

THE PARISIANS - BOOK 1.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

PREFATORY NOTE.

(BY THE AUTHOR'S SON.)

"The Parisians" and "Kenelm Chillingly" were begun about the same time, and had their common origin in the same central idea. That idea first found fantastic expression in "The Coming Race;" and the three books, taken together, constitute a special group, distinctly apart from all the other works of their author.

The satire of his earlier novels is a protest against false social respectabilities; the humour of his later ones is a protest against the disrespect of social realities. By the first he sought to promote social sincerity and the free play of personal character; by the last, to encourage mutual charity and sympathy amongst all classes, on whose interrelation depends the character of society itself. But in these three books, his latest fictions, the moral purpose is more definite and exclusive. Each of them is an expostulation against what seemed to him the perilous popularity of certain social and political theories, or a warning against the influence of certain intellectual tendencies upon individual character and national life. This purpose, however, though common to the three fictions, is worked out in each of them by a different method. "The Coming Race" is a work of pure fancy, and the satire of it is vague and sportive. The outlines of a definite purpose are more distinctly drawn in "Chillingly,"—a romance which has the source of its effect in a highly wrought imagination. The humour and pathos of "Chillingly" are of a kind incompatible with the design of "The Parisians," which is a work of dramatized observation. "Chillingly" is a romance; "The Parisians" is a novel. The subject of "Chillingly" is psychological; that of "The Parisians" is social. The author's object in "Chillingly" being to illustrate the effects of "modern ideas" upon an individual character, he has confined his narrative to the biography of that one character; hence the simplicity of plot and small number of dramatis personae, whereby the work gains in height and depth what it loses in breadth of surface. "The Parisians," on the contrary, is designed to illustrate the effect of "modern ideas" upon a whole community. This novel is therefore panoramic in the profusion and variety of figures presented by it to the reader's imagination. No exclusive prominence is vouchsafed to any of these figures. All of them

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are drawn and coloured with an equal care, but by means of the bold, broad touches necessary for their effective presentation on a canvas so large and so crowded. Such figures are, indeed, but the component features of one great form, and their actions only so many modes of one collective impersonal character,—that of the Parisian Society of Imperial and Democratic France; a character everywhere present and busy throughout the story, of which it is the real hero or heroine. This society was doubtless selected for characteristic illustration as being the most advanced in the progress of "modern ideas." Thus, for a complete perception of its writer's fundamental purpose, "The Parisians" should be read in connection with "Chillingly," and these two books in connection with "The Coming Race." It will then be perceived that through the medium of alternate fancy, sentiment, and observation, assisted by humour and passion, these three books (in all other respects so different from each other) complete the presentation of the same purpose under different aspects, and thereby constitute a group of fictions which claims a separate place of its own in any thoughtful classification of their author's works.

One last word to those who will miss from these pages the connecting and completing touches of the master's hand. It may be hoped that such a disadvantage, though irreparable, is somewhat mitigated by the essential character of the work itself. The aesthetic merit of this kind of novel is in the vivacity of a general effect produced by large, swift strokes of character; and in such strokes, if they be by a great artist, force and freedom of style must still be apparent, even when they are left rough and unfinished. Nor can any lack of final verbal correction much diminish the intellectual value which many of the more thoughtful passages of the present work derive from a long, keen, and practical study of political phenomena, guided by personal experience of public life, and enlightened by a large, instinctive knowledge of the human heart.

Such a belief is, at least, encouraged by the private communications spontaneously made to him who expresses it, by persons of political experience and social position in France, who have acknowledged the general accuracy of the author's descriptions, and noticed the suggestive sagacity and penetration of his occasional comments on the circumstances and sentiments he describes.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

They who chance to have read the "Coming Race" may perhaps remember that I, the adventurous discoverer of the land without a sun, concluded the sketch of my adventures by a brief reference to the malady which, though giving no perceptible notice of its encroachments, might, in the opinion of my medical attendant, prove suddenly fatal.

I had brought my little book to this somewhat melancholy close a few

years before the date of its publication, and in the meanwhile I was induced to transfer my residence to Paris, in order to place myself under the care of an English physician, renowned for his successful treatment of complaints analogous to my own.

I was the more readily persuaded to undertake this journey,—partly because I enjoyed a familiar acquaintance with the eminent physician referred to, who had commenced his career and founded his reputation in the United States; partly because I had become a solitary man, the ties of home broken, and dear friends of mine were domiciled in Paris, with whom I should be sure of tender sympathy and cheerful companionship. I had reason to be thankful for this change of residence: the skill of Dr. C_____ soon restored me to health. Brought much into contact with various circles of Parisian society, I became acquainted with the persons and a witness of the events that form the substance of the tale I am about to submit to the public, which has treated my former book with so generous an indulgence. Sensitively tenacious of that character for strict and unalloyed veracity which, I flatter myself, my account of the abodes and manners of the Vrilya has established, I could have wished to preserve the following narrative no less jealously guarded than its predecessor from the vagaries of fancy. But Truth undisguised, never welcome in any civilized community above ground, is exposed at this time to especial dangers in Paris; and my life would not be worth an hour's purchase if I exhibited her 'in puris naturalibus' to the eyes of a people wholly unfamiliarized to a spectacle so indecorous. That care for one's personal safety which is the first duty of thoughtful man compels me therefore to reconcile the appearance of 'la Verite' to the 'bienseances' of the polished society in which 'la Liberte' admits no opinion not dressed after the last fashion.

Attired as fiction, Truth may be peacefully received; and, despite the necessity thus imposed by prudence, I indulge the modest hope that I do not in these pages unfaithfully represent certain prominent types of the brilliant population which has invented so many varieties of Koom-Posh;

[Koom-Posh, Glek-Nas. For the derivation of these terms and their metaphorical signification, I must refer the reader to the "Coming Race," chapter xii., on the language of the Vrilya. To those who have not read or have forgotten that historical composition, it may be convenient to state briefly that Koom-Posh with the Vrilya is the name for the government of the many, or the ascendancy of the most ignorant or hollow, and may be loosely rendered Hollow-Bosh. When Koom-Posh degenerates from popular ignorance into the popular ferocity which precedes its decease, the name for that state of things is Glek-Nas; namely, the universal strife-rot.]

and even when it appears hopelessly lost in the slough of a Glek-Nas, re-emerges fresh and lively as if from an invigorating plunge into the Fountain of Youth. O Paris, 'foyer des idees, et oeil du monde!'—animated contrast to the serene tranquillity of the Vrilya, which,

nevertheless, thy noisiest philosophers ever pretend to make the goal of their desires: of all communities on which shines the sun and descend the rains of heaven, fertilizing alike wisdom and folly, virtue and vice; in every city men have yet built on this earth,—mayest thou, O Paris, be the last to brave the wands of the Coming Race and be reduced into cinders for the sake of the common good!

TISH.

PARIS, August 28, 1872.

THE PARISIANS.

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

It was a bright day in the early spring of 1869. All Paris seemed to have turned out to enjoy itself. The Tuileries, the Champs Elysees, the Bois de Boulogne, swarmed with idlers. A stranger might have wondered where Toil was at work, and in what nook Poverty lurked concealed. A millionaire from the London Exchange, as he looked round on the magasins, the equipages, the dresses of the women; as he inquired the prices in the shops and the rent of apartments,—might have asked himself, in envious wonder, How on earth do those gay Parisians live? What is their fortune? Where does it come from?

As the day declined, many of the scattered loungers crowded into the Boulevards; the cafes and restaurants began to light up.

About this time a young man, who might be some five or six and twenty, was walking along the Boulevard des Italiens, heeding little the throng through which he glided his solitary way: there was that in his aspect and bearing which caught attention. He looked a somebody; but though unmistakably a Frenchman, not a Parisian. His dress was not in the prevailing mode: to a practised eye it betrayed the taste and the cut of a provincial tailor. His gait was not that of the Parisian,—less lounging, more stately; and, unlike the Parisian, he seemed indifferent to the gaze of others.

Nevertheless there was about him that air of dignity or distinction which those who are reared from their cradle in the pride of birth acquire so unconsciously that it seems hereditary and inborn. It must also be confessed that the young man himself was endowed with a considerable share of that nobility which Nature capriciously distributes among her

favourites with little respect for their pedigree and blazon, the nobility of form and face. He was tall and well shaped, with graceful length of limb and fall of shoulders; his face was handsome, of the purest type of French masculine beauty,—the nose inclined to be aquiline, and delicately thin, with finely-cut open nostrils; the complexion clear,—the eyes large, of a light hazel, with dark lashes,—the hair of a chestnut brown, with no tint of auburn,—the beard and mustache a shade darker, clipped short, not disguising the outline of lips, which were now compressed, as if smiles had of late been unfamiliar to them; yet such compression did not seem in harmony with the physiognomical character of their formation, which was that assigned by Lavater to temperaments easily moved to gayety and pleasure.

Another man, about his own age, coming quickly out of one of the streets of the Chaussee d'Antin, brushed close by the stately pedestrian above described, caught sight of his countenance, stopped short, and exclaimed, "Alain!" The person thus abruptly accosted turned his eye tranquilly on the eager face, of which all the lower part was enveloped in black beard; and slightly lifting his hat, with a gesture of the head that implied, "Sir, you are mistaken; I have not the honour to know you," continued his slow indifferent way. The would-be acquaintance was not so easily rebuffed. "Peste," he said, between his teeth, "I am certainly right. He is not much altered: of course I AM; ten years of Paris would improve an orang-outang." Quickening his step, and regaining the side of the man he had called "Alain," he said, with a well-bred mixture of boldness and courtesy in his tone and countenance,

"Ten thousand pardons if I am wrong. Put surely I accost Alain de Kerouec, son of the Marquis de Rochebriant."

"True, sir; but—"

"But you do not remember me, your old college friend, Frederic Lemercier?"

"Is it possibly?" cried Alain, cordially, and with an animation which charged the whole character of his countenance. "My dear Frederic, my dear friend, this is indeed good fortune! So you, too, are at Paris?"

"Of course; and you? Just come, I perceive," he added, somewhat satirically, as, linking his arm in his new-found friend's, he glanced at the cut of that friend's coat-collar.

"I have been herd a fortnight," replied Alain.

"Hem! I suppose you lodge in the old Hotel de Rochebriant. I passed it yesterday, admiring its vast facade, little thinking you were its inmate."

"Neither am I; the hotel does not belong to me; it was sold some years

ago by my father.”

”Indeed! I hope your father got a good price for it; those grand hotels have trebled their value within the last five years. And how is your father? Still the same polished grand seigneur? I never saw him but once, you know; and I shall never forget his smile, style grand monarque, when he patted me on the head and tipped me ten napoleons.”

”My father is no more,” said Alain, gravely; ”he has been dead nearly three years.”

”Ciel! forgive me; I am greatly shocked. Hem! so you are now the Marquis de Rochebriant, a great historical name, worth a large sum in the market. Few such names left. Superb place your old chateau, is it not?”

”A superb place, no—a venerable ruin, yes!”

”Ah, a ruin! so much the better. All the bankers are mad after ruins: so charming an amusement to restore them. You will restore yours, without doubt. I will introduce you to such an architect! has the ’moyen age’ at his fingers’ ends. Dear,—but a genius.”

The young Marquis smiled,—for since he had found a college friend, his face showed that it could smile,—smiled, but not cheerfully, and answered,

”I have no intention to restore Rochebriant. The walls are solid: they have weathered the storms of six centuries, they will last my time, and with me the race perishes.”

”Bah! the race perish, indeed! you will marry. ’Parlez moi de ca’: you could not come to a better man. I have a list of all the heiresses at Paris, bound in russia leather. You may take your choice out of twenty. Ah, if I were but a Rochebriant! It is an infernal thing to come into the world a Lemerrier. I am a democrat, of course. A Lemerrier would be in a false position if he were not. But if any one would leave me twenty acres of land, with some antique right to the De and a title, faith, would not I be an aristocrat, and stand up for my order? But now we have met, pray let us dine together. Ah! no doubt you are engaged every day for a month. A Rochebriant just new to Paris must be ’fete’ by all the Faubourg.”

”No,” answered Alain, simply, ”I am not engaged; my range of acquaintance is more circumscribed than you suppose.”

”So much the better for me. I am luckily disengaged today, which is not often the case, for I am in some request in my own set, though it is not that of the Faubourg. Where shall we dine?—at the Trois Freres?”

”Wherever you please. I know no restaurant at Paris, except a very

ignoble one, close by my lodging.”

”’Apropos’, where do you lodge?” ”Rue de l’Universite, Numero ---.”

”A fine street, but ’triste’. If you have no longer your family hotel, you have no excuse to linger in that museum of mummies, the Faubourg St. Germain; you must go into one of the new quarters by the Champs Elysees. Leave it to me; I’ll find you a charming apartment. I know one to be had a bargain,—a bagatelle,—five hundred naps a-year. Cost you about two or three thousand more to furnish tolerably, not showily. Leave all to me. In three days you shall be settled. Apropos! horses! You must have English ones. How many?—three for the saddle, two for your ’coupe’? I’ll find them for you. I will write to London to-morrow: Reese [Rice] is your man.”

”Spare yourself that trouble, my dear Frederic. I keep no horses and no coupe. I shall not change my apartment.” As he said this, Rochebriant drew himself up somewhat haughtily.

”Faith,” thought Lemercier, ”is it possible that the Marquis is poor? No. I have always heard that the Rochebriants were among the greatest proprietors in Bretagne. Most likely, with all his innocence of the Faubourg St. Germain, he knows enough of it to be aware that I, Frederic Lemercier, am not the man to patronize one of its greatest nobles. ’Sacre bleu!’ if I thought that; if he meant to give himself airs to me, his old college friend,—I would—I would call him out.”

