed to bring things to so satisfactory a conclusion."

Juliana blushed and smiled as she replied, "By being always, thanks to you, Monsieur le Curé, so full of the desire of being reasonable, that it drove out of my head whatever might have prevented me from keeping my resolution."

The Double Vow.

Henry was a youth of fifteen, which is as much as to say that he had good intentions, but did not always carry them out in practice. He loved his father and his tutor, but he loved his pleasures still more; he would have done anything to make them happy, but he did not give them the greatest of all happiness, that of seeing him docile and well-conducted. The impetuosity of his disposition often drew from those he loved bitter tears, which in the end made his own flow. His life was thus divided between faults and repentance; and his good intentions were so continually rendered useless by reprehensible actions, that his friends at last gave up all hopes of his amendment. His father, the Count of A——, was constantly thinking, with increasing anxiety, of the time when Henry must leave him to enter the university, or to travel. The paths of vice would then present themselves to him under the most seductive aspects, and there would no longer be the hand of a father to restrain or his voice to call him back; he might fall deeper and deeper into error, and return to the paternal mansion with a heart corrupted, despoiled of its purity and elevation, and incapable even of that feeling which is at least the reflection of virtue—

repentance.

The count was of a mild but feeble character, and his health was delicate; the death of the countess, his wife, had mined beneath his feet the ground on which he rested. Henry, on the return of his father's birthday, fancied that he could hear a secret voice saying to him, "The fragile layer of earth which bears thy father, and separates him from thy mother's ashes, will soon crumble away, and he will disappear from thy view without carrying with him to the tomb the hope of thy amendment." This day he shed burning tears; but what avail tears and softened feelings when they do not produce amendment? He went into the park where stood the tomb of his mother, together with the empty sepulchre which, during an illness, his father had caused to be constructed for himself. There, he made a solemn vow to combat the violence of his temper and his love of pleasure; but, alas! I should too deeply grieve my young readers were I to relate in detail how only a few days before that appointed for his going to the university, he was guilty of a fault which cruelly pierced the heart of his unhappy father, already so deeply wounded. The count fell ill, and was confined to his bed without being able to flatter himself with the hope that he might witness the return of his son to virtue, before he was called upon to exchange his melancholy couch for the bed of stone which awaited him in the park.

I will not then describe to you either the fault or the regret of Henry; but in passing a severe judgment on his errors you may as well extend it also to those of which at any time you may yourselves have been guilty. What child can approach the dying bed of his parents, without saying to himself, "Alas! if I have not deprived them of whole years of life, who knows by how many weeks or days I may not have shortened their term? I may perhaps have added to the sufferings which now I would so gladly have mitigated, and my follies may have closed before their time those eyes which, but for me, might still enjoy the light of day!" It is because the fatal consequences of our faults are concealed from view that reckless mortals are so bold in the commission of crimes: man gives free scope to the ungoverned desires of his heart, as he might let loose a set of ferocious animals; he permits them under favour of the darkness to wander amongst mankind; but he sees not how many innocent people are wounded or torn to pieces: he madly flings around him burning brands, lighted by guilty passions, and when he has already sunk into the tomb, the neighbouring houses on which the fatal spark has alighted, burst into flames, and the dense column of smoke hovers over the place of his repose like a monument raised to his shame.

Henry, when all hope of recovery was at an end, could no longer support the melancholy and care-worn aspect of his father: he remained in the adjacent chamber, and there, whilst the count's ebbing life was struggling against repeated fainting-fits, he addressed his silent prayers to Heaven, closed his eyes to the future, and dreaded, like the explosion of a terrible shell, those first awful words, "*He is dead.*" The time, however, came when he must present himself before his father, take leave of him, receive his forgiveness, and give him his promise of amendment.

Alone in the apartment adjoining that of the invalid, he had roused himself from a long and painful stupor: he listened, and heard only the voice of his aged tutor, who had been his father's preceptor also, and who, now seeing the approach of the shadows of death, gave him his blessing in these words: "Go calmly to thy sleep, virtuous soul! May all thy good actions, all thy promises fulfilled, all thy pious thoughts, be gathered around thee at the close of life, as the beautiful clouds of evening gather round the sun when sinking in the west! Smile once more if you can hear my words, and if your dying heart has still the power of feeling." The invalid made an effort to rouse himself from the heavy sleep of his swoon, but he did not smile, for, in the confusion of his senses, he had mistaken the voice of his preceptor for that of his son. "Henry," he stammered in imperfect accents, "I cannot see you, but I hear you. Lay your hand on my heart, and solemnly promise me that you will become virtuous." Henry rushed forward to make this promise, but the preceptor had already placed his hand on the fluttering heart of the father, and, with a sign to the son, said, in a low voice, "I promise for you." The heart of the count was still beating with that slow and languid motion which announces the near extinction of life; he neither heard the vow, nor the friends who surrounded him.

Henry, sinking under this heart-rending scene, and trembling for that which must succeed it, resolved to quit the château, and not return till the most agonizing hours of his affliction should have passed away, but he felt that this amendment must not commence by a secret flight. He therefore announced to his preceptor, "that he could no longer support this dreadful sight, but that he would return in a week," and then he added, in a voice choked with grief, "I shall still find a father here." He embraced him, told him where he meant to seclude himself, and left the house.

With faltering steps he traversed the park. He perceived the two white sepulchres visible through the trees, and approached them. Not daring to touch the yet empty tomb beneath which his father was to repose, he leaned against the one which covered a heart which he had not broken, that of his mother, whom he had lost many years before. On that mother's tomb, and in the presence of God, he renewed his vow of amendment.

Every step he took brought back the memory of his errors; a child led by his father, a pit, a fading leaf, the sound of a church-bell, all awakened the most painful recollections.

He reached the place of his retreat, but after four days of remorse, of tears and of anguish, he felt that he ought to return to the château, and prove the sincerity of his regret for the loss of his father by imitating his virtues. The most noble commemoration that man can offer to those whom he has loved, and whose loss he deplores, is to dry the tears of those who suffer;—a series of good works is the fairest garland that can be suspended over their tombs.

Henry again turned his steps homewards: it was evening when he crossed the park; and the dusky pyramid which surmounted his father's tomb looked through the trees, like one of those grey clouds which float in the azure sky, over the blackened ruins of a village destroyed by fire. Henry stopped: he leaned his head against the cold marble, his face bathed with tears, but there was no gentle voice to bid him "be consoled." No father there to show his affection by tenderly repeating, "I pardon thee." The rustling of the leaves sounded to him as a murmur of anger, and the obscurity of the evening chilled him with the terror of some horrible gloom. However, he recovered himself, and renewed in these words the vow which his tutor had pronounced in his name: "Oh! father! dear father! Do you hear your poor child who is weeping over your grave? Look at me; on my knees I implore your forgiveness, I promise to fulfil the vow which my tutor pronounced for me upon your dying heart. Oh father! father!"—here grief stifled his voice—"will you not give your child some token of your forgiveness!"

A rustling among the leaves was audible, a figure slowly advancing put aside the branches, and said, "I have pardoned you." It was his father! That which is intermediate between sleep and death, a deep swoon, had restored him to life by throwing him into a salutary lethargy. It was the first time he had been out, and he came, accompanied by his ancient preceptor, to offer his thanks on his tomb. Tender father! if thou hadst indeed passed into another world, thy heart could not thus have throbbed with joy, nor thine eyes shed tears of happiness, on the return of a penitent son who came to cast at thy feet a regenerate man! [Pg 236]

I cannot draw the curtain over this affecting scene, without addressing one important question to my young readers. Are you still so happy as to possess a father and a mother, to whom you may afford inexpressible joy by your affection and your good conduct? Ah! if any one of you has hitherto neglected to procure them this felicity, I will take upon me the office of a conscience which cannot fail some day to awaken, and I tell him that a time will come when nothing can afford him consolation if he has to say to himself, "They loved me above all things, yet I have seen them expire without having given them the happiness of being able to say, My child is virtuous."

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Poor José.

On the 15th of May, 1801, an honest, but wretched woman breathed her last, in a garret of one of the highest houses in the Rue Saint-Honoré. She was still young; but misery more than sickness had rendered her condition hopeless. Stretched, since the morning, without food, upon a bed of straw, her strength was nearly exhausted; and she already was speechless, when the cries of her only child, a boy of about six years of age, attracted the neighbours, as well as the portress of the house. Their assistance, however, was of no avail. The poor creature expired without having the power to utter a single word, and her eyes closed in death while still fixed upon her child, whose tears had already ceased to flow on beholding himself thus surrounded. The portress took him in her arms, and kissed him. "Poor little José!" she said. "Poor José!" repeated the neighbours, and taking the child, they left the garret, to go and consult with Dame Robert, a shoemaker, and owner of a shop six feet square, attached to the same house. She was the friend and adviser of all who lived near her: the most trifling circumstances were referred to her superior judgment, and, in the present embarrassment, it was to her that the neighbours turned to decide on the fate of the unfortunate orphan. Before revealing the result of this noisy conference, we will relate in a few words the melancholy, but too common history, of the parents of poor José. [Pg 238]

His father, a native of Annecy, in Savoy, was named Joseph Berr, or José, according to the *patois* of the province. The name, thus corrupted, is so common in that part of the country, that, if ignorant of a man's name, one may call him José, without being often wrong; and, under all circumstances, the appellation is received with pleasure. José Berr, then, possessed the usual qualities of his countrymen; he was honest, intelligent, and energetic. He had lately married, and not finding sufficient work to maintain his little family in comfort, he, like many other ignorant people, committed the folly of going to settle in Paris, after having expended in a long and wearisome journey, one half of his little store. The simple-hearted Berr firmly believed that he should make his fortune; but he soon found that, if a large city does offer great resources, there are also obstacles to be met with on all sides. He wished to station himself at the corner of a street, to do porter's work, but he found the ground already occupied by rivals, who determined to beat him off the field. They would have nothing to say to the new comer, and it was not until he had expended what was to him a considerable sum, in treating the whole party at a tavern, that he obtained the honour of being admitted into their fraternity. But as, at the corner of almost every street, companies of porters are to be met with, similar to the one into which Berr was received, the profits, consequently, were very trifling, while living in Paris is very dear. His wife, on her side, endeavoured to work, but having neither acquaintances nor patrons, and obliged, moreover, to take care of little José, who was just born, she earned still less than her husband. For some years, this unfortunate family thus struggled against poverty, Berr often repenting that he had left his native town, where, if he did not earn much, he was at least sure of being employed and assisted. Finally, at the close of a severe winter, during which he had made redoubled efforts to obtain a subsistence for his wife and child, Berr was seized with inflammation of the chest, and died in four days' time for want of proper care. From that moment, his wife languished, and unable to endure this loss, and the privations of all kinds which were hourly increasing, she terminated her miserable existence, as we have already seen. [Pg 239]

In the meantime, the council of neighbours, assembled at Dame Robert's, deliberated, without coming to any conclusion, upon the fate of little José, who, without troubling himself as to the future, was quietly sleeping in the shoemaker's shop. The charity and the means of most of these women were about sufficient to make them willing to keep the child for a week, but not longer. One had a large family, another was in service. A moment's silence ensued; then a voice uttered the word "Workhouse." "The workhouse!" exclaimed Dame Robert, with indignation. "Send this poor little innocent, the only child of these worthy people to the workhouse! No, you shall not go to the workhouse, my little cherub," she continued, taking up the sleeping José; "I have five children of my own, but you shall share their bread, even if I have to work an hour more morning and evening, I will take care of you until you can provide for yourself; and God will help me."

The idea of the workhouse, so distressing to the poor, had greatly excited Dame Robert, but the kindness of her heart soon confirmed her generous promise. Left alone with the child, after being overwhelmed with praise by her neighbours, who envied her the good action, which they had not themselves courage to perform, she laid the little orphan in the same bed with her own boys, and retired to rest with the satisfaction of having done her duty.

The good done by the poor is more meritorious, and requires more self-denial, than that done by others; for their charity is always at the expense of necessaries, while that of the rich takes from nothing but their superfluity. Dame Robert had recently become a widow. Her small business was tolerably flourishing; but to suffice for the maintenance of a sixth child, she made it a rule to work, as she had said, an hour longer morning and evening. This was a great deal for her, who, with the care of her six children, her work and her business, could only obtain these two additional hours by taking them from her time of rest. [Pg 240]

The produce of this surplus labour was amply sufficient for the maintenance of a child so young as José; besides, Dame Robert was not a woman to spoil him any more than the rest, for all her kindness of heart did not prevent her from displaying the roughness of manner so common to her class; his share of potatoes was the same as those of the two younger children; he occupied the small space left in the poor bed provided for them; and when the six little rogues made too much noise, broke anything, or drank the milk of Dame Robert's favourite cat, the reproofs and thumps which followed these misdeeds were equally distributed between José and his adopted brothers. As to the rest, Providence seemed willing to reward the good shoemaker for her humanity. The labour of the two additional hours was scarcely sufficient to satisfy her numerous customers; and, as she herself observed to her neighbours, who were astonished at her constant cheerfulness, "I laugh to see the people passing and repassing in such a hurry, little thinking that by wearing out their shoes they are helping to make my pot boil."

José was beloved by all his little comrades on account of his gentle and obliging disposition; but he was more especially the friend of Philip, the youngest of Dame Robert's children. Somewhat older than José, Philip protected him in their quarrels, gave him the best of everything, and became seriously angry whenever any one called him the little Savoyard, this appellation appearing to him insulting, without his very well knowing why. However, as the children grew older, Philip had no longer any need of exerting his influence for the protection of José. The intelligence of the latter had developed so much, and rendered him so far superior to his young friends, that he assumed over them that kind of ascendancy which the grossest minds cannot refuse to superior intellect, when it does not interfere with their own self-respect. [Pg 241]

José had just attained his eighth year; he was small for his age, but strong and active. Dame Robert had neither the means nor the capacity to bestow upon him any education beyond some notions of religion, rather limited, it is true, but still sufficient for his age. The whole moral code of this worthy woman was contained in these four sentences, which she was incessantly repeating to her children, and which they always beheld her put in practice:—

"Be thankful to God for the bread he gives you.

"Never tell a lie, even to gain your bread.

"Earn your bread honestly, otherwise it will profit you nothing.

"When you are grown up, return to your father and mother the bread they have given to you."

It may be seen, that if Dame Robert was not possessed of much eloquence, the principles which guided her conduct were just and solid, and that their correct application was sufficient to direct her children in the narrow path they were destined to tread.

"Now, my boy!" she said, one Sunday morning, taking José upon her knees, "we have something besides sport to think about to-day; you are now eight years old, and you may, in your turn, begin to assist me as I have assisted you. There are no idlers with Dame Robert. My eldest boys have begun their apprenticeship; Philip goes of my errands; and of you I intend to make a little shoe-black, who will bring home every night the pence he has earned in the day. See! here is the little box I have bought for you." [Pg 242]

José was enchanted at these words. How delightful to be able, at his age, to earn money, to be useful to his kind mother; for the tenderness of his little heart made him already feel this joy. It must also be owned, that the seductive idea of being almost his own master, and of being able to go through a few streets when executing commissions, delighted him beyond measure, and made him eagerly accept Dame Robert's plan; and he immediately ran to admire his little shoe-cleaning apparatus. Nothing had been forgotten; the box, two hard brushes, two soft brushes, a little

knife, some blacking, some spirit for the tops of the boots, a supply of rags, and a vessel to contain water; these articles comprised the whole of José's new possessions. They were looked at, touched, and turned about, not only by himself, but by the other children also; while José, impatient to make use of them at once, wanted to clean all the dirty shoes in the house, and Dame Robert decided, if he succeeded in this his first attempt, that he should the next day be established sole master of his brushes, on the grand Place du Musée. José, full of zeal, immediately set to work, aided by the advice of his brothers and sisters. The first pair turned out badly: José cut the strings; at the second attempt he gave his hand a great scratch, but this only proved that his knife was good, so he did not cry. Finally, he succeeded very well with the third pair, better with the next, and still better with the succeeding one; so that, when he came to Philip's shoes, which he intentionally reserved till the last, the young novice executed what the apprentices term their *masterpiece*, and it was therefore decided that he might exercise his talents in public.

[Pg 243] It was with difficulty that José closed his eyes that night, and when he did sleep he beheld in his dreams more than one passer-by stop before him to require the exercise of his skill. As I have already said, Dame Robert lived in the Rue Saint-Honoré, near the corner of the Rue Froidmanteau; and, although but a short time has elapsed since the period at which little José commenced his labours, this part of Paris then bore no resemblance to what it is at the present day. The wide and handsome street leading from the Carrousel to the Place du Musée did not then exist, and the Place du Musée itself terminated in a rapid descent at the end of the Rue Froidmanteau, while this narrow, low, and always dirty street was almost the only thoroughfare leading to the Louvre in this direction. Nevertheless it was the one usually taken by the artists who were attracted either by business or pleasure to the Palace of the Louvre, in which at that time, as now, the exhibition of pictures was held, and in which, moreover, were situated the free academy for drawing, the rooms for the exhibition of prize pictures, both of which have been removed elsewhere, as well as the studios of a great number of painters then situated in the immense wing which extends from the Pont-des-Arts to the Pont-Royal. Dame Robert, in her tender solicitude for José, and wishing also to justify her reputation for prudence, had carefully examined all the localities I have mentioned; the inevitable mud which every foot-passenger must necessarily collect in crossing the Rue Froidmanteau, first suggested to her the idea of the useful establishment, of which José was to be the founder, and having with joy discovered that no rival in this department had yet thought of taking advantage of so favourable a site, she hastened, as we have already seen, to inform her adopted son of his new destination.

On the Monday morning, therefore, José commenced his new career. The whole of the little family was awake at an early hour, anxious to accompany and install José in the situation [Pg 244] indicated by Dame Robert, who herself carried the neat little box, while each of the children took possession of one of the utensils. José alone, as the hero of the day, carried nothing; he marched proudly at the head of the merry troop, and never did conqueror take possession of a kingdom with greater satisfaction than was experienced by the little Savoyard, when he established his apparatus in a hollow, some feet in depth, faced by two enormous posts, between which José appeared as in a fortress. Dame Robert, after having strongly cautioned him not to leave his post, and not to eat up at once his provisions for the day, which she had given to him in a little basket, at length made up her mind to leave him, and went away, accompanied by the other children, though not without often looking back. Having reached the end of the Place du Musée, she once more turned round, and saw, with infinite satisfaction, that José was already engaged in cleaning some boots, which a lazy servant had brought to him, in order to save himself the trouble of doing them. With a contented heart, the good woman then redoubled her speed, and returned home to resume her ordinary occupations; but the image of José frequently presented itself to her imagination, and interrupted her labours. The day seemed to her very long, and she had to exercise her self-denial, in order to resist the temptation she felt to go and take a distant peep at him, to ascertain how he was getting on; but not to give her more credit than she deserved, it must be told that she turned away her eyes when, at lunch-time, Philip, stealing by the side of the houses, bent his steps towards the Place du Musée. When he returned empty-handed, and with a smiling countenance, the kind soul became quite easy, and resumed her needle with more activity than ever.

At the close of this day, so memorable to the little family, the moment José was perceived in the distance, dragging along his new possessions, all the children ran to his assistance; José, [Pg 245] throwing himself into the arms of Dame Robert, commenced a confused recital of his wonderful adventures; then, suddenly interrupting himself, he drew from his pocket and presented to her, with inexpressible pride, twelve sous, carefully tied up in a bit of rag. This was the result of his day's labour, and José, encouraged by this first attempt, and having almost completely overcome the timidity natural to his age, like all children who are compelled by necessity to work while very young, he devoted himself with so much assiduity and intelligence to his new calling, that he soon became the most skilful, as well as the smartest little shoeblack in the whole neighbourhood. As he grew older, his earnings increased; he sometimes went of errands, called hackney coaches, &c., &c., while his gentle disposition and pleasing manners gained for him the esteem of all who lived in the neighbourhood of his ambulatory establishment. Besides, José was industrious and docile, and not given to mischief, neither was he greedy, as is sometimes the case with children even better brought up than he could have been, and his good conduct was all the more remarkable from his being entirely his own master during the whole of the day, while fate, as if for the very purpose of trying him, had placed objects of temptation in almost every street through which he had to pass on his way backward and forward. One of these objects was an attractive gingerbread shop, another, a troop of little urchins, who endeavoured to entice every

child that passed by to join in their follies. It really required strength of mind, and even what at José's age may be termed virtue, to withstand these terrible rocks, but he was always triumphant, and if he did sometimes cast a longing look towards the somersets and tricks of these little vagabonds, or upon the delicious piles of Madame Legris' crisp gingerbread, his daily treasure was always faithfully carried home to Dame Robert, and never had the mud-soiled pedestrian to complain of having to wait a single minute for the services of the useful shoeblack. [Pg 246]

As our reputation commences with ourselves, and is almost always dependent on our own will, José, who was truly anxious to do what was right, had already obtained for himself a very flattering one, considering his age; and we will now relate the good fortune which this reputation was the means of procuring for him at the expiration of a year.

In addition to Madame Legris', and many other enticing shops, there was, at that time, upon the Place du Musée, one which kept an excellent assortment of colours, canvasses, and everything connected with painting, and which the artists and students of that period may remember to have been well acquainted with. M. Barbe, the owner of this establishment, was a kind-hearted and excellent man, very intelligent, and very active in his business. His shop was always filled with artists and young men engaged in painting, the proximity of a great number of studios rendering it convenient for the purchases perpetually required in this pursuit. Moreover, the length of time it had been established, the confidence inspired by the worthy owner, and the advantages it offered to the poorer class of students, had rendered it a kind of rendezvous for that little world of its own which we term artists. Barbe kept in his lumber-rooms those inferior pictures which could not obtain a purchaser, and with which, otherwise, the unfortunate authors would not have known what to do; he supplied one with colours, for a certain time, gratis; lent a palette or an easel to another; had a kind word for all, and took as much interest in them as if they had been his own children. Madame Barbe seconded him wonderfully, and shared his tastes and occupations with a degree of skill and intelligence worthy of all praise; but, as there is nothing perfect in this world, Madame Barbe will not be offended if I reveal two little defects, of which, besides, I have since learned, that she has corrected herself. She was a little too fond, to use a common expression, of *storming* at those about her; and she possessed such an amazing volubility of tongue, that it was difficult to keep pace with her, so that she almost always remained master of the field. Still young and very agreeable, she exercised great influence over her excellent husband, while she possessed sufficient attraction for her numerous customers, who were amused with her eloquence without suffering from her irritability. Her usual victims were her husband, her little girl of four years old, and a man of about forty, named Gabri, M. Barbe's head assistant and confidential clerk. Naturally taciturn, Gabri had become still more so since the marriage of his patron with this eloquent dame. He had remarked, with his usual discrimination, that when these fits of passion commenced, the very mildest answer was only pouring oil upon the fire; he maintained, therefore, in such cases, the most perfect silence; and Madame Barbe, satisfied with this evidence of the force of her arguments, went elsewhere to exercise her power. Gabri was nevertheless esteemed by her, as by every one else; and it is even asserted, that in one of her better moments she acknowledged, that a great portion of the prosperity of their business was due to his intelligence and integrity. He therefore, with a few exceptions, fared pretty well in the house; not to mention, that Barbe himself treated him altogether as a friend. Still, poor Gabri could not overcome the melancholy induced by irreparable misfortunes. In the course of six weeks he had lost his three children and their mother, by the small-pox; and, even after the lapse of many years, this man, apparently so cold, shed tears whenever he spoke of his poor children. "They were three fine boys," he would say, but could not finish. With a heart so sensitive, it was impossible for him to behold without interest our amiable little José. He carefully watched his disposition and conduct for a long time, became more and more attached to him, and the fortunate child thus acquired by his own merits alone a prudent and sincere friend. [Pg 247] [Pg 248]

But it was not enough for Gabri that he should love José with his whole heart; he wished also to take measures for his future welfare; and after repeatedly talking over the matter with Madame Legris, who also took a great interest in his young *protégé*, they commenced their innocent plot in the following manner.

