

THE PARISIANS - BOOK 10.

EDWARD BULWER-LYTTON*

BOOK X.

CHAPTER I.

Graham Vane had heard nothing for months from M. Renard, when one morning he received the letter I translate:

"MONSIEUR,—I am happy to inform you that I have at last obtained one piece of information which may lead to a more important discovery. When we parted after our fruitless research in Vienna, we had both concurred in the persuasion that, for some reason known only to the two ladies themselves, Madame Marigny and Madame Duval had exchanged names—that it was Madame Marigny who had deceased in the name of Madame Duval, and Madame Duval who had survived in that of Marigny.

"It was clear to me that the *beau Monsieur* who had visited the false Duval must have been cognisant of this exchange of name, and that, if his name and whereabouts could be ascertained, he, in all probability, would know what had become of the lady who is the object of our research; and after the lapse of so many years he would probably have very slight motive to preserve the concealment of facts which might, no doubt, have been convenient at the time. The lover of the *soi-disant* Mademoiselle Duval was by such accounts as we could gain a man of some rank—very possibly a married man; and the liaison, in short, was one of those which, while they last, necessitate precautions and secrecy.

"Therefore, dismissing all attempts at further trace of the missing lady, I resolved to return to Vienna as soon as the business that recalled me to Paris was concluded, and devote myself exclusively to the search after the amorous and mysterious Monsieur.

"I did not state this determination to you, because, possibly, I might be in error—or, if not in error, at least too sanguine in my expectations—

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and it is best to avoid disappointing an honourable client.

"One thing was clear, that, at the time of the *_soi-disant_* Duval's decease, the *_beau Monsieur_* was at Vienna.

"It appeared also tolerably clear that when the lady friend of the deceased quitted Munich so privately, it was to Vienna she repaired, and from Vienna comes the letter demanding the certificates of Madame Duval's death. Pardon me, if I remind you of all these circumstances no doubt fresh in your recollection. I repeat them in order to justify the conclusions to which they led me.

"I could not, however, get permission to absent myself from Paris for the time I might require till the end of last April. I had meanwhile sought all private means of ascertaining what Frenchmen of rank and station were in that capital in the autumn of 1849. Among the list of the very few such Messieurs I fixed upon one as the most likely to be the mysterious Achille—Achille was, indeed, his *_nom de bapteme_*.

"A man of intrigue—a *_bonnes fortunes_*—of lavish expenditure withal; very tenacious of his dignity, and avoiding any petty scandals by which it might be lowered; just the man who, in some passing affair of gallantry with a lady of doubtful repute, would never have signed his titular designation to a letter, and would have kept himself as much incognito as he could. But this man was dead—had been dead some years. He had not died at Vienna—never visited that capital for some years before his death. He was then, and had long been, the *_ami de la maison_* of one of those *grandes dames* of whose intimacy *_grands seigneurs_* are not ashamed. They parade there the *_bonnes fortunes_* they conceal elsewhere. Monsieur and the *grande dame* were at Baden when the former died. Now, Monsieur, a Don Juan of that stamp is pretty sure always to have a confidential Leporello. If I could find Leporello alive I might learn the secrets not to be extracted from a Don Juan defunct. I ascertained, in truth, both at Vienna, to which I first repaired in order to verify the *renseignements* I had obtained at Paris, and at Baden, to which I then bent my way, that this brilliant noble had a favourite valet who had lived with him from his youth—an Italian, who had contrived in the course of his service to lay by savings enough to set up a hotel somewhere in Italy, supposed to be Pisa. To Pisa I repaired, but the man had left some years; his hotel had not prospered—he had left in debt. No one could say what had become of him. At last, after a long and tedious research, I found him installed as manager of a small hotel at Genoa—a pleasant fellow enough; and after friendly intercourse with him (of course I lodged at his hotel), I easily led him to talk of his earlier life and adventures, and especially of his former master, of whose splendid career in the army of 'La Belle Deesse' he was not a little proud. It was not very easy to get him to the particular subject in question. In fact, the affair with the poor false Duval had been so brief and undistinguished an episode in his master's life, that it was not without a strain of memory that he reached it.