Just as M. Lemercier had come to that bellicose resolution, the Marquis said, with a smile which, though frank, was not without a certain grave melancholy in its expression, ”My dear Frederic, pardon me if I seem to receive your friendly offers ungraciously. But I believe that I have reasons you will approve for leading at Paris a life which you certainly will not envy;” then, evidently desirous to change the subject, he said in a livelier tone, ”But what a marvellous city this Paris of ours is! Remember I had never seen it before: it burst on me like a city in the Arabian Nights two weeks ago. And that which strikes me most—I say it with regret and a pang of conscience—is certainly not the Paris of former times, but that Paris which M. Buonaparte—I beg pardon, which the Emperor—has called up around him, and identified forever with his reign. It is what is new in Paris that strikes and enthrals me. Here I see the life of France, and I belong to her tombs!”

”I don’t quite understand you,” said Lemercier. ”If you think that because your father and grandfather were Legitimists, you have not the fair field of living ambition open to you under the Empire, you never were more mistaken. ’Moyen age,’ and even rococo, are all the rage. You have no idea how valuable your name would be either at the Imperial Court or in a Commercial Company. But with your fortune you are independent of all but fashion and the Jockey Club.”

"And 'apropos' of that, pardon me,—what villain made your coat?—let me know; I will denounce him to the police." Half amused, half amazed, Alain Marquis de Rochebriant looked at Frederic Lemercier much as a good-tempered lion may look upon a lively poodle who takes a liberty with his mane, and after a pause he replied curtly, "The clothes I wear at Paris were made in Bretagne; and if the name of Rochebriant be of any value at all in Paris, which I doubt, let me trust that it will make me acknowledged as 'gentilhomme,' whatever my taste in a coat or whatever the doctrines of a club composed—of jockeys."

"Ha, ha!" cried Lemercier, freeing himself from the arm of his friend, and laughing the more irresistibly as he encountered the grave look of the Marquis. "Pardon me,—I can't help it,—the Jockey Club,—composed of jockeys!—it is too much!—the best joke. My dear, Alain, there is some of the best blood of Europe in the Jockey Club; they would exclude a plain bourgeois like me. But it is all the same: in one respect you are quite right. Walk in a blouse if you please: you are still Rochebriant; you would only be called eccentric. Alas! I am obliged to send to London for my pantaloons: that comes of being a Lemercier. But here we are in the Palais Royal."

CHAPTER II.

The salons of the Trois Freres were crowded; our friends found a table with some little difficulty. Lemercier proposed a private cabinet, which, for some reason known to himself, the Marquis declined.

Lemercier spontaneously and unrequested ordered the dinner and the wines.

While waiting for their oysters, with which, when in season, French 'bon-vivants' usually commence their dinner, Lemercier looked round the salon with that air of inimitable, scrutinizing, superb impertinence which distinguishes the Parisian dandy. Some of the ladies returned his glance coquettishly, for Lemercier was 'beau garcon; others turned aside indignantly, and muttered something to the gentlemen dining with them. The said gentlemen, when old, shook their heads, and continued to eat unmoved; when young, turned briskly round, and looked at first fiercely at M. Lemercier, but, encountering his eye through the glass which he had screwed into his socket, noticing the hardihood of his countenance and the squareness of his shoulders, even they turned back to the tables, shook their heads, and continued to eat unmoved, just like the old ones.

"Ah!" cried Lemercier, suddenly, "here comes a man you should know, 'mon cher.' He will tell you how to place your money,—a rising man, a coming man, a future minister. Ah! 'bon jour,' Duplessis, 'bon jour,'" kissing his hand to a gentleman who had just entered and was looking about him

for a seat. He was evidently well and favourably known at the Trois Freres. The waiters had flocked round him, and were pointing to a table by the window, which a saturnine Englishman, who had dined off a beefsteak and potatoes, was about to vacate.

M. Duplessis, having first assured himself, like a prudent man, that his table was secure, having ordered his oysters, his chablis, and his 'potage a la bisque,' now paced calmly and slowly across the salon, and halted before Lemercier.

Here let me pause for a moment, and give the reader a rapid sketch of the two Parisians.

Frederic Lemercier is dressed, somewhat too showily, in the extreme of the prevalent fashion. He wears a superb pin in his cravat,—a pin worth two thousand francs; he wears rings on his fingers, 'breloques' to his watch-chain. He has a warm though dark complexion, thick black eyebrows, full lips, a nose somewhat turned up, but not small, very fine large dark eyes, a bold, open, somewhat impertinent expression of countenance; withal decidedly handsome, thanks to colouring, youth, and vivacity of regard.

Lucien Duplessis, bending over the table, glancing first with curiosity at the Marquis de Rochebriant, who leans his cheek on his hand and seems not to notice him, then concentrating his attention on Frederic Lemercier, who sits square with his hands clasped,—Lucien Duplessis is somewhere between forty and fifty, rather below the middle height, slender, but not slight,—what in English phrase is called "wiry." He is dressed with extreme simplicity: black frockcoat buttoned up; black cravat worn higher than men who follow the fashions wear their neckcloths nowadays; a hawk's eye and a hawk's beak; hair of a dull brown, very short, and wholly without curl; his cheeks thin and smoothly shaven, but he wears a mustache and imperial, plagiarized from those of his sovereign, and, like all plagiarisms, carrying the borrowed beauty to extremes, so that the points of mustache and imperial, stiffened and sharpened by cosmetics which must have been composed of iron, looked like three long stings guarding lip and jaw from invasion; a pale olive-brown complexion, eyes small, deep-sunk, calm, piercing; his expression of face at first glance not striking, except for quiet immovability. Observed more heedfully, the expression was keenly intellectual,—determined about the lips, calculating about the brows: altogether the face of no ordinary man, and one not, perhaps, without fine and high qualities, concealed from the general gaze by habitual reserve, but justifying the confidence of those whom he admitted into his intimacy.

"Ah, mon cher," said Lemercier, "you promised to call on me yesterday at two o'clock. I waited in for you half an hour; you never came."

"No; I went first to the Bourse. The shares in that Company we spoke of have fallen; they will fall much lower: foolish to buy in yet; so the

object of my calling on you was over. I took it for granted you would not wait if I failed my appointment. Do you go to the opera to-night?"

"I think not; nothing worth going for: besides, I have found an old friend, to whom I consecrate this evening. Let me introduce you to the Marquis de Rochebriant. Alain, M. Duplessis."

The two gentlemen bowed.

"I had the honour to be known to Monsieur your father," said Duplessis.

"Indeed," returned Rochebriant. "He had not visited Paris for many years before he died."

"It was in London I met him, at the house of the Russian Princess C----."

The Marquis coloured high, inclined his head gravely, and made no reply. Here the waiter brought the oysters and the chablis, and Duplessis retired to his own table.

"That is the most extraordinary man," said Frederic, as he squeezed the lemon over his oysters, "and very much to be admired."

"How so? I see nothing at least to admire in his face," said the Marquis, with the bluntness of a provincial.

"His face. Ah! you are a Legitimist,—party prejudice. He dresses his face after the Emperor; in itself a very clever face, surely."

"Perhaps, but not an amiable one. He looks like a bird of prey."

"All clever men are birds of prey. The eagles are the heroes, and the owls the sages. Duplessis is not an eagle nor an owl. I should rather call him a falcon, except that I would not attempt to hoodwink him."

"Call him what you will," said the Marquis, indifferently; "M. Duplessis can be nothing to me."

"I am not so sure of that," answered Frederic, somewhat nettled by the phlegm with which the Provincial regarded the pretensions of the Parisian. "Duplessis, I repeat it, is an extraordinary man. Though untitled, he descends from your old aristocracy; in fact, I believe, as his name shows, from the same stem as the Richelieus. His father was a great scholar, and I believe he has read much himself. Might have distinguished himself in literature or at the bar, but his parents died fearfully poor; and some distant relations in commerce took charge of him, and devoted his talents to the 'Bourse.' Seven years ago he lived in a single chamber, 'au quatrieme,' near the Luxembourg. He has now a hotel, not large but charming, in the Champs Elysees, worth at least six hundred thousand francs. Nor has he made his own fortune alone, but that

of many others; some of birth as high as your own. He has the genius of riches, and knocks off a million as a poet does an ode, by the force of inspiration. He is hand-in-glove with the Ministers, and has been invited to Compiègne by the Emperor. You will find him very useful."

Alain made a slight movement of incredulous dissent, and changed the conversation to reminiscences of old school-boy days.

The dinner at length came to a close. Frederic rang for the bill,—glanced over it. "Fifty-nine francs," said he, carelessly flinging down his napoleon and a half. The Marquis silently drew forth his purse and extracted the same sum. When they were out of the restaurant, Frederic proposed adjourning to his own rooms. "I can promise you an excellent cigar, one of a box given to me by an invaluable young Spaniard attached to the Embassy here. Such cigars are not to be had at Paris for money, nor even for love; seeing that women, however devoted and generous, never offer you anything better than a cigarette. Such cigars are only to be had for friendship. Friendship is a jewel."

"I never smoke," answered the Marquis, "but I shall be charmed to come to your rooms; only don't let me encroach on your good-nature. Doubtless you have engagements for the evening."

"None till eleven o'clock, when I have promised to go to a soiree to which I do not offer to take you; for it is one of those Bohemian entertainments at which it would do you harm in the Faubourg to assist,—at least until you have made good your position. Let me see, is not the Duchesse de Tarascon a relation of yours?"

"Yes; my poor mother's first cousin."

"I congratulate you. 'Tres grande dame.' She will launch you in 'puro coelo,' as Juno might have launched one of her young peacocks."

"There has been no acquaintance between our houses," returned the Marquis, dryly, "since the mesalliance of her second nuptials."

"Mesalliance! second nuptials! Her second husband was the Duc de Tarascon."

"A duke of the First Empire, the grandson of a butcher."

"Diable! you are a severe genealogist, Monsieur le Marquis. How can you consent to walk arm-in-arm with me, whose great-grandfather supplied bread to the same army to which the Due de Tarascon's grandfather furnished the meat?"

"My dear Frederic, we two have an equal pedigree, for our friendship dates from the same hour. I do not blame the Duchesse de Tarascon for marrying the grandson of a butcher, but for marrying the son of a man

made duke by a usurper. She abandoned the faith of her house and the cause of her sovereign. Therefore her marriage is a blot on our scutcheon.”

Frederic raised his eyebrows, but had the tact to pursue the subject no further. He who interferes in the quarrels of relations must pass through life without a friend.

The young men now arrived at Lemercier’s apartment, an entresol looking on the Boulevard des Italiens, consisting of more rooms than a bachelor generally requires; low-pitched, indeed, but of good dimensions, and decorated and furnished with a luxury which really astonished the provincial, though, with the high-bred pride of an oriental, he suppressed every sign of surprise.

Florentine cabinets, freshly retouched by the exquisite skill of Mombro; costly specimens of old Sevres and Limoges; pictures and bronzes and marble statuettes,—all well chosen and of great price, reflected from mirrors in Venetian frames,—made a ‘coup d’oeil’ very favourable to that respect which the human mind pays to the evidences of money. Nor was comfort less studied than splendour. Thick carpets covered the floors, doubled and quilted portieres excluded all draughts from chinks in the doors. Having allowed his friend a few minutes to contemplate and admire the ‘salle a manger’ and ‘salon’ which constituted his more state apartments, Frederic then conducted him into a small cabinet, fitted up with scarlet cloth and gold fringes, whereon were artistically arranged trophies of Eastern weapons and Turkish pipes with amber mouthpieces.

There, placing the Marquis at ease on a divan and flinging himself on another, the Parisian exquisite ordered a valet, well dressed as himself, to bring coffee and liqueurs; and after vainly pressing one of his matchless cigars on his friend, indulged in his own Regalia.

”They are ten years old,” said Frederic, with a tone of compassion at Alain’s self-inflicted loss,—”ten years old. Born therefore about the year in which we two parted—”

”When you were so hastily summoned from college,” said the Marquis, ”by the news of your father’s illness. We expected you back in vain. Have you been at Paris ever since?”

”Ever since; my poor father died of that illness. His fortune proved much larger than was suspected: my share amounted to an income from investments in stocks, houses, etc., to upwards of sixty thousand francs a-year; and as I wanted six years to my majority of course the capital on attaining my majority would be increased by accumulation. My mother desired to keep me near her; my uncle, who was joint guardian with her, looked with disdain on our poor little provincial cottage; so promising an heir should acquire his finishing education under masters at Paris. Long before I was of age, I was initiated into politer mysteries of our

capital than those celebrated by Eugene Sue. When I took possession of my fortune five years ago, I was considered a Croesus; and really for that patriarchal time I was wealthy. Now, alas! my accumulations have vanished in my outfit; and sixty thousand francs a-year is the least a Parisian can live upon. It is not only that all prices have fabulously increased, but that the dearer things become, the better people live. When I first came out, the world speculated upon me; now, in order to keep my standing, I am forced to speculate on the world. Hitherto I have not lost; Duplessis let me into a few good things this year, worth one hundred thousand francs or so. Croesus consulted the Delphic Oracle. Duplessis was not alive in the time of Croesus, or Croesus would have consulted Duplessis."

Here there was a ring at the outer door of the apartment, and in another minute the valet ushered in a gentleman somewhere about the age of thirty, of prepossessing countenance, and with the indefinable air of good-breeding and 'usage du monde.' Frederic started up to greet cordially the new-comer, and introduced him to the Marquis under the name of "Sare Garm Varn."