Madame Barbe entertained some partiality for Madame Legris, who, wishing to maintain a good understanding with her neighbours, listened more patiently than others to the long speeches of this chatterbox. Besides, she often gave cakes to the little girl, a generosity which Madame Barbe could not find it in her heart to blame, notwithstanding her desire to discover faults. The friendly vender of gingerbread went, therefore, one morning, to call upon her at the hour she was sure to be in the best humour, her shop being then filled with purchasers. "Well, neighbour," she said, on entering, "how goes on business this week?"

"Pretty well, pretty well," replied Madame Barbe, (all the while dexterously filling and capping some bladders of colour, an occupation which she always reserved till the middle of the morning, in order to display the grace of her pretty fingers,) "but sit down, neighbour; I am really very glad to see you.... Ah! good morning, sir; you shall be attended to in a moment.... Pussy, my darling, here is Madame Legris, who has brought you some cracknels.... Be so kind as to take a seat, ladies.... Barbe, bring some canvasses.... Yes, ladies, they are excellent and very fine, and have been made these twelve months and more.... Your servant, sir; I know what you want.... Gabri, bring some pencils to this gentleman.... Naples yellow and white? In a moment, my little friend.... Gracious! what a crowd! what confusion! and only myself to attend to it all! for as to my husband and Gabri ..." And Madame Barbe shrugged her shoulders in a most significant manner. [Pg 249]

"Really, friend," resumed Madame Legris, "you seem to me ..."

"What, sir!" exclaimed Madame Barbe, in a higher tone, "those brushes good for nothing!... Brushes carefully sorted, and made with brass wire.... Just look at them a second time, sir. Here's a glass of water. Good heavens! those brushes ill made!"

"Pooh!" exclaimed the discontented purchaser, "I don't want any water;" and putting the brush into his mouth, "I see," he repeated, "that they divide;" and he threw them on the counter with contempt.

"You have them, however, from the best makers, my dear friend," said Madame Legris, wishing to maintain the choleric shopkeeper in good humour in order to attain her object; "and doubtless ..."

"Doubtless!" resumed Madame Barbe, becoming scarlet, and biting her lips; "the gentleman, doubtless, knows nothing about the manufactory of Dagneau; so it's no use talking. Get out of my way, you little stupid," she said, addressing her daughter, at the same time giving her a slap. "Yes, five sous for every dip-cup[2] you bring me to clean, young gentleman, and quite enough, I think; other people only give four. Mercy! Gabri: you bring so many things at a time, that you will let them all fall." And whether Madame Barbe's quick eye really saw what was going to happen, or whether the sharp tones of her voice startled poor Gabri, certain it is that he let fall the whole of his load in the middle of the shop. His mistress, greatly irritated, rushed forward, and she might, perhaps, have even ventured to have added acts to words had not the entrance of a new comer suddenly changed the expression of her features.

This was a distinguished artist, one of M. Barbe's best customers, who also affected to be an admirer of his wife, at whose expense he amused himself, by deluding her with the hope that he would one day paint her portrait.

"What's the matter now? Here is truly a fine subject for a picture;" he exclaimed, as he beheld the crayons and other articles floating in a sea of oil, while Gabri, with folded arms, stood petrified, and Madame Legris was engaged in restraining the infuriated mistress of the establishment. "It might be called the Broken Cruse. But do not spoil your pretty face, my charming model. My picture will be completed in a week, and then we will commence the sketch of our portrait; but really your complexion is so delicate, so transparent, that we shall have to use all the resources of our art, and I have a great fancy to try it on wood. Have you any panels at hand, as, if so, we will choose one at once."

Whilst Madame Barbe, now calmed and delighted, resumed her seat with an affected air; the painter, half reclining upon the counter, amused himself with sketching a small figure with a piece of white chalk, while he related all the important news of the artistic world. "I told you, Madame Barbe, that the number of fools was increasing; pictures of ten feet are nothing to these gentlemen now. There is G——, whom you know very well; he has just hired the tennis-court at Versailles, in order to commence his picture, as no studio would be large enough for it; and this they call painting."

"Ah! Ah!" said Madame Barbe, smiling, "we shall see that at the Exhibition. But what has become of that young man, a pupil of Monsieur V——'s, so talented, and so admired? I never see him here now."

"Lost! utterly lost!" replied the artist, with a malicious smile. "He gave the greatest hopes, but his master's false system has ruined him. That man will never turn out a first-rate pupil; I have said so for a long time past.... But, Madame Barbe, they are not bringing me anything I want. How is it that you have not more attendance for your numerous customers? It is very strange, upon my word."

"Indeed, neighbour!" said Madame Legris, who had been watching for an opportunity of getting in a word, "Your business is getting so extensive that it will be impossible for you to attend to it all yourself, notwithstanding your activity. Were I in your place, I should take an assistant—a child, for instance, that would not be much expense."

"You are right, neighbour," said Barbe, who at that moment joined them. "Gabri is overwhelmed with messages and work, and an errand boy would be very useful."

Madame Barbe looked at her husband, and then at Gabri: but the latter continued quietly to grind his colours, and Barbe saying no more, the desire of contradicting them passed away almost immediately; and this capricious woman, turning graciously towards the artist, begged him to give his opinion upon a subject of so much importance.

"Certainly!" he replied. "It is a good thing; you are quite right;" and he had already forgotten the matter in question.

"Since it is decided," resumed Madame Barbe, who now calculated that she should have an additional person to exercise her authority over, "tell me, neighbour, whether you happen to know a lad likely to suit us. You know as well as we do what we require."

"As to that," replied Madame Legris, concealing the pleasure she felt at this question, "it is a difficult matter. I am not sure that I know any one at this moment who would suit you in every respect.... Yes! stop; I know a poor boy.... But no, it is impossible; his mother would not consent...."

"His mother would not consent!" exclaimed Madame Barbe, offended at the supposition. "What! not consent to his entering a house like ours, to be my husband's *pupil*, to live as we do! And for all this, what do we ask in return? Almost nothing, in truth! only to be intelligent, faithful, obedient, active, industrious, and not greedy, nor awkward;" and as she named the last of the required qualifications, she glanced towards Gabri, who bent his head in silence. "In fine, Madame Legris, represent these advantages to the child's parents, and I cannot think that they will hesitate for a moment."

"They will not be so foolish," replied Madame Legris, "besides, this boy has only adoptive parents. It is poor little José, the pretty little Savoyard, who is established down yonder, between those two great stones. His is a singular history, and when you know it...."

"You shall relate it to me at our first sitting," interrupted the painter, taking up his hat; and the hope of being able to relate an interesting story, increased the desire which Madame Barbe then felt of possessing José. The kind-hearted Madame Legris therefore went away perfectly satisfied with the success of her project, and if Gabri's conversation was still as laconic as usual, a close observer might have seen him several times during the day rub his hands and smile, a thing quite extraordinary for him.

The day after this conversation, Dame Robert, dressed in her Sunday clothes, and holding our little hero by the hand, called upon Madame Barbe. The story was long, and the dialogue which followed it still longer: and it may be presumed that Madame Barbe's eloquence was more flowing and animated than usual; but, as her auditors did not take the trouble to report it, we can only inform our reader that it was agreed—firstly, that José should serve Madame Barbe during the space of seven years, without receiving any remuneration whatever; and that, after that time, if his conduct was good, he should be paid a small sum monthly. Secondly, that the said José should, during his seven years' apprenticeship, be lodged and boarded by his new masters, and that Dame Robert should take charge of his clothing. [Pg 253]

Every thing being arranged to the satisfaction of both parties, José was immediately set to work, and from the first moment displayed a degree of intelligence which greatly delighted the kind-hearted Barbe and much astonished his difficult partner. He had a wonderful faculty for remembering where the different articles were kept, and, if he happened to hesitate for a moment, Gabri, from the extremity of the back shop, where he was grinding his colours, would quickly make him a sign, which the intelligent child immediately understood. Poor Gabri dared not display all his joy, for his tormenting mistress would have punished him by scolding the innocent José; but, taking advantage of a moment when the latter came to fetch something from where he was, he would cast a rapid glance towards the counter, and, clasping the child in his arms, press him with transport to his heart. Madame Barbe would turn her head, but Gabri's grindstone was already in motion, while little José was at the top of the ladder.

In the evening, the mistress ordered Gabri to conduct the *apprentice* to his room. Oh! how delightfully did these words fall upon José's ears! he who had hitherto possessed only one-third of the dark loft in which the brothers slept! He was going to sleep alone, and in his own room! After having gaily mounted seven stories, Gabri opened a little door, and entered a very small room which led to the roof of the house, and adjoined M. Barbe's lumber-room. "A window! a window!" exclaimed José, on entering; "Monsieur Gabri, I have a window!" and he clapped his hands, and jumped for joy. Gabri showed him his bed, which was of fresh straw, covered with a sheet; the little fellow was in such a state of joyous excitement that it was with difficulty his protector could induce him to lie down. [Pg 254]

José was roused from his pleasant slumbers by the first rays of the morning sun, when he was gladdened by another agreeable surprise, on discovering that the walls of his garret were smooth and perfectly white, for it had just undergone repair, and was then in a state of cleanliness rarely met with in such places; but José, little sensible to this advantage, was very much so to the cheerful appearance of his room, and especially to the facilities which those white walls afforded him for continuing his first attempts in art. For it must be known that José, in the leisure moments left by his former occupation, used often to exercise his talents by daubing with his blacking and clumsy brushes upon stones or bits of wood a thousand figures of his own invention. What pleasure, then, for him to be able to adorn his room with drawings of soldiers and horses! and he was already on the point of commencing operations when he heard the voice of Madame Barbe, and hastened to obey the summons.

For a whole week the house resounded with nothing but the name of José. The poor boy, constantly watched and tormented, was subjected to a very severe test; but the natural goodness of his disposition and his indefatigable zeal, softened by degrees the severity of his mistress. Besides, his kind friend Gabri, by his judicious advice, saved him from many an act of thoughtlessness, and Madame Barbe scolded so often that her husband never scolded at all. José was, therefore, good, beloved, and happy. His taste for painting was increased by the conversations which he daily heard in this house; still, perhaps, this taste might never have been developed, had it not been for a singular occurrence, and his genius, like the fire shut up in a rude stone, might never have emitted a spark, had not some one struck upon it. [Pg 255]

Amongst the numerous houses to which José was sent with the orders executed by M. Barbe, there was one at which he was received with especial kindness, and which, notwithstanding all his prudence, he found great difficulty in leaving when his errand was performed. This was the house of one M. Enguehard, a respectable man, in only moderate circumstances, who, being passionately fond of art, had exercised his talents in engraving until compelled to discontinue, by

weakness of sight. Married, late in life, to an amiable woman; who made him happy, their constant occupation was the education of their only son, a lad about two years older than José. Francisco, as he was named, had from his birth been destined to be a painter, and being brought up with this idea, he manifested both facility and power; but naturally of a lively, volatile temperament, and still too fond of amusement, he worked but little, and his progress was consequently not rapid. Like many other children he did not reflect on the sacrifices which his father's slender means obliged him to make for his education, and he lost or destroyed, without scruple, books, maps, mathematical instruments, and other expensive articles, which his parents could only replace by depriving themselves of some personal comfort.

Francisco was nevertheless of a good disposition, and when he chose to make an effort, his progress was so astonishing, that his kind parents forgot his past faults. M. Enguehard was at first inclined to restrain the liking which his son manifested for José, fearing lest this child, whom he naturally supposed had not been very carefully brought up, might lead his son to contract some bad habits; but feeling himself an interest, which it was indeed difficult not to feel, on seeing the boy's frank and amiable countenance, he made inquiries about him, and what he learned was so satisfactory that it removed all apprehension with regard to his intimacy with Francisco. The two boys grew daily more and more attached to each other, and José divided all his leisure moments between Dame Robert and his beloved Francisco. Philip, however, was not forgotten; but José, always beyond his years in mental powers, preferred the advantage of being enlightened by the conversation of M. Enguehard and Francisco, to the pleasure of being admired by Philip. His ideas became enlarged and elevated; and, grieved at his own ignorance, he envied Francisco the happiness of an education from which he profited so little.

One day when the latter had thrown aside, in a passion, a book which wearied him, José picked it up, and, turning it round, looked at it with a sigh.

"You are very fortunate," said Francisco, "in not knowing how to read or write, for you are not forced to learn lessons."

"Ah!" replied José, "that is my greatest grief: it is you who are fortunate in having the opportunity of learning. Oh, if you would but teach me to draw!"

"Yes, yes!" cried Francisco, enchanted at the idea: "I will be your master; but take care if you do not do well—upon the knuckles, my lad!"

José smiled at this threat, and M. Enguehard, who entered at the moment, having approved the project, it was decided that Francisco should give José a lesson every Sunday, and of an evening during the week whenever José could obtain permission to go out; but Francisco thought no more about rapping knuckles. José comprehended so readily and advanced so rapidly, that, in order to maintain the proper distance between master and pupil, his friend was obliged to set seriously to work, and this little experiment led him to make a few salutary reflections. M. Enguehard, struck by José's astonishing aptitude, neglected no opportunity of maintaining an emulation so advantageous to both the boys. He often talked to them about the celebrated masters of the old school, and related to them portions of their history. "Almost all of them," he said, "displayed their genius from childhood. Lanfranc, one of the most distinguished pupils of the Caracci, being in the service of Count Scotti, covered all the walls with charcoal drawings, his paper being insufficient to contain the fertility of his imagination. Philippe de Champagne, a native of Brussels, but classed amongst the painters of the French school, and who died President of the Academy, used, when about eight or nine years of age, to copy every picture and engraving that came in his way; and Claude Gelée, called Lorraine, a real phenomenon, such as the history of the arts can offer but few examples of, could learn nothing while at school; his parents therefore apprenticed him to a confectioner, with whom he succeeded still worse. Not knowing what to do, he went to Rome, and, unable to find employment, he entered by chance the service of Augustin Tasso to grind his colours and clean his palette. This master, in the hope of obtaining some advantage from his talents, taught him some of the rules of perspective; and Lorraine, devoting himself entirely to painting, passed whole days in the fields sketching and painting, and became the celebrated and almost unique landscape painter, whose works we still daily admire in our Museum."

José had listened to this recital with an attention which scarcely permitted him to breathe. When M. Enguehard had finished speaking, a silence of a few moments ensued, which José at length interrupted by rising suddenly and crying out with all his might, "Why not? why not?"... He then blushed when he beheld Francisco and M. Enguehard laughing heartily. M. Enguehard sent them to play, and, reflecting upon the words which had escaped from José, he felt tempted to direct him into a career to which everything seemed to call him; but the kind-hearted engraver was poor; to charge himself with José was impossible; and then, was he not wrong in diverting the child's mind from the ideas that were suitable to his present position? Again he hesitated. "Good God! what a pity!" he repeated; "but if I should render him unhappy without being able to assist him!" And from that day M. Enguehard related no more stories, nor gave himself any further anxiety about the lessons which Francisco continued to give to José. But all precautions were now useless; José was born a painter; Claude Lorraine incessantly recurred to his mind, and for want of fields, which he was denied the privilege of beholding, he sketched horses and figures in every corner, and sought subjects for composition in the historical anecdotes which Francisco related to him. Francisco, however, could only teach him the elements and mechanical details of art, things which José's genius rendered almost useless to him. Drawing even was not enough; he burned with a desire to paint, and found a secret pleasure in touching palettes and colours.

Examining with attention the occupations of the various painters on whom he waited with parcels, his imagination became excited, and when alone in his garret, he grieved at being only able to work with black and white. He took good care, however, to keep from Madame Barbe the knowledge of his favourite amusement. It was at the expense of his sleep that he exercised his talents; and his friend Gabri, his only confidant, did not feel tempted to betray his secret.

But a circumstance occurred, which all his prudence could not have foreseen, and which, by enlightening Madame Barbe, cost poor José many tears.

[Pg 259] We have already spoken of Barbe's kindness in giving room in his house, not only to those pictures, whether good or bad, which their authors had no convenience for keeping; but also to the colour boxes of the young men employed in copying in the Museum; as well as to the studies which the pupils were very glad to bring under the notice of the crowd of artists, who were continually congregated in the shop of the honest colour vender. Before being admitted to compete for the great prize for painting which annually sends to Rome, and maintains there, at the expense of the government, the person who has the good fortune to obtain it, the students have a first trial with a full-length figure, and afterwards with painted sketches; and the six or eight most successful competitors then take their places, and commence the pictures for which the prize is to be awarded. It may easily be conceived how great is the importance attached to these competitions by those young and poor students, who behold in them the termination of their elementary course, and the possibility of pursuing their studies on a more extended scale. One of the most promising pupils of that time had just obtained the prize for the figure. As Barbe had assisted him in various ways, he was anxious to make him a participator in his joy, and place in his hands his triumphant work. He arrived, therefore, followed by a dozen of his companions and rivals, who, the first moment of disappointment over, usually participate cordially in the delight of the victor, especially when they happen to study under the same master. José was a witness to the transports of these young men, and heard the praises lavished by the spectators on the fortunate student. Agitated by a thousand varied emotions, jealous, but with that noble and rare jealousy which made Cæsar weep at the feet of Alexander's statue, he would doubtless in his [Pg 260] excitement have drawn upon himself a severe reprimand from Madame Barbe, had not Gabri whom nothing could divert from his silent watchfulness, led him away, in spite of himself.

"Ah!" said José, with emotion, "Do you see that young man? He is only fifteen.... Claude Lorraine was a confectioner.... And I, what am I?... I feel that I, too, have something in me!..."

Gabri knew nothing about Claude Lorraine, but he exerted himself with so much kindness to pacify José, that he at length succeeded, by means of a positive promise, to satisfy, at least, the most attainable of his wishes. The Exhibition had just opened, and José from his station in Madame Barbe's shop, could see successive crowds of amateurs thronging the entrance to the Museum; and he was constantly hearing the merits of the different paintings discussed. How, then, could he help ardently longing to examine for himself those interesting works? He had once ventured timidly to approach the door of the Museum, but the dark scowl of the porter, and a slight movement of his cane, warned him to make a precipitate retreat; not that working-men of all kinds, and soldiers, cannot without difficulty gain admission into these exhibitions; but it must be owned that poor José, at his age, and in his linen pantaloons, besmeared with every colour in M. Barbe's establishment, and in his tattered and scanty jacket, presented an appearance by no means calculated to soften the rigour of so proper a gentleman. Having then confided his grief, both to his young and his old friend,—to Francisco and to Gabri,—the affair was settled in the following manner. Francisco, with his father's permission, presented his little companion with a coat, and a pair of nankeen trousers, which he had laid aside, and which could easily be made to fit José. Philip, who had for some time been working at a tailor's, eagerly offered his services. [Pg 261] Dame Robert purchased a pretty piece of stuff, which her daughter cut out for a waistcoat; and Gabri declared that he would take upon himself to provide the hat. José burned with impatience to enjoy the generosity of his friends; but the requisite preparations necessarily took some time, for the little workers had more zeal than capacity; and, besides, they could not neglect their ordinary tasks. It was necessary, therefore, to wait, and José, finding himself alone in the shop, and wishing to divert his mind, determined to take another view of the picture which had made so deep an impression on him, and which the young painter, according to custom, had left for some time with M. Barbe. It was hung at a considerable height; José mounted a ladder, to get it down; but, thinking he heard the voice of the terrible Madame Barbe, he hastily replaced it, and, in his precipitation, brushed against the still fresh paint with his sleeve, and rubbed out a portion of the ground and almost the whole of one leg. Recovering from his fright, and finding no one approach, he again raised his eyes: judge of his dismay, on beholding what had occurred! What was to be done? What would become of him, if the young painter happened to come for his picture? What would Madame Barbe say? for, if questioned on the subject, he would not utter a falsehood. Besides, all evasion would be as useless as it would be wicked, as such an act of carelessness could have been committed by no one but him. The poor child was in despair; he already saw himself ignominiously turned out of the house; but time pressed, and he must discover some means of repairing the mischief. He could find but one. He ran to hide the picture in his room, and was presumptuous enough to rely upon his own ability to repair the fatal blemish.

It may be thought, that so daring an idea was but little likely to enter the mind of a child only thirteen years of age; but José, as we have before observed, was born with extraordinary talents [Pg 262] for painting; besides, he knew nothing else; he occupied his thoughts with nothing else;—all that he had seen and heard from his earliest childhood had reference to painting. Neither is it without

example, that remarkable talents—especially when constantly directed towards one object—have produced, even in extreme youth, very astonishing results. Some years ago at Florence, when there happened to be a fall of snow of a few inches thick, a very unusual occurrence in that climate, the children of the common people might be seen gathering it together into great heaps, forming it into giants in the principal square, and in the streets into colonnades and statues, and even into groups, in which artists themselves could not but acknowledge a remarkable imitation of the great works in the midst of which they were born; so much does the influence of what they hear and see act upon the minds and dispositions of children, and give, as a mere starting-point, to some of those who live in the atmosphere of art, that which to others less favoured proves almost a goal. It must also be remembered, that the work on which José was about to try his skill was that of a youth of fifteen, and, consequently, far from being faultless.

He had seen enough of painting to feel at no loss in charging a palette; but he wanted colours, brushes, &c.; and José well knew that, though in the midst of everything of this kind, he had no right to touch any. He therefore resolved to have recourse to the friendship of Francisco, and to ask him for the money necessary to make his purchases at a distant shop. It may perhaps appear singular that his friend Gabri did not come to his aid; but the absence of this guardian angel had been the cause of his misfortune as there was no friendly glance or hand to warn, or raise him up. Gabri, for the first time during the whole fifteen years that he had lived with M. Barbe, had asked leave of absence for a few days, in order to visit his native place; his request was so reasonable, that it could not be refused, but Madame Barbe's ill-temper was at its height when she beheld him depart without being able to obtain a single word of explanation relative to the motives which had induced him to undertake this unexpected journey.