"By little and little, however, in the course of two or three evenings, and by the aid of many flasks of Orviette or bottles of Lacrima (wines, Monsieur, that I do not commend to any one who desires to keep his stomach sound and his secrets safe), I gathered these particulars.

"Our Don Juan, since the loss of a wife in the first year of marriage, had rarely visited Paris where he had a domicile—his ancestral hotel there he had sold.

"But happening to visit that capital of Europe a few months before we come to our dates at Aix-la-Chapelle, he made acquaintance with Madame Marigny, a natural daughter of high-placed parents, by whom, of course, she had never been acknowledged, but who had contrived that she should receive a good education at a convent; and on leaving it also contrived that an old soldier of fortune—which means an officer without fortune—who had served in Algiers with some distinction, should offer her his hand, and add the modest dot they assigned her to his yet more modest income. They contrived also that she should understand the offer must be accepted. Thus Mademoiselle 'Quelque Chose' became Madame Marigny, and she, on her part, contrived that a year or so later she should be left a widow. After a marriage, of course the parents washed their hands of her—they had done their duty. At the time Don Juan made this lady's acquaintance nothing could be said against her character; but the milliners and butchers had begun to imply that they would rather have her money than trust to her character. Don Juan fell in love with her, satisfied the immediate claims of milliner and butcher, and when they quitted Paris it was agreed that they should meet later at Aix-la-Chapelle. But when he resorted to that sultry and, to my mind, unalluring spa, he was surprised by a line from her saying that she had changed her name of Marigny for that of Duval.

"I recollect," said Leporello, "that two days afterwards my master said to me, 'Caution and secrecy. Don't mention my name at the house to which I may send you with any note for Madame Duval. I don't announce my name when I call. _La petite_ Marigny has exchanged her name for that of Louise Duval; and I find that there is a Louise Duval here, her friend, who is niece to a relation of my own, and a terrible relation to quarrel with—a dead shot and unrivalled swordsman—Victor de Mauleon. My master was brave enough, but he enjoyed life, and he did not think _la petite_ Marigny worth being killed for.'

"Leporello remembered very little of what followed. All he did remember is that Don Juan, when at Vienna, said to him one morning, looking less gay than usual, 'It is finished with _ca petite_ Marigny.—she is no more.' Then he ordered his bath, wrote a note, and said with tears in his eyes, 'Take this to Mademoiselle Celeste; not to be compared to _la petite_ Marigny; but _la petite_ Celeste is still alive.' Ah, Monsieur! if only any man in France could be as proud of his ruler as that Italian was of my countrymen! Alas! we Frenchmen are all made to command—or at

least we think ourselves so—and we are insulted by one who says to us, 'Serve and obey.' Nowadays, in France, we find all Don Juans and no Leporellos.

"After strenuous exertions upon my part to recall to Leporello's mind the important question whether he had ever seen the true Duval, passing under the name of Marigny—whether she had not presented herself to his master at Vienna or elsewhere—he rubbed his forehead, and drew from it these reminiscences.

"'On the day that his Excellency,'—Leporello generally so styled his master—'Excellency,' as you are aware, is the title an Italian would give to Satan if taking his wages,' told me that *la petite* Marigny was no more, he had received previously a lady veiled and mantled, whom I did not recognise as any one I had seen before, but I noticed her way of carrying herself—haughtily—her head thrown back; and I thought to myself, that lady is one of his grandes dames. She did call again two or three times, never announcing her name; then she did not reappear. She might be Madame Duval—I can't say.'

"'But did you never hear his Excellency speak of the real Duval after that time?'

"'No—*non mi ricordo*—I don't remember.'

"'Nor of some living Madame Marigny, though the real one was dead?'