"Decidedly," said the visitor, as he took off his paletot and seated himself beside the Marquis,—"decidedly, my dear Lemerrier," said he, in very correct French, and with the true Parisian accent and intonation, "you Frenchmen merit that praise for polished ignorance of the language of barbarians which a distinguished historian bestows on the ancient Romans. Permit me, Marquis, to submit to you the consideration whether Garm Varn is a fair rendering of my name as truthfully printed on this card."

The inscription on the card, thus drawn from its case and placed in Alain's hand, was—

MR. GRAHAM VANE,

No. -- Rue d'Anjou.

The Marquis gazed at it as he might on a hieroglyphic, and passed it on to Lemerrier in discreet silence.

That gentleman made another attempt at the barbarian appellation.

"'Grar-ham Varne.' 'C'est ca!' I triumph! all difficulties yield to French energy."

Here the coffee and liqueurs were served; and after a short pause the Englishman, who had very quietly been observing the silent Marquis, turned to him and said, "Monsieur le Marquis, I presume it was your father whom I remember as an acquaintance of my own father at Ems. It is many years ago; I was but a child. The Count de Chambord was then at that enervating little spa for the benefit of the Countess's health.

If our friend Lemercier does not mangle your name as he does mine, I understand him to say that you are the Marquis de Rochebriant."

"That is my name: it pleases me to hear that my father was among those who flocked to Ems to do homage to the royal personage who deigns to assume the title of Count de Chambord."

"My own ancestors clung to the descendants of James II. till their claims were buried in the grave of the last Stuart, and I honour the gallant men who, like your father, revere in an exile the heir to their ancient kings."

The Englishman said this with grace and feeling; the Marquis's heart warmed to him at once.

"The first loyal 'gentilhomme' I have met at Paris," thought the Legitimist; "and, oh, shame! not a Frenchman!" Graham Vane, now stretching himself and accepting the cigar which Lemercier offered him, said to that gentleman "You who know your Paris by heart—everybody and everything therein worth the knowing, with many bodies and many things that are not worth it—can you inform me who and what is a certain lady who every fine day may be seen walking in a quiet spot at the outskirts of the Bois de Boulogne, not far from the Baron de Rothschild's villa? The said lady arrives at this selected spot in a dark-blue coupe without armorial bearings, punctually at the hour of three. She wears always the same dress,—a kind of gray pearl-coloured silk, with a 'cachemire' shawl. In age she may be somewhat about twenty—a year or so more or less—and has a face as haunting as a Medusa's; not, however, a face to turn a man into a stone, but rather of the two turn a stone into a man. A clear paleness, with a bloom like an alabaster lamp with the light flashing through. I borrow that illustration from Sare Scott, who applied it to Milor Bee-ren."

"I have not seen the lady you describe," answered Lemercier, feeling humiliated by the avowal; "in fact, I have not been in that sequestered part of the Bois for months; but I will go to-morrow: three o'clock you say,—leave it to me; to-morrow evening, if she is a Parisienne, you shall know all about her. But, mon cher, you are not of a jealous temperament to confide your discovery to another."

"Yes, I am of a very jealous temperament," replied the Englishman; "but jealousy comes after love, and not before it. I am not in love; I am only haunted. To-morrow evening, then, shall we dine at Philippe's, seven o'clock?"

"With all my heart," said Lemercier; "and you too, Alain?"

"Thank you, no," said the Marquis, briefly; and he rose, drew on his gloves, and took up his hat.

At these signals of departure, the Englishman, who did not want tact nor delicacy, thought that he had made himself 'de trop' in the 'tete-a-tete' of two friends of the same age and nation; and, catching up his paletot, said hastily, "No, Marquis, do not go yet, and leave our host in solitude; for I have an engagement which presses, and only looked in at Lemerrier's for a moment, seeing the light at his windows. Permit me to hope that our acquaintance will not drop, and inform me where I may have the honour to call on you."

"Nay," said the Marquis; "I claim the right of a native to pay my respects first to the foreigner who visits our capital, and," he added in a lower tone, "who speaks so nobly of those who revere its exiles."

The Englishman saluted, and walked slowly towards the door; but on reaching the threshold turned back and made a sign to Lemerrier, unperceived by Alain.

Frederic understood the sign, and followed Graham Vane into the adjoining room, closing the door as he passed.

"My dear Lemerrier, of course I should not have intruded on you at this hour on a mere visit of ceremony. I called to say that the Mademoiselle Duval whose address you sent me is not the right one,—not the lady whom, knowing your wide range of acquaintance, I asked you to aid me in finding out."

"Not the right Duval? Diable! she answered your description, exactly."

"Not at all."

"You said she was very pretty and young,—under twenty."

"You forgot that I said she deserved that description twenty-one years ago."

"Ah, so you did; but some ladies are always young. 'Age,' says a wit in the 'Figaro,' 'tis a river which the women compel to reascend to its source when it has flowed onward more than twenty years.' Never mind: 'soyez tranquille;' I will find your Duval yet if she is to be found. But why could not the friend who commissioned you to inquire choose a name less common? Duval! every street in Paris has a shop-door over which is inscribed the name of Duval."

"Quite true, there is the difficulty; however, my dear Lemerrier, pray continue to look out for a Louise Duval who was young and pretty twenty-one years ago: this search ought to interest me more than that which I entrusted to you tonight, respecting the pearly-robed lady; for in the last I but gratify my own whim, in the first I discharge a promise to a friend. You, so perfect a Frenchman, know the difference; honour is engaged to the first. Be sure you let me know if you find any other

Madame or Mademoiselle Duval; and of course you remember your promise not to mention to any one the commission of inquiry you so kindly undertake. I congratulate you on your friendship for M. de Rochebriant. What a noble countenance and manner!"

Lemercier returned to the Marquis. "Such a pity you can't dine with us to-morrow. I fear you made but a poor dinner to-day. But it is always better to arrange the menu beforehand. I will send to Philippe's tomorrow. Do not be afraid."

The Marquis paused a moment, and on his young face a proud struggle was visible. At last he said, bluntly and manfully,

"My dear Frederic, your world and mine are not and cannot be the same. Why should I be ashamed to own to my old schoolfellow that I am poor, -very poor; that the dinner I have shared with you to-day is to me a criminal extravagance? I lodge in a single chamber on the fourth-story; I dine off a single plat at a small restaurateur's; the utmost income I can allow to myself does not exceed five thousand francs a year: my fortunes I cannot hope much to improve. In his own country Alain de Rochebriant has no career." Lemercier was so astonished by this confession that he remained for some moments silent, eyes and mouth both wide open; at length he sprang up, embraced his friend well-nigh sobbing, and exclaimed, "'Tant mieux pour moi!' You must take your lodging with me. I have a charming bedroom to spare. Don't say no. It will raise my own position to say 'I and Rochebriant keep house together.' It must be so. Come here to-morrow. As for not having a career, -bah! I and Duplessis will settle that. You shall be a millionaire in two years. Meanwhile we will join capitals: I my paltry notes, you your grand name. Settled!"

"My dear, dear Frederic," said the young noble, deeply affected, "on reflection you will see what you propose is impossible. Poor I may be without dishonour; live at another man's cost I cannot do without baseness. It does not require to be 'gentilhomme' to feel that: it is enough to be a Frenchman. Come and see me when you can spare the time. There is my address. You are the only man in Paris to whom I shall be at home. Au revoir." And breaking away from Lemercier's clasp, the Marquis hurried off.

CHAPTER III.

Alain reached the house in which he lodged. Externally a fine house, it had been the hotel of a great family in the old regime. On the first floor were still superb apartments, with ceilings painted by Le Brun, with walls on which the thick silks still seemed fresh. These rooms were

occupied by a rich 'agent de change;' but, like all such ancient palaces, the upper stories were wretchedly defective even in the comforts which poor men demand nowadays: a back staircase, narrow, dirty, never lighted, dark as Erebus, led to the room occupied by the Marquis, which might be naturally occupied by a needy student or a virtuous 'grisette.' But there was to him a charm in that old hotel, and the richest 'locataire' therein was not treated with a respect so ceremonious as that which attended the lodger on the fourth story. The porter and his wife were Bretons; they came from the village of Rochebriant; they had known Alain's parents in their young days; it was their kinsman who had recommended him to the hotel which they served: so, when he paused at the lodge for his key, which he had left there, the porter's wife was in waiting for his return, and insisted on lighting him upstairs and seeing to his fire, for after a warm day the night had turned to that sharp biting cold which is more trying in Paris than even in London.

The old woman, running up the stairs before him, opened the door of his room, and busied herself at the fire. "Gently, my good Marthe," said he, "that log suffices. I have been extravagant to-day, and must pinch for it."

"M. le Marquis jests," said the old woman, laughing.

"No, Marthe; I am serious. I have sinned, but I shall reform. 'Entre nous,' my dear friend, Paris is very dear when one sets one's foot out of doors: I must soon go back to Rochebriant."

"When M. le Marquis goes back to Rochebriant he must take with him a Madame la Marquise,—some pretty angel with a suitable dot."

"A dot suitable to the ruins of Rochebriant would not suffice to repair them, Marthe: give me my dressing-gown, and good-night."

"'Bon repos, M. le Marquis! beaux rêves, et bel avenir.'"

"'Bel avenir!'" murmured the young man, bitterly, leaning his cheek on his hand; "what fortune fairer than the present can be mine? yet inaction in youth is more keenly felt than in age. How lightly I should endure poverty if it brought poverty's ennobling companion, Labour,—denied to me! Well, well; I must go back to the old rock: on this ocean there is no sail, not even an oar, for me."

Alain de Rochebriant had not been reared to the expectation of poverty. The only son of a father whose estates were large beyond those of most nobles in modern France, his destined heritage seemed not unsuitable to his illustrious birth. Educated at a provincial academy, he had been removed at the age of sixteen to Rochebriant, and lived there simply and loneliness enough, but still in a sort of feudal state, with an aunt, an elder and unmarried sister to his father.

His father he never saw but twice after leaving college. That brilliant seigneur visited France but rarely, for very brief intervals, residing wholly abroad. To him went all the revenues of Rochebriant save what sufficed for the manage of his son and his sister. It was the cherished belief of these two loyal natures that the Marquis secretly devoted his fortune to the cause of the Bourbons; how, they knew not, though they often amused themselves by conjecturing: and, the young man, as he grew up, nursed the hope that he should soon hear that the descendant of Henri Quatre had crossed the frontier on a white charger and hoisted the old gonfalon with its 'fleur-de-lis.' Then, indeed, his own career would be opened, and the sword of the Kerouecs drawn from its sheath. Day after day he expected to hear of revolts, of which his noble father was doubtless the soul. But the Marquis, though a sincere Legitimist, was by no means an enthusiastic fanatic. He was simply a very proud, a very polished, a very luxurious, and, though not without the kindness and generosity which were common attributes of the old French noblesse, a very selfish grand seigneur.

Losing his wife (who died the first year of marriage in giving birth to Alain) while he was yet very young, he had lived a frank libertine life until he fell submissive under the despotic yoke of a Russian Princess, who, for some mysterious reason, never visited her own country and obstinately refused to reside in France. She was fond of travel, and moved yearly from London to Naples, Naples to Vienna, Berlin, Madrid, Seville, Carlsbad, Baden-Baden,—anywhere for caprice or change, except Paris. This fair wanderer succeeded in chaining to herself the heart and the steps of the Marquis de Rochebriant.

She was very rich; she lived semi-royally. Hers was just the house in which it suited the Marquis to be the 'enfant gâté.' I suspect that, cat-like, his attachment was rather to the house than to the person of his mistress. Not that he was domiciled with the Princess; that would have been somewhat too much against the proprieties, greatly too much against the Marquis's notions of his own dignity. He had his own carriage, his own apartments, his own suite, as became so grand a seigneur and the lover of so grand a dame. His estates, mortgaged before he came to them, yielded no income sufficient for his wants; he mortgaged deeper and deeper, year after year, till he could mortgage them no more. He sold his hotel at Paris; he accepted without scruple his sister's fortune; he borrowed with equal 'sang froid' the two hundred thousand francs which his son on coming of age inherited from his mother. Alain yielded that fortune to him without a murmur,—nay, with pride; he thought it destined to go towards raising a regiment for the fleur-de-lis.

To do the Marquis justice, he was fully persuaded that he should shortly restore to his sister and son what he so recklessly took from them. He was engaged to be married to his Princess so soon as her own husband died. She had been separated from the Prince for many years, and every year it was said he could not last a year longer. But he completed the

measure of his conjugal iniquities by continuing to live; and one day, by mistake, Death robbed the lady of the Marquis instead of the Prince.

This was an accident which the Marquis had never counted upon. He was still young enough to consider himself young; in fact, one principal reason for keeping Alain secluded in Bretagne was his reluctance to introduce into the world a son "as old as myself" he would say pathetically. The news of his death, which happened at Baden after a short attack of bronchitis caught in a supper 'al fresco' at the old castle, was duly transmitted to Rochebriant by the Princess; and the shock to Alain and his aunt was the greater because they had seen so little of the departed that they regarded him as a heroic myth, an impersonation of ancient chivalry, condemning himself to voluntary exile rather than do homage to usurpers. But from their grief they were soon roused by the terrible doubt whether Rochebriant could still be retained in the family. Besides the mortgagees, creditors from half the capitals in Europe sent in their claims; and all the movable effects transmitted to Alain by his father's confidential Italian valet, except sundry carriages and horses which were sold at Baden for what they would fetch, were a magnificent dressing-case, in the secret drawer of which were some bank-notes amounting to thirty thousand francs, and three large boxes containing the Marquis's correspondence, a few miniature female portraits, and a great many locks of hair.