Gabri was to return on the Sunday evening, the day following that which had proved so fatal to poor José; but to wait for his coming was impossible, this same Sunday being the only time that the poor boy had at his own disposal. He therefore hastened to M. Enguehard's, and having fortunately found Francisco alone, he confided to him his embarrassment. Francisco shuddered at his friend's danger, but was almost as much terrified at the projected reparation as at the accident itself; nevertheless, at the urgent entreaty of José, who feared lest his absence should be remarked, he gave him all the money he had, amounting to four francs ten sous. This was sufficient for José's purpose; for, as may be easily imagined, there was no question of easel, nor colour box, and he made so much haste, that his purchases were completed and hidden before Madame Barbe had once asked for him.

José was tormented during the whole of the day by the idea of his daring undertaking; and his preoccupation prevented him from being as much delighted as he would otherwise have been with his new clothes, which Philip, with an air of importance, brought home tied up in a handkerchief, in tailor fashion, under his arm. The poor boy, who expected great praise and many thanks, was somewhat disconcerted at the indifference with which José examined an *invisible* seam, which in spite of this qualification was even more easily distinguishable than any of the others. He therefore went off, persuaded that José was ill, for he could never attach an unkind motive to his conduct.

José, awakening with the earliest dawn, at first felt nothing but the delight of possessing colours and brushes. He prepared his rude palette with extreme care, and made this important operation last as long as he could; but when all was ready, the difficulty of commencing vividly presented itself to his mind, and caused him so much anxiety, that he remained motionless, not daring to touch a brush, when all at once a fortunate inspiration restored his courage. "I have to paint half a leg," he said to himself. "Well, then, why not copy my own? The greatest masters use models, and paint everything from nature; I can easily place one foot without inconveniencing myself. We shall see if with this assistance I cannot manage." And José commenced by cutting a caper; then looking at the figure, the legs of which, fortunately for him, were outstretched, he placed one of his own in nearly the same position, and with a trembling hand gave the first touch. By degrees that fever of enthusiasm, which always fills the mind in every kind of composition, took possession of him; he became excited; he fancied himself drawing like Raphael, colouring like Rubens; and his hand, so timid at first, worked with freedom and facility; he felt no further embarrassment, and did not cease until he had completely repaired the mischief.

Poor José, p. 264.

His task ended, José went down, to watch for an opportunity of replacing the picture without being observed. It was already late, the whole of the family were going out for a walk; and Madame Barbe was in such good humour, on account of a pretty cap which her husband had just given her, that José had no difficulty in obtaining leave to go to the Exhibition, on the understanding that he was to be back before dinner-time, to arrange certain things, which Gabri's absence had left in disorder. José, with a light heart, had no sooner lost sight of them than he hastened to hang up the picture, and smiled, as from beneath he beheld the fine effect of his work. Having now nothing to think of but the delight of possessing his new clothes, and, especially, of being privileged to pass the threshold of that door, so long closed against him, he went out, fastening with some pride the metal buttons of his coat, and entered the Exhibition, eyeing the burly porter, as he passed, with a confident air.

At that period, the noble staircase, with its double banister, which we admire at present, was not built; the square saloon of the Exhibition was reached by a side door, leading from the Place du Musée, and a staircase, which now only serves as a private entrance. This entrance was neither so convenient nor handsome as the present one; but still it was princely in its dimensions, and especially so to the unaccustomed eyes of poor José, who had never seen anything more splendid than the church of Saint Roch. Those wide steps of white stone; those walls covered with pictures, for they reached almost to the first landing-place; the tumult of the crowd which pressed forward, carrying him along with it,—all combined to throw José into a kind of bewilderment. He looked without seeing, walked without thinking, and, driven onwards by the crowd, at length found himself at the door of the great gallery of the Museum, which is left open during the Exhibition, but which at that time contained only the works of the old masters. At the sight of this immense gallery, magnificent even to those who are familiar with magnificence, José stood struck with astonishment, while an involuntary feeling of respect caused him to take off his hat. There were but few visitors in that part of the Museum; José breathed more freely, and being able to examine without being jostled, began deliciously to taste the pleasure he had so often longed for. Various pictures attracted his attention; but too ignorant to divine their subjects, there was something wanting to his enjoyment. But when, at last, he came to that picture of Raphael's, known by the name of *La Vierge à la chaise*, the figures could easily be recognised, and José found himself, so to speak, in the midst of his habitual acquaintances; he was able to make comparisons, having seen other church paintings; and his natural taste was so pure, and he had so remarkable an instinct for appreciating the master-pieces of art, that at the sight of this admirable production, an emotion hitherto unknown took possession of him. The more he looked, the more complete did the illusion become; the face of the divine infant seemed to become animated, and to smile upon him. José, leaning against the balustrade, extended his arms and smiled too, and in the delight of these new sensations, forgot everything else, when a noise close by him made him start and awake from his reverie. He turned his head, and beheld a man attentively examining him; he was still young, and possessed a countenance remarkable for its expression; his eyes, full of fire, were fixed with kindness upon José, who, notwithstanding his ordinary timidity, replied without embarrassment to the questions addressed to him. The

stranger wished to know his name, what he thought of Raphael's picture, what were his views, his occupations, &c. José's artless statements, through which his precocious genius could readily be discerned, deeply interested the stranger. "You were born a painter, child," he said, touching José's forehead. "You already know what no master could teach you, but you must be directed, and this I will undertake to do. Here is my address, my name is G——; call upon me, I will make something of you."

José, overwhelmed with joy in recognising the name of one of our most celebrated artists, clasped his hands without being able to utter a word. Monsieur G. gave him another kind look, and departed. It was some time before José recovered from the agitation into which this event had thrown him, and the day was already far advanced when he remembered that he was still in the service of Madame Barbe, and that his accident caused him to run great risk of not remaining in it. Full of anxiety, he precipitately retraced his steps, and soon reached home. Alas! every one had returned, and the manner in which he was received, was a presage of the storm about to burst over his devoted head. [Pg 267]

Barbe, who was hurriedly pacing the shop, advanced towards him, as if to question him, then turned away his head with an expression of vivid sorrow. José, confounded, was beginning to murmur some excuses, when Madame Barbe, the violence of whose passion had hitherto prevented her from speaking, at length recovered the power of pouring forth the abuse destined for the hapless culprit.

"Here you are, at last, Sir!" she said. "You are certainly very punctual; however, I can easily imagine, you young rascal, that you were in no hurry to make your appearance."

"I am very sorry, Madame....." replied José.

But Madame Barbe would not give him time to finish.

"Do not interrupt, you shameless liar," she cried; "you little viper, whom we have nourished, and who now stings his benefactors. But I could pardon you for being idle and ungrateful, if you had not sacrificed the reputation of my house, by destroying the pictures confided to us. Yes," she continued with more vehemence, seeing José turn pale, "you fancied, you hardened, good-for-nothing, that your tricks would not be discovered; thief, we know all: not content with having irreparably destroyed a fine work, you have carried your villany so far as to steal from us the things necessary for your undertaking." José uttered a cry of horror, and rushing towards his implacable mistress, who still continued her invectives, he protested his innocence, in so far at least as related to the second part of the accusation; but neither his tears nor his protestations produced any effect upon the prejudiced minds of his employers. It had so happened that when they entered, the light which M. Barbe carried, fell directly upon the unfortunate figure restored by José; and as nature had made him a colorist, a quality which can never be acquired, and one in which the young student was deficient, it was an easy matter to perceive the difference. Besides, poor José, in his embarrassment, had copied the left foot, which happened to be most convenient for him, without observing whether it was the proper one, and had so placed it that the great toe was on the outside. The loft in which the culprit slept was visited, and his still moist palette and colours left no doubt of what he had done. Barbe would have pardoned the injury done to the painting, but the idea of theft revolted his honest nature, and it was difficult to avoid suspecting José, since they were ignorant of Francisco's friendship for him, and well knew that he had nothing of his own. It was in vain that he related the simple truth, it only appeared an ingeniously concocted story; and Madame Barbe, after a second explosion of invectives, took him by the arm, and would have turned him out of doors that very evening, had not her husband positively declared that he should remain for that night. His wife, obliged to yield, revenged herself by seeking two or three of her neighbours, who hurried with malicious eagerness to see the left foot upon the right leg, and the woful condition of poor little José, choking with grief in a corner. He was spared none of their commentaries, these kind souls taking care to speak very loudly and very distinctly. [Pg 268]

"Certainly," said one, "his mother did well to die, poor dear woman. She did not deserve such a son."

"I always expected it," said another, "this is what comes of picking up vagabonds; but Dame Robert is such an obstinate woman. What is one to do?" A third added that everything must be locked up, and care taken that he was never left alone. Finally, their cruelty was carried to such extremes, that poor José was unable any longer to restrain his sobs, which being heard by M. Barbe in his room, he immediately hastened to the poor child and sent him to bed. [Pg 269]

José passed a frightful night; a few hours more and he would be sent away disgraced, and obliged to return to his adopted mother, without the means of support, and with a charge of dishonesty weighing upon him. One hope alone remained to him, Francisco might attest the truth of what he had said; he therefore determined to entreat M. Barbe, who was more humane than his wife, to go and question Francisco, who would establish his innocence; but even this resource failed the unfortunate child. The same idea had occurred to Barbe, who was very fond of him, and early in the morning he had called upon M. Enguehard. Wishing to spare his favourite as much as possible, he merely asked Francisco whether he had lent José any money. But Francisco not having been put upon his guard, and fearing lest he might in some manner injure his friend, or be reprimanded by his father, committed a fault too common among children, and in order to save José he told a falsehood, and by so doing completed his ruin, for he assured M. Barbe that he had not lent his apprentice anything. M. Enguehard knew nothing more, and Barbe returned,

convinced of José's theft, and of the necessity of sending him away. He therefore repulsed him angrily when he came to present his request, and told him to pack up his things. But Madame Barbe was not a woman to lose an opportunity of delivering a speech or making a scene, and therefore determined before expelling the unhappy boy, to oblige him to make an apology to the young student whom she had begged to call at the shop. José almost happy at this unexpected respite, placed his little bundle on the ground, and leaning upon it, cast a sorrowful look on all the objects around him, and which he was about to leave for ever. Gabri's vacant place caused his tears to flow afresh; would that faithful friend believe his protestations any more than the rest, whilst proofs were so strong against him? At that moment the postman placed a letter in M. Barbe's hand. "Oh!" said the latter, "it is from Nogent-sur-Marne, and from friend Gabri. What can he have to write to us about?" and he read the letter to himself with signs of the greatest surprise. Madame Barbe, impatient to know what it contained, snatched it from his hand, and, after reading it, exclaimed, "Heaven be praised, this act of folly will never be committed. Listen to this," she said, calling to José, "behold the just punishment of your infamous conduct;" and she read, or rather declaimed the following letter:—

"From Nogent-sur-Marne, my native place, September the 7th.

"Monsieur Barbe,—Notwithstanding my intention of returning the day after that fixed by you, I write to inform you in a more authentic and convenient manner of my intentions with regard to Joseph Berr, called José, your apprentice. Monsieur Barbe, I have lost my wife and three children, three fine boys whom God has taken away from me; but I dare say I have already told you this. I have a nice little property perfectly free from all claims (a good seven thousand francs placed here in honest hands). Therefore, being master of my own will, which is to love and assist the said José, I intend that he shall follow the calling which he is so anxious for, viz., that of an artist, and for this I have bound myself, by my signature, which you will see at the end of the deed written by me upon stamped paper, and which accompanies this letter. I beg that it may be read to the said José, and never again recurred to, being, notwithstanding, Monsieur Barbe,

"Your very faithful Servant,
"Sebastian Gabri."

The second paper was as follows:—

"Joseph Berr, called José, requiring, in order to be able to prosecute his studies in painting, during four years, a sum of money, which I possess, I give it to him as a loan which he will return to me when his profession becomes profitable, together with the interests and costs as is just and customary.

	f.	c.
"First. One franc per day for maintenance during the space of four years, making	1460	0
Item. For entering the studio of a celebrated master, 15 francs per month for four years	720	0
Item. For indemnifying Madame Barbe, for three years' apprenticeship, still due to her	50	0
Item. For 25 centimes every Sunday, for child's amusements	52	0
Item. For my journey hither by coach, expressly on his account	10	0
Item. For my expenses while here	12	0
Item. For this sheet of stamped paper	0	30
Item. For interest during four years	460	6
	2764	36

"Which sum I undertake to pay, according as required, Provided that the board and lodging be furnished by Dame Robert as heretofore.

"The said José will put his mark at the end of this deed, to which I also cheerfully put my name.

"Sebastian Gabri."

It is easy to imagine the agony of poor José while listening to the reading of these papers; what would have overwhelmed him with joy the evening before, now filled him with anguish. Gabri, that tender and generous friend, as a reward for his sacrifice, was about to learn that the object of his care was unworthy of it. Still José was not guilty, and these bitter trials were now on the point of coming to the happiest termination. Francisco, tormented as one always is by the consciousness of having done wrong, and rendered uneasy about his friend on account of M. Barbe's visit, determined to confess all to his father, who had no difficulty in convincing him of the gravity of his fault, and of the inconvenience which might result to the innocent José, who might perhaps be accused of having stolen the colours from his master. Francisco, alarmed at this idea, entreated his father to take him instantly to M. Barbe's; and there, regardless of the spectators, he had the courage and the merit to confess his fault, and thus completely justify his friend.

Whilst Madame Barbe stood biting her lips, and saying, "It is very singular, very strange," and her kind-hearted husband brushed the tears from his eyes, the two boys affectionately embraced

each other, and enjoyed the happiest moment of their young lives. A moment afterwards, José had another triumph, highly flattering indeed to his self-love, but not to be compared in real worth with the noble friendship of Francisco. The young author of the injured painting was with his master when Madame Barbe wrote to him her anything but clear account of the accident, which she was anxious to turn to the disgrace of poor José. This master was the very Monsieur G—— before mentioned, who, recognising in the hero of the story, the child who had so much interested him at the Museum, wished to accompany his pupil to M. Barbe's. For a long time he examined in silence the attempt which had cost the poor boy so dear, then turning towards his pupil, "If you don't make haste," he said, "I can tell you he will catch you." This man, distinguished as much by feeling as by genius, was able to appreciate the action of the worthy and generous Gabri; he read his letter with emotion, and taking a pencil, ran it through the fifteen francs per month destined for José's instruction. "I cannot hope," he said, smiling, to José, "to be the *celebrated master* mentioned by Gabri, but he must at least let me teach you all I know."

It may easily be imagined, that everything was arranged, without difficulty, to the entire delight of the poor boy. Madame Barbe, awed by the presence of Monsieur G—— and Monsieur Enguehard, felt that she must put some restraint upon her tongue. She unhesitatingly accepted, it is true, the indemnification of fifty francs, and only murmured on the day that Barbe presented José with his first box of colours. Dame Robert, who was consulted in all important arrangements, was at first somewhat discontented with José's choice; but she could refuse nothing to her dear child. "And, after all," she said, "it is a trade, like any other. I am only sorry that the apprenticeship is so long." She was completely consoled, however, when José came once more to live with her. [Pg 273]

To complete José's happiness, M. Enguehard, a short time after these occurrences, begged M. G—— to receive his son as a pupil. The two friends, therefore, were again together, following the same career with equal ardour, and although with different success, still without any interruption to their mutual friendship.

Those who are curious to know whether José justified the hopes inspired by his childhood, may have their curiosity gratified by a perusal of the Second Part of his history.

SEQUEL
TO
THE HISTORY OF POOR JOSÉ.

How tranquil and pleasant is the life of the artist! He possesses an advantage which is denied even to the fortunate of this world,—an occupation always affording amusement and variety, together with an almost total indifference to everything which does not bear directly upon painting. The artist sees that all is quiet in the town in which he lives; this is enough for him: scarcely does he know the names of the ministers in office, and he is the last to learn what is going on around. Occupied the whole day with his art, his studio is his universe; and at night, in the midst of a re-union of friends, artists like himself, he still dwells upon his favourite idea, which is never absent from his mind, while he gains instruction, or is inspired with increased ardour by the conversation of his colleagues or rivals. These re-unions are gay, and abound in wit, as well as in mischief. Not a few of those caricatures which attract the loungers of the Boulevards and the Rue du Coq, have been sketched by a skilful hand during these moments of recreation. A few amiable women, authors, distinguished musicians, and poets, make a part of these seductive meetings: each one amuses himself according to his fancy; and if the mirth is sometimes a little noisy, and the wit a little too free, wit and mirth are at least always to be found in them. [Pg 274]

But if the artist is happy, the student is even more so. The former, being no longer at an age in which he can advance much, is keenly alive to his own deficiencies, and, if it must be owned, often looks with a jealous eye on the success of his brother artists; while to the other, on the contrary the horizon of his hopes is unbounded, and emulation but a healthy stimulant, which does not degenerate into envy. The student tries to excel his companions, but he loves them all; he encourages the less skilful, frankly admires those who are superior to himself, and, while pursuing his laborious occupations, seldom fails to lay the foundation of one of those honourable and lasting friendships which embellish the remainder of his life. Little favoured by fortune, as a general rule, these young men endure privations with cheerfulness, or rather their simple habits prevent them from feeling them as such. The whole of their time and powers, being constantly directed towards the one object in view, there is no space left for the minor passions, which so often disturb the mind of youth. The pleasures of the toilet are unknown to him who spends his days in the studio, and public amusements are too expensive to be thought of more than once or twice a year. [Pg 275]

Francisco and José, re-united as we have already said in the studio of a celebrated painter, led a life in every way consonant to their tastes; but José especially felt the happiness of a condition, to which he had never thought it possible to attain. He was no longer the hapless child, rescued from the street by the benevolence of a kind-hearted woman, but a fine young man, the honour and hope of Monsieur G——'s studio, and, what was still better, a good young man, always simple and modest, almost ashamed of being distinguished, and redoubling his attentions towards his first protectors, in proportion as his success rendered them less necessary to him. The excellent Gabri devoted a portion of the sum which had been destined for his instruction to the hire of a

room in the house in which Dame Robert lived, where José could work without much inconvenience. He rose very early, and commenced the labours of the day by making pictures of everything that presented itself to his imagination, or copied drawings lent to him by his master. After a hasty breakfast, he repaired to the studio, worked until five o'clock, when, accompanied by Francisco, and conversing together on their projects and hopes, he quietly returned home. M. Enguehard often invited him to dinner, and took great pleasure in extending his knowledge in such a manner as might be useful to him. Thanks to the kind instruction of Madame Enguehard, and to his own natural abilities, he soon learned to read and write; while M. Enguehard especially endeavoured to make him acquainted with history and fable,—acquirements indispensable to a painter, who, in fact, ought not, if it were possible, to remain in ignorance of any branch of knowledge. Everything can and ought to tend to his advancement in art: travel, reading, science, the habits of different classes of society, solitude, happiness, and misery, all are useful and profitable to him who seeks to represent, with the utmost possible truth, the acts and passions of man.

Francisco and José had not yet reached what might be called the moral portion of their studies; but José could form some idea of it, and began to make, beforehand, his provisions for the future. During the winter evenings, the two friends used to draw by lamplight, from seven till ten, according to the custom of almost all the students. Each pay a trifling sum monthly for the hire of the room, the models, and the lights. The students of the various academies assemble together, and their masters often take pleasure in passing an hour with them, and aiding them with their counsel.

It may, perhaps, be thought that such constant occupation must be very fatiguing, but there are so many attractions, and so much novelty, in the study of art, that weariness is seldom felt, especially in the full vigour of youth; and those who have experienced it, can say whether a week in the life of a man of the world does not leave behind it more lassitude, more weariness, and more void, than one such as I have just described. Besides, all is not labour in these pursuits: they rest, they chat; ideas are exchanged and corrected; the rich are generous towards the poor, and never refuse to share with them their experience. The character even is improved in these studious reunions—images in miniature of the great world into which they will have, at a later period, to be thrown; it is no longer the rod and the rule of college, but it is still the salutary influence of companionship; it is emulation, and a something of the honours of renown, without that alloy which so often spoils it for man. But woe to the sullen and morose! woe to those who cherish absurd or bad propensities! for justice is speedily rendered either by bitter sarcasm or by force. There, as elsewhere, the most distinguished take the lead, and it can easily be understood that studies, whose aim in general is to trace the good and the beautiful, may tend to elevate the mind, and strengthen every generous sentiment of the heart.

José enjoyed, with intense delight, the idea of being something of himself, of seeing before him the almost certain prospect of an honourable subsistence, acquired by a great talent. He may one day, perhaps, be rich; the name of Berr may one day be uttered with respect, and his pictures placed with care in the cabinets of the most fastidious lovers of art; but I may confidently assert, in advance, that nothing will be so dear to him, that nothing will efface from his memory the remembrance of the time, when, on the Monday, accompanied by Francisco, each went to purchase his sheet of tinted paper, or when, before retiring to rest, once more turning his canvass to take another look at the morning's work, he ventured to hope for all that he might then possess.

Profoundly impressed with the obligations which he was under to Dame Robert and to Gabri, he made it a law to himself never to lose a single day during the whole four years of his pupilage. Always the first at the studio, he never left before the time of the lessons, as is sometimes done by those idlers who, having gossiped or wasted in play the whole of the morning, hide themselves at the arrival of the master, who supposes them absent. Still, José was not always in an equally favourable disposition; the games and boyish tricks of his companions possessed some attraction for him; but he rarely yielded to the temptation, and did all he could to prevent his too volatile friend Francisco from doing so. "What matters," said the latter, "losing a few hours? We have time enough!" and Francisco wasted his time without scruple. Nevertheless, his natural ability, and a few weeks' steadiness, always kept him pretty nearly in the second rank among his companions.

 At the expiration of a year, José began to paint sufficiently well from nature to attempt some portraits; and he eagerly availed himself of this means of being less burdensome to his friend Gabri. At his express desire, Dame Robert persuaded one of her relations *to have her face drawn in colours*; at the same time assuring her, that her boy *was well skilled in his business*. José would certainly have been sadly distressed could he have heard her thus torture the language of art; but, happily, he was not present, and the good woman, with two or three phrases of this kind, persuaded her cousin, who merely stipulated that she should be painted with two eyes, and with her lace cap and coral ear-rings. This portrait was to be finished for her husband's birthday. José therefore left the studio a little earlier every day; and, as the likeness was very striking, and had but little shade, while the eyes looked full at the spectator, and the coral ear-rings seemed *as if they could be taken in the fingers*, the work was universally applauded. The young painter received innumerable compliments, twelve francs, and several commissions, which, although paid for below their value, so much increased his little store, that he had the satisfaction of being able, at the end of a year, to reimburse Gabri for the hire of his room, and Dame Robert for the trifling expense of his board. The greater his advancement, the more profitable did his talents

become; and he at length followed the example of many other students of slender means, who, having the good sense not to be ashamed of employing their talents in sign-painting, adorn the shops of Paris with what might almost be called handsome pictures.

All Monsieur G——'s instructions were attentively listened to by José, who sometimes even wrote down the most remarkable passages before he went to bed. One phrase especially struck him as being the true definition of an artist. "Three things," said this clever master to his pupils, "are requisite for him who devotes his life to the fine arts,—genius to conceive, taste to select, and talent to execute." These conditions are equally applicable to the musician and to the poet; but who can flatter himself with being possessed at once of all these three qualifications? José dare not cherish such a hope; he dare not believe that he had genius; but taste and talent might be acquired, he thought; and, as our sage little friend was still but just emerged from childhood, he wrote in large letters, upon his table and upon his easel, the words which thus became to him a fundamental law of painting.