"'Stop, I do recollect; not that he ever named such a person to me, but that I have posted letters for him to a Madame Marigny—oh, yes! even years after the said *petite* Marigny was dead; and once I did venture to say, 'Pardon me, Eccellenza, but may I ask if that poor lady is really dead, since I have to prepay this letter to her?'"

"'Oh,' said he, 'Madame Marigny! Of course the one you know is dead, but there are others of the same name; this lady is of my family. Indeed, her house, though noble in itself, recognises the representative of mine as its head, and I am too *bon prince* not to acknowledge and serve any one who branches out of my own tree.'"

"A day after this last conversation on the subject, Leporello said to me: 'My friend, you certainly have some interest in ascertaining what became of the lady who took the name of Marigny (I state this frankly, Monsieur, to show how difficult even for one so prudent as I am to beat about a bush long but what you let people know the sort of bird you are in search of).'

"'Well,' said I, 'she does interest me. I knew something of that Victor de Mauleon, whom his Excellency did not wish to quarrel with; and it would be a kindly act to her relation if one could learn what became of Louise Duval.'

”I can put you on the way of learning all that his Excellency was likely to have known of her through correspondence. I have often heard him quote, with praise, a saying so clever that it might have been Italian, ”Never write, never burn;” that is, never commit yourself by a letter—keep all letters that could put others in your power. All the letters he received were carefully kept and labelled. I sent them to his son in four large trunks. His son, no doubt, has them still.’

”Now, however, I have exhausted my budget. I arrived at Paris last night. I strongly advise you to come hither at once, if you still desire to prosecute your search.

”You, Monsieur, can do what I could not venture to do; you can ask the son of Don Juan if, amid the correspondence of his father, which he may have preserved, there be any signed Marigny or Duval—any, in short, which can throw light on this very obscure complication of circumstances. A grand seigneur would naturally be more complaisant to a man of your station than he would be to an agent of police. Don Juan’s son, inheriting his father’s title, is Monsieur le Marquis de Rochebriant; and permit me to add, that at this moment, as the journals doubtless inform you, all Paris resounds with the rumour of the coming war; and Monsieur de Rochebriant—who is, as I have ascertained, now in Paris—it may be difficult to find anywhere on earth a month or two hence.—I have the honour, with profound consideration, &c., &c., RENARD.”

The day after the receipt of this letter Graham Vane was in Paris.

CHAPTER II.

Among things indescribable is that which is called ”Agitation” in Paris—”Agitation” without riot or violence—showing itself by no disorderly act, no turbulent outburst. Perhaps the cafes are more crowded; passengers in the streets stop each other more often, and converse in small knots and groups; yet, on the whole, there is little externally to show how loudly the heart of Paris is beating. A traveller may be passing through quiet landscapes, unconscious that a great battle is going on some miles off, but if he will stop and put his ear to the ground he will recognise by a certain indescribable vibration, the voice of the cannon.

But at Paris an acute observer need not stop and put his ear to the ground; he feels within himself a vibration—a mysterious inward sympathy which communicates to the individual a conscious thrill—when the passions of the multitude are stirred, no matter how silently.

Tortoni’s cafe was thronged when Duplessis and Frederic Lemerrier entered

it: it was in vain to order breakfast; no table was vacant either within the rooms or under the awnings without.

But they could not retreat so quickly as they had entered. On catching sight of the financier several men rose and gathered round him, eagerly questioning:

"What do you think, Duplessis? Will any insult to France put a drop of warm blood into the frigid veins of that miserable Ollivier?"

"It is not yet clear that France has been insulted, Messieurs," replied Duplessis, phlegmatically.

"Bah! Not insulted! The very nomination of a Hohenzollern to the crown of Spain was an insult—what would you have more?"