Wholly unprepared for the ruin that stared him in the face, the young Marquis evinced the natural strength of his character by the calmness with which he met the danger, and the intelligence with which he calculated and reduced it.

By the help of the family notary in the neighbouring town, he made himself master of his liabilities and his means; and he found that, after paying all debts and providing for the interest of the mortgages, a property which ought to have realized a rental of L10,000 a year yielded not more than L400. Nor was even this margin safe, nor the property out of peril; for the principal mortgagee, who was a capitalist in Paris named Louvier, having had during the life of the late Marquis more than once to wait for his half-yearly interest longer than suited his patience,—and his patience was not enduring,—plainly declared that if the same delay recurred he should put his right of seizure in force; and in France still more than in England, bad seasons seriously affect the security of rents. To pay away L9,600 a year regularly out of L10,000, with the penalty of forfeiting the whole if not paid,—whether crops may fail, farmers procrastinate, and timber fall in price,—is to live with the sword of Damocles over one's head.

For two years and more, however, Alain met his difficulties with prudence and vigour; he retrenched the establishment hitherto kept at the chateau, resigned such rural pleasures as he had been accustomed to indulge, and lived like one of his petty farmers. But the risks of the future remained undiminished.

"There is but one way, Monsieur le Marquis," said the family notary, M. Hebert, "by which you can put your estate in comparative safety. Your father raised his mortgages from time to time, as he wanted money, and often at interest above the average market interest. You may add considerably to your income by consolidating all these mortgages into one at a lower percentage, and in so doing pay off this formidable mortgagee, M. Louvier, who, I shrewdly suspect, is bent upon becoming the proprietor of Rochebriant. Unfortunately those few portions of your land which were but lightly charged, and, lying contiguous to small proprietors, were coveted by them, and could be advantageously sold, are already gone to pay the debts of Monsieur the late Marquis. There are, however, two small farms which, bordering close on the town of S____, I think I could dispose of for building purposes at high rates; but these lands are covered by M. Louvier's general mortgage, and he has refused to release them, unless the whole debt be paid. Were that debt therefore transferred to another mortgagee, we might stipulate for their exception, and in so doing secure a sum of more than 100,000 francs, which you could keep in reserve for a pressing or unforeseen occasion, and make the nucleus of a capital devoted to the gradual liquidation of the charges on the estate. For with a little capital, Monsieur le Marquis, your rent-roll might be very greatly increased, the forests and orchards improved, those meadows round S_____ drained and irrigated. Agriculture is beginning to be understood in Bretagne, and your estate would soon double its value in the hands of a spirited capitalist. My advice to you, therefore, is to go to Paris, employ a good 'avoue,' practised in such branch of his profession, to negotiate the consolidation of your mortgages upon terms that will enable you to sell outlying portions, and so pay off the charge by instalments agreed upon; to see if some safe company or rich individual can be found to undertake for a term of years the management of your forests, the draining of the S_____ meadows, the superintendence of your fisheries, etc. They, it is true, will monopolize the profits for many years,—perhaps twenty; but you are a young man: at the end of that time you will reenter on your estate with a rental so improved that the mortgages, now so awful, will seem to you comparatively trivial."

In pursuance of this advice, the young Marquis had come to Paris fortified with a letter from M. Hebert to an 'avoue' of eminence, and with many letters from his aunt to the nobles of the Faubourg connected with his house. Now one reason why M. Hebert had urged his client to undertake this important business in person, rather than volunteer his own services in Paris, was somewhat extra-professional. He had a sincere and profound affection for Alain; he felt compassion for that young life so barrenly wasted in seclusion and severe privations; he respected, but was too practical a man of business to share, those chivalrous sentiments of loyalty to an exiled dynasty which disqualified the man for the age he lived in, and, if not greatly modified, would cut him off from the hopes and aspirations of his eager generation. He thought plausibly enough that the air of the grand metropolis was necessary to the mental health,

enfeebled and withering amidst the feudal mists of Bretagne; that once in Paris, Alain would imbibe the ideas of Paris, adapt himself to some career leading to honour and to fortune, for which he took facilities from his high birth, an historical name too national for any dynasty not to welcome among its adherents, and an intellect not yet sharpened by contact and competition with others, but in itself vigorous, habituated to thought, and vivified by the noble aspirations which belong to imaginative natures.

At the least, Alain would be at Paris in the social position which would afford him the opportunities of a marriage, in which his birth and rank would be readily accepted as an equivalent to some ample fortune that would serve to redeem the endangered seigneuries. He therefore warned Alain that the affair for which he went to Paris might be tedious, that lawyers were always slow, and advised him to calculate on remaining several months, perhaps a year; delicately suggesting that his rearing hitherto had been too secluded for his age and rank, and that a year at Paris, even if he failed in the object which took him there, would not be thrown away in the knowledge of men and things that would fit him better to grapple with his difficulties on his return.

Alain divided his spare income between his aunt and himself, and had come to Paris resolutely determined to live within the L200 a year which remained to his share. He felt the revolution in his whole being that commenced when out of sight of the petty principality in which he was the object of that feudal reverence, still surviving in the more unfrequented parts of Bretagne, for the representatives of illustrious names connected with the immemorial legends of the province.

The very bustle of a railway, with its crowd and quickness and unceremonious democracy of travel, served to pain and confound and humiliate that sense of individual dignity in which he had been nurtured. He felt that, once away from Rochebriant, he was but a cipher in the sum of human beings. Arrived at Paris, and reaching the gloomy hotel to which he had been recommended, he greeted even the desolation of that solitude which is usually so oppressive to a stranger in the metropolis of his native land. Loneliness was better than the loss of self in the reek and pressure of an unfamiliar throng. For the first few days he had wandered over Paris without calling even on the 'avoue' to whom M. Hebert had directed him. He felt with the instinctive acuteness of a mind which, under sounder training, would have achieved no mean distinction, that it was a safe precaution to imbue himself with the atmosphere of the place, and seize on those general ideas which in great capitals are so contagious that they are often more accurately caught by the first impressions than by subsequent habit, before he brought his mind into collision with those of the individuals he had practically to deal with.

At last he repaired to the 'avoue,' M. Gandrin, Rue St. Florentin. He had mechanically formed his idea of the abode and person of an 'avoue' from his association with M. Hebert. He expected to find a dull house in

a dull street near the centre of business, remote from the haunts of idlers, and a grave man of unpretending exterior and matured years.

He arrived at a hotel newly fronted, richly decorated, in the fashionable quartier close by the Tuileries. He entered a wide 'porte cochere,' and was directed by the concierge to mount 'au premier.' There, first detained in an office faultlessly neat, with spruce young men at smart desks, he was at length admitted into a noble salon, and into the presence of a gentleman lounging in an easy-chair before a magnificent bureau of 'marqueterie, genre Louis Seize,' engaged in patting a white curly lapdog, with a pointed nose and a shrill bark.

The gentleman rose politely on his entrance, and released the dog, who, after sniffing the Marquis, condescended not to bite.

"Monsieur le Marquis," said M. Gandrin, glancing at the card and the introductory note from M. Hebert, which Alain had sent in, and which lay on the 'secrtaire' beside heaps of letters nicely arranged and labelled, "charmed to make the honour of your acquaintance; just arrived at Paris? So M. Hebert—a very worthy person whom I have never seen, but with whom I have had correspondence—tells me you wish for my advice; in fact, he wrote to me some days ago, mentioning the business in question,—consolidation of mortgages. A very large sum wanted, Monsieur le Marquis, and not to be had easily."

"Nevertheless," said Alain, quietly, "I should imagine that there must be many capitalists in Paris willing to invest in good securities at fair interest."

"You are mistaken, Marquis; very few such capitalists. Men worth money nowadays like quick returns and large profits, thanks to the magnificent system of 'Credit Mobilier,' in which, as you are aware, a man may place his money in any trade or speculation without liabilities beyond his share. Capitalists are nearly all traders or speculators."

"Then," said the Marquis, half rising, "I am to presume, sir, that you are not likely to assist me."

"No, I don't say that, Marquis. I will look with care into the matter. Doubtless you have with you an abstract of the, necessary documents, the conditions of the present mortgages, the rental of the estate, its probable prospects, and so forth."

"Sir, I have such an abstract with me at Paris; and having gone into it myself with M. Hebert, I can pledge you my word that it is strictly faithful to the facts."

The Marquis said this with naive simplicity, as if his word were quite sufficient to set that part of the question at rest. M. Gandrin smiled politely and said, "'Eh bien,' M. le Marquis: favour me with the

abstract; in a week's time you shall have my opinion. You enjoy Paris? Greatly improved under the Emperor. 'Apropos,' Madame Gandrin receives tomorrow evening; allow me that opportunity to present you to her." Unprepared for the proffered hospitality, the Marquis had no option but to murmur his gratification and assent.

In a minute more he was in the streets. The next evening he went to Madame Gandrin's,—a brilliant reception,—a whole moving flower-bed of "decorations" there. Having gone through the ceremony of presentation to Madame Gandrin,—a handsome woman dressed to perfection, and conversing with the secretary to an embassy,—the young noble ensconced himself in an obscure and quiet corner, observing all and imagining that he escaped observation. And as the young men of his own years glided by him, or as their talk reached his ears, he became aware that from top to toe, within and without, he was old-fashioned, obsolete, not of his race, not of his day. His rank itself seemed to him a waste-paper title-deed to a heritage long lapsed. Not thus the princely seigneurs of Rochebriant made their 'debut' at the capital of their nation. They had had the 'entree' to the cabinets of their kings; they had glittered in the halls of Versailles; they had held high posts of distinction in court and camp; the great Order of St. Louis had seemed their hereditary appanage. His father, though a voluntary exile in manhood, had been in childhood a king's page, and throughout life remained the associate of princes; and here, in an 'avoue's soiree,' unknown, unregarded, an expectant on an 'avoue's' patronage, stood the last lord of Rochebriant.

It is easy to conceive that Alain did not stay long. But he stayed long enough to convince him that on L200 a year the polite society of Paris, even as seen at M. Gandrin's, was not for him. Nevertheless, a day or two after, he resolved to call upon the nearest of his kinsmen to whom his aunt had given him letters. With the Count de Vandemar, one of his fellow-nobles of the sacred Faubourg, he should be no less Rochebriant, whether in a garret or a palace. The Vandemars, in fact, though for many generations before the First Revolution a puissant and brilliant family, had always recognized the Rochebriants as the head of their house,—the trunk from which they had been slipped in the fifteenth century, when a younger son of the Rochebriants married a wealthy heiress and took the title with the lands of Vandemar.

Since then the two families had often intermarried. The present count had a reputation for ability, was himself a large proprietor, and might furnish advice to guide Alain in his negotiations with M. Gandrin. The Hotel de Vandemar stood facing the old Hotel de Rochebriant; it was less spacious, but not less venerable, gloomy, and prison-like.

As he turned his eyes from the armorial scutcheon which still rested, though chipped and mouldering, over the portals of his lost ancestral house, and was about to cross the street, two young men, who seemed two or three years older than himself, emerged on horseback from the Hotel de Vandemar.

Handsome young men, with the lofty look of the old race, dressed with the punctilious care of person which is not foppery in men of birth, but seems part of the self-respect that appertains to the old chivalric point of honour. The horse of one of these cavaliers made a caracole which brought it nearly upon Alain as he was about to cross. The rider, checking his steed, lifted his hat to Alain and uttered a word of apology in the courtesy of ancient high-breeding, but still with condescension as to an inferior. This little incident, and the slighting kind of notice received from coevals of his own birth, and doubtless his own blood,—for he divined truly that they were the sons of the Count de Vandemar,—disconcerted Alain to a degree which perhaps a Frenchman alone can comprehend. He had even half a mind to give up his visit and turn back. However, his native manhood prevailed over that morbid sensitiveness which, born out of the union of pride and poverty, has all the effects of vanity, and yet is not vanity itself.

The Count was at home, a thin spare man with a narrow but high forehead, and an expression of countenance keen, severe, and 'un peu moqueuse.'

He received the Marquis, however, at first with great cordiality, kissed him on both sides of his cheek, called him "cousin," expressed immeasurable regret that the Countess was gone out on one of the missions of charity in which the great ladies of the Faubourg religiously interest themselves, and that his sons had just ridden forth to the Bois.

As Alain, however, proceeded, simply and without false shame, to communicate the object of his visit at Paris, the extent of his liabilities, and the penury of his means, the smile vanished from the Count's face. He somewhat drew back his fauteuil in the movement common to men who wish to estrange themselves from some other man's difficulties; and when Alain came to a close, the Count remained some moments seized with a slight cough; and, gazing intently on the carpet, at length he said, "My dear young friend, your father behaved extremely ill to you,—dishonourably, fraudulently."

"Hold!" said the Marquis, colouring high. "Those are words no man can apply to my father in my presence."

The Count stared, shrugged his shoulders, and replied with 'sang froid,' "Marquis, if you are contented with your father's conduct, of course it is no business of mine: he never injured me. I presume, however, that, considering my years and my character, you come to me for advice: is it so?"

Alain bowed his head in assent.

"There are four courses for one in your position to take," said the Count, placing the index of the right hand successively on the thumb and three fingers of the left,— "four courses, and no more.

"First. To do as your notary recommended: consolidate your mortgages, patch up your income as you best can, return to Rochebriant, and devote the rest of your existence to the preservation of your property. By that course your life will be one of permanent privation, severe struggle; and the probability is that you will not succeed: there will come one or two bad seasons, the farmers will fail to pay, the mortgagee will foreclose, and you may find yourself, after twenty years of anxiety and torment, prematurely old and without a sou.