The excellent Gabri experienced the most heartfelt joy at the success of his *protégé*; he frequently visited him when at work in his room, and, for fear of disturbing him, would remain in perfect silence behind his chair, and then, after embracing him, he would go down to listen to Dame Robert's chat. As we have already observed, Gabri was no talker; their intercourse, therefore, was rather a monologue than a dialogue; but he was never weary of listening, so long as José was the theme; but when Dame Robert went on to any other subject, "Good evening, neighbour," he would say; "Madame Barbe is expecting me, and you know she is not one to make light of things."

One morning, at the class, Monsieur G—— said to his pupils, "Gentlemen, you will to-morrow have a new companion. I recommend him to your kindness. Not too many experiments or jokes, if you please. He is very young, and, doubtless, but little experienced in your ways; be, therefore, good boys. He is sent to me by the city of Angers. Berr, my friend, you will place him by you; and I beg that you, Enguehard, will not show off the Parisian too much." Francisco smiled, without replying; but Monsieur G——'s speech produced the ordinary effect, and which he very well knew himself. The desire of tormenting the new comer immediately seized all these young madcaps, and Francisco in particular. "Oh!" said he, "a pupil from the provinces! how odd that we have had none before. And they think I shall not amuse myself with this young Raphael from Angers! Stuff! our master very well knows the value of his recommendations in this line." And Francisco, encouraged by the laughter of his auditors, began to make a grotesque sketch upon the wall which he assured them was an exact portrait of the Angevin.

"Angevin! Yes, that must be his name," said another young rogue, the usual companion of Francisco's follies; "you know how that exasperates them."

"Oh! as to that," replied Francisco, "we have all our nicknames: am I not the Madcap, and Berr the Phœnix? But listen! I'll tell you what we must do;" and hereupon these two giddy brains began whispering in a corner. José hazarded a few words in favour of the provincial; but he was only laughed at, and was at last obliged to end by joining in their mirth, though he determined, nevertheless, to exert his influence to the utmost at the proper time, in order to save the new pupil from too much annoyance.

Many of the provincial towns had then, and still have, academies of painting, destined for the artistic education of children in humble circumstances; and the pupil who displayed the greatest amount of talent was sent to Paris, to continue his studies under a better master than could generally be obtained in a small town, the expenses of those studies being defrayed by the establishment which elected him. The youth, from whom Francisco and his mischievous companions expected so much diversion, had been chosen by the professors of the Academy of Angers as the most promising of its pupils. This, however, was not saying much; and it did not unfrequently happen, that those who occupied the first rank in the Departmental Schools, were, on entering those of Paris, immediately placed in the lowest; still, however, fortunate that the principles inculcated by their professors were not those of the time of Jouvenet and Boucher. The young student had, unhappily, been directed by an old master—an admirer of that age of absurdity and bad taste. He made his pupils copy figures in red chalk, portraits in pastel, and showed them with pride his prize picture—for he, too, had been to Rome. But we may judge of the merits of his rivals, and of the advantage he derived from his journey, when we learn that this picture, regarded by him thirty years afterwards as his best production, represented Cleobis and Biton; and that the Grecian characters wore Roman armour, and draperies of gauze and silk. To crown his misfortune, the poor candidate, small, ill-made, and more than plainly attired, not so much in conformity with the fashions of his province as with the length of his purse, presented an appearance not altogether unlike the caricature sketched by Francisco upon the wall; and it may, therefore, be easily imagined, that these young satirists did not lose so favourable an opportunity of exercising their humour.

Scarcely had the young man entered, than he was received with noisy acclamations; and two of the pupils, eagerly pressing forward to receive him, overwhelmed him with ironical and *outré* compliments.

"Sir!" they exclaimed, "your reputation has preceded you; the admiration of your native city was insufficient for such distinguished merit. You are about to receive the homage of Paris, while you have ours already...."

"The name of the Angevin is already celebrated," added another; "and it will be handed down to

posterity like that of Josepin."

"But, gentlemen," said the unfortunate victim,—speaking as if all the A's and E's had circumflex accents over them, according to the agreeable custom of his province,—"Gentlemen, I am not called the Angevin. My father's, as well as my own name, is Valentin lâ Grimâudière."[3]

[Pg 282] This name, and especially the tone in which it was pronounced, a kind of sing-song, difficult of imitation to those unacquainted with the fair province of Anjou, excited fresh bursts of laughter; and Francisco again taking the word, "You must be aware, Sir," he said, gravely, and at the same time endeavouring to imitate the accent of the stranger, "that the great painters are rarely known by their true names. Thus we speak of Dominichino and Guercino, instead of Dominico Zampieri, and Barbieri da Cento. Assuredly then it is not surprising that you should be called the Angevin."

"But, gentlemen," replied the simple youth, "you are indeed too good; I do not deserve...."

"You deserve our most profound respect, illustrious companion," interrupted Francisco. "Gentlemen, I present to you the glory of the Angevin Academy, the hero of Pasticcio,[4] the conqueror of Stipling, and the favourite of the Rococos.[5] And to you, noble Angevin, I present my especial friends, Landort, Galvaudeur (the Disturber), La Picoterie (the Torment), Rubens the Younger, and myself, Le Braque (the Madcap), your very humble servant. Now, my worthy friend, you know us perfectly, so away with ceremony; take your place, my Gringalet, and let us see what you can do. At the first rest, you shall be made to read, to write, and to sing, and, after the model, you shall pay your welcome."

The unfortunate Angevin, bewildered by this torrent of bad jokes, dared neither reply nor resist. He had arrived early, in the hope of finding his future companions less numerous; but his precaution had proved a failure. Francisco, and the merry participators in his follies, had divined his intention, and their diligence surpassed his own. The more sober pupils had not yet arrived; [Pg 283] and José, detained by a portrait which he had to finish that morning, did not arrive until late, so that the innocent victim remained unprotected in the midst of his persecutors. Although he had announced himself as having painted, Monsieur G—— made him commence by drawing, in order to judge of his power.

"Sit there," said Francisco, pointing to an empty seat between two of his companions; "the call has been made, but that is the place of honour, the best for the light, and the one always chosen by the first on the master's list;" and he pushed the poor lad towards the place which his mischief had destined for him.

As studios in repute are usually well attended, and as space is not always in proportion to the number of the pupils, they are often much inconvenienced, and press round the model in three or four rows of different elevations. Those of the first row are seated upon low wooden benches; those of the second upon chairs; others again upon high stools; while, behind these, upon still higher stools, or standing, come those who paint, with scarcely room for themselves and their light easels. The place pointed out by Francisco to the unfortunate competitor, was upon one of the little benches, so that above him were seated two pupils who amused themselves by resting their drawing-boards upon his head, and obliged him to hold it bent down, in a position by no means convenient, especially for looking at the model, which was placed upon a table two or three feet high. Besides, the disagreeable person above him, pretending to be obliged to touch and retouch his work again and again, crumbled up large pieces of bread, which he afterwards shook over the work of the patient Angevin. More than one bullet of bread was aimed at his nose, too, and by such well-practised hands, that their occupation seemed in no way interrupted. Conversation, however, flowed on as usual, while the elder students, busied with their work, [Pg 284] thought no more of the stranger. He, poor fellow, tormented, crushed, with heavy drops of perspiration standing on his brow, and not daring to utter a syllable, smudged his paper at random, while tears rolled down his cheeks when he thought of the opinion Monsieur G—— would form of his talents. Summoning up his courage, however, he at length ventured to address his right-hand neighbour, and said gently, "Would you be so kind as to lend me your penknife, Sir?" No reply. "Sir;" he resumed in a somewhat louder tone, and gently touching him, "if you have a penknife...." The young man looked at him with astonishment, and pointing to his ear, gave him to understand that he was deaf. The Angevin sighed, not wishing to speak louder, for fear of again becoming an object of ridicule, and turning towards his left-hand neighbour, he again said, "Oblige me with a penknife, Sir, if you please." The student raised his head, and replied gravely, "*Non intelligo, domine; non sum Gallus.*" "But, Sir, it is a penknife I want," continued the Angevin, at the same time making a movement with his fingers, as if cutting a pencil. His mischievous companion pretended not to understand him, and affecting to believe that he was making game of him, he pretended to be angry, and gave him so rude a push that he almost fell from his by no means steady seat. His portfolio escaped from his hold, and all the drawings and papers contained in it flew into the middle of the room. The Angevin, in despair, crept as softly as possible to pick them up, but his persecutors were not yet weary of the sport. "Get away from the model! Silence!" exclaimed those of the last row, who were disturbed by this commotion. "To the hunt! dog! hunt!" cried the others. At length the poor boy succeeded in returning to his place; but he found himself so much pressed, and so ill at ease, his companions having designedly drawn closer together, that, urged to extremes, his anger was on the point of [Pg 285] triumphing over his timidity, when the door opened, and José appeared.

"Ah! Phœnix, Phœnix!" exclaimed the young students. "Good morning, my brave Phœnix," said

Francisco; "you are late for a Monday morning, and will get no place for painting."—"I shall not paint this week," replied José, advancing towards the fire-place; then looking round him he said, "Who will give me his place, and I will give him my study?"—"I! I!" exclaimed several voices.

"Come, then!" said José, who had immediately observed the uncomfortable position of the Angevin, "it shall be you, Maurice;" and he pointed to the pupil seated beside the stranger, who had pretended to be deaf. "Bravo!" exclaimed Maurice, rising, "I shall have your study. Besides, I am not very industriously disposed. I shall do nothing this week. I'll be a gentleman at large!"

José took his place, and by a glance caused the drawing-boards which crushed his unfortunate *protégé* to be removed: then, as if he had forgotten to bring paper with him, he asked him for a sheet. The Angevin hastened to comply with the request, and José having kindly addressed some questions to him, he began to feel a little more at his ease. At the hour of recreation, these mischief-loving urchins again met to decide whether some grand joke could not be played off upon their victim; but José, stepping into the midst of the group, exclaimed, "No! no! gentlemen, enough of this; let us leave the poor fellow in peace; he is not a Paris boy, and I demand an exception in his favour. I was far more of a foreigner among you than he is, yet have I found in you most excellent comrades."

José was so much beloved, and possessed so much influence over his companions, that their sport had no longer any interest for them the moment he disapproved of it; so the Angevin was abandoned to his young protector. The nickname alone adhered to him, and it was not long before they discovered in him so much kindness and good-nature, that they soon ceased to have any desire of tormenting him. He obtained the good opinion of all his fellow-students; but José was his friend, and to serve him he would have gone through fire and water.

Solon has, I think, said: "No praise before death;" and he said wisely, for one moment of forgetfulness might tarnish even the most irreproachable life. Who can boast of being infallible, especially in youth? José, the prudent José, learned this to his cost; for, unhappily, these reflections apply to him. It was his first fault; but it was a serious one, as we shall show.

Occasionally, during the summer, José's companions formed themselves into little parties, and spent the day in the country in an inexpensive manner; for they had both good legs and a good appetite, and required only simple fare. They went into the environs of Paris, and returned home in the evening, after spending a pleasant day. But José, though keenly alive to the pleasure of these parties, often refused to join them, as they occasioned a loss of time which to him was very precious. However, the fête of Saint Cloud was approaching, and Francisco proposed going to see the fountains play. This proposition was eagerly acceded to, and José felt a strong desire to accompany them. He had never seen the fountains play, and this sight possesses powerful attractions to a Parisian, and especially to a young man like José, who was ignorant of almost everything foreign to his studies. It was, therefore, decided that they should form a party of twelve, dine at Saint Cloud, and share the expenses between them. José communicated his project to Dame Robert, and this excellent woman loved him too tenderly to oppose what appeared likely to afford him so much pleasure; nevertheless, at the moment of his departure, she followed him to the door, recommending him not to lose his purse in the crowd, and not get into any quarrel with the boothkeepers at the fair. José smiled at her fears, and hastened to rejoin his friends, who were to meet him at the Tuileries.

The young people merrily pursued their way, already amused with the procession of carriages, horses, carts, and pedestrians, like themselves, all taking the same direction. On arriving at Saint Cloud, they commenced with a simple breakfast, the greater part of their little treasure being reserved for their evening meal. They then took a survey of the booths, admired the cascades, listened to the bands, marvelled at the conjurors, and even laughed at Punch's buffoonery, as the numerous spectators of this fête are annually accustomed to do at the same season of the year. They several times fell in with a troop of young men, pupils of a different master, and their rivals in glory and talent. These two studios were jealous and inimical, as well from party spirit as from a sentiment of attachment to their masters; and this animosity had been manifested in more than one encounter of class against class, for there existed between them no individual aversion. On this occasion, they looked at each other with an expression of irony.

"Oh, oh!" cried José's companions, "here are the Princes of *Babocheux* and *Flou-flou*."[6]

"Yes, gentlemen," replied the others, "ready to admire your *Croûtes aux épinards*."[7]

Each made a grimace; but they separated without saying anything more.

Returned to the inn, after having wandered about for a considerable time, José and his companions were prepared to enjoy a repast, dainty to them, from their simple habits; and they contemplated it with a degree of satisfaction, which would have made many young people, spoiled either by fortune or by their parents, shrug their shoulders with contempt. Their table was laid in what was called the garden, a small enclosure surrounded by walls, and covered with a trellis work, ornamented with honey-suckle and vine. This spot was capable of containing five or six tables, separated by partitions, also of trellis work, and though very warm, still there was a little more air there than in the house; besides the circumstances of the guests permitted them no choice, and our young students were therefore very well satisfied at being so comfortably located.

As may be imagined, there was no lack of conversation; this turned at first upon their good cheer,

which they had time enough to enjoy, as the waiters were so much occupied, that they allowed full half an hour to intervene between each course.

"Well! Angevin, my friend," said Francisco,—for José's protection had caused him to be received into the party,—"what do you think of this Marinade?[8] something better than your usual fare, hey!"

"I should think so," replied the Angevin, holding out his plate for the third or fourth time. "Plague take the stew, I shan't touch it to-morrow."

"What!" cried the young folks, laughing; "what do you mean by the stew?"

"Oh! nothing, nothing," replied the Angevin, already regretting his indiscretion; but his companions insisting, and José joining in their request, he told them, laughingly, that, finding it impossible to live in Paris in any other than the most economical manner, he had ended, after trying various plans, by purchasing a large stew-pan and an earthen stove. He filled it once a week with turnips, potatoes, and a few slices of bacon, which he boiled altogether, and this *ragout*, which was hot only for the first time, served him for dinner during the whole week. He was so much accustomed to call it his stew, that the word had inadvertently escaped him in the presence of his companions. [Pg 289]

"My poor fellow!" said José, holding out his hand to him. "Poor Angevin!" repeated the others; and, so far from laughing, a momentary silence pervaded the whole party.

"Gentlemen," said Francisco, who blushed at the remembrance of the murmurs which often escaped him on account of what he called his father's unnecessary economy; "I am going to propose a toast: to the success of our worthy comrade! May he gain the prize, even though I should myself have to be left behind him."

The young friends rose, and eagerly touched their glasses, while the Angevin, deeply moved, repeated, in a tone of emotion, "Oh! Berr, Berr, it is to you that I owe all this!"

Their conversation then turned upon painting, and upon the hopes entertained by Francisco and José, who flattered themselves with being this year permitted to compete for the prize, not, however, with the presumptuous hope of obtaining it, for they were both very young, especially José; but the mere fact of being admitted to the competition counted for much, and they might perhaps deserve honourable mention. Francisco had, moreover, an additional motive for desiring, as soon as possible, to distinguish himself. Glory was not the only passion which agitated his breast; for some time past he had grieved at being without fortune or reputation, which prevented him from aspiring to an alliance which would have crowned his fondest wishes. But this prospect was so distant and so uncertain that he had never spoken of it, even to José, except once, and then very vaguely.

Whilst, then, they were conversing upon art, with an enthusiasm worthy of the subject, they were interrupted by a loud noise, which proceeded from a room on the first-floor, immediately above the spot where they were dining. As the window was open, it was easy to overhear what passed, and, by a natural feeling of curiosity, the young guests checked their conversation, in order to listen to their joyous neighbours. [Pg 290]

"By the powers!" cried one, "here's a splendid *charge*[9] it ought to be hung up in Barbe's shop; the veriest *rapin*[10] would recognise it!"

"Yes," said another, "it is his very self, with his vagabond air! Ah! ah! my gentlemen of the green and yellow school! you fancy you are going to carry off the next prizes from us, do you? We shall see, my lads! we shall see!"

Our young friends looked at each other with indignation, and softly approached the window, in order to hear more, for they recognised their antagonists, who doubtless little imagined they were so near.

"For my part," said one of the rival students, "I fear neither Rivol nor Enguehard, nor even the famous Berr, about whom they make such a fuss; he is ready enough, and up to the tricks of the art, and that's all. Enguehard is an idle dog, who does no good, while Rivol is too well off ever to be anything more than an amateur and a dauber. So down with the Purists, and long life to the Colourists!"

"Long life to the Colourists!" shouted his companions, and they added many other jests so bitter and so personal, that José and his friends, already animated by a few glasses of wine, to which they were unaccustomed, could no longer restrain their indignation, and commenced the attack by throwing into the room plates, knives, and anything else which happened to come in their way. The enemy hastened to the window, and recognising their adversaries, uttered shouts of laughter, which completely exasperated the others. A decanter, thrown by José, struck the forehead of one of the Colourists, who in their turn became furious, and began to make a descent, by means of the trellis-work placed beneath the window, for the purpose of crushing their antagonists. A battle then ensued, amidst bitter insults. Fragments of broken chairs flew about in all directions, the women at the neighbouring tables screamed, the children cried, and the men rushed forward to separate the combatants, without being in the least able to understand the invectives with which they overwhelmed each other, under the names of Purists and Colourists. The landlord of the inn, attracted by the noise, ran towards the scene of action, [Pg 291]

followed by his waiters, and they succeeded, without much difficulty, in calming those who were only *soldiers*—for they fought solely for the honour of their corps. But the chiefs did not so readily listen to reason; Enguehard was stretched upon the ground, his arms pinioned by the two stout hands of a Colourist, and José, absolutely out of his senses, was stifling, with the weight of his knee, the young man who had spoken of him with so much contempt, and who had just been conquered by his impetuosity.

These four madmen would listen to nothing, and were at length obliged to be separated by main force; but José, while still struggling, slipped over some pieces of the broken plates, and gave himself so violent a twist that he was unable to rise, and was obliged to remain seated on the ground, suffering excruciating pain.

It being proved by the testimony of eye-witnesses, that the young people in the garden had commenced this memorable battle, by throwing plates into the room, and that the Colourists had only broken the trellis-work in descending, the landlord contented himself with a slight sum as indemnification, and allowed them to depart; but José and his friends had done considerable damage, and had been the first to commence the disturbance; they had only sufficient money to defray the expenses of their dinner, and the innkeeper declared that he would be paid, and that he should send for the police. Francisco increased the man's anger, by the rage into which he put himself; the poor Angevin employed prayers and tears, to soften the innkeeper; while José, ashamed, and in despair, maintained a gloomy silence, abandoning himself to the most melancholy reflections, when his name, pronounced by a severe and well-known voice, made him utter a cry, and hide his face in his hands. [Pg 292]

The voice was that of the good and vigilant Gabri, who had been induced by his active friendship for José to follow him to the fête, and to watch over the inexperience which he very justly attributed to him. He had watched the young men from a distance, and determined not to make his appearance, except in case of accident; finally, having been able to find accommodation only at the farther end of the place occupied by them at the inn, he had been the last to arrive at the scene of action.

"Sir," he said coldly to the innkeeper, "estimate the damage done, and make out your account; I will discharge the debts of these madcaps, who are of my acquaintance, and we will afterwards settle matters together."

The host, who was no cheat, and who was, moreover, too happy to be paid without any further trouble, made out a tolerably reasonable account, which Gabri immediately discharged. Then telling Francisco and the Angevin to support José, who was unable to walk, he placed him in a carriage, and drove off with him, after having saluted the troop of students, who were still too much bewildered by what had taken place even to think of thanking him.

Gabri had placed José in the cabriolet in as convenient a position as possible for his injured leg, while he went upon the box himself, and during the whole of their way home never once addressed a single word to the poor sufferer, nor even turned his head towards him, notwithstanding the complaints which the constant jolting of the rude vehicle drew from the culprit. The well-paid coachman took them as far as Dame Robert's door. "There, there he is," said Gabri to the terrified woman, "and now good evening; I will see him again when he has recovered, and grown wiser;" and he turned away without listening to Dame Robert's exclamations, who in her trouble did not perceive that José had almost fainted. He was conveyed to bed, his dislocated ankle set, and his numerous bruises attended to: but the wine which he had taken, and the violent excitement which had followed an excess altogether new to him, brought on a somewhat severe illness, which lasted for several days; and even when it was subdued he was obliged to remain six weeks with his foot resting upon a chair, without being able to move. We may judge of his grief and remorse, which many circumstances contributed to augment. Gabri allowed his heart to be touched by his repentance, and consented to see him; but he was sad, and Dame Robert uneasy; and José was one day deeply grieved to see her, while thinking herself unobserved, lock up a bottle of brandy which was standing near him. [Pg 293]

Soon afterwards he had to endure a far more bitter trial. The time for competing for the prizes arrived; Francisco was admitted for the sketches; while José, who was only just beginning to walk, and whose studies had, moreover, been too much interrupted, was obliged to give up all hope for that year, and endure the mortification of finding himself left behind by companions considerably less advanced than himself. Francisco, though sincerely grieved at his friend's misfortune, felt his ardour increased from not having to compete with so formidable a rival. He made astonishing efforts to sustain the honour of the school, but he only obtained the second prize, which did not send its possessor to Rome: the first was carried off by that same chief of the Colourists who had spoken of José with so much contempt: and thus the poor boy remained with the bitter remembrance of two months passed in suffering, of a triumph lost, and of a folly committed. [Pg 294]

However, as it is not considered that a young man must necessarily be dishonoured because he has once been intoxicated and beaten, José, after having passed some time in a state of complete apathy, at length took courage. He perceived, that instead of abandoning himself to vain regrets he ought to endeavour to repair his fault, while that intimate consciousness of power, in which even the most modest cannot help believing, told him, that he *could* repair everything. It usually happens after a first fault, that a young man either turns from the evil path, or pursues it for the rest of his life. José had too much superiority of nature not to profit by experience. Redoubling, therefore, both his assiduity and zeal, he made such marked progress during the course of the

current year, that Monsieur G. decided that he also might compete as well as Francisco and Rivol.