"I tell you what it is, Duplessis," said the Vicomte de Breze, whose habitual light good temper seemed exchanged for insolent swagger—"I tell you what it is, your friend the Emperor has no more courage than a chicken. He is grown old, and infirm, and lazy; he knows that he can't even mount on horseback. But if, before this day week, he has not declared war on the Prussians, he will be lucky if he can get off as quietly as poor Louis Philippe did under shelter of his umbrella, and ticketed 'Schmidt.' Or could you not, M. Duplessis, send him back to London in a bill of exchange?"

"For a man of your literary repute, M. le Vicomte," said Duplessis, "you indulge in a strange confusion of metaphors. But, pardon me, I came here to breakfast, and I cannot remain to quarrel. Come, Lemer cier, let us take our chance of a cutlet at the Trois Freres."

"Fox, Fox," cried Lemer cier, whistling to a poodle that had followed him into the cafe, and, frightened by the sudden movement and loud voices of the habitués, had taken refuge under the table.

"Your dog is poltron," said De Breze; "call him Nap." At this stroke of humour there was a general laugh, in the midst of which Duplessis escaped, and Frederic, having discovered and caught his dog, followed with that animal tenderly clasped in his arms.

"I would not lose Fox for a great deal," said Lemer cier with effusion; "a pledge of love and fidelity from an English lady the most distinguished: the lady left me—the dog remains."

Duplessis smiled grimly: "What a thoroughbred Parisian you are, my dear Frederic! I believe if the tramp of the last angel were sounding, the Parisians would be divided into two sets: one would be singing the Marseillaise, and parading the red flag; the other would be shrugging their shoulders and saying, 'Bah! as if le Bon Dieu would have the bad taste to injure Paris—the Seat of the Graces, the School of the Arts,

the Fountain of Reason, the Eye of the World;’ and so be found by the destroying angel caressing poodles and making *bons mots* about les femmes.”

”And quite right, too,” said Lemercier, complacently; ”what other people in the world could retain lightness of heart under circumstances so unpleasant? But why do you take things so solemnly? Of course there will be war idle now to talk of explanations and excuses. When a Frenchman says, ’I am insulted,’ he is not going to be told that he is not insulted. He means fighting, and not apologising. But what if there be war? Our brave soldiers beat the Prussians—take the Rhine—return to Paris covered with laurels; a new Boulevard de Berlin eclipses the Boulevard Sebastopol. By the way, Duplessis, a Boulevard de Berlin will be a good speculation—better than the Rue de Louvier. Ah! is not that my English friend, Garm Varn?” here, quitting the arm of Duplessis, Lemercier stopped a gentleman who was about to pass him unnoticed. ”*Bon jour, mon ami!* how long have you been at Paris?”

”I only arrived last evening,” answered Graham, ”and my stay will be so short that it is a piece of good luck, my dear Lemercier, to meet with you, and exchange a cordial shake of the hand.”

”We are just going to breakfast at the Trois Freres—Duplessis and I—pray join us.”

”With great pleasure—ah, M. Duplessis, I shall be glad to hear from you that the Emperor will be firm enough to check the advances of that martial fever which, to judge by the persons I meet, seems to threaten delirium.”

Duplessis looked very keenly at Graham’s face, as he replied slowly: ”The English, at least, ought to know that when the Emperor by his last reforms resigned his personal authority for constitutional monarchy, it ceased to be a question whether he could or could not be firm in matters that belonged to the Cabinet and the Chambers. I presume that if Monsieur Gladstone advised Queen Victoria to declare war upon the Emperor of Russia, backed by a vast majority in Parliament, you would think me very ignorant of constitutional monarchy and Parliamentary government if I said, ’I hope Queen Victoria will resist that martial fever.’”

”You rebuke me very fairly, M. Duplessis, if you can show me that the two cases are analogous; but we do not understand in England that, despite his last reforms, the Emperor has so abnegated his individual ascendancy, that his will, clearly and resolutely expressed, would not prevail in his Council and silence opposition in the Chambers. Is it so? I ask for information.”

The three men were walking on towards the Palais Royal side by side while this conversation proceeded.