"Course the second. Rochebriant, though so heavily encumbered as to yield you some such income as your father gave to his chef de cuisine, is still one of those superb 'terres' which bankers and Jews and stock-jobbers court and hunt after, for which they will give enormous sums. If you place it in good hands, I do not doubt that you could dispose of the property within three months, on terms that would leave you a considerable surplus, which, invested with judgment, would afford you whereon you could live at Paris in a way suitable to your rank and age. Need we go further?—does this course smile to you?"

"Pass on, Count; I will defend to the last what I take from my ancestors, and cannot voluntarily sell their roof-tree and their tombs."

"Your name would still remain, and you would be just as well received in Paris, and your 'noblesse' just as implicitly conceded, if all Judaea encamped upon Rochebriant. Consider how few of us 'gentilshommes' of the old regime have any domains left to us. Our names alone survive: no revolution can efface them."

"It may be so, but pardon me; there are subjects on which we cannot reason,—we can but feel. Rochebriant may be torn from me, but I cannot yield it."

"I proceed to the third course. Keep the chateau and give up its traditions; remain 'de facto' Marquis of Rochebriant, but accept the new order of things. Make yourself known to the people in power. They will be charmed to welcome you a convert from the old noblesse is a guarantee of stability to the new system. You will be placed in diplomacy; effloresce into an ambassador, a minister,—and ministers nowadays have opportunities to become enormously rich."

"That course is not less impossible than the last. Till Henry V. formally resign his right to the throne of Saint Louis, I can be servant to no other man seated on that throne."

"Such, too, is my creed," said the Count, "and I cling to it; but my estate is not mortgaged, and I have neither the tastes nor the age for public employments. The last course is perhaps better than the rest; at all events it is the easiest. A wealthy marriage; even if it must be a 'mesalliance.' I think at your age, with your appearance, that your name

is worth at least two million francs in the eyes of a rich 'roturier' with an ambitious daughter."

"Alas!" said the young man, rising, "I see I shall have to go back to Rochebriant. I cannot sell my castle, I cannot sell my creed, and I cannot sell my name and myself."

"The last all of us did in the old 'regime,' Marquis. Though I still retain the title of Vandemar, my property comes from the Farmer-General's daughter, whom my great-grandfather, happily for us, married in the days of Louis Quinze. Marriages with people of sense and rank have always been 'marriages de convenance' in France. It is only in 'le petit monde' that men having nothing marry girls having nothing, and I don't believe they are a bit the happier for it. On the contrary, the 'quarrels de menage' leading to frightful crimes appear by the 'Gazette des Tribunaux' to be chiefly found among those who do not sell themselves at the altar."

The old Count said this with a grim 'persiflage.' He was a Voltairian.

Voltaireism, deserted by the modern Liberals of France, has its chief cultivation nowadays among the wits of the old 'regime.' They pick up its light weapons on the battle-field on which their fathers perished, and re-feather against the 'canaille' the shafts which had been pointed against the 'noblesse.'

"Adieu, Count," said Alain, rising; "I do not thank you less for your advice because I have not the wit to profit by it."

"'Au revoir,' my cousin; you will think better of it when you have been a month or two at Paris. By the way, my wife receives every Wednesday; consider our house yours."

"Count, can I enter into the world which Madame la Comtesse receives, in the way that becomes my birth, on the income I take from my fortune?"

The Count hesitated. "No," said he at last, frankly; "not because you will be less welcome or less respected, but because I see that you have all the pride and sensitiveness of a 'seigneur de province.' Society would therefore give you pain, not pleasure. More than this, I know, by the remembrance of my own youth and the sad experience of my own sons, that you would be irresistibly led into debt, and debt in your circumstances would be the loss of Rochebriant. No; I invite you to visit us. I offer you the most select but not the most brilliant circles of Paris, because my wife is religious, and frightens away the birds of gay plumage with the scarecrows of priests and bishops. But if you accept my invitation and my offer, I am bound, as an old man of the world to a young kinsman, to say that the chances are that you will be ruined."

"I thank you, Count, for your candour; and I now acknowledge that I have found a relation and a guide," answered the Marquis, with nobility of

mien that was not without a pathos which touched the hard heart of the old man.

"Come at least whenever you want a sincere if a rude friend;" and though he did not kiss his cousin's cheek this time, he gave him, with more sincerity, a parting shake of the hand.

And these made the principal events in Alain's Paris life till he met Frederic Lemercier. Hitherto he had received no definite answer from M. Gandrin, who had postponed an interview, not having had leisure to make himself master of all the details in the abstract sent to him.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day, towards the afternoon, Frederic Lemercier, somewhat breathless from the rapidity at which he had ascended to so high an eminence, burst into Alain's chamber.

"'Br-r! mon cher;' what superb exercise for the health—how it must strengthen the muscles and expand the chest! After this who should shrink from scaling Mont Blanc? Well, well. I have been meditating on your business ever since we parted. But I would fain know more of its details. You shall confide them to me as we drive through the Bois. My coupe is below, and the day is beautiful; come."

To the young Marquis, the gayety, the heartiness of his college friend were a cordial. How different from the dry counsels of the Count de Vandemar! Hope, though vaguely, entered into his heart. Willingly he accepted Frederic's invitation, and the young men were soon rapidly borne along the Champs Elysees. As briefly as he could Alain described the state of his affairs, the nature of his mortgages, and the result of his interview with M. Gandrin.

Frederic listened attentively. "Then Gandrin has given you as yet no answer?"

"None; but I have a note from him this morning asking me to call to-morrow."

"After you have seen him, decide on nothing,—if he makes you any offer. Get back your abstract, or a copy of it, and confide it to me. Gandrin ought to help you; he transacts affairs in a large way. 'Belle clientele' among the millionnaires. But his clients expect fabulous profits, and so does he. As for your principal mortgagee, Louvier, you know, of course, who he is."

"No, except that M. Hebert told me that he was very rich."

"'Rich' I should think so; one of the Kings of Finance, Ah! observe those young men on horseback."

Alain looked forth and recognized the two cavaliers whom he had conjectured to be the sons of the Count de Vandemar.

"Those 'beaux garçons' are fair specimens of your Faubourg," said Frederic; "they would decline my acquaintance because my grandfather kept a shop, and they keep a shop between them."

"A shop! I am mistaken, then. Who are they?"

"Raoul and Enguerrand, sons of that mocker of man, the Count de Vandemar."

"And they keep a shop! You are jesting."

"A shop at which you may buy gloves and perfumes, Rue de la Chaussee d'Antin. Of course they don't serve at the counter; they only invest their pocket-money in the speculation; and, in so doing, treble at least their pocket-money, buy their horses, and keep their grooms."

"Is it possible! nobles of such birth! How shocked the Count would be if he knew it!"

"Yes, very much shocked if he was supposed to know it. But he is too wise a father not to give his sons limited allowances and unlimited liberty, especially the liberty to add to the allowances as they please. Look again at them; no better riders and more affectionate brothers since the date of Castor and Pollux. Their tastes indeed differ—Raoul is religious and moral, melancholy and dignified; Enguerrand is a lion of the first water,—elegant to the tips of his nails. These demigods nevertheless are very mild to mortals. Though Enguerrand is the best pistol-shot in Paris, and Raoul the best fencer, the first is so good-tempered that you would be a brute to quarrel with him, the last so true a Catholic, that if you quarrelled with him you need not fear his sword. He would not die in the committal of what the Church holds a mortal sin."

"Are you speaking ironically? Do you mean to imply that men of the name of Vandemar are not brave?"

On the contrary, I believe that, though masters of their weapons, they are too brave to abuse their skill; and I must add that, though they are sleeping partners in a shop, they would not cheat you of a farthing. Benign stars on earth, as Castor and Pollux were in heaven."

"But partners in a shop!"

"Bah! when a minister himself, like the late M. de M_____, kept a shop, and added the profits of 'bons bons' to his revenue, you may form some idea of the spirit of the age. If young nobles are not generally sleeping partners in shops, still they are more or less adventurers in commerce. The Bourse is the profession of those who have no other profession. You have visited the Bourse?"

"No."

"No! this is just the hour. We have time yet for the Bois. Coachman, drive to the Bourse."

"The fact is," resumed Frederic, "that gambling is one of the wants of civilized men. The 'rouge-et-noir' and 'roulette' tables are forbidden; the hells closed: but the passion for making money without working for it must have its vent, and that vent is the Bourse. As instead of a hundred wax-lights you now have one jet of gas, so instead of a hundred hells you have now one Bourse, and—it is exceedingly convenient; always at hand; no discredit being seen there as it was to be seen at Frascati's; on the contrary, at once respectable, and yet the mode."

The coupe stops at the Bourse, our friends mount the steps, glide through the pillars, deposit their canes at a place destined to guard them, and the Marquis follows Frederic up a flight of stairs till he gains the open gallery round a vast hall below. Such a din! such a clamour! disputations, wrangling, wrathful.

Here Lemercier distinguished some friends, whom he joined for a few minutes.

Alain left alone, looked down into the hall. He thought himself in some stormy scene of the First Revolution. An English contested election in the market-place of a borough when the candidates are running close on each other—the result doubtful, passions excited, the whole borough in civil war—is peaceful compared to the scene at the Bourse.

Bulls and bears screaming, bawling, gesticulating, as if one were about to strangle the other; the whole, to an uninitiated eye, a confusion, a Babel, which it seems absolutely impossible to reconcile to the notion of quiet mercantile transactions, the purchase and sale of shares and stocks. As Alain gazed bewildered, he felt himself gently touched, and, looking round, saw the Englishman.

"A lively scene!" whispered Mr. Vane. "This is the heart of Paris: it beats very loudly."

"Is your Bourse in London like this?"

"I cannot tell you: at our Exchange the general public are not admitted: the privileged priests of that temple sacrifice their victims in closed

penetralia, beyond which the sounds made in the operation do not travel to ears profane. But had we an Exchange like this open to all the world, and placed, not in a region of our metropolis unknown to fashion, but in some elegant square in St. James's or at Hyde Park Corner, I suspect that our national character would soon undergo a great change, and that all our idlers and sporting-men would make their books there every day, instead of waiting long months in 'ennui' for the Doncaster and the Derby. At present we have but few men on the turf; we should then have few men not on Exchange, especially if we adopt your law, and can contrive to be traders without risk of becoming bankrupts. Napoleon I. called us a shopkeeping nation. Napoleon III. has taught France to excel us in everything, and certainly he has made Paris a shopkeeping city."

Alain thought of Raoul and Enguerrand, and blushed to find that what he considered a blot on his countrymen was so familiarly perceptible to a foreigner's eye.

"And the Emperor has done wisely, at least for the time," continued the Englishman, with a more thoughtful accent. "He has found vent thus for that very dangerous class in Paris society to which the subdivision of property gave birth; namely the crowd of well-born, daring young men without fortune and without profession. He has opened the 'Bourse' and said, 'There, I give you employment, resource, an 'avenir.'" He has cleared the byways into commerce and trade, and opened new avenues of wealth to the noblesse, whom the great Revolution so unwisely beggared. What other way to rebuild a 'noblesse' in France, and give it a chance of power be side an access to fortune? But to how many sides of your national character has the Bourse of Paris magnetic attraction! You Frenchmen are so brave that you could not be happy without facing danger, so covetous of distinction that you would pine yourselves away without a dash, *coute quo coute*, at celebrity and a red ribbon. Danger! look below at that arena: there it is; danger daily, hourly. But there also is celebrity; win at the Bourse, as of old in a tournament, and paladins smile on you, and ladies give you their scarves, or, what is much the same, they allow you to buy their cachemires. Win at the Bourse,—what follows? the Chamber, the Senate, the Cross, the Minister's 'portefeuille.' I might rejoice in all this for the sake of Europe,—could it last, and did it not bring the consequences that follow the demoralization which attends it. The Bourse and the Credit Mobilier keep Paris quiet, at least as quiet as it can be. These are the secrets of this reign of splendour; these the two lions couchants on which rests the throne of the Imperial reconstructor."

Alain listened surprised and struck. He had not given the Englishman credit for the cast of mind which such reflections evinced.

Here Lemercier rejoined them, and shook hands with Graham Vane, who, taking him aside, said, "But you promised to go to the Bois, and indulge my insane curiosity about the lady in the pearl-coloured robe?"

"I have not forgotten; it is not half-past two yet; you said three. 'Soyez tranquille;' I drive thither from the Bourse with Rochebriant."

"Is it necessary to take with you that very good-looking Marquis?"

"I thought you said you were not jealous, because not yet in love. However, if Rochebriant occasions you the pang which your humble servant failed to inflict, I will take care that he do not see the lady."

"No," said the Englishman; "on consideration, I should be very much obliged to any one with whom she would fall in love. That would disenchant me. Take the Marquis by all means."

Meanwhile Alain, again looking down, saw just under him, close by one of the pillars, Lucien Duplessis. He was standing apart from the throng, a small space cleared round himself, and two men who had the air of gentlemen of the 'beau monde,' with whom he was conferring. Duplessis, thus seen, was not like the Duplessis at the restaurant. It would be difficult to explain what the change was, but it forcibly struck Alain: the air was more dignified, the expression keener; there was a look of conscious power and command about the man even at that distance; the intense, concentrated intelligence of his eye, his firm lip, his marked features, his projecting, massive brow, would have impressed a very ordinary observer. In fact, the man was here in his native element; in the field in which his intellect gloried, commanded, and had signalized itself by successive triumphs. Just thus may be the change in the great orator whom you deemed insignificant in a drawing-room, when you see his crest rise above a reverential audience; or the great soldier, who was not distinguishable from the subaltern in a peaceful club, could you see him issuing the order to his aids-de-camp amidst the smoke and roar of the battle-field.