The place in which the young people then worked at their prize pictures, was situated at the top of that same *Pavilion du Musée*, of which we have already spoken. It was divided into several little compartments, or cells, called *boxes*, in each of which a student was shut up, so as to allow him no communication with his companions, and still less with his master or with strangers. The subject for the picture was chosen by the professors of painting of the Institution; the programme was distributed to the candidates, and when their sketches were made, and received, they were all to commence their pictures at the same time, according to those sketches, without changing anything. Each morning, on arriving, they were rigidly searched, in order to make sure that they brought with them no drawings or engravings which could in any manner aid them. Thus left to their own resources, they passed two months in this manner, *en loge*, as it is termed; and these [Pg 295] pictures, the figures in which were one third the size of life, were publicly exhibited during three days before the prizes were awarded. But although it was strictly forbidden for the pupils to see their respective works, in order, doubtless, to prevent the weak from being aided by the strong, or to take care that a happy idea should remain the sole property of its author—notwithstanding, I say, all these precautions, the students of that time, less sensible perhaps than those of the present day, found means of visiting each other without being perceived. The windows of their cells all looked in the same direction, upon a small, dirty, and almost unfrequented square, in which is now situated one of the gates leading to the quay. These temporary abodes were, as we have already said, situated in the roof, all the windows opening upon wide leads, unprotected by railings. These madcaps, at the imminent risk of breaking their necks by falling from an immense height, glided by this way from one cell to another. The more scrupulous closed their windows, so as to prevent intrusion; but two days before the expiration of the time allowed for the pictures, each student permitted, without difficulty, his work to be inspected by his companions, and the little Areopagus, with remarkable sagacity and impartiality, precisely anticipated the decrees of the greater one, and awarded the first and second prize in such a manner, that there is scarcely an example of their decisions having turned out erroneous.

José, who took the first rank in the sketches, now prepared to submit to this trial, so severe, but, at the same time, so important to him. Monsieur G. had recommended the reputation of his studio to his pupils. Three times had they competed, without any of them obtaining the first prize. It was necessary to repair this disgrace, and be avenged for the late success of the Colourists. In addition to two formidable rivals in the opposition school, José had to contend against his two [Pg 296] friends, Francisco and Rivol, who, besides having already competed for the prize, had, also, the advantage of age—José was then only fifteen years and a half old; but these considerations by no means discouraged him; and fired by that enthusiastic and true love of art which overcomes all difficulties, he commenced, though not without emotion, the required picture, the subject of which was the "Death of Hippolytus."

Dame Robert, as may be imagined, was greatly excited, and her mind wholly absorbed by her darling boy's undertaking. Certainly, had she been consulted, José would have had nothing to fear; but neither the good woman's indulgence, nor Gabri's affection, could avail poor José anything—they must wait. "If," said Dame Robert, "I could only see what they are doing, I should soon find out whether José had not left them behind; but they are cloistered up like so many monks, and when the boy comes home at night, he does not even so much as give us a hint as to how things are going on."

Gabri, equally anxious, but more discreet than Dame Robert, did not seek to elicit anything from José; but he watched him carefully, sighed when the poor boy appeared depressed, and rubbed his hands with glee when he seemed happy.

The good-natured Angevin, who was not yet sufficiently advanced to compete for the prize, was deeply interested in the success of his friend; but he felt little uneasiness, for he knew that José was very far superior to his rivals. He too would have liked to have seen his work, but he was obliged to content himself with walking beneath the windows of the young captives, and see their heads pop out and in occasionally, like so many marionettes, with now and then a mahl-stick accompanying them, and serving to complete the resemblance.

[Pg 297] Six weeks had passed away, the pictures were advancing, and as, with the exception of José and his companions, the competitors were of different schools, he had seen only the work of his friends; and his own was so far superior to theirs, that a hope which he scarcely dared own, even to himself, made his heart beat high within his breast. He had nothing to fear from the other students, as they were all inferior to Francisco and Rivol. He was standing, therefore, contemplating with a kind of secret pleasure the group of terrified horses which he had just completed, when Francisco tapped at his window, and immediately afterwards leaping into the room, told him, with a countenance expressive of the utmost concern, that he was in despair, and should never succeed with his figure of Aricia, which was in the programme distributed for the picture. Subjects are usually selected with but few female figures, these being more difficult for the young artists, as they cannot have models; and the unfortunate Aricia, which almost all of them had reserved till the last, had completely wrecked both the courage and talent of Francisco. He looked with admiration on José's Aricia, for he had been entirely successful, at least in his sketch. José, anxious to soothe the agitation of his friend, accompanied him across the leads to his cell, in order to examine the figure which so much distressed him: he found it awkward, ill-drawn, and in bad taste, and could not conceal from his friend that he thought it detestable. This, of course, served only to increase Francisco's despair. He dashed his palette to the ground,

stamped upon it, broke his brushes, and ended by crying with rage. José embraced and tried to soothe him, and at length, by dint of kindness and encouragement, succeeded in persuading him that all was not yet lost, and that he could still repaint the figure during the week that yet remained to them. He pointed out to him what he had to avoid, and raised his courage by dwelling on the merits of the rest of the picture. At last, after having spent two hours in this manner, he left him, if not entirely consoled, at least sufficiently recovered to resume his work.

The following days Francisco repainted his unfortunate figure, but still without success; he effaced it, recommenced, again effaced it, and at last succeeded in completing it; but in a manner so far inferior to the other parts of the composition, that it formed a blemish which destroyed the general effect. Such was the opinion of his companions, when, according to the rule established among them, they visited each other to judge of the respective merits of their productions. They had still four days to remain at work, and the pictures were not completely finished, but it was easy to judge which would obtain the prize; and José was regarded as the conqueror, provided he completed the figure of Aricia as he had done the group of Hippolytus and his horses. Next to his, came Francisco's picture, then Rivol's, the others were very far from the mark, and need, therefore, cause them no anxiety.

Francisco, deprived of the last ray of hope by the decision of his companions, as well as by that of his own judgment, shut himself up in his cell, and would not allow José to enter, though he entreated for admittance. He gave no reply to these friendly solicitations, and the intensity of his annoyance had rendered him so unjust, that to avoid seeing José, who lay crouched upon the narrow ledge of the window, he took a large piece of linen, which served him for a blind, and fastened it before the window. José listened to him for some time pacing up and down and groaning with despair; but seeing that his perseverance was useless and importunate he retired, deeply grieved at his distress.

He passed a sleepless night, and the next morning no sooner had he reached his own cell than he ran to Francisco's; but he was not there, his picture still rested upon the easel, and for a moment José thought of retouching the figure of Aricia. But this would have been a palpable fraud, and his honour revolted from its commission. Francisco, moreover, would never have consented to triumph by such disgraceful means. José, therefore, laid down the brush which he had taken up, and with a heavy heart returned to his own cell.

Whilst painting the figure which had proved so fatal to poor Francisco, he vainly sought some method of serving him, and his tender friendship made him almost desire that his Aricia might not be better than his companion's. He worked with so little care, that, had any one else been in the case, his wishes would have been accomplished; but, as it often happens with artists, the very thing that he took the least pains with turned out the best; and, to make use of a familiar expression, this figure came so happily, that even an experienced painter would not have been ashamed to own it.

With a mind absorbed in reflection, José painted on almost without heeding what he did, and it was not until he rose up, when all was completed, that he perceived that the last touches seemed to have been given by the hand of a master, rather than by that of a pupil. His first feeling was one of intense joy, but it was soon overshadowed by the thought of Francisco. He felt that the prize was his, but soon one of those noble inspirations which elevated minds alone receive in their happiest moments, presented itself to his imagination, and showed him that the safety of his friend depended solely upon him.

By one of the old rules of the professors, the pupil who presented his picture with a figure completely erased, or otherwise defaced, was on this account excluded from the competition; his picture was exhibited with the others, but was not taken into account in the awarding of the prizes, even though it were a masterpiece in comparison with the rest. This rule, which it was found rarely necessary to apply, was unknown to most of the students. José had become informed of it during his residence at M. Barbe's, but he was quite sure that Francisco knew nothing about it. His friend's picture was the best, after his own; and by having the courage to destroy the figure of Aricia, which alone would have ensured the prize to a work of less merit, Francisco would remain without a rival.

At first José seized upon this idea with all the warmth of generous affection, but, on raising his eyes to his work, he began to think the sacrifice beyond his strength. Pacing his cell with agitation, he thought of the honour of being crowned at the age of sixteen, of the pleasure of going to Italy, and of the advantage his studies would derive from the journey.

"But," said he, turning his back upon his picture, "Francisco needs it almost as much as myself; the means of his parents are almost exhausted by the efforts they have made for his education; his mother's health requires a warmer climate; if Francisco gains the prize his family will follow him,..." and José again approached his easel.

"Francisco is nearly twenty," he continued; "he has already obtained a second prize, and thus cannot have it again; his age will soon exclude him from the competition, while I have still two or three years before me; moreover, he spoke to me of a vague hope which he entertained of a happy marriage, to which his want of fortune might one day be the only obstacle. If a brilliant success were to overcome this obstacle? If the happiness of his future life depended upon what I am about to do?..." José trembled, opened a box, took out his palette knife, and approached the head of the charming Aricia—but again he paused.

"If I were only to injure it a little," he thought, "alas! it would still be better than my poor friend's!"... and he cast a look of approbation upon the canvas. But soon a thought presented itself, which dispelled his irresolution, and strengthened his wavering heroism. He recalled that painful moment when, despised, falsely accused, on the point of being driven from the house by [Pg 301] Barbe, and without hope of justification, Francisco did not fear to own the truth, and to re-establish, at his own cost, the honour of the poor little Savoyard. The honourable career which was now before him commenced from that moment; all that he was, all that he hoped to be, sprang, in the first instance, from Francisco's generous confession.... José no longer hesitated, he resumed his knife, and with a firm hand so erased the figure that nothing but the sketch remained—and thus nobly repaid the debt of friendship formerly contracted to his young companion.

José erasing his Figure of Aricia, p. 301.

Satisfied with himself, and more calm after this trial of strength—an act of high virtue in a young man of sixteen—José gave the last touches to the other parts of his picture, and so cleverly managed the erasure, that nothing more could be inferred from it, than one of those movements of irritability by no means uncommon among students. He kept his secret until the day previous to the one on which the pictures were to be removed. He then called upon Francisco at his father's, and told him that his figure of Aricia was unfinished, and indeed in a great measure effaced, and that there was not time to repaint it. Francisco, recovered from his unjust displeasure, grieved for and blamed his friend; but, being ignorant of the rule of exclusion, he assured him that the prize would still be his, and José did not attempt to remove his impression.

But José had still severe trials to encounter: he foresaw the grief of Dame Robert, Gabri's disappointment, and finally a whole year's work before he could again reach the desired goal, which he had so nearly attained; but the most painful moment was past, and he awaited that in which Francisco should be triumphant, as the only compensation worthy of him.

The exhibition of pictures was held, as usual, in a small room on the basement floor, now appropriated to another use. [Pg 302] The artistic crowd arrived, and was constantly renewed during three entire days; and the young students, mingling with it, heard alike the censure and praise unreservedly bestowed, and often even with the knowledge that the young authors of the works were present. The universal opinion was in favour of the pictures of José and Francisco; but the spectators were constantly heard to exclaim, "A figure erased! what a pity! what madness!"

At length, on the fourth day, after a private conference, the professors summoned before them the trembling candidates, and José's sacrifice did not prove unavailing. He heard Francisco Enguehard proclaimed for the first prize, Rivol for the second, and he scarcely heard the honourable mention made of himself, notwithstanding the fatal figure which had excluded him from the competition.

Francisco, surprised and bewildered at such unexpected happiness, scarcely knew what he was about; he did not hear the felicitations of his companions, but allowed himself to be led away by

José, who made him run until he reached his father's house.

"He has gained the prize!" cried José, at the foot of the stairs, "Francisco has gained the prize!" and seeing his friend in the arms of his parents, who wept while they blessed him, this noble youth was rewarded by a pleasure more intense and more elevated than any which his own triumph could have afforded him.

Leaving Francisco in the arms of his happy mother, who was never weary of looking at him, and who even thought him handsomer, now that the laurel decked his brow, José bent his steps homeward, and perceived in the distance Dame Robert and Gabri anxiously awaiting his return.

"He walks rapidly," said Dame Robert; "so much the better, he bears us good news."—"He looks happy," continued Gabri: "Oh, if he has gained the prize! at sixteen, too!" and already a smile of joy shone upon the countenance of this excellent man.

"Congratulate me, my friends," cried José, as he approached them; "I am happy in my failure; Francisco has gained the prize!"

"Francisco!" exclaimed Dame Robert, letting fall her arms, already extended to embrace him; "and you? Have you gained nothing? On my word there must be some abominable trickery in the affair."

"No," replied José smiling, "but be comforted, my good mother, I am neither depressed nor discouraged, and next year you shall see the laurels on my brow."

"But," said Gabri, in a tone of vexation, "who obtained the second prize?"

"Rivol," replied José; "and I might perhaps have had it if ..." and he looked timidly at Gabri, "if I had not erased my figure of Aricia."

"Yes!" exclaimed Gabri, as if talking to himself, "I was sure of it, I suspected as much at the exhibition.... José, José, embrace me, my son. Gracious Heaven! this is the first day I have passed without regretting the loss of my own noble boys."

Gabri was too familiar with artistic matters not to have divined the sacrifice which José's friendship had induced him to make, and his heart was capable of appreciating and rejoicing in it; but Dame Robert, who understood nothing of the matter, save that her boy was rejected, gave free vent to her dissatisfaction.

"Indeed, M. Gabri, it is very fine to pet him up after such a failure as that. Who would have thought it? It was well worth while to be shut up for two months without uttering a syllable, to let others walk off with the prize; still your picture was very fine, my boy, though, to tell you the truth, your female figure was too pale. I told you, however, not to spare your colours, but young people will always have their own way."

José smiled, and hastened to tranquillize the good woman. So far as concerned himself he succeeded without much difficulty; but she was for some time out of humour with Gabri, whose triumphant air annoyed her, because she did not understand it. Nor did she gain any information on the subject, for Gabri was discreet, and would not divulge José's secret; he did not even seek an explanation from the lad himself; but his marks of friendship were increased, and he more frequently repeated, "My son José!"

At the annual meeting of the Academy, when the students publicly receive the laurel crown, awarded for the merits of their works, José appeared more pleased than Francisco. He was restless, busying himself with his friend's toilet, &c.; and, placed in a corner of the room during the ceremony, the spectators might have imagined, from his excitement and his looks, when Francisco Enguehard was proclaimed, that he was the happy father of the young laureate, were it not that his almost childish features precluded the supposition.

A month after this great epoch for the two friends, they were separated; Francisco and his parents took the route to Italy; and José having returned to his studies, pursued them with ardour and contentment in thinking of the happiness which he had been the means of securing to three persons.

The year passed, and when again about to compete for the prize, José wrote to his friend, and told him to expect him in three months from that date. He felt confidence in himself, and had acquired so much power, that notwithstanding the merits of seven competitors, all older than himself, his picture was unanimously declared the best. It was even so superior to anything usually seen at these competitions, that it was thought proper to allow the exhibition to remain open several days longer than usual, in order to gratify the crowd of amateurs who flocked to see it. Dame Robert fully enjoyed José's triumph, and the almost equal pleasure of relating its history to her neighbours. Gabri rubbed his hands, and bent his head while listening to the praises of the young artist, and the honest Barbe exultingly boasted of having supplied for this famous picture the finest and the best canvas in his shop.

José, overwhelmed with honours, and full of joy, set out on his way to Rome, where he found Francisco, who had still four years remaining of the five granted by the government. Monsieur and Madame Enguehard received José as a second son; he lived in the same house with them, and enjoyed, in all its fulness, the delights of a life devoted to friendship and the fine arts, in that beautiful land where these arts so naturally flourish.

Many years have passed away since these events took place. Monsieur and Madame Barbe, grown rich and old, have retired, and given up their business to the excellent Gabri. A new generation of artists and students frequents the shop, and pursues pretty nearly the same habits as that which preceded it. But it is not in the same spot; the theatre of José's first exploits no longer exists. The two large posts may still, indeed, be seen; but Barbe's house has been taken down, and in its place monkeys and learned birds, attract by their various tricks, numerous spectators. Francisco Enguehard, steady and talented, is married, as he wished, to the only daughter of a rich antiquary, who desired to have for a son-in-law, a man of genius. Dame Robert has given up her business to her eldest son, and rests her fingers, if not her tongue, for she is never weary of relating to any one who will listen to her, how that José was a poor orphan, how she took him and put him to sleep on her counter, &c., &c. Philip, a worthy fellow, and a passable tailor, is married and settled, as he says, in his wife's native province, that is to say in the Marais. The poor Angevin, still a bad painter, notwithstanding all his efforts and perseverance, has returned to Angers. There, at least, he has talent, and directs in his turn the same school which sent him to Paris. He who was called poor José is now one of our most distinguished artists. He possesses a respectable fortune, acquired by his talents, and, what is far more valuable to him, [Pg 306] the universal esteem granted to the most noble character and the most irreproachable conduct. Faithful alike to delicacy and friendship, Francisco never knew the sacrifice which obtained for him his crown. José's laurels are suspended in his magnificent studio, beside his first palette, and his shoeblack's knife. He watches over Gabri, as a son over a father; listens to the long stories of the good old Dame Robert, without the least sign of impatience; and, finally, though young, handsome, and sought after, he always wears clothes made by Philip, and boasting of little elegance, with shoes of the same kind from Dame Robert's shop: and this is not the least remarkable trait in his history.

[Pg 307]

Caroline:

OR,

THE EFFECTS OF A MISFORTUNE.

"How delighted I am that Robert is gone!" exclaimed Caroline de Manzay, as she entered her mother's room; "I never knew anybody so disagreeable!"

"What!" said Madame de Manzay, "not even Denis?"

"Oh! that is quite different; Denis is teazing and troublesome, meddles with everything, and is angry when prevented; he jeers and laughs at one, and becomes passionate and insulting when contradicted; but then he is a mere child, and one overlooks it."

"You did not seem very ready to do so: you were always quarrelling, and could say very insulting things yourself sometimes."

"For all that I like him better than Robert."

"Yet Robert never teazed you; he is very reasonable."

"To be sure he is; he is twenty years old: and how proud he is! Because he is five years older than I am he treats me like a little girl, and to-day he told me I was a spoiled child."

"Robert is not the first person who has said that, my dear; but for what reason did he pay you this [Pg 308] compliment?"

"It was because Denis, who always takes delight in seeing me vexed, came to tell me, with an air of triumph, that when we took him and Robert to the village, we were to go by the road which I do not like. I said we were not to go that way; he asserted that we were, because he had heard my father give orders to his forester to wait for him at the green-gate, that he might see on his way back the fir-trees which are to be cut. Then I declared that I would not go out at all, and Robert laughed at me, and insisted that if my father chose it I should be obliged to go, and to take the road he wished. All this made me angry, and when papa came up I teazed him so, till he said we should go the way I liked best, and that he would look at the fir-trees another time. 'Well,' said I to Robert, when my father was at a little distance, 'it is my turn to laugh at you now;' 'I would recommend you not,' he replied, very contemptuously, 'there is no glory in being a spoiled child, and in abusing indulgence,' and then he turned his back on me. Oh! I detest him! So when he got into the carriage I would not say good-bye, and when he came up to kiss me, I turned my back upon him in my turn."

"And did that appear to grieve him?"

"He did not care in the least; he began to laugh, and said, 'Adieu, Caroline, try to become a little more reasonable, you need it greatly.'"

"And how did you part with Denis?"

"Oh, very well, for I spoke to him."

"What did you say to him?"

"I told him I was delighted that he was going away, because he was so rude; and he replied, that he was quite as glad, because I was so wilful and captious. In fact, I am not at all fond of Denis, either, and it is a great relief to be rid of him. It will be a long time, will it not, before we see him again?"

"Much too long; his guardian thinks of going to America, and taking Denis with him. God only knows when he will come back." [Pg 309]

"Oh! I shall have quite enough of him; he is so insufferable! And Robert?"

"He is going on his travels for four or five years."

"That is a great blessing."

"But, my dear child, you should reflect that Robert is your father's nephew, and that Denis is my poor sister's son; they are both of them your nearest relatives, and ought to be your best friends."

"Fine friends, indeed! the one teazes me, and the other despises me."

"I allow that Denis is fond of teazing, and that Robert is scornful, but they will out-grow that."

"No, that they won't."

"What! do you, then, really think that Denis, at twenty years old, will spoil your drawing, or blow out your candle?"

"He will do something as tiresome; and even if he should improve, Robert will always remain the same."

"I hope not; he will gain with years the gentleness in which he is deficient. But, even supposing he should not change, you yourself will alter, and when you are no longer a spoiled child, he will not call you such."

"I don't know that; he is so unamiable. However, it is all the same to me; I do not care for his opinion."

"So I perceive, my dear," said her mother, smiling, "you speak of it so calmly."

At this moment, Caroline heard her father calling her, and ran out to join him; she was always happy to be his companion, and responded with all her heart to the passionate affection which he showed her. Caroline was the only survivor of Monsieur and Madame de Manzay's eight daughters, and during her infancy her health had been so delicate, as to cause them the greatest anxiety. Continually agitated by the fear of losing her, their only thought had been to preserve their treasure: they trembled lest the slightest opposition should endanger her fragile existence, or cast a cloud over a life which might have so short a duration. For some years past, these terrible apprehensions had ceased, but Caroline had been so long accustomed to have her own way, that the effect survived the cause. She was accustomed to no other rule than her caprice, or the prompting of a disposition naturally upright and generous. When her fancies or her self-love did not interfere, she was ready to do everything to oblige, and diffused around her all the cheerfulness natural to her age: but if it at all crossed in her wishes, nothing could be obtained from her, and even her kindness of heart was insufficient to conquer her temper. In such unhappy moments, which were but too frequent, she would answer her mother with petulance, refuse to walk with her father, or sing him the airs he loved, and behave roughly to her little brother, whom she nevertheless loved with all her heart, and considered almost as her own child. Being ten years old, when Stephen was born, she had never thought of him as a rival, but as a *protégé*. She was habitually kind and indulgent, and would spend whole hours in building card-houses for him, or in telling him stories. It is true she did not like him to amuse himself with others: as she could not appropriate him to herself, like his parents, she devoted herself to him; but she did appropriate him, in fact, and one of the principal causes of her dissatisfaction with Denis was, that Stephen preferred his stories to hers, and his noisy games to the more tranquil pleasures procured him by his sister. [Pg 310]

"What does it signify, if Stephen enjoys himself better with Denis than with you?" said Robert to her one day.

"It displeases me."

"But why?"

"Because he is so whimsical; a week ago he was interrupting me perpetually, to make me tell him over and over again the story of the Wonderful Cat, and now, when I call him on purpose, he says it wearies him." [Pg 311]

"Naturally enough, when you propose telling it to him at the very time that Denis is just in the finest part of a story about robbers or battles."

"And twenty times have I begged Denis not to tell him any more such stories: but he does not care for a word that is said to him."

"Stephen would be very sorry if he left off, I can assure you: look how attentive he is."

"Yes, and what am I to do while Stephen is listening to Denis?"

"You might finish the drawing which your father asked for this morning, and which, as you said, you had not time to complete."