"That all depends," replied Duplessis, "upon what may be the increase of popular excitement at Paris. If it slackens, the Emperor, no doubt, could turn to wise account that favourable pause in the fever. But if it continues to swell, and Paris cries, 'War,' in a voice as loud as it cried to Louis Philippe 'Revolution,' do you think that the Emperor could impose on his ministers the wisdom of peace? His ministers would be too terrified by the clamour to undertake the responsibility of opposing it—they would resign. Where is the Emperor to find another Cabinet? a peace Cabinet? What and who are the orators for peace?—whom a handful!—who? Gambetta, Jules Favre, avowed Republicans,—would they even accept the post of ministers to Louis Napoleon? If they did, would not their first step be the abolition of the Empire? Napoleon is therefore so far a constitutional monarch in the same sense as Queen Victoria, that the popular will in the country (and in France in such matters Paris is the country) controls the Chambers, controls the Cabinet; and against the Cabinet the Emperor could not contend. I say nothing of the army—a power in France unknown to you in England, which would certainly fraternise with no peace party. If war is proclaimed,—let England blame it if she will—she can't lament it more than I should: but let England blame the nation; let her blame, if she please, the form of the government, which rests upon popular suffrage; but do not let her blame our sovereign more than the French would blame her own, if compelled by the conditions on which she holds her crown to sign a declaration of war, which vast majorities in a Parliament just elected, and a Council of Ministers whom she could not practically replace, enforced upon her will."

"Your observations, M. Duplessis, impress me strongly, and add to the deep anxieties with which, in common with all my countrymen, I regard the menacing aspect of the present hour. Let us hope the best. Our Government, I know, is exerting itself to the utmost verge of its power, to remove every just ground of offence that the unfortunate nomination of a German Prince to the Spanish throne could not fail to have given to French statesmen."

"I am glad you concede that such a nomination was a just ground of offence," said Lemercier, rather bitterly; "for I have met Englishmen who asserted that France had no right to resent any choice of a sovereign that Spain might make."

"Englishmen in general are not very reflective politicians in foreign affairs," said Graham; "but those who are must see that France could not, without alarm the most justifiable, contemplate a cordon of hostile states being drawn around her on all sides,—Germany, is, itself so formidable since the field of Sadowa, on the east; a German prince in the southwest; the not improbable alliance between Prussia and the Italian kingdom, already so alienated from the France to which it owed so much. If England would be uneasy were a great maritime power possessed of Antwerp, how much more uneasy might France justly be if Prussia could add the armies of Spain to those of Germany, and launch them both upon

France. But that cause of alarm is over—the Hohenzollern is withdrawn. Let us hope for the best.”

The three men had now seated themselves at a table in the Trois Freres, and Lemerrier volunteered the task of inspecting the menu and ordering the repast, still keeping guard on Fox.

”Observe that man,” said Duplessis, pointing towards a gentleman who had just entered; ”the other day he was the popular hero—now, in the excitement of threatened war, he is permitted to order his *bifteck* uncongratulated, uncaressed; such is fame at Paris! here to-day and gone to-morrow.”

”How did the man become famous?”

”He is a painter, and refused a decoration—the only French painter who ever did.”

”And why refuse?”

”Because he is more stared at as the man who refused than he would have been as the man who accepted. If ever the Red Republicans have their day, those among them most certain of human condemnation will be the coxcombs who have gone mad for the desire of human applause.”

”You are a profound philosopher, M. Duplessis.”

”I hope not—I have an especial contempt for philosophers. Pardon me a moment—I see a man to whom I would say a word or two.”

Duplessis crossed over to another table to speak to a middle-aged man of somewhat remarkable countenance, with the red ribbon in his buttonhole, in whom Graham recognised an ex-minister of the Emperor, differing from most of those at that day in his Cabinet, in the reputation of being loyal to his master and courageous against a mob. Left thus alone with Lemerrier, Graham said:

”Pray tell me where I can find your friend the Marquis de Rochebriant. I called at his apartment this morning, and I was told that he had gone on some visit into the country, taking his valet, and the concierge could not give me his address. I thought myself so lucky on meeting with you, who are sure to know.”