"Ah, Marquis!" said Graham Vane, "are you gazing at Duplessis? He is the modern genius of Paris. He is at once the Cousin, the Guizot, and the Victor Hugo of speculation. Philosophy, Eloquence, audacious Romance,—all Literature now is swallowed up in the sublime epic of 'Agiotage,' and Duplessis is the poet of the Empire."

"Well said, M. Gram Varn," cried Frederic, forgetting his recent lesson in English names. "Alain underrates that great man. How could an Englishman appreciate him so well?"

"'Ma foi!'" returned Graham, quietly. "I am studying to think at Paris, in order some day or other to know how to act in London. Time for the Bois. Lemer cier, we meet at seven,—Philippe's."

CHAPTER V.

"What do you think of the Bourse?" asked Lemercier, as their carriage took the way to the Bois.

"I cannot think of it yet; I am stunned. It seems to me as if I had been at a 'Sabbat,' of which the wizards were 'agents de change,' but not less bent upon raising Satan."

"Pooh! the best way to exorcise Satan is to get rich enough not to be tempted by him. The fiend always loved to haunt empty places; and of all places nowadays he prefers empty purses and empty stomachs."

"But do all people get rich at the Bourse? or is not one man's wealth many men's ruin?"

"That is a question not very easy to answer; but under our present system Paris gets rich, though at the expense of individual Parisians. I will try and explain. The average luxury is enormously increased even in my experience; what were once considered refinements and fopperies are now called necessary comforts. Prices are risen enormously, house-rent doubled within the last five or six years; all articles of luxury are very much dearer; the very gloves I wear cost twenty per cent more than I used to pay for gloves of the same quality. How the people we meet live, and live so well, is an enigma that would defy AEdipus if AEdipus were not a Parisian. But the main explanation is this: speculation and commerce, with the facilities given to all investments, have really opened more numerous and more rapid ways to fortune than were known a few years ago.

"Crowds are thus attracted to Paris, resolved to venture a small capital in the hope of a large one; they live on that capital, not on their income, as gamblers do. There is an idea among us that it is necessary to seem rich in order to become rich. Thus there is a general extravagance and profusion. English milords marvel at our splendour. Those who, while spending their capital as their income, fail in their schemes of fortune, after one, two, three, or four years, vanish. What becomes of them, I know no more than I do what becomes of the old moons. Their place is immediately supplied by new candidates. Paris is thus kept perennially sumptuous and splendid by the gold it engulfs. But then some men succeed,—succeed prodigiously, preternaturally; they make colossal fortunes, which are magnificently expended. They set an example of show and pomp, which is of course the more contagious because so many men say, 'The other day those millionnaires were as poor as we are; they never economized; why should we?' Paris is thus doubly enriched,—by the fortunes it swallows up, and by the fortunes it casts up; the last being always reproductive, and the first never lost except to the individuals."

"I understand: but what struck me forcibly at the scene we have left was the number of young men there; young men whom I should judge by their appearance to be gentlemen, evidently not mere spectators,—eager, anxious, with tablets in their hands. That old or middle-aged men should find a zest in the pursuit of gain I can understand, but youth and avarice seem to me a new combination, which Moliere never divined in his 'Avare.'"

"Young men, especially if young gentlemen, love pleasure; and pleasure in this city is very dear. This explains why so many young men frequent the Bourse. In the old gaining now suppressed, young men were the majority; in the days of your chivalrous forefathers it was the young nobles, not the old, who would stake their very mantles and swords on a cast of the die. And, naturally enough, *mon cher*; for is not youth the season of hope, and is not hope the goddess of gaming, whether at *rouge-et-noir* or the Bourse?"

Alain felt himself more and more behind his generation. The acute reasoning of Lemer cier humbled his *amour propre*. At college Lemer cier was never considered Alain's equal in ability or book-learning. What a stride beyond his school-fellow had Lemer cier now made! How dull and stupid the young provincial felt himself to be as compared with the easy cleverness and half-sportive philosophy of the Parisian's fluent talk!

He sighed with a melancholy and yet with a generous envy. He had too fine a natural perception not to acknowledge that there is a rank of mind as well as of birth, and in the first he felt that Lemer cier might well walk before a Rochebriant; but his very humility was a proof that he underrated himself.

Lemer cier did not excel him in mind, but in experience. And just as the drilled soldier seems a much finer fellow than the raw recruit, because he knows how to carry himself, but after a year's discipline the raw recruit may excel in martial air the upright hero whom he now despairingly admires, and never dreams he can rival; so set a mind from a village into the drill of a capital, and see it a year after; it may tower a head higher than its recruiting-sergeant.

CHAPTER VI.

"I believe," said Lemer cier, as the *coupe* rolled through the lively alleys of the Bois de Boulogne, "that Paris is built on a loadstone, and that every Frenchman with some iron globules in his blood is irresistibly attracted towards it. The English never seem to feel for London the passionate devotion that we feel for Paris. On the contrary, the London middle class, the commercialists, the shopkeepers, the clerks, even the

superior artisans compelled to do their business in the capital, seem always scheming and pining to have their home out of it, though but in a suburb."

"You have been in London, Frederic?"

"Of course; it is the mode to visit that dull and hideous metropolis."

"If it be dull and hideous, no wonder the people who are compelled to do business in it seek the pleasures of home out of it."

"It is very droll that though the middle class entirely govern the melancholy Albion, it is the only country in Europe in which the middle class seem to have no amusements; nay, they legislate against amusement. They have no leisure-day but Sunday; and on that day they close all their theatres, even their museums and picture-galleries. What amusements there may be in England are for the higher classes and the lowest."

"What are the amusements of the lowest class?"

"Getting drunk."

"Nothing else?"

"Yes. I was taken at night under protection of a policeman to some cabarets, where I found crowds of that class which is the stratum below the working class; lads who sweep crossings and hold horses, mendicants, and, I was told, thieves, girls whom a servant-maid would not speak to, very merry, dancing quadrilles and waltzes, and regaling themselves on sausages,—the happiest-looking folks I found in all London; and, I must say, conducting themselves very decently."

"Ah!" Here Lemercier pulled the check-string. "Will you object to a walk in this quiet alley? I see some one whom I have promised the Englishman to—But heed me, Alain, don't fall in love with her."

CHAPTER VII.

The lady in the pearl-coloured dress! Certainly it was a face that might well arrest the eye and linger long on the remembrance.

There are certain "beauty-women" as there are certain "beauty-men," in whose features one detects no fault, who are the show figures of any assembly in which they appear, but who, somehow or other, inspire no sentiment and excite no interest; they lack some expression, whether of mind, or of soul, or of heart, without which the most beautiful face is

but a beautiful picture. This lady was not one of those "beauty-women." Her features taken singly were by no means perfect, nor were they set off by any brilliancy of colouring. But the countenance aroused and impressed the imagination with a belief that there was some history attached to it, which you longed to learn. The hair, simply parted over a forehead unusually spacious and high for a woman, was of lustrous darkness; the eyes, of a deep violet blue, were shaded with long lashes.

Their expression was soft and mournful, but unobservant. She did not notice Alain and Lemercier as the two men slowly passed her. She seemed abstracted, gazing into space as one absorbed in thought or reverie. Her complexion was clear and pale, and apparently betokened delicate health.

Lemercier seated himself on a bench beside the path, and invited Alain to do the same. "She will return this way soon," said the Parisian, "and we can observe her more attentively and more respectfully thus seated than if we were on foot; meanwhile, what do you think of her? Is she French? is she Italian? can she be English?"

"I should have guessed Italian, judging by the darkness of the hair and the outline of the features; but do Italians have so delicate a fairness of complexion?"

"Very rarely; and I should guess her to be French, judging by the intelligence of her expression, the simple neatness of her dress, and by that nameless refinement of air in which a Parisienne excels all the descendants of Eve,—if it were not for her eyes. I never saw a Frenchwoman with eyes of that peculiar shade of blue; and if a Frenchwoman had such eyes, I flatter myself she would have scarcely allowed us to pass without making some use of them."

"Do you think she is married?" asked Alain.

"I hope so; for a girl of her age, if *comme il faut*, can scarcely walk alone in the Bois, and would not have acquired that look so intelligent, —more than intelligent,—so poetic."

"But regard that air of unmistakable distinction; regard that expression of face,—so pure, so virginal: *comme il faut*—she must be."

As Alain said these last words, the lady, who had turned back, was approaching them, and in full view of their gaze. She seemed unconscious of their existence as before, and Lemercier noticed that her lips moved as if she were murmuring inaudibly to herself.

She did not return again, but continued her walk straight on till at the end of the alley she entered a carriage in waiting for her, and was driven off.

"Quick, quick!" cried Lemercier, running towards his own coupe; "we must

give chase.”

Alain followed somewhat less hurriedly, and, agreeably to instructions Lemer cier had already given to his coachman, the Parisian’s coupe set off at full speed in the track of the strange lady’s, which was still in sight.

In less than twenty minutes the carriage in chase stopped at the grille of one of those charming little villas to be found in the pleasant suburb of A—; a porter emerged from the lodge, opened the gate; the carriage drove in, again stopped at the door of the house, and the two gentlemen could not catch even a glimpse of the lady’s robe as she descended from the carriage and disappeared within the house.

”I see a cafe yonder,” said Lemer cier; ”let us learn all we can as to the fair unknown, over a *_sorbet_* or a *_petit verre_*.” Alain silently, but not reluctantly, consented. He felt in the fair stranger an interest new to his existence.

They entered the little cafe, and in a few minutes Lemer cier, with the easy *_savoir vivre_* of a Parisian, had extracted from the *_garcon_* as much as probably any one in the neighbourhood knew of the inhabitants of the villa.

It had been hired and furnished about two months previously in the name of Signora Venosta; but, according to the report of the servants, that lady appeared to be the *_gouvernante_* or guardian of a lady much younger, out of whose income the villa was rented and the household maintained.

It was for her the *_coupe_* was hired from Paris. The elder lady very rarely stirred out during the day, but always accompanied the younger in any evening visits to the theatre or the houses of friends.

It was only within the last few weeks that such visits had been made.

The younger lady was in delicate health, and under the care of an English physician famous for skill in the treatment of pulmonary complaints. It was by his advice that she took daily walking exercise in the Bois. The establishment consisted of three servants, all Italians, and speaking but imperfect French. The *_garcon_* did not know whether either of the ladies was married, but their mode of life was free from all scandal or suspicion; they probably belonged to the literary or musical world, as the *_garcon_* had observed as their visitors the eminent author M. Savarin and his wife; and, still more frequently, an old man not less eminent as a musical composer.

”It is clear to me now,” said Lemer cier, as the two friends reseated themselves in the carriage, ”that our pearly *_ange_* is some Italian singer of repute enough in her own country to have gained already a competence; and that, perhaps on account of her own health or her

friend's, she is living quietly here in the expectation of some professional engagement, or the absence of some foreign lover."

"Lover! do you think that?" exclaimed Alain, in a tone of voice that betrayed pain.

"It is possible enough; and in that case the Englishman may profit little by the information I have promised to give him."

"You have promised the Englishman?"

"Do you not remember last night that he described the lady, and said that her face haunted him: and I—"

"Ah! I remember now. What do you know of this Englishman? He is rich, I suppose."

"Yes, I hear he is very rich now; that an uncle lately left him an enormous sum of money. He was attached to the English Embassy many years ago, which accounts for his good French and his knowledge of Parisian life. He comes to Paris very often, and I have known him some time. Indeed he has intrusted to me a difficult and delicate commission. The English tell me that his father was one of the most eminent members of their Parliament, of ancient birth, very highly connected, but ran out his fortune and died poor; that our friend had for some years to maintain himself, I fancy, by his pen; that he is considered very able; and, now that his uncle has enriched him, likely to enter public life and run a career as distinguished as his father's."

"Happy man! happy are the English," said the Marquis, with a sigh; and as the carriage now entered Paris, he pleaded the excuse of an engagement, bade his friend goodby, and went his way musing through the crowded streets.

CHAPTER VIII.

LETTER FROM ISAURA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL.

VILLA D'—, A—.

I can never express to you, my beloved Eulalie, the strange charm which a letter from you throws over my poor little lonely world for days after it is received. There is always in it something that comforts, something that sustains, but also a something that troubles and disquiets me. I suppose Goethe is right, "that it is the property of true genius to disturb all settled ideas," in order, no doubt, to lift them into a

higher level when they settle down again.

Your sketch of the new work you are meditating amid the orange groves of Provence interests me intensely; yet, do you forgive me when I add that the interest is not without terror? I do not find myself able to comprehend how, amid those lovely scenes of Nature, your mind voluntarily surrounds itself with images of pain and discord. I stand in awe of the calm with which you subject to your analysis the infirmities of reason and the tumults of passion. And all those laws of the social state which seem to me so fixed and immovable you treat with so quiet a scorn, as if they were but the gossamer threads which a touch of your slight woman's hand could brush away. But I cannot venture to discuss such subjects with you. It is only the skilled enchanter who can stand safely in the magic circle, and compel the spirits that he summons, even if they are evil, to minister to ends in which he foresees a good.

We continue to live here very quietly, and I do not as yet feel the worse for the colder climate. Indeed, my wonderful doctor, who was recommended to me as American, but is in reality English, assures me that a single winter spent here under his care will suffice for my complete re-establishment. Yet that career, to the training for which so many years have been devoted, does not seem to me so alluring as it once did.

I have much to say on this subject, which I defer till I can better collect my own thoughts on it; at present they are confused and struggling. The great Maestro has been most gracious.