"Indeed I shall not, it is too tiresome; and if anything more is said about it, I will tear it to pieces."

"Surely not, you are not silly enough to do that."

"And why then should I be silly to tear this drawing? It is my own, I hope."

"A fine reason truly! The château yonder is mine also. What would you say if I were to burn it down?"

"There is no resemblance in the two cases."

"In fact, I should be a madman, and you merely a child."

"A child! Do you know that I am fifteen?"

"So they say, but I cannot believe it."

"Why not? I am taller than the gardener's daughter, who is sixteen."

"Yes; but you are not as reasonable as Stephen, who is only five."

"And, how not, pray?"

"Come, do not be angry; you are, perhaps, about as much so, but that is all I can grant you. Now do not put yourself in a passion, that will not frighten me; you cannot tear me to pieces like your drawings. Adieu, make yourself happy: I am going to carry off Denis to hunt, so you may tell Stephen the story of the Wonderful Cat as many times as you please." [Pg 312]

It was by conversations like these that Robert had drawn upon himself the animadversions of Caroline. Unaccustomed to any opposition to her wishes, she could not forgive the harsh manner in which her cousin contradicted her, and, spoiled as she was by continual marks of affection, she was astonished at the contemptuous disapprobation which she had to encounter from one, whose good opinion she was desirous of obtaining. Never had she heard the name of Robert de Puivaux mentioned without eulogium. He had completed his studies most successfully, and had particularly distinguished himself at the Polytechnic School, which he had just left, after spending two years there, simply for instruction. His character was extolled, his judgment esteemed, and his understanding and acquirements were considered by all as beyond his years; but all these advantages were effaced, in Caroline's mind, by his ungracious conduct towards herself—or, rather, they served to render it the more vexatious to her. It must be allowed that Robert had treated her in a manner far from pleasant. Naturally serious, and disposed to regulate his conduct on principles of reason and duty, he could not comprehend the inconsiderateness of Caroline, and the importance which she attached to her own whims; he had no patience in seeing everyone yield to her, and was as angry with her for their weakness as for her own defects; he, therefore, never lost any opportunity of showing his disapprobation and contempt: and, wholly engrossed by the unfavourable impressions with which she inspired him, he did not remark the good qualities which lay hidden under this petulant exterior, and which the future would develope.

Shortly after the departure of Robert and Denis, Madame de Manzay, who had been an invalid ever since the birth of Stephen, was suddenly snatched from her family, after a few days' illness. [Pg 313] We will not attempt to describe this sad event: there are sorrows which can never be comprehended by those who have not felt them, and which it is needless to relate to those who know them by experience. The language of man cannot adequately express all that the soul of man is capable of feeling, and such feelings are not learned but revealed; a single moment—one of those moments which are equal to a whole life—can explain more than years of reflection, and convey to the heart, what all the knowledge of the mind would be unable to grasp.

A week had elapsed since the death of Madame de Manzay, and her unhappy family were not yet roused from the first stupor of grief; their hearts had not yet recovered composure; they had not returned to their usual habits; no one obeyed, for no one commanded; and each one, engrossed by his affliction, forgot his duties. There was neither regularity nor labour; confusion alone reigned in the desolate household. Poor little Stephen was left all day long to himself; Monsieur de Manzay wandered about in the park; his daughter shut herself up in her room; and no one attempted to assist anyone else in supporting the weight of grief, by which each was oppressed. Caroline, as usual, was weeping in her own apartment, when an old servant, who had been in the family from the birth of her father, and who had just seen his master, seated, alone, in his wife's room, thinking he would like to see his daughter, went to her, and said, "Pray go, Miss Caroline, to my master. Poor gentleman! he has no one now but you."

"And Stephen, Peter; you do not reckon him."

"Oh! that is quite another thing, miss; master loves the dear little fellow with all his heart, but he is not company for him; he cannot talk with him, and divert his thoughts, as you could. Oh! Miss Caroline, you are the very image of my good mistress; try then to resemble her in everything. You [Pg 314] cannot remember it, for you were too young, but when my mistress lost four of her children in one year, and you alone were left—well, miss, it was she who then consoled master. He was like one distracted, and said he felt tempted to throw himself in the water, and the poor lady was obliged to appear perfectly calm, in order to tranquillize him. I have sometimes seen her leave

my master's room, to go and cry, and then she would return, and urge him to submit to the will of God; she would make him walk with her, or read aloud to divert his thoughts; she would even amuse him with music: and how he loved her in return! Oh! Miss Caroline! you had a treasure in your mother; endeavour to be as good as she was."

Caroline's sobs prevented her from making any reply; but she held out her hand to the aged Peter, and rose immediately to follow him to her father. She was told that he was in the park, and repaired thither; but, absorbed in her affliction, and in the reflections suggested by Peter's artless observations, she mistook the path, and did not perceive her error, for she went on without thinking whither her steps were directed. For the first time in her life, perhaps, she became aware that she had a duty to fulfil towards others, and that she was not placed in this world merely to be loved and indulged. She had just been told—"*Your father has no one but you.*" It was the truth; but of what use had she been to her father, during the past week? Had she afforded him consolation or assistance, when, given up to her own affliction, she had scarcely bestowed a thought on his; when he had been obliged to try and comfort her, and had sought to do so in vain; when her tears and cries had shaken the resolution he found it so difficult to maintain; when she had kept out of his presence, and abandoned him at the time he most needed her? Was it thus that her mother had acted, when, struck by misfortune, she had, for the sake of calming her husband's despair, begun by controlling her own feelings? Yet who, more than her father, possessed a claim to her active gratitude, to her affectionate devotion? Her earliest recollections were associated with his kindness and tenderness. He had consecrated his leisure to her instruction, relinquished for this purpose studies in which he took delight, and renounced all recreations but those which he could share with her; he had made her the companion of his walks, and allowed her to direct them as she chose. If she wished for an excursion in the neighbourhood, M. de Manzay would leave all his occupations to procure this pleasure for her; in a word, he never refused her a request, and yet her demands had not been few. And what had she done, on her part, to requite such great affection? How had she repaid the extreme indulgence of her parents? She loved them heartily, and they were convinced of this, but she had done nothing more: whilst they thought only of her, she had never considered them, and had found it perfectly natural to be continually the recipient of benefits, without ever giving anything in return. "Oh, how wicked I have been!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands; "can God ever forgive me, or mamma?" She threw herself on her knees, and, melting into tears, promised, as if still in the presence of her whom she could never again behold in this world, to repair, by her attention to the objects of affection she had left, the faults which she had committed against her. She felt that her resolution was accepted and blessed; that the relations of those who love each other are eternal; and that her mother was pleased with her earnest endeavours, as she would have been if still living. She felt that it was her soul which responded to her own, and inspired her with the love of virtue, the hope of perseverance, the joy of pardon. She arose, and returned to the château, eager to find her father, and begin her new part. "Hitherto, he has devoted his life to me," said she to herself, "now, it shall be my care to live for him;" and immediately, with the ardour so natural to youth, she depicted to herself all the various ways in which she could be useful to him, and was enchanted at the idea of being at last good for something in the world; no obstacle or difficulty presented itself to her mind, so natural did the performance of her duty appear to her at this moment.

On approaching the château, she found Stephen sitting quite alone, under a tree, crying. "What is the matter, Stephen?" she asked, kissing him.

"I am hungry."

"Hungry! why what o'clock is it?"

"It is twelve o'clock."

"But you have already had your breakfast?"

"No; Mary forgot to make my soup. Nobody thinks about me now that mamma is gone."

"I will think of you, my dear child. Come with me, I will get you some breakfast, and tomorrow you shall not have to wait so long." On entering the house, she inquired for her father. She was told that he had come in, and had asked for her, and, after waiting some time, had gone out again. "But he has had his breakfast, I suppose?"

"No, miss, the cook has gone out."

"Things must not go on thus," thought Caroline; "I must have some order in the household." She perceived at this moment her father coming in, and hastened to meet him; she was eager to have some conversation with him, and impart to him her good resolutions; but the very first was, to attend to others rather than herself, and she therefore sacrificed to Stephen's appetite her desire of communicating to her father her new projects. After breakfast, M. de Manzay was going towards his wife's sitting-room, where he passed all the time which he spent in-doors. Caroline, who wished to follow him, paused for an instant at this sight: she never yet had sufficient resolution to enter her mother's apartment, and trembled at the idea of revisiting a spot so filled with her image. "But how can I ever be of service to my father, if I cannot go where it is his desire always to remain? Come, I must go to him;" and, making an effort to command her feelings, she went to her father. Surprised and pleased to see her in this room, where his recollections became almost realities, he embraced her with even more than his wonted tenderness; and, comparing, with a pleasure mingled with grief, the portrait of his wife with the

features of his daughter,—"Oh, my child!" he exclaimed at length, his voice checked by tears, "I have only you now." She threw her arms round him, and for some time neither father nor daughter could utter a word. At length, overcoming her emotion, she said, "My dear papa, I have hitherto done very wrong, but I will endeavour to repair my faults. I have been a selfish, ungrateful child, and lived only for myself; henceforth my life shall be devoted to you. Forgive me for having been so useless to you; forget the past; you shall see that I am no longer the same, and you shall be satisfied with my conduct. Kiss me, dear papa; I will correct all my faults, and endeavour to be like mamma."

"God bless you, my child, for having formed such a project! but you are very young to make even the attempt."

"Not too young, I hope. I shall hardly succeed at first, but the recollection of mamma will come to my assistance. I know what she used to do, and I will endeavour to imitate her. I will come and see you in your study, and be always ready to give up my own occupations to please you. I will give Stephen his lessons. I will keep the accounts. You shall see how steady I will be; only try me, papa."

"Do what you like, my child; I am in no state to make any decision; I can think of nothing. I leave you mistress of the house, of your brother, of myself. If there are still any peaceful moments in store for me on this earth, I shall enjoy them through you, and you alone."

"And Stephen, papa, you forget him."

"Poor child! no, I do not forget him; go and bring him here."

Caroline brought her little brother to her father, who took him in his arms, saying, "Stephen, you loved dear mamma, did you not?"

"With all my heart," replied the child, sobbing.

"And you were also obedient to her. Well, now you must love your sister, and obey her; she will be a mother to you henceforward."

"Would you like it, Stephen?" asked Caroline, "would you like me to take care of you, and give you your lessons?"

"Yes, if you promise not to scold me."

"My dear child, I will not scold you; I will try to be kind like mamma."

"Oh, you are very kind already, I am sure," said Stephen, caressing his sister, "only sometimes you get out of patience, and that frightens me."

"Make yourself easy, I intend to grow better; but you must also be very good, to please papa, who has so much sorrow."

"Oh! yes; for that I will learn my lessons better than I used to do."

"My beloved children," said M. de Manzay, encircling them both in his arms, "my dear children, this is the first moment of comfort I have had for a week past. Go, my own Caroline, assume your new functions; take possession of the keys; direct, command, re-establish the regularity which formerly reigned in the house; take the same care of your brother that he has been accustomed to; but first come to me, that I may give you my blessing, before the portrait of your mother."

After some moments devoted to these tender and afflicting emotions, Caroline left the room with Stephen. Her first care was to see if his apartment was in order: she found it completely stripped of all the articles which he was in the habit of using.

"What has become of your little table, Stephen?" she enquired.

"Oh! I dare say it is in the garden; I took it there the day before yesterday, and they have forgotten to bring it in."

"And your arm-chair?"

"I tied it to Turk's tail, for a carriage, and he broke it."

"You might have expected as much, my dear."

"What could I do? I was alone, and tired of doing nothing."

"You have recollected, I hope, to give water to your birds."

"Oh! gracious! I have never given them any but once. Poor creatures! they must be very thirsty. But, Caroline, do not scold me, it is not my fault. Every morning, mamma used to ask me if I had taken water and seeds to my birds, leaves to my rabbits, and grass to my fawn; and now, who is there to think of all these things?"

"I will. Let us go to your aviary, and I will talk to you by the way."

Caroline then explained to her brother all her plans concerning him. She told him that he should work with her, and that she would amuse him, and take care of all his things; in a word, that she would, as far as possible, supply the place of a mother to him. She had his books brought into her

sitting-room, and such of his playthings as he had been accustomed to keep in his mother's apartment; she gave him a shelf in her library, and the lower part of a closet, and established his little table by the window, as he wished. At first, she intended to place it elsewhere, for this was her own favourite place; but she recollected that last year, when she had remarked that her mamma was happy in being able to enjoy, while sitting at table, the prospect over the valley, her mother had yielded to her the place she coveted. "I cannot be so good as mamma," she thought, "unless I do as she did, so I will remove my table from the window." [Pg 320]

Such were the feelings and views with which Caroline undertook the reformation of her character, and she begun the task with the blind ardour so natural to youth: that happy privilege bestowed by Providence, to remove all hesitation from their resolutions, and leave nothing doubtful but the execution. But this first strong and happy impulse does not always last; when the sentiment which gave it birth ceases to be exclusive, things which had been forgotten reappear, the realities of life and the peculiarities of character resume their claims, and what we still desire above all things is, nevertheless, not our sole object. This was precisely the case with Caroline. For a considerable time her heart was so full of the idea of her great loss, of the remembrance of her faults, of her affection for her father, and of the new pleasure of exerting herself for the sake of others, that she could not form a thought exclusively for herself, and would have been indignant had she been desired to do so; but when, after the lapse of several months, life had returned to its uniform course, when business was again attended to, and all the family had resumed their usual habits, she perceived how completely her own had been overturned. The time which she formerly employed, according to her fancy, was no longer her own; a great part of it was absorbed by her little brother, and her pursuits were also frequently interrupted by her father. As long as he had a friend constantly at hand, he might be always disposed to accommodate himself to the arrangements of his daughter, but now that this friend was no more, Caroline was required to replace her, and became his property: their positions were changed, and the effect of this was perpetually felt, and the more strikingly in proportion as their first deep affliction subsided by degrees, and M. de Manzay was able to take some interest in the scenes around him, and his daughter to enter into her own employments. [Pg 321]

It will readily be believed that, in a young person of sixteen, a change of this nature could not be made easily, or completely carried out from the first. In order to maintain it, Caroline was obliged to exert much self-control, and she often failed of success. It would sometimes happen that she kept her brother waiting to repeat his lesson, because she was reading an interesting book, or playing an air that she liked; on other occasions, she would defer the household accounts for several days whilst she was finishing a drawing, or completing a piece of embroidery; and occasionally her father could read so plainly in her countenance that she had no interest in what he proposed, that he would give up his intention, not without a melancholy retrospect of the days when whatever he wished became immediately the earnest object of another. Yet it must also be said that Caroline acknowledged and regretted all her faults, and very often repaired them so promptly and so thoroughly, that they almost became a merit, and led to fresh improvement. Stephen never found her so kind and patient, or her father so affectionately devoted to him, as when she had to reproach herself with some act of impatience or caprice; and, generally speaking, she quickly recovered herself. To give one instance amongst others:—It was several months after the death of Madame de Manzay, and everything had been placed as far as possible on its former footing in the château, and tranquillity and peace, the more valuable in proportion as happiness is wanting, were reestablished in the house, when, one day, M. de Manzay entered his daughter's apartment with a letter in his hand. "Caroline," he said, "would you like Denis to come and live with us for some time?"

"Oh, no, certainly not. I do not want him; he is insufferable."

"But, my dear, his guardian is lately dead, and Denis, as you know, is on bad terms with the wife, so that he cannot remain with her: where can he go, unless he comes to Primini?" [Pg 322]

"Let him go where he likes. Why does he make himself detested by every one? Oh! I should not have a moment's peace if he were here; I would rather go away myself than remain with him. Pray, papa, write word at once that you cannot have him."

"I will write and say that *you* would rather not; for my own part, I will assuredly not be the person to refuse to receive your mother's nephew;" and M. de Manzay left the room. Caroline was struck with these last words, and with the tone in which they were uttered. "*My mother's nephew*," thought she; "but Denis does not in the least resemble mamma; he is as unamiable as she was good: yet my father appears to regret him: perhaps he thinks that Denis will be cured of his faults—but that cannot be, for he never listens to a word that is said to him. However, he must not be left in the streets; besides, if my father wishes him to come here, that is the most important point. Well! I must be patient, and, after all, he will not eat me."

Caroline rose, after having made these brief reflections, and repaired to her father's room. He was pacing the apartment with a pensive air, still holding in his hand the letter which announced the death of Denis's guardian.

"My dear papa," said she, "I come to request you to invite Denis to come to us."

"Indeed, my dear."

"Yes; just now I was still more unreasonable than he is: pray be so kind as to think no more of it, and to write for Denis."

"You are a good girl, and I promise you to prevent him from tormenting you."

"Oh! no, papa, do not trouble yourself about the matter; I know that these petty grievances are very annoying to you, and I will find means to manage. Perhaps he may have learned to behave better than formerly, and I am certainly less childish than I was a year ago. Make yourself easy, papa, all shall go on well." [Pg 323]

A fortnight after this conversation, Denis arrived at his uncle's house. He was fifteen, but his reason was not in proportion to his age. Endowed with great strength and unconquerable activity, he delighted only in noise and commotion, and, if he was fond of teazing, it was only to produce this commotion. Anything was acceptable to him but quiet: the anger of a child, the insults of a servant, the barking of a dog, all answered his purpose, and he would not have cared to teaze an animal unless it cried out. During his first visit to Primini, Stephen had been a great assistance to him. Sometimes he would torment him, and amuse himself with his anger; sometimes he would divert him, and laugh at the displeasure which this occasioned to Caroline; and, if the latter became seriously angry, Denis had attained the height of his wishes. He was not ill-disposed, but he could not endure *ennui*, and he knew not how to avoid it by rational occupations. Brought up in the country, and much spoiled by his guardian, he had taken more interest in the employments of the labourers, the gardeners, and the gamekeepers, than in the lessons which he from time to time received from the masters, who came from the neighbouring town. He never took up a book, unless he met with accounts of voyages, and battles, tales of robbers, or ghost stories; and his greatest ambition was to lead the life of a corsair some day, or to go and live amongst the savages, and endeavour to be chosen as the chief of a tribe. He was brave, adroit, and capable of generous actions, but he was violent and wilful, and through his excessive activity was becoming a torment to himself and others.

Such was the guest whose arrival Caroline dreaded and certainly not without reason. When he entered the drawing-room, where all the family was assembled, he rushed forward so abruptly to embrace his uncle, that he overturned a table which stood in his way; the lamp which was upon it fell upon Stephen, struck him severely, and covered him with oil. He began to cry, and Caroline, running to him, wounded her foot with a piece of the broken glass. In a word, the arrival of Denis was a signal for noise and confusion; and, what was still worse, Caroline was much disposed to be angry with him, and demand whether he would never learn to be more careful—but she restrained herself, recollecting the promise she had given to her father that all should go well; and, when tranquillity was a little restored, she embraced her cousin cordially, and received him in a very friendly manner. During some days all went on tolerably well; Denis had so much to see that he did not require the aid of others to pass away his time; besides, notwithstanding his rudeness, he was not altogether exempt from that kind of shyness, which is not unusual with those who can neither conform to the established usages of society, nor entirely shake off their exactions. He was always ill at ease with persons with whom he was not completely familiar; indeed, he generally withdrew when a stranger came in; and the few days which were required to renew his acquaintance with the inhabitants of Primini were agreeable enough to them, and very painful to himself: but this state of things did not long continue, he soon recovered the freedom of his disposition and manners, and the effect of this upon the tranquillity of the château was speedily felt. At his first attacks, Caroline, who had prepared herself to bear everything with patience, supported her cousin's tricks without complaint, picked up a dozen times the reel of cotton which he threw down, re-lighted the taper which he extinguished, or replaced before her piano the chair which he removed as soon as she left it. One day, however, Denis, weary of his ineffectual attempts to put her out of temper, after having tried in vain during the whole of a rainy morning, began to teaze Stephen, and smeared with ink a picture which he held in his hand. The child burst into tears, and Caroline, excited by his vexation, and by the impatience which she had so long curbed, was now seriously angry. [Pg 324] [Pg 325]

"Leave my room, Denis," she cried, "it really is impossible to live with you. Not satisfied with trying the whole day to provoke me, you must now make poor Stephen cry. Go away, I will not have you stay in my room."

"Then you must put me out of the door yourself, for I shall not stir."

"You will not go! Am I not mistress in my own apartment?"

"Certainly, if you can only make yourself obeyed;" and, so saying, Denis placed himself in an arm-chair.

"I will go and fetch my father."

"As you please; I am not afraid of my uncle, he is much kinder than you are."

Caroline hastened to M. de Manzay's room; she was ready to cry, and her flushed cheeks betrayed her vivid emotion.

"Papa," she said, "will you come and order Denis to quit my room?"

"Why do you wish to turn him out?"

"He teazes me, and makes Stephen cry; it is impossible to have any peace with him,—he makes me quite miserable."

"Well, then, let him return to Paris."

"No—I only want him to leave my room."

"That would settle the question to-day, but to-morrow he might begin again; and I will not have to interfere perpetually in your quarrels."

"This is the first time, papa, I have ever applied to you."

"The same thing will be recurring every day. I would rather he should go—he must be sent to college."

"Send Denis to college, papa! He would be expelled directly." [Pg 326]

"So much the worse for him; there will be nothing left for him but to go to sea; that is, after all, the best profession for him, and I will not have him render you unhappy."

"But, papa, would it not be better to prevent him from doing so, by obliging him to behave more reasonably?"

"It would be insufferable to me, to be obliged to be always looking after him. I require tranquillity. I will send Denis away if you like it, but to be perpetually watching him is what I cannot do."

"Then," she exclaimed, in tears, "I must be the victim of this mischievous boy."

"No, certainly; that shall not be the case: he shall go at once. Call my nephew," said M. de Manzay to a gardener, who was at work in front of the window.

"He is not in the château, sir," replied the man; "he has just gone down towards the mill with Master Stephen."

"With Stephen!" repeated M. de Manzay. "What were you telling me then just now, Caroline?"

"They seem to have made up their quarrel, papa, and I will follow their example, for I could not suffer Denis to be sent away."

"So much the better, for this time I will pass over his conduct, but at the very first dispute——

"There shall be none, papa; or, at least, you shall not be troubled about the matter."

"Thank you, my dear child, embrace me. You are a good girl, and the joy of your poor father's heart." And M. de Manzay pressed Caroline to his bosom with the utmost tenderness, grateful for the decision which spared his weakness. When she had quitted him, she reflected on her position. She saw clearly that it was in vain to seek from her father any support against Denis, for, although he had not the same affection for him as he felt towards herself, he was almost as much [Pg 327] afraid of opposing him: not that Denis was ill-disposed, but he was so eager about what he wished, and had so determined a will, that his uncle hesitated to resist him; and it would have been a thousand times less painful to him to send Denis away, in order to spare his daughter a moment's uneasiness, than to watch over his conduct, and prevent him from being so troublesome and disagreeable.