”No, I do not; it is some days since I saw Alain. But Duplessis will be sure to know.” Here the financier rejoined them.

”Mon cher, Garm Varn wants to know for what Sabine shades Rochebriant has deserted the *'fumum opes strepitumque'* of the capital.”

"Ah! the Marquis is a friend of yours, Monsieur?"

"I can scarcely boast that honour, but he is an acquaintance whom I should be very glad to see again."

"At this moment he is at the Duchesse de Tarascon's country-house near Fontainebleau; I had a hurried line from him two days ago stating that he was going there on her urgent invitation. But he may return to-morrow; at all events he dines with me on the 8th, and I shall be charmed if you will do me the honour to meet him at my house."

"It is an invitation too agreeable to refuse, and I thank you very much for it."

Nothing worth recording passed further in conversation between Graham and the two Frenchmen. He left them smoking their cigars in the garden, and walked homeward by the Rue de Rivoli. As he was passing beside the Magasin du Louvre he stopped, and made way for a lady crossing quickly out of the shop towards her carriage at the door. Glancing at him with a slight inclination of her head in acknowledgment of his courtesy, the lady recognised his features,—

"Ah, Mr. Vane!" she cried, almost joyfully—"you are then at Paris, though you have not come to see me."

"I only arrived last night, dear Mrs. Morley," said Graham, rather embarrassed, "and only on some matters of business which unexpectedly summoned me. My stay will probably be very short."

"In that case let me rob you of a few minutes—no, not rob you even of them; I can take you wherever you want to go, and as my carriage moves more quickly than you do on foot, I shall save you the minutes instead of robbing you of them."

"You are most kind, but I was only going to my hotel, which is close by."

"Then you have no excuse for not taking a short drive with me in the Champs Elysees—come."

Thus bidden, Graham could not civilly disobey. He handed the fair American into her carriage, and seated himself by her side.

CHAPTER III.

"Mr. Vane, I feel as if I had many apologies to make for the interest in your life which my letter to you so indiscreetly betrayed."

"Oh, Mrs. Morley! you cannot guess how deeply that interest touched me."

"I should not have presumed so far," continued Mrs. Morley, unheeding the interruption, "if I had not been altogether in error as to the nature of your sentiments in a certain quarter. In this you must blame my American rearing. With us there are many flirtations between boys and girls which come to nothing; but when in my country a man like you meets with a woman like Mademoiselle Cicogna, there cannot be flirtation. His attentions, his looks, his manner, reveal to the eyes of those who care enough for him to watch, one of two things—either he coldly admires and esteems, or he loves with his whole heart and soul a woman worthy to inspire such a love. Well, I did watch, and I was absurdly mistaken. I imagined that I saw love, and rejoiced for the sake of both of you to think so. I know that in all countries, our own as well as yours, love is so morbidly sensitive and jealous that it is always apt to invent imaginary foes to itself. Esteem and admiration never do that. I thought that some misunderstanding, easily removed by the intervention of a third person, might have impeded the impulse of two hearts towards each other—and so I wrote. I had assumed that you loved—I am humbled to the last degree—you only admired and esteemed."

"Your irony is very keen, Mrs. Morley, and to you it may seem very just."

"Don't call me Mrs. Morley in that haughty tone of voice,—can't you talk to me as you would talk to a friend? You only esteemed and admired—there is an end of it."

"No, there is not an end of it," cried Graham, giving way to an impetuosity of passion, which rarely, indeed, before another, escaped his self-control; "the end of it to me is a life out of which is ever stricken such love as I could feel for woman. To me true love can only come once. It came with my first look on that fatal face—it has never left me in thought by day, in dreams by night. The end of it to me is farewell to all such happiness as the one love of a life can promise—but—"

"But what?" asked Mrs. Morley, softly, and very much moved by the passionate earnestness of Graham's voice and words.