In what a radiant atmosphere his genius lives and breathes! Even in his cynical moods, his very cynicism has in it the ring of a jocund music,—the laugh of Figaro, not of Mephistopheles.

We went to dine with him last week. He invited to meet us Madame S—, who has this year conquered all opposition, and reigns alone, the great S—; Mr. T—, a pianist of admirable promise; your friend M. Savarin, wit, critic, and poet, with his pleasant, sensible wife; and a few others, who, the Maestro confided to me in a whisper, were authorities in the press. After dinner S— sang to us, magnificently, of course. Then she herself graciously turned to me, said how much she had heard from the Maestro in my praise, and so and so. I was persuaded to sing after her. I need not say to what disadvantage. But I forgot my nervousness; I forgot my audience; I forgot myself, as I always do when once my soul, as it were, finds wing in music, and buoys itself in the air, relieved from the sense of earth. I knew not that I had succeeded till I came to a close, and then my eyes resting on the face of the grand prima donna, I was seized with an indescribable sadness, with a keen pang of remorse. Perfect artiste though she be, and with powers in her own realm of art which admit of no living equal, I saw at once that I had pained her: she had grown almost livid; her lips were quivering, and it was only with a great effort that she muttered out some faint words intended for applause. I comprehended by an instinct how gradually there

can grow upon the mind of an artist the most generous that jealousy which makes the fear of a rival annihilate the delight in art. If ever I should achieve S—'s fame as a singer, should I feel the same. jealousy?—I think not now, but I have not been tested. She went away abruptly. I spare you the recital of the compliments paid to me by my other auditors, compliments that gave me no pleasure; for on all lips, except those of the Maestro, they implied, as the height of eulogy, that I had inflicted torture upon S—. "If so," said he, "she would be as foolish as a rose that was jealous of the whiteness of a lily. You would do yourself great wrong, my child, if you tried to vie with the rose in its own colour."

He patted my bended head as he spoke, with that kind of fatherly king-like fondness with which he honours me; and I took his hand in mine, and kissed it gratefully. "Nevertheless," said Savarin, "when the lily comes out there will be a furious attack on it, made by the clique that devotes itself to the rose: a lily clique will be formed en revanche, and I foresee a fierce paper war. Do not be frightened at its first outburst: every fame worth having must be fought for."

Is it so? have you had to fight for your fame, Eulalie? and do you hate all contests as much as I do?

Our only other gayety since I last wrote was a soiree at M. Louvier's. That republican millionaire was not slow in attending to the kind letter you addressed to him recommending us to his civilities. He called at once, placed his good offices at our disposal, took charge of my modest fortune, which he has invested, no doubt, as safely as it is advantageously in point of interest, hired our carriage for us, and in short has been most amiably useful.

At his house we met many to me most pleasant, for they spoke with such genuine appreciation of your works and yourself. But there were others whom I should never have expected to meet under the roof of a Croesus who has so great a stake in the order of things established. One young man—a noble whom he specially presented to me, as a politician who would be at the head of affairs when the Red Republic was established—asked me whether I did not agree with him that all private property was public spoliation, and that the great enemy to civilization was religion, no matter in what form.

He addressed to me these tremendous questions with an effeminate lisp, and harangued on them with small feeble gesticulations of pale dirty fingers covered with rings.

I asked him if there were many who in France shared his ideas.

"Quite enough to carry them some day," he answered with a lofty smile. "And the day may be nearer than the world thinks, when my confreres will be so numerous that they will have to shoot down each other for the sake

of cheese to their bread.”

That day nearer than the world thinks! Certainly, so far as one may judge the outward signs of the world at Paris, it does not think of such things at all. With what an air of self-content the beautiful city parades her riches! Who can gaze on her splendid palaces, her gorgeous shops, and believe that she will give ear to doctrines that would annihilate private rights of property; or who can enter her crowded churches, and dream that she can ever again install a republic too civilized for religion?

Adieu. Excuse me for this dull letter. If I have written on much that has little interest even for me, it is that I wish to distract my mind from brooding over the question that interests me most, and on which I most need your counsel. I will try to approach it in my next.

ISAURA.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Eulalie, Eulalie!—What mocking spirit has been permitted in this modern age of ours to place in the heart of woman the ambition which is the prerogative of men? You indeed, so richly endowed with a man’s genius, have a right to man’s aspirations. But what can justify such ambition in me? Nothing but this one unintellectual perishable gift of a voice that does but please in uttering the thoughts of others. Doubtless I could make a name familiar for its brief time to the talk of Europe,—a name, what name? a singer’s name. Once I thought that name a glory. Shall I ever forget the day when you first shone upon me; when, emerging from childhood as from a dim and solitary bypath, I stood forlorn on the great thoroughfare of life, and all the prospects before me stretched sad in mists and in rain? You beamed on me then as the sun coming out from the cloud and changing the face of earth; you opened to my sight the fairy-land of poetry and art; you took me by the hand and said, ”Courage! there is at each step some green gap in the hedgerows, some, soft escape from the stony thoroughfare. Beside the real life expands the ideal life to those who seek it. Droop not, seek it: the ideal life has its sorrows, but it never admits despair; as on the ear of him who follows the winding course of a stream, the stream ever varies the note of its music,—now loud with the rush of the falls; now low and calm as it glides by the level marge of smooth banks; now sighing through the stir of the reeds; now babbling with a fretful joy as some sudden curve on the shore stays its flight among gleaming pebbles,—so to the soul of the artist is the voice of the art ever fleeting beside and before him. Nature gave thee the bird’s gift of song: raise the gift into art, and make the art thy companion.

”Art and Hope were twin-born, and they die together.” See how faithfully I remember, methinks, your very words. But the magic of the words, which I then but dimly understood, was in your smile and in your eye, and the

queen-like wave of your hand as if beckoning to a world which lay before you, visible and familiar as your native land. And how devotedly, with what earnestness of passion, I gave myself up to the task of raising my gift into an art! I thought of nothing else, dreamed of nothing else; and oh, now sweet to me then were words of praise! "Another year yet," at length said the masters, "and you ascend your throne among the queens of song." Then—then—I would have changed for no other throne on earth my hope of that to be achieved in the realms of my art. And then came that long fever: my strength broke down, and the Maestro said, "Rest, or your voice is gone, and your throne is lost forever." How hateful that rest seemed to me! You again came to my aid. You said, "The time you think lost should be but time improved. Penetrate your mind with other songs than the trash of Libretti. The more you habituate yourself to the forms, the more you imbue yourself with the spirit, in which passions have been expressed and character delineated by great writers, the more completely you will accomplish yourself in your own special art of singer and actress." So, then, you allured me to a new study. Ah! in so doing did you dream that you diverted me from the old ambition? My knowledge of French and Italian, and my rearing in childhood, which had made English familiar to me, gave me the keys to the treasure-houses of three languages. Naturally I began with that in which your masterpieces are composed. Till then I had not even read your works. They were the first I chose. How they impressed, how they startled me! what depths in the mind of man, in the heart of woman, they revealed to me! But I owed to you then, and I repeat it now, neither they nor any of the works in romance and poetry which form the boast of recent French literature satisfied yearnings for that calm sense of beauty, that divine joy in a world beyond this world, which you had led me to believe it was the prerogative of ideal art to bestow. And when I told you this with the rude frankness you had bid me exercise in talk with you, a thoughtful, melancholy shade fell over your face, and you said quietly, "You are right, child; we, the French of our time, are the offspring of revolutions that settled nothing, unsettled all: we resemble those troubled States which rush into war abroad in order to re-establish peace at home. Our books suggest problems to men for reconstructing some social system in which the calm that belongs to art may be found at last: but such books should not be in your hands; they are not for the innocence and youth of women as yet unchanged by the systems which exist." And the next day you brought me T'asso's great poem, the "Gerusalemme Liberata," and said, smiling, "Art in its calm is here."

You remember that I was then at Sorrento by the order of my physician. Never shall I forget the soft autumn day when I sat amongst the lonely rocklets to the left of the town,—the sea before me, with scarce a ripple; my very heart steeped in the melodies of that poem, so marvellous for a strength disguised in sweetness, and for a symmetry in which each proportion blends into the other with the perfectness of a Grecian statue. The whole place seemed to me filled with the presence of the poet to whom it had given birth. Certainly the reading of that poem formed an era in my existence: to this day I cannot acknowledge the

faults or weaknesses which your criticisms pointed out; I believe because they are in unison with my own nature, which yearns for harmony, and, finding that, rests contented. I shrink from violent contrasts, and can discover nothing tame and insipid in a continuance of sweetness and serenity. But it was not till after I had read "La Gerusalemme" again and again, and then sat and brooded over it, that I recognized the main charm of the poem in the religion which clings to it as the perfume clings to a flower,—a religion sometimes melancholy, but never to me sad. Hope always pervades it. Surely if, as you said, "Hope is twin-born with art," it is because art at its highest blends itself unconsciously with religion, and proclaims its affinity with hope by its faith in some future good more perfect than it has realized in the past.

Be this as it may, it was in this poem so pre-eminently Christian that I found the something which I missed and craved for in modern French masterpieces; even yours,—a something spiritual, speaking to my own soul, calling it forth; distinguishing it as an essence apart from mere human reason; soothing, even when it excited; making earth nearer to heaven. And when I ran on in this strain to you after my own wild fashion, you took my head between your hands and kissed me, and said, "Happy are those who believe! long may that happiness be thine!" Why did I not feel in Dante the Christian charm that I felt in Tasso? Dante in your eyes, as in those of most judges, is infinitely the greater genius; but reflected on the dark stream of that genius the stars are so troubled, the heaven so threatening.

Just as my year of holiday was expiring, I turned to English literature; and Shakspeare, of course, was the first English poet put into my hands. It proves how childlike my mind still was, that my earliest sensation in reading him was that of disappointment. It was not only that, despite my familiarity with English (thanks chiefly to the care of him whom I call my second father), there is much in the metaphorical diction of Shakspeare which I failed to comprehend; but he seemed to me so far like the modern French writers who affect to have found inspiration in his muse, that he obtrudes images of pain and suffering without cause or motive sufficiently clear to ordinary understandings, as I had taught myself to think it ought to be in the drama.

He makes Fate so cruel that we lose sight of the mild deity behind her. Compare, in this, Corneille's "Polyeucte," with the "Hamlet." In the first an equal calamity befalls the good, but in their calamity they are blessed. The death of the martyr is the triumph of his creed. But when we have put down the English tragedy,—when Hamlet and Ophelia are confounded in death with Polonius and the fratricidal king, we see not what good end for humanity is achieved. The passages that fasten on our memory do not make us happier and holier: they suggest but terrible problems, to which they give us no solution.

In the "Horaces" of Corneille there are fierce contests, rude passions, tears drawn from some of the bitterest sources of human pity; but then

through all stands out, large and visible to the eyes of all spectators, the great ideal of devoted patriotism. How much of all that has been grandest in the life of France, redeeming even its worst crimes of revolution in the love of country, has had its origin in the "Horaces" of Corneille. But I doubt if the fates of Coriolanus and Caesar and Brutus and Antony, in the giant tragedies of Shakspeare, have made Englishmen more willing to die for England. In fine, it was long before—I will not say I understood or rightly appreciated Shakspeare, for no Englishman would admit that I or even you could ever do so, but before I could recognize the justice of the place his country claims for him as the genius without an equal in the literature of Europe. Meanwhile the ardour I had put into study, and the wear and tear of the emotions which the study called forth, made themselves felt in a return of my former illness, with symptoms still more alarming; and when the year was out I was ordained to rest for perhaps another year before I could sing in public, still less appear on the stage. How I rejoiced when I heard that fiat! for I emerged from that year of study with a heart utterly estranged from the profession in which I had centred my hopes before—Yes, Eulalie, you had bid me accomplish myself for the arts of utterance; by the study of arts in which thoughts originate the words they employ; and in doing so I had changed myself into another being. I was forbidden all fatigue of mind: my books were banished, but not the new self which the books had formed. Recovering slowly through the summer, I came hither two months since, ostensibly for the advice of Dr. C——, but really in the desire to commune with my own heart and be still.

And now I have poured forth that heart to you, would you persuade me still to be a singer? If you do, remember at least how jealous and absorbing the art of the singer and the actress is,—how completely I must surrender myself to it, and live among books or among dreams no more. Can I be anything else but singer? and if not, should I be contented merely to read and to dream?

I must confide to you one ambition which during the lazy Italian summer took possession of me; I must tell you the ambition, and add that I have renounced it as a vain one. I had hoped that I could compose, I mean in music. I was pleased with some things I did: they expressed in music what I could not express in words; and one secret object in coming here was to submit them to the great Maestro. He listened to them patiently: he complimented me on my accuracy in the mechanical laws of composition; he even said that my favourite airs were "touchants et gracieux."

And so he would have left me, but I stopped him timidly, and said, "Tell me frankly, do you think that with time and study I could compose music such as singers equal to myself would sing to?"

"You mean as a professional composer?"

"Well, yes."

”And to the abandonment of your vocation as a singer?”

”Yes.”

”My dear child, I should be your worst enemy if I encouraged such a notion: cling to the career in which you call be greatest; gain but health, and I wager my reputation on your glorious success on the stage. What can you be as a composer? You will set pretty music to pretty words, and will be sung in drawing-rooms with the fame a little more or less that generally attends the compositions of female amateurs. Aim at something higher, as I know you would do, and you will not succeed. Is there any instance in modern times, perhaps in any times, of a female composer who attains even to the eminence of a third-rate opera-writer? Composition in letters may be of no sex. In that Madame Dudevant and your friend Madame de Grantmesnil can beat most men; but the genius of musical composition is *homme*., and accept it as a compliment when I say that you are essentially *femme*.”