It was, therefore, in herself alone that she must seek a remedy for the inconveniences occasioned by her cousin's disposition. It was only by her own calmness and superior sense that she could make him ashamed of his resolution to teaze her. She had already occasionally experienced the happy effects of apparent indifference, and he had more than once desisted from his mischievous tricks, when he found that they did not attain his object. The only plan, then, was to be habitually so patient as to weary him out, and induce him to seek amusements less annoying to others. This being the case, her own tranquillity, and that of her father, must depend upon herself, and for this it was worth while to make some efforts. Yes, undoubtedly, it was well worth while, but such efforts were not so easy as Caroline had imagined, as she quickly found by experience. She said to herself, beforehand, that, after all, she need not be so very unhappy, because Denis would gather her choicest flowers, trample on her flower-beds, disturb her silkworms, or meddle with her herbal; that domestic tranquillity was more valuable than these trifles; and that she had but to sacrifice them at once and entirely: but, if she could bear calmly, though not without a secret struggle, the malicious tricks which her cousin played her, and was not angry once in a dozen times that she was tempted to be so, and that he well deserved it, she could not behold Stephen's vexations with the same equanimity, and when he began to cry her indignation would burst forth. This was, however, bad policy; for Denis then enjoyed a double triumph, which was the more [Pg 328] agreeable to him because it was so easily gained. Poor Caroline had, therefore, to pass many unhappy moments; and, whether she succeeded in commanding herself or not, she was continually vexed and agitated, and was every day surprised to find life so full of hardships, and duty so difficult.

But she had also to encounter other difficulties, which were quite unexpected, and which she could not overcome by mere force of will, and a determination to conquer them. The greater part of these difficulties did not arise from within, from her own habits and disposition, from her old aversion to contradiction, and still more to restraint; they came from without, and had their source in the prejudices and passions of others; and upright intentions and firm resolution were not sufficient immediately to overcome them. Caroline had excited many unfavourable prejudices, which, however just in some respects, were unjust in their exclusive severity: it was necessary for her to triumph over these,—necessary, but difficult; and she learned to see how intimate is the connection in our destinies, what lengthened responsibility may attach to an action, in

appearance the most trivial, and how indispensable it is to act to the best of our ability in all things, if we would have a conscience free from the fear of consequences.

Two years had now elapsed since Caroline had lost her mother. M. de Manzay had regained sufficient self-command to occupy himself with the education of Stephen. The hunting season detained Denis at a distance from the château; and Caroline, being now accustomed to the management of household affairs, was not obliged to devote so much time to them; and, having become more reasonable, she employed her remaining hours better, and consequently found more leisure than formerly, although in reality she had much more to do. She was particularly struck by the details given in a newspaper of the happy results produced in the village of L——, [Pg 329] by the establishment of a school and working institution for girls, according to the method of mutual instruction. All night her head was full of the subject, and the next day, as soon as she rose, she went and proposed to her father to found a similar school of industry in the village, near their château, and offered to undertake its direction.

"We must send for a person who understands the method from one of the Paris schools," she said, "we can then form the establishment and train the monitors; when they are sufficiently instructed, the management of the children will be entrusted to them, and I shall superintend them. That was the plan adopted at L——."

"I ask nothing better, my dear; it will be useful to the village, and afford you occupation. Think over the matter again, and, if you persist in your project, we will speak of it to the curé."

"Why speak to him? It is not his business."

"The education of his parishioners is, in a certain sense, his business; and his opposition would be a great obstacle."

"But surely he would not oppose it; he ought to be pleased when the poor are benefited."

"He is no doubt very charitable, but he is also self-willed. You know I have never been able to hold intercourse with him upon any point whatever. He would not even recommend a beggar to me."

"Very true, but he cannot refuse our proposal. Oh! how happy I shall be when the plan is carried into effect."

Caroline had several conversations with her father on the subject, and was delighted at the idea of being useful to all those little girls, who were so wretched and so ignorant. The day on which it was at length decided between them that the school should be established, she went out full of [Pg 330] joy to take a walk. She was musing over her projects, considering in what manner she could render herself beloved and respected by the children, and gain their confidence—thought over the rewards she would give, and the good advice she would address to them—in a word, she was at this moment quite happy, and foresaw no difficulty, when she met the curé, who was returning from a visit to a sick person. He bowed, and would have passed without speaking to her, but, with the confidence natural to her age and character, she stopped him saying, "Monsieur le Curé, I have something to tell you."

"Indeed! Miss Caroline; what can it be?" replied the curé, with an air of surprise and almost of severity. "It appears to me that we have not much connection with each other, and that you occupy yourself but little with the sort of affairs that interest me."

"But I wish to occupy myself with them, and that is what I have to tell you about. My father intends to establish a school of industry in the village."

"For what purpose? We have already a schoolmistress."

"She is old and half deaf, they say; besides she has not a good method of teaching."

"How do you know that? You have never visited the school."

"I shall go every day to the new school; I shall be superintendent."

"You understand, then, what is to be taught?"

"I suppose I know how to read and write."

"Yes, but the catechism; you are probably not acquainted with that; for you do not set a very good example to our young girls."

"How! Monsieur le Curé," exclaimed Caroline, colouring with anger and vexation; "what do you mean?"

"I mean, young lady, that you often come into church after the service has begun, and sometimes go away before it is over."

"Oh, Monsieur le Curé, it is a very long time since that has happened." [Pg 331]

"I know nothing about that; I have not time to pay attention to the exact days, but it is really a scandal."

"Monsieur le Curé, I now always remain the whole time. Pray inquire if, for the last two years, I have not come in very punctually."

"Yes; and do you no longer give bad advice as you used to do formerly?"

"I never gave any one bad advice."

"You forget that, in consequence of your interrupting the gardener's daughter in her attendance on the catechism, you caused her first communion to be deferred, and that, when you saw her crying on that account, you told her it was no great misfortune, and gave her a neck-handkerchief to console her, so that she ended by saying that it did not much matter whether she made her first communion then or not, and that a year sooner or later was all the same to her. Perhaps you do not recollect also, that when your milkwoman, Dame Joan, wanted to send her daughter to her old mother, and that Matty did not like going, you told her that her mother was very ill-natured to oppose her wishes, and that your parents let you do whatever you pleased."

"But, Monsieur le Curé, I was then a child; it is more than three years ago."

"You have now, then, become reasonable, I suppose, Caroline?"

"You know I have, Monsieur le Curé.'

"And how should I know it? Have you ever told me so?"

"How could I tell you? We never see you at the château."

"Where, then, could I learn the alteration of which you speak? Have I seen any effects of it? Do you ever visit our poor? Have you given good advice to our young girls? Have you procured work for their mothers? You talk of superintending a school of industry; do you even know how to hem a duster? It is said that you do not. No, Miss Caroline; go and play on the piano, work at your embroidery, amuse yourself, but do not pretend to teach others: there we can do without you." [Pg 332]

"Oh! how severe you are, Monsieur le Curé," said poor Caroline.

"I am but just, Miss Caroline. I am aware that this is not the way they speak to you at the château; but things are not the better for that."

"Why have you not given me good advice? I should have profited by it."

"To be sure I ought to have done so, in order that M. de Manzay might ridicule it!"

"My father has never ridiculed you, Monsieur le Curé."

"That is hardly probable. He opposes me constantly. Not a week ago he prevented the municipal council from doing what I requested: he had the upper hand then, now it is my turn. Good evening, Miss Caroline; you will not establish your school."

Caroline repulsed by the Curé, p. 332.

Having thus spoken, the curé bowed, and left her, without waiting for a reply. The poor child was thunderstruck at finding herself the object of so much severity, prejudice, and injustice. "What

have I done, then," she exclaimed, in tears, "to give such a bad opinion of me? I wish well to every one, and no one loves me. Oh, how ill-natured the world is—nobody has been kind to me but papa and mamma; and mamma is no longer with us!" Caroline abandoned herself for some time to all the bitterness of her heart, and was indignant at this malevolence, without at all considering whether it were altogether gratuitous, or whether it might not have some foundation. However, as she reflected on the reproofs of the curé, they brought to her recollection other occasions on which she might have justly incurred his censure. By continued reflection and self- examination, she at last perceived, that she must formerly have given a sufficiently bad opinion of herself to all the grave heads of the village, and that she had done nothing since calculated to change that opinion. Fully occupied with her father, towards whom alone she felt that she had been deficient, and with her brother, whom she considered as a sacred legacy from her mother, it had not for a moment occurred to her that strangers might have reason to complain, or pass an unfavourable judgment upon her conduct; nor that approbation might be refused, even when her actions deserved it. "It is quite natural," she said, at length; "why should Monsieur le Curé suppose that I have corrected my faults? He would not enquire of my father if I now comply with all his wishes, or ask Stephen if I am a patient teacher, or Denis whether I bear with him better than formerly. Since I wish to persuade him of the change which has taken place in me, I must begin by giving him proofs of it. I will do all I can, but it will take a long time, for Monsieur le Curé does not give up his notions very readily. I must ask my father to wait before he establishes the school." Monsieur de Manzay was surprised, like his daughter, at the prejudices which existed against her; he loved her so tenderly, and found in her so many charming qualities, that he could never have calculated the effects of her faults, and he found it difficult to conceive that any one could look upon his Caroline with other eyes than his own. However, he entered into her views, and readily consented to her wish to postpone the execution of her benevolent projects, in order to carry them out more effectually.

A few days after that on which the curé had treated her so harshly, Caroline met him again. He bowed to her with more amenity than on the former occasion, for he had reproached himself most heartily for having repulsed with such asperity the good intentions of so young a person, and one who showed so much enthusiasm. He had besides, made some inquiries about her during the interval; had spoken to persons who kept up an intercourse with the château; and all he had heard increased his regret. He was therefore glad to meet her, and hastened to address her. "How is your little brother, Miss Caroline?" he inquired; "I hear that he has a cold."

"Thank you, Monsieur le Curé, he is better to-day." They remained some moments silent, each wishing to say something, but not knowing exactly where to begin. Caroline at length broke the silence: "Monsieur le Curé, you were very hard upon me the other day; but you taught me something of which I was completely ignorant, and which it was very necessary I should know. I had forgotten my childish follies, and did not imagine that others would remember them; you have rendered me a service by undeceiving me; I entreat you now to assist me in convincing every one—and yourself especially—that I have altered for the better. What must I do for this purpose? I am ready to follow your advice."

"My dear young lady," replied the curé with a gentleness which was unusual to him, "I perceive clearly that you are very much improved, for formerly you resented the slightest remonstrance, and now you bear with sweetness even harshness and injustice. I have been really grieved, I assure you, that I was so hard upon you the other day. When I was at some distance, I said to myself: Now, here is this child of sixteen, who was never contradicted in her life, and yet is as patient as a lamb when severe things are said to her; whilst I, an old priest, who fifty years ago renounced the world and its passions, am angry and repulse her good resolutions. Instead of killing the fatted calf, I shut the door against the returning prodigal; and yet, poor little thing, she has done no great harm; she can only be reproached with childish conduct."

"Indeed! Monsieur le Curé," cried Caroline, joyfully, "you really thought all this? Oh! how grateful I am to you!"

"You have nothing to thank me for, my dear young lady, it is but common justice. I much wished to pay you a visit at the château, to express my regret, but I dared not, it is so long since I have seen Monsieur de Manzay, and I responded so ill last week to his request for additional seats in the church, that I did not know how he might receive me; but you are very kind I see, and you will not be offended with an old man who has not yet learned to command his temper. Oh! my child, you are young, and in the season of vigour; for the love of God, employ all the strength you possess in mastering your passions. This is the real duty of man, as the Scripture says. To be benevolent and compassionate, to possess a generous heart and an exalted character, to act so as to make yourself beloved by every one, all this is much in the sight of God and man, and all this I believe you will be; but still all this is not sufficient, and, in conjunction with so many good qualities, may exist great faults, which will prepare for us many regrets. Witness me, for instance, my dear young lady; I am not good for much, but I may say that I love my parishioners, and that I desire their welfare with all my heart. Your father has the best intentions possible, and is full of compassion for the poor, and yet I ask nothing from him, and take no advantage of so good a neighbour: and why is this? Because the first time I met him, four years ago, when he had just completed the purchase of this estate, I heard him praise the Revolution, and say that it was a glorious event. From that moment all was at an end between us; he appeared to my imagination a Jacobin, ready to set fire to our church, and oblige us again to say mass under the shelter of the woods; and I would never hear of any intercourse with him. I am no longer of that opinion, Miss Caroline: I perceive that it is possible to be a very peaceful, and a very honest man, and yet speak

well of the Revolution; and several times I have been tempted to renew intercourse with Monsieur de Manzay, but various things have turned out unfavourably. He had a master removed whom I patronised; he decided the municipal council to employ upon a road the money which I had asked for a bell; and when you spoke to me about the school, I fancied it was to oppose me that he chose to have another in these new methods, of which I know nothing, and in which, therefore, I could not interfere. There is my confession, my dear young lady. Now give me your hand, for yourself, and for Monsieur de Manzay; assure me that you bear me no ill-will; and tell me what are your projects."

"I have none for the present, Monsieur le Curé," replied Caroline, greatly moved, as she placed her hand in that of the old man. "I have no plan, but to follow your advice in everything. Tell me what I must do, in order to make the villagers forget that I was formerly a very unreasonable child."

"My dear young lady, you need only be the same at Montfort that you are at the château. I have asked a great deal about you since the other day, and have heard much in your favour, but these things are not known amongst our people, and it is a pity. Observe, Miss Caroline, that you cannot be useful to our poor people, without becoming acquainted with them, and making them acquainted with you. Go and see them sometimes; I assure you that you would become attached to them; and when you are familiar with their wants and have acquired their confidence, we will talk of your school, if you like."

At this moment the bell of the château rang for dinner, and Caroline was obliged to take leave of the curé. They parted on the best terms possible, and the very next day she began her visits to the poor inhabitants of Montfort: but her project was not easy of accomplishment. The curé had not exaggerated the prejudices of which she was the object; and, to those which affected her personally, were united other grounds of dislike, of which she was totally innocent. The arrival of Monsieur de Manzay in this part of the country, had not been looked on with favour, because he succeeded a proprietor who was much beloved by the inhabitants, and who had been obliged, by misfortune, to sell the estate. In order to banish the remembrance of this unfavourable commencement, Monsieur and Madame de Manzay must have been to the inhabitants of Montfort all that Monsieur and Madame de Solanges had been. The latter, without children, without any lively affections, or high powers of mind, but endowed with that intelligent activity which is so great a resource in the various relations of life, took much interest in all the affairs of the peasantry, gave them advice and assistance, and were to them a sort of visible and friendly Providence, whose aid they believed could never fail. With Monsieur and Madame de Manzay all was very different: concentrated in their domestic circle, in the happiness of conscious mutual affection, in the care of their children, and in the elevated pleasures derived from highly cultivated minds, they paid little attention to anything beyond the very small circle of their affections. They were supposed to be indifferent, because they were exclusive; proud, because they were absorbed in themselves: and the departure of Monsieur and Madame de Solanges was a continued source of regret. Caroline was, therefore, not received with much pleasure at Montfort, and it often required great forbearance on her part not to abandon the inhabitants of the village to their unreasonableness and injustice, and renounce all her plans: even the curé himself, whom she had seen so well disposed, often fell back into his old prejudices against her and her family. Sometimes he would be influenced by the ill-humour of some of the village gossips, and sometimes the appearance of a dress or bonnet a little fashionable would induce him to say that Caroline was better fitted for the gay society of Paris than for the country, and that she would not do as much good in her whole life, as Madame de Solanges in a single hour. Sometimes he was angry because she did not compel all the household to attend church, but left every one at liberty in this respect; at others, Monsieur de Manzay, as mayor, had to support the rights of the commune against the encroachments of the curé, and the latter vented his displeasure on poor Caroline, and would hardly answer her when she wished to communicate to him her remarks, her views, and her hopes. The elections, when Monsieur de Manzay voted for the opposition candidate, retarded the establishment of the school at Montfort three months; not that the curé interested himself deeply in politics, but his friends took up the question with so much warmth, that they succeeded in inflaming him, and for more than six weeks he never set foot in the château.

Caroline found it difficult, without becoming morose, to fortify herself against all these obstacles; to maintain calmness under disappointment, yet keep up the same lively interest in success. Indeed, I know not if the welfare of the inhabitants of Montfort, her conviction that she had duties to fulfil towards them, and that God would not have given her the means, without imposing on her the obligation of being useful, would always have sufficed to support her under this arduous struggle—and if she might not, in a moment of discouragement, have said to herself, that she was no longer responsible towards persons who rejected all her efforts for their benefit,—had not another sentiment come to her aid, and softened the unpleasantness of her enterprise. She had perceived, with sorrow, that her mother was not beloved at Montfort as she deserved to be. Her first impulse was that of violent irritation and bitter displeasure against those who failed to do justice to Madame de Manzay; but a little reflection corrected this feeling, and she considered that the best homage she could render to the memory of her mother, would be to acquire the affection of her neighbours, to such a degree, that some portion of it might be reflected upon her by whose remembrance she was guided and encouraged: this idea rendered every sacrifice and every effort more easy to her; she found nothing difficult, when the aim was to call down blessings on the name of her mother, and to efface the unjust prejudice which even death had been unable to destroy. Her filial efforts were crowned with success; she saw all her desires

accomplished; and became the successor, with the inhabitants of Montfort, to the attachment which they had retained for Monsieur and Madame de Solanges. They ceased to regret that Monsieur de Manzay had come to settle amongst them, and very soon began to congratulate themselves on that event; for Caroline, who was all-powerful with her father, induced him to have more intercourse with his neighbours, and by that means he was frequently able to be of service to them. A fountain was required in the town. Caroline begged her father to have one constructed, and to name it after her mother, so that her memory might be connected, in the minds of the people, with the idea of a benefit. The curé united with her in the distribution of relief to the poor: Caroline gave away flax for spinning, potatoes, meal; Monsieur de Manzay kept in store faggots and turf; and the curé recommended to them those who were really distressed and deserving of assistance. The school and the work-room were established, and the children made rapid progress. Thus, in the course of a few years, the inhabitants of the château and those of the village found their position, with regard to each other, completely altered; instead of being grievous and hurtful, they had been rendered agreeable and useful, through the exertions of a young girl, who, against the difficulties of the present, drew all her strength from her regret for the past, and her hopes for the future.

But if the salutary influence of Caroline extended itself abroad, it was not, on that account, the less active, or the less efficacious, at home, in the bosom of her own family. In a very few years, everything at Primini had undergone a change. Monsieur de Manzay, who was formerly acquainted only with the enjoyments of the heart, and the pleasures of the intellect, whose life passed away in generous but useless emotions, in beautiful but sterile conceptions, who never sought to communicate his ideas to others, and found, in the disinterested contemplation of truth, sufficient to delight his heart and satisfy his conscience, was, unknown to himself, raised from this state of careless languor, which he had looked upon almost as a merit, and learned to consider it a fault. Caroline, no longer a child, matured by misfortune, and anxious to associate herself with all the tastes and occupations of her father, directed towards the subjects which interested him the energy which had formerly been expended on her own fancies. She very soon became acquainted with his opinions, and adopted them. But it was not merely for her personal satisfaction that she entered into them so deeply. Endowed with great strength of will, and full of the ardour of her age, it was inconceivable to her, that any one should consider he had fulfilled his duty to the cause of truth, while yet he did nothing to promote its triumphs, nor felt the necessity of imparting that of which he cherished the belief. This disposition in the daughter reacted on the father. Monsieur de Manzay, at first, contented himself with taking the steps which Caroline requested, out of complaisance to her. He expected no other result than the pleasure which she derived from them, and the affectionate gratitude which she evinced towards him. But, when success had several times crowned his efforts, when exertions, which he fancied useless, had brought back to constitutional principles a neighbour who had been enlisted on the other side, by prejudices easy to be overcome; when an appeal to the proper authority had obtained the redress of an illegal act; when a journey to the principal town had been of essential service to an election, important to the country; or, when the farmers had consented to adopt new and advantageous methods of culture, Monsieur de Manzay congratulated himself on having yielded to the entreaties of his daughter, and began to think that men are naturally accessible to reason, and that to induce them to submit to it completely, there is often nothing more required than to present it to them in their own way. Such a conviction was encouraging, and made him wish to employ, for the advantage of his neighbours, all those facilities for serving them which he enjoyed, in the possession of a superior understanding and extensive knowledge. He became more intimate with them, and was useful to almost all. Old emigrants, strangers to what was passing around them, to whom liberty was but revolution, and monarchy the old *régime*, learned, by their intercourse with him, that it was possible to be a friend to representative government, without approving the crimes of the Convention; that a man might love equality, without being, necessarily, ill-bred; that the king's authority gains nothing from being served by bad ministers; and that there is no rebellion in preferring an honest man, brought in by the opposition, but of good ability, and well-known amongst his fellow-citizens, to a designing fellow, without merit, who is sent from Paris, or imposed on the electors by a circular. Young people, on the contrary, led by discontent with what is around them to admire all that existed thirty years back, were convinced, by conversing with Monsieur de Manzay, that everything was not to be regretted in the times of the Revolution or of the Empire; and that because the past was very different from the present, it had not the less been often very bad. Aged men, full of the ideas of the last century, obstinately refused all the demands of the curé, and applauded themselves on the success of this obstinacy, as a victory in the good cause; Monsieur de Manzay led them back to more reasonable sentiments, and the curé, in his turn, ceased to attack them. In a word, Monsieur de Manzay, from a solitary and unknown man, became a communicative and influential one; his power of being useful was thus increased, and consequently his happiness; and for these advantages he was indebted to his daughter.

Stephen was also a gainer by the new order of ideas which had been introduced into the family. His sister, convinced by her own experience of the disadvantages of a too desultory education, felt it to be a matter of much importance that his should be conducted with regularity. She prevailed on her father to give him fixed lessons, and to exact a strict performance of the duties imposed on him; she undertook to watch over their execution, and devoted to this inspection a large portion of her time; she also took upon herself the charge of teaching him many things which it was desirable he should know, and in which she was capable of giving him instruction. All this was easy, but there was yet more to be done: knowledge is desirable and necessary, it is even indispensable; yet it is but one portion, and that not the most important, of education.

Though Stephen's mind was not yet fully developed, Caroline was extremely desirous to turn all his abilities to account; but she was still more anxious that his views should be right, his decisions just, and his character firm: she wished him to know how to appreciate everything according to its real value, that he might not passionately attach himself to trivial objects, and that he should give his whole mind to whatever he had once determined on. To attain these results, Stephen must not be indulged as she had been, for she still often felt how naturally the habit of yielding to every fancy leads to mistakes as to what is of real importance. This point, however, she found it difficult to obtain from M. de Manzay. How was he to be induced to give pain to this child, the last pledge of her whose remembrance constituted his life; how could he resist his wishes, impose restraints on him, treat him with severity? Perhaps by urging it very importunately, and asking it as a personal favour, Caroline might have gained this difficult conquest, and led her father to subdue the feelings of his heart, and make use of one weakness to combat another; but she did not have recourse to this dangerous method; her natural sense of uprightness deterred her from making use of it, and taught her that truth alone has the privilege of finally triumphing over error; that one passion is not well vanquished by another; and that though it be a longer, it is at all events a surer way to appeal to reason, the sole legitimate and absolute sovereign of our moral nature. It was, therefore, not by entreaties, but by rational persuasion, that she succeeded in inducing her father to train Stephen for other aims than mere present enjoyment, the amusement of the day, or the gratification of his passing fancies. Nor let it be imagined that Stephen had any reason to regret this change; on the contrary, his mode of life being better regulated, afforded him more enjoyment; the necessity of working gave value to his amusements; he found more happiness in doing what was right, when he had experienced the effects of the reverse; and he loved his father and sister all the better for their complaisance, when he had felt their firmness.

Even Denis himself found his advantage in the reform which had taken place at Primini. When life flowed on there so tranquilly and so happily that each seemed to have no other duties than those of affection, no occupations but those which were required to pass time agreeably, there was abundance of room for him, and he could abandon himself to all the impetuosity of his character; but when misfortune and time had changed the habits of the family—when all was according to rule, and each hour had its employment, each person his work,—what remained for him but to make up his mind, and be reasonable like the others? He had no longer any one to torment, and he scarcely regretted it, for Caroline's patience had at length wearied him of this singular amusement; and if he was sometimes a weight upon his cousin, it was rather from the burthen of his idleness than from any bad intention. But he required society—idle people; when everybody was occupied he knew not what to do with himself. He could not pass the whole of his time in walking, in looking at the haymaking, or in angling; and when Stephen was studying with his father, Caroline at her school, and the servants at their work, he must either lounge about wearily by himself, or find some employment. He resolved one day to try this last plan, fully resolved that if, after six months' trial, he should find it too laborious, he would resume his old mode of proceeding, and give up books for ever. As he had much resolution and strength of character, and would not do things by halves, he gave himself up completely to his new project, and voluntarily, without even requiring to be reminded, he every day devoted eight hours to work. At first he found this insupportable, and could only console himself for the disgust which he experienced, by counting the number of days which remained to complete his term of trial; but by degrees his distaste vanished; he perceived that there is a vast difference between studying at broken intervals, like a child and from constraint, and in seeking heartily to acquire fresh knowledge. For his special employment he had chosen mathematics, which he had formerly begun to learn, and which would be essential if he persisted in his design of entering the naval service; but which he had, nevertheless, thrown aside and neglected. M. de Manzay offered him his assistance, although convinced that his resolution would not be of long duration, and that he would not persevere even to the term which he had prescribed for himself. He was mistaken. Denis, far from being discouraged, every day became more attached to his new mode of life, and the fatal epoch passed without his having remarked it. He was now quite decided upon the continuance of his studies; he was eighteen years of age, and calculated upon employing one more year in preparing himself to enter the Polytechnic School. These two years of labour and of seclusion, the mere idea of which formerly alarmed him to such a degree that he was ready to relinquish his desire of entering the navy, he now scarcely dreaded at all; besides which, he felt that he had sufficient energy to surmount any unpleasant feelings they might occasion. Whenever he again felt any dismay at the prospect, he would go and confide his uneasiness to Caroline, now his best friend, whom he no more thought of teasing than she recollected having been tormented by him; their childish quarrels were so far from their thoughts, that they would have been astonished had they been reminded that only four years had intervened since these puerile disputes.

But if Caroline had forgotten the annoyance which had formerly been given her by Denis, this was far from being the case with respect to the contempt with which she had been treated by Robert; she could not reconcile herself to the idea of his disdainful tone towards her, and though her own good sense told her that her cousin's censure was justly founded, yet she could not sufficiently conquer herself to forgive the manner in which it was shown. Her imagination always represented Robert, and his intercourse with her, such as she recollected them, and she did not take into consideration, either the change in herself, nor that which must have taken place in her cousin; all the praises which she heard bestowed upon him redoubled her fear at the thought of meeting him again, and it was with real dread that she awaited his approaching return.

Robert, on his part, came back full of prejudices against Caroline. With all the self-sufficiency of a

[Pg 346] young man of twenty, he had formerly seen only her defects, and he persisted in the opinion which he had then formed of her, with an obstinacy which would have been unpardonable, if his absence, and the little taste he had for letter-writing, joined to a not ill-founded mistrust of Monsieur de Manzay's opinion where his daughter was concerned, had not afforded some excuse for the error of still seeing, in the Caroline of twenty, the Caroline of fifteen.

The mutual dislike existing between Robert and Caroline was the more to be regretted as they were destined to pass their lives near each other. Robert's estate was contiguous to that of Monsieur de Manzay, and it was with the intention of settling there that he returned from his travels. Decided to enter upon a completely independent career, which should allow him the free disposal of his mode of life, he had resolved to seek in commercial enterprises the means of employing his time and abilities; he determined to convert his château into a manufactory, and to add to his position as a landowner that of a merchant. His estate, which was thickly wooded, and, traversed by a river, was exactly suited for the establishment of an iron factory;—he promised himself much satisfaction in setting it on foot, and superintending it, and calculated upon being very useful to the country by such a measure. He was not fond of the world, and regretted nothing at Paris but that brilliant circulation of intellect which is as natural to it as its atmosphere. No one can say whence it comes, or whither it goes; who is the giver, or who the receiver; what will be its influence, or what may be its limit: it is enough that it exists, that it spreads itself around, that it seizes on all—yes, on all—even on those who deny it, even on those who condemn it. But although Robert was more than any man capable of appreciating, and of contributing his share to this noble pleasure, he was not disposed to purchase it at the price of a life of idleness, equally devoid of results as of aim. [Pg 347] Had the state of his country opened to him a career in which all his abilities might be simultaneously developed, in which activity would have required no sacrifice, but in which his individual progress would have advanced the public good, he would have given this the preference; but this was not possible, and Robert had too much strength of character to suppose that he was exempted from doing that which was good, because he had a glimpse of something better. He felt confident that a time would come, when his wishes might be accomplished, and in the course of a long career he looked forward to the promise of a future for himself and for his country. But the future is in the hands of God alone, and our obligations are attached to the present time; to squander it in the expectation of the future, is to borrow without knowing whether we have wherewith to pay, and to expose ourselves to the danger of being some day bankrupt. Robert, therefore, not without some hesitation, but without regret, fixed on the plan the best suited to his tastes and his position, and which offered the best employment for his time, whilst awaiting a more extended career; but he would not enter on his project lightly, or without acquiring all the knowledge requisite for such an enterprise. It would not satisfy him to be merely a worker on a grand scale; even could he have made it profitable, it would have given him no pleasure; and he was rich enough to entitle him not to consider money as his sole object. He began, then, by passing two years at the Polytechnic Institution, which he left with a brilliant reputation. It was at that period that he spent a short time at Primini, before he set out on the long tour on which he had determined, in order to see various countries, and study their manners and institutions; to perfect himself in living languages; and to examine the different industrial processes invented and practised beyond the bounds of his own country, with which it was right that he should be acquainted.

[Pg 348] He thus came back to Puivaux at twenty-five years of age, happy to return to his own country, to revisit the scenes of his childhood, and renew his family ties; and the only thing that disturbed him was, the disagreeable recollection which he retained of Caroline. In spite of his prejudices, she had often presented herself to his mind, and the remembrance of her caprices could not efface that of her lovely face, the elegance of her form, and the grace of her movements; the sweet tones of her voice still vibrated on his ears, and often had he repeated to himself that it was a great pity she was so insufferable, for she might have been charming; and then—then—but it must not be thought of, she possessed neither good sense nor good temper, and from such a person what could be hoped for?

It was rather late, one evening, when Robert arrived at Primini, where he was to take up his abode till everything was in order at his own house. He was not yet expected, but the absence of a friend, whom he had intended to visit by the way, had shortened his journey; and he had entered the château, and made his way to the drawing-room, before his coming was even suspected. He was struck by the scene presented by the persons there assembled. Monsieur de Manzay was reading aloud, Stephen was drawing, Denis copying music, and Caroline working at her embroidery frame. This social employment, this active tranquillity, was the more striking from its contrast with the former habits of those present, and its congeniality with his own tastes. He looked on without stirring, when Caroline chanced to raise her eyes, and exclaimed, "It is Robert!" Her voice expressed more surprise than pleasure, and, after having risen hastily, she remained where she was without advancing towards her cousin. He had already repeatedly embraced his uncle and Stephen, and shaken hands with Denis, before she could recover herself sufficiently to speak; she opened her lips and closed them again without uttering a syllable. [Pg 349] Robert, on his side, was ill at ease, and it is impossible to say how long their embarrassment might have lasted, if Monsieur de Manzay had not cried out, "Well! what are you both doing? Are you not glad to see each other again? What are you thinking about?"

"Will you permit me to embrace you, Caroline?" then said Robert.

"Permit you!" repeated Monsieur de Manzay; "are you such a simpleton as to ask? I should like to see her refuse, indeed. For I am a terrible despot, as you well know," he added, caressing his

daughter, as he led her towards Robert. They then embraced, but without much pleasure on either side; and, under the pretext of giving some orders, Caroline speedily made her escape from the room.

"My cousin is, then, at the head of your house?" inquired Robert, when she was gone.

"Yes, certainly, and a capital manager she is, I can assure you."

"I should not have supposed her to be over-gifted with order."

"Formerly she had little enough; but she is greatly changed; you would not recognise her, my friend."

"She has at least retained her good looks, and she has done well, for she is really charming."

"Why, then, did you stand there like a post before her?"

"We were not very good friends, formerly, and I was afraid she might recollect it. By the way, Denis, how do you agree with Caroline?"

"With Caroline! how is it possible to do otherwise than agree with her, kind as she is?"

"Yet you used to be always quarrelling."

"Oh! that is a long time ago, when I was quite a child; but now, I would throw myself into the river to give her pleasure."

"Or, what would be more to the purpose, you would work for her—as I imagine this music is destined for her?"

[Pg 350] "Exactly so; but, Robert, do not suppose that I am still the idle fellow I used to be. I have been quite reformed here, and I am going to enter the Polytechnic School."

"How! you, who spoke of it with such horror?"

"I tell you that I am quite reformed; for the last four years, nearly, I have been living at Primini, and as everyone here is occupied, I was obliged to do like the rest. In the beginning it was exceedingly wearisome, but afterwards I took delight in the exertion, and so does everyone. Is it not so, Stephen?"

"How tall Stephen is grown," said Robert; "he was quite a little fellow, when I went away."

"You must remember that five years have passed since then, and many events have occurred; but you will have time enough to discover this, my friend, and for the present you must need refreshment and repose. Stephen, go and tell your sister that she had better order supper."

At this moment, Caroline entered the room.

"Your apartment is quite ready, Robert," she said; "shall Stephen conduct you to it, or would you rather take supper immediately?"

"Just as you please, I am quite at your disposal," replied Robert, in a ceremonious manner, corresponding, perfectly, with the extreme politeness of Caroline.

They were both of them ill at ease, infinitely more so than they would have been with total strangers, when a little constraint would have been natural. In fact, when all is real, there can be no embarrassment. It is by a false position, and not by a difficult one, that we are disconcerted. The remainder of the evening passed cheerlessly enough. Caroline, who usually diffused life and gaiety over the home circle, was constrained and silent, and took no share in the conversation; her silence reacted upon Denis, who was accustomed to laugh and jest with her: Robert reproached himself for the constraint and *ennui* which he seemed to have introduced into the [Pg 351] house, and promised himself not to prolong his stay, grieved as he was to find himself like a stranger, and a troublesome stranger, in his own family. Following up his old prejudices he laid all the blame of his vexation upon Caroline. "She is still the same, whatever they may say," thought he to himself; "she yields completely to the fancy of the moment. Because she is sorry to see me—yet what harm have I ever done her?—she makes us all uncomfortable, with her intolerable, ill-humoured airs. I perceive nothing of that devotion to others—that self-denial, of which my uncle spoke in his letters. However, I never believed in it, and I was right; she is, and she always will be, a spoiled child."

The next day affairs assumed a different aspect, but Robert was no great gainer by the change. Caroline, who had reproached herself for making the evening pass disagreeably to her father, determined to overcome the awkwardness which she experienced in Robert's presence, and, as far as outward appearances were concerned, she succeeded. She threw off the almost gloomy silence of the preceding evening, replied gaily to the pleasantries of Denis on the subject, and appeared, as usual, serene and amiable; but she found it impossible to be at her ease with Robert. She listened to him with attention, replied with gentleness, and even addressed her conversation to him when the opportunity occurred; but it was evident that she did so with effort, and that she laboured under insufferable constraint with him. Robert perceived this clearly, and every day added to his vexation; this negative distinction wounded and annoyed him, and he had to encounter it perpetually. If Caroline wanted a strong hand to stretch her embroidery frame, it was to Denis that she applied; if she wished to gather a flower that was beyond her reach, she

would call Denis to her assistance, even if Robert were close beside her. At table, she might [Pg 352] sometimes forget to help Denis, or attend to Stephen before him, whilst her scrupulous politeness towards Robert marked the distance between them. Treated thus as a stranger, and more wounded by Caroline's polite attention than even by her coldness, Robert found little pleasure at Primini, and was dissatisfied with his cousin. He felt that their near relationship gave him a right to more familiar intercourse, whilst he forgot that he did nothing to promote it; greatly piqued, and more grieved than he was aware of, to find himself on such bad terms with Caroline, he took the very way to increase the distance between them; he was reserved and ceremonious in his conduct towards her, yet captious, and even ironical. Never did a word of friendly regard drop from his lips, but he would often complain; and, too proud to own his vexation, he veiled it under so much bitterness, that he was completely misunderstood by Caroline, whose heart, accustomed to the full light of truth, never suspected simulation, or detected what was feigned.

As Robert's stay at Primini was prolonged, he was day after day the more grieved at the state of his relations with Caroline; seeing her as he did continually, he could not but acknowledge that she possessed excellent qualities, great amiability and simplicity of character, and that she had wonderfully improved since they parted. Although he was still far from being acquainted with all her worth, he began to think that it would be very delightful to gain her friendship and possess her confidence, and also to doubt whether he had ever deserved either the one or the other. The remembrance of his former wrongs towards her presented itself to his mind; he recollected how disagreeable had been his manners, how severe his condemnation; he was no longer surprised at the coldness of Caroline, and asked himself whether, since his arrival, he had taken the proper measures to overcome it. His conscience told him that he had not; his regret augmented, and soon assumed the form of self-reproach. He accused himself as the sole cause of all this vexation, [Pg 353] and anxiously sought the means of putting an end to the constraint which was so painful to both, so distressing to himself. One morning, as he was pondering over the subject whilst taking a walk, he heard bursts of laughter, and, approaching, saw Caroline and Denis engaged in watering the flowers, and chatting in the most animated manner. He joined them, wished them good morning; Caroline resumed her gravity; Denis recollected that it was the hour to begin his studies, and left them. Robert and Caroline remained for some moments without speaking. At last, making an effort, he said, "I have disturbed you, Caroline; I am sorry for it."

"Why should you think you disturb me, Robert? I can go on watering my flowers whilst you are here."

"Yes; but you are not laughing as you were just now."

"I have no longer any inclination to do so."

"That is the very thing of which I complain; I always interrupt your merriment, my dear Caroline; cannot you laugh and chat with me as you do with Denis?"

"With you, Robert? Oh, that would be very difficult."

"And why? Am I not also your cousin?"

"I do not know you so well as Denis."

"But yesterday, when the curé introduced his nephew, to whom you were a stranger, you conversed a great deal with him, and appeared to be amused."

"I am not afraid of M. Julius."

"Are you, then, afraid of me?"

"Yes, certainly: you are so extremely severe."

"Have I found fault with you once since my return?"

"No; but you do not blame me the less in your own thoughts."

[Pg 354] "Nay, I assure you I think of you very favourably. Besides, my dear Caroline, allowing that we are not always of the same opinion, and that—pardon my frankness—some of the disadvantages which I formerly remarked may yet remain from your too indulgent education—you possess so many good qualities, that these slight defects may be easily overlooked. I, also, have had my faults, and especially towards you; but, because we are neither of us perfect, need we be other than good friends? Forget the past, I entreat you, and give me some portion of your regard."

"With all my heart, Robert," cried Caroline, holding out her hand to her cousin, who kissed it affectionately. "Believe me, I was far from supposing that you set any value on my affection. I thought you despised me." And the tears stood in her eyes. "Let us say no more about it," she continued, more calmly, "it makes me too unhappy."

"How good and amiable you are, my dear Caroline; I have been very unjust."

"I shall think of it no more. I was so unreasonable five years ago, that I quite understand your thinking me very ridiculous."

"Yes; but how harsh I was! Oh, I repent it with all my soul! Pardon me, I entreat you."

"Pardon you! my dear Robert, what a grand word! Must I, in my turn, remind you that you are my cousin, and, above all, my senior; and that I could not allow myself to talk of pardon to you?

Come, let us return to the house; my father will be delighted to see us on such good terms; for our coldness annoys him, and he scolds me every day—in his way of scolding, however—for not making myself more agreeable to you." She took Robert's offered arm, and they went back to the house chatting familiarly.

This first step once made, a complete change took place in the nature of the relations between Caroline and Robert. They were both so simple-minded, so truthful, so upright, that as soon as what may be called the exterior obstacles which had separated them were removed, the most perfect confidence was established between them. There were, besides, so many reasons to bring them together; all their affections were directed to the same objects: Robert had no relatives that were not also those of Caroline; their interests were alike; near neighbours, their exertions were employed for the welfare of the same persons: the workmen of Robert were the sons, the brothers, the husbands of Caroline's *protégées*; their opinions agreed, their tastes were congenial; in a word, everything combined to attract them to each other, and they could not become intimately acquainted without finding how exactly they suited each other's tastes. Caroline was never tired of listening to the accounts which her cousin gave of his travels, or to the development of his ideas, his projects, and his hopes, of which he perpetually conversed with her. It was with intense delight that he contemplated the vivid impressions of so fresh a mind, so youthful a heart; he was surprised by her good sense, enchanted by her gentleness, and was particularly charmed with the seriousness and sincerity which induced her to maintain her own opinion with firmness till the moment that she was convinced of an error, when she would at once abandon it, without any subterfuge or embarrassment. [Pg 355]

The winter arrived, and passed away in this pleasing intercourse. Its long days afforded Robert the greater opportunity for attaching himself to Caroline, and gaining her affections. With the return of spring he was to quit Primini, and establish himself at Puivaux. Scarcely six months ago, he had impatiently longed for this period; a little later, he felt that he looked forward to it without eagerness; and now that the time approached, he could not contemplate it without dread. However, by frequently grieving over the matter, and thinking how dreary life would appear to him without Caroline, he at last arrived at the conclusion, that he might render it happy through her means, and that his cousin might perhaps consent to become his wife: she already showed so much regard and esteem for him, and placed in him so much confidence; might she not bestow on him still more? Why should not Caroline return his love? [Pg 356]

His addresses were not destined to encounter any obstacles; he had never been indifferent to Caroline, and had now become extremely dear to her: the certainty of living in his vicinity had already appeared to her a happy destiny; what, then, would it be to live for him, to form his happiness, and receive from him her own; to be the first object of his thoughts and pursuits; to find such admirable qualities and such noble faculties devoted entirely to her; in a word, to become the wife of a man whom she was proud to call her friend, and congratulated herself on having for a relative?

It may easily be imagined that M. de Manzay was not slow in granting his consent. He had often dwelt with pleasure on the idea of this union, and had never abandoned the hope of seeing it take place. The marriage was celebrated at Montfort by the curé, who had once thought so ill of Caroline. She was accompanied to the altar by four young couples, M. de Manzay giving the dowry to the girls selected by Caroline from amongst her former pupils, whilst Robert supplied the funds for their establishment. The bridegrooms were workmen employed at his ironworks, and were to live at Puivaux, whither Robert conducted Caroline the day after the wedding. Her father followed her thither. It was impossible for him to live without her, and he would not detain her from her husband's affairs; but Primini was not neglected. This place, which was destined for Stephen, was on all accounts much loved by Caroline; she therefore watched over it with the greatest care, and thither her walks were habitually directed. The two châteaux belonged to the same commune, and were situated in the same parish: their interests were identical, and the good which was undertaken by Monsieur and Madame de Puivaux was only the continuation of that which had been effected by Monsieur and Mademoiselle de Manzay. [Pg 357]

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FOOTNOTES:

[1] The Italian Marionettes are made with a degree of perfection unequalled in this country. —Note by the Author.

[2] These dip-cups, or *pinceliers*, are little boxes of tin used for cleaning the brushes. The colour-venders repurchase the residue of these boxes, and the colour thus obtained is employed in the manufacture of printed goods.

[3] Grimaud signifies a sulky person.

[4] Pasticcio signifies an imitation of the mixed style of various artists.

[5] Derisive epithets employed to designate one who does not follow the method and taste of the existing school of art, or who adopts a finicing style of painting.

[6] Slang terms, indicative of a soft and finicing style of painting.

[7] Croûtes aux épinards, signifying daubs.

[8] Pickled meat, fried.

[9] That is to say, a caricature.

[10] The last entered or the least skilful in the studio.

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Every effort has been made to replicate this text as faithfully as possible, including some inconsistencies of hyphenation.

The following is a list of changes made to the original. The first line is the original line, the second the corrected one.

'His dog does not growl, said I, so it must be the man himself. Never mind, friend; let us sleep."
'His dog does not growl,' said I, 'so it must be the man himself. Never mind, friend; let us sleep.'"

into one of Martin's paniers, where, covered
into one of Martin's panniers, where, covered

had just flattered himself, "Give it to me with the
had just flattered himself, "give it to me with the

the sound of his horses' feet growing fainter and
the sound of his horse's feet growing fainter and

"lest we lose our way," Cecilia did not dare to say
"lest we lose our way." Cecilia did not dare to say

First of all, she said, I will teach her to work well
"First of all," she said, "I will teach her to work well

B, then C; and at last, all the letters of the aphabet.
B, then C; and at last, all the letters of the alphabet.

Thus, all the success obtained that that day was,
Thus, all the success obtained that day was,

his mind still perplexed with the came doubt,
his mind still perplexed with the same doubt,

"Oh! my father," demanded Nadir, how, amidst

"Oh! my father," demanded Nadir, "how, amidst

I should not say, "To what purpose have I paid my debts?
I should not say, "To what purpose have I paid my debts?"

to find it, for it is in my shoe, under my stocking.
to find it, for it is in my shoe, under my stocking."

"there is master Louis himself, who will tell you that it is
"there is Master Louis himself, who will tell you that it is

if they find all the house out of sorts in this mannner——"
if they find all the house out of sorts in this manner——"

disturb every body, and require to be pitied,—not that
disturb everybody, and require to be pitied,—not that

could not wait on Amelia as attentively as on other occasions,
could not wait on Adela as attentively as on other occasions,

she made it a rule to work, as she had had said, an hour longer
she made it a rule to work, as she had said, an hour longer

My father's, as well as my own name, is Valentin lâ Grimâudière.
My father's, as well as my own name, is Valentin lâ Grimâudière."

the inexperience which he very justly atttributed to him.
the inexperience which he very justly attributed to him.

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