He left me, of course, mortified and humbled; but I feel he is right as regards myself, though whether in his depreciation of our whole sex I cannot say. But as this hope has left me, I have become more disquieted, still more restless. Counsel me, Eulalie; counsel, and, if possible, comfort me.

ISAURA.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

No letter from you yet, and I have left you in peace for ten days. How do you think I have spent them? The Maestro called on us with M. Savarin, to insist on our accompanying them on a round of the theatres. I had not been to one since my arrival. I divined that the kind-hearted composer had a motive in this invitation. He thought that in witnessing the applauses bestowed on actors, and sharing in the fascination in which theatrical illusion holds an audience, my old passion for the stage, and with it the longing for an artiste’s fame, would revive.

In my heart I wished that his expectations might be realized. Well for me if I could once more concentrate all my aspirations on a prize within my reach!

We went first to see a comedy greatly in vogue, and the author thoroughly understands the French stage of our day. The acting was excellent in its way. The next night we went to the Odeon, a romantic melodrama in six acts, and I know not how many tableaux. I found no fault with the acting there. I do not give you the rest of our programme. We visited all the principal theatres, reserving the opera and Madame S—— for the last. Before I speak of the opera, let me say a word or two on the plays.

There is no country in which the theatre has so great a hold on the

public as in France; no country in which the successful dramatist has so high a fame; no country perhaps in which the state of the stage so faithfully represents the moral and intellectual condition of the people. I say this not, of course, from my experience of countries which I have not visited, but from all I hear of the stage in Germany and in England.

The impression left on my mind by the performances I witnessed is, that the French people are becoming dwarfed. The comedies that please them are but pleasant caricatures of petty sections in a corrupt society. They contain no large types of human nature; their witticisms convey no luminous flashes of truth; their sentiment is not pure and noble,—it is a sickly and false perversion of the impure and ignoble into travesties of the pure and noble.

Their melodramas cannot be classed as literature: all that really remains of the old French genius is its vaudeville. Great dramatists create great parts. One great part, such as a Rachel would gladly have accepted, I have not seen in the dramas of the young generation.

High art has taken refuge in the opera; but that is not French opera. I do not complain so much that French taste is less refined. I complain that French intellect is lowered. The descent from "Polyeucte" to "Ruy Blas" is great, not so much in the poetry of form as in the elevation of thought; but the descent from "Ruy Blas" to the best drama now produced is out of poetry altogether, and into those flats of prose which give not even the glimpse of a mountain-top.

But now to the opera. S—— in Norma! The house was crowded, and its enthusiasm as loud as it was genuine. You tell me that S—— never rivalled Pasta, but certainly her Norma is a great performance. Her voice has lost less of its freshness than I had been told, and what is lost of it her practised management conceals or carries off.

The Maestro was quite right: I could never vie with her in her own line; but conceited and vain as I may seem even to you in saying so, I feel in my own line that I could command as large an applause,—of course taking into account my brief-lived advantage of youth. Her acting, apart from her voice, does not please me. It seems to me to want intelligence of the subtler feelings, the under-current of emotion which constitutes the chief beauty of the situation and the character. Am I jealous when I say this? Read on and judge.

On our return that night, when I had seen the Venosta to bed, I went into my own room, opened the window, and looked out. A lovely night, mild as in spring at Florence,—the moon at her full, and the stars looking so calm and so high beyond our reach of their tranquillity. The evergreens in the gardens of the villas around me silvered over, and the summer boughs, not yet clothed with leaves, were scarcely visible amid the changeless smile of the laurels. At the distance lay Paris, only to be known by its innumerable lights. And then I said to myself,

"No, I cannot be an actress; I cannot resign my real self for that vamped-up hypocrite before the lamps. Out on those stage-ropes and painted cheeks! Out on that simulated utterance of sentiments learned by rote and practised before the looking-glass till every gesture has its drill!"

Then I gazed on those stars which provoke our questionings, and return no answer, till my heart grew full,—so full,—and I bowed my head and wept like a child.

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

And still no letter from you! I see in the journals that you have left Nice. Is it that you are too absorbed in your work to have leisure to write to me? I know you are not ill, for if you were, all Paris would know of it. All Europe has an interest in your health. Positively I will write to you no more till a word from yourself bids me do so.

I fear I must give up my solitary walks in the Bois de Boulogne: they were very dear to me, partly because the quiet path to which I confined myself was that to which you directed me as the one you habitually selected when at Paris, and in which you had brooded over and revolved the loveliest of your romances; and partly because it was there that, catching, alas! not inspiration but enthusiasm from the genius that had hallowed the place, and dreaming I might originate music, I nursed my own aspirations and murmured my own airs. And though so close to that world of Paris to which all artists must appeal for judgment or audience, the spot was so undisturbed, so sequestered. But of late that path has lost its solitude, and therefore its charm.

Six days ago the first person I encountered in my walk was a man whom I did not then heed. He seemed in thought, or rather in revery, like myself; we passed each other twice or thrice, and I did not notice whether he was young or old, tall or short; but he came the next day, and a third day, and then I saw that he was young, and, in so regarding him, his eyes became fixed on mine. The fourth day he did not come, but two other men came, and the look of one was inquisitive and offensive. They sat themselves down on a bench in the walk, and though I did not seem to notice them, I hastened home; and the next day, in talking with our kind Madame Savarin, and alluding to these quiet walks of mine, she hinted, with the delicacy which is her characteristic, that the customs of Paris did not allow demoiselles *comme il faut* to walk alone even in the most sequestered paths of the Bois.

I begin now to comprehend your disdain of customs which impose chains so idly galling on the liberty of our sex.

We dined with the Savarins last evening: what a joyous nature he has! Not reading Latin, I only know Horace by translations, which I am told

are bad; but Savarin seems to me a sort of half Horace,—Horace on his town-bred side, so playfully well-bred, so good-humoured in his philosophy, so affectionate to friends, and so biting to foes. But certainly Savarin could not have lived in a country farm upon endives and mallows. He is town-bred and Parisian, „jusqu’au bout des ongles.. How he admires you, and how I love him for it! Only in one thing he disappoints me there. It is your style that he chiefly praises: certainly that style is matchless; but style is only the clothing of thought, and to praise your style seems to me almost as invidious as the compliment to some perfect beauty, not on her form and face, but on her taste and dress.

We met at dinner an American and his wife,—a Colonel and Mrs. Morley: she is delicately handsome, as the American women I have seen generally are, and with that frank vivacity of manner which distinguishes them from English women. She seemed to take a fancy to me, and we soon grew very good friends.

She is the first advocate I have met, except yourself, of that doctrine upon the rights of Women, of which one reads more in the journals than one hears discussed in salons. Naturally enough I felt great interest in that subject, more especially since my rambles in the Bois were forbidden; and as long as she declaimed on the hard fate of the women who, feeling within them powers that struggle for air and light beyond the close precinct of household duties, find themselves restricted from fair rivalry with men in such fields of knowledge and toil and glory as men since the world began have appropriated to themselves, I need not say that I went with her cordially: you can guess that by my former letters. But when she entered into the detailed catalogue of our exact wrongs and our exact rights, I felt all the pusillanimity of my sex and shrank back in terror.

Her husband, joining us when she was in full tide of eloquence, smiled at me with a kind of saturnine mirth. ”Mademoiselle, don’t believe a word she says: it is only tall talk! In America the women are absolute tyrants, and it is I who, in concert with my oppressed countrymen, am going in for a platform agitation to restore the Rights of Men.”

Upon this there was a lively battle of words between the spouses, in which, I must own, I thought the lady was decidedly worsted.

No, Eulalie, I see nothing in these schemes for altering our relations towards the other sex which would improve our condition. The inequalities we suffer are not imposed by law,—not even by convention: they are imposed by nature.

Eulalie, you have had an experience unknown to me: you have loved. In that day did you,—you, round whom poets and sages and statesmen gather, listening to your words as to an oracle,—did you feel that your pride of genius had gone out from you, that your ambition lived in whom you loved,

that his smile was more to you than the applause of a world?

I feel as if love in a woman must destroy her rights of equality, that it gives to her a sovereign even in one who would be inferior to herself if her love did not glorify and crown him. Ah! if I could but merge this terrible egotism which oppresses me, into the being of some one who is what I would wish to be were I man! I would not ask him to achieve fame. Enough if I felt that he was worthy of it, and happier methinks to console him when he failed than to triumph with him when he won. Tell me, have you felt this? When you loved did you stoop as to a slave, or did you bow down as to a master?

FROM MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL TO ISAURA CICOGNA.

—Chere enfant,—All your four letters have reached me the same day. In one of my sudden whims I set off with a few friends on a rapid tour along the Riviera to Genoa, thence to Turin on to Milan. Not knowing where we should rest even for a day, my letters were not forwarded.

I came back to Nice yesterday, consoled for all fatigues in having insured that accuracy in description of localities which my work necessitates.

You are, my poor child, in that revolutionary crisis through which genius passes in youth before it knows its own self, and longs vaguely to do or to be a something other than it has done or has been before. For, not to be unjust to your own powers, genius you have,—that inborn undefinable essence, including talent, and yet distinct from it. Genius you have, but genius unconcentrated, undisciplined. I see, though you are too diffident to say so openly, that you shrink from the fame of singer, because, fevered by your reading, you would fain aspire to the thorny crown of author. I echo the hard saying of the Maestro: I should be your worst enemy did I encourage you to forsake a career in which a dazzling success is so assured, for one in which, if it were your true vocation, you would not ask whether you were fit for it; you would be impelled to it by the terrible star which presides over the birth of poets.

Have you, who are so naturally observant, and of late have become so reflective, never remarked that authors, however absorbed in their own craft, do not wish their children to adopt it? The most successful author is perhaps the last person to whom neophytes should come for encouragement. This I think is not the case with the cultivators of the sister arts.

The painter, the sculptor, the musician, seem disposed to invite disciples and welcome acolytes. As for those engaged in the practical affairs of life, fathers mostly wish their sons to be as they have been.

The politician, the lawyer, the merchant, each says to his children, "Follow my steps." All parents in practical life would at least agree

in this,—they would not wish their sons to be poets. There must be some sound cause in the world's philosophy for this general concurrence of digression from a road of which the travellers themselves say to those whom they love best, "Beware!"

Romance in youth is, if rightly understood, the happiest nutriment of wisdom in after-years; but I would never invite any one to look upon the romance of youth as a thing

"To case in periods and embalm in ink."

Enfant, have you need of a publisher to create romance? Is it not in yourself? Do not imagine that genius requires for its enjoyment the scratch of the pen and the types of the printer. Do not suppose that the poet, the romancier, is most poetic, most romantic, when he is striving, struggling, labouring, to check the rush of his ideas, and materialize the images which visit him as souls into such tangible likenesses of flesh and blood that the highest compliment a reader can bestow on them is to say that they are lifelike: No: the poet's real delight is not in the mechanism of composing; the best part of that delight is in the sympathies he has established with innumerable modifications of life and form, and art and Nature, sympathies which are often found equally keen in those who have not the same gift of language. The poet is but the interpreter. What of?—Truths in the hearts of others. He utters what they feel. Is the joy in the utterance? Nay, it is in the feeling itself. So, my dear, dark-bright child of song, when I bade thee open, out of the beaten thoroughfare, paths into the meads and river-banks at either side of the formal hedgerows, rightly dost thou add that I enjoined thee to make thine art thy companion. In the culture of that art for which you are so eminently gifted, you will find the ideal life ever beside the real. Are you not ashamed to tell me that in that art you do but utter the thoughts of others? You utter them in music; through the music you not only give to the thoughts a new character, but you make them reproductive of fresh thoughts in your audience.

You said very truly that you found in composing you could put into music thoughts which you could not put into words. That is the peculiar distinction of music. No genuine musician can explain in words exactly what he means to convey in his music.

How little a libretto interprets an opera; how little we care even to read it! It is the music that speaks to us; and how?—Through the human voice. We do not notice how poor are the words which the voice warbles. It is the voice itself interpreting the soul of the musician which enchants and entralls us. And you who have that voice pretend to despise the gift. What! despise the power of communicating delight!—the power that we authors envy; and rarely, if ever, can we give delight with so little alloy as the singer.

And when an audience disperses, can you guess what griefs the singer

may have comforted? what hard hearts he may have softened? what high thoughts he may have awakened?

You say, "Out on the vamped-up hypocrite! Out on the stage-ropes and painted cheeks!"

I say, "Out on the morbid spirit which so cynically regards the mere details by which a whole effect on the minds and hearts and souls of races and nations can be produced!"

There, have I scolded you sufficiently? I should scold you more, if I did not see in the affluence of your youth and your intellect the cause of your restlessness. Riches are always restless. It is only to poverty that the gods give content.

You question me about love; you ask if I have ever bowed to a master, ever merged my life in another's: expect no answer on this from me. Circe herself could give no answer to the simplest maid, who, never having loved, asks, "What is love?"

In the history of the passions each human heart is a world in itself; its experience profits no others. In no two lives does love play the same part or bequeath the same record.

I know not whether I am glad or sorry that the word "love" now falls on my ear with a sound as slight and as faint as the dropping of a leaf in autumn may fall on thine.

I volunteer but this lesson, the wisest I can give, if thou canst understand it: as I bade thee take art into thy life, so learn to look on life itself as an art. Thou couldst discover the charm in Tasso; thou couldst perceive that the requisite of all art, that which pleases, is in the harmony of proportion. We lose sight of beauty if we exaggerate the feature most beautiful.

Love proportioned adorns the homeliest existence; love disproportioned deforms the fairest.

Alas! wilt thou remember this warning when the time comes in which it may be needed?

E— G—.