"But," he continued with a forced smile, "we Englishmen are trained to the resistance of absolute authority; we cannot submit all the elements that make up our being to the sway of a single despot. Love is the painter of existence, it should not be its sculptor."

"I do not understand the metaphor."

"Love colours our life, it should not chisel its form."

"My dear Mr. Vane, that is very cleverly said, but the human heart is too large and too restless to be quietly packed up in an aphorism. Do you mean to tell me that if you found you had destroyed Isaura Cicogna's happiness as well as resigned your own, that thought would not somewhat deform the very shape you would give to your life? Is it colour alone that your life would lose?"

"Ah, Mrs. Morley, do not lower your friend into an ordinary girl in whom idleness exaggerates the strength of any fancy over which it dreamily broods. Isaura Cicogna has her occupations—her genius—her fame—her career. Honestly speaking, I think that in these she will find a happiness that no quiet hearth could bestow. I will say no more. I feel persuaded that were we two united I could not make her happy. With the irresistible impulse that urges the genius of the writer towards its vent in public sympathy and applause, she would chafe if I said, 'Be contented to be wholly mine.' And if I said it not, and felt I had no right to say it, and allowed the full scope to her natural ambition, what then? She would chafe yet more to find that I had no fellowship in her aims and ends—that where I should feel pride, I felt humiliation. It would be so; I cannot help it, 'tis my nature."

"So be it then. When, next year perhaps, you visit Paris, you will be safe from my officious interference! Isaura will be the wife of another."

Graham pressed his hand to his heart with the sudden movement of one who feels there an agonising spasm—his cheek, his very lips were bloodless.

"I told you," he said bitterly, "that your fears of my influence over the happiness of one so gifted, and so strong in such gifts, were groundless; you allow that I should be very soon forgotten?"

"I allow no such thing—I wish I could. But do you know so little of a woman's heart (and in matters of heart, I never yet heard that genius had a talisman against emotion),—do you know so little of a woman's heart as not to know that the very moment in which she may accept a marriage the least fitted to render her happy, is that in which she has lost all hope of happiness in another?"

"Is it indeed so?" murmured Graham—"Ay, I can conceive it."

"And have you so little comprehension of the necessities which that fame, that career to which you allow she is impelled by the instincts of genius, impose on this girl, young, beautiful, fatherless, motherless? No matter how pure her life, can she guard it from the slander of envious

tongues? Will not all her truest friends—would not you, if you were her brother—press upon her by all the arguments that have most weight with the woman who asserts independence in her modes of life, and yet is wise enough to know that the world can only judge of virtue by its shadow—reputation, not to dispense with the protection which a husband can alone secure? And that is why I warn you, if it be yet time, that in resigning your own happiness you may destroy Isaura's. She will wed another, but she will not be happy. What a chimera or dread your egotism as man conjures up! Oh! forsooth, the qualities that charm and delight a world are to unfit a woman to be helpmate to a man. Fie on you!—fie!”

Whatever answer Graham might have made to these impassioned reproaches was here checked.

Two men on horseback stopped the carriage. One was Enguerrand de Vandemar, the other was the Algerine Colonel whom we met at the supper given at the Maison Doree by Frederic Lemercier.

“Pardon, Madame Morley,” said Enguerrand; “but there are symptoms of a mob-epidemic a little further up the fever began at Belleville, and is threatening the health of the Champs Elysees. Don't be alarmed—it may be nothing, though it may be much. In Paris, one can never calculate an hour beforehand the exact progress of a politico-epidemic fever. At present I say, 'Bah! a pack of ragged boys, gamins de Paris;' but my friend the Colonel, twisting his *moustache en souriant amerement*., says, 'It is the indignation of Paris at the apathy of the Government under insult to the honour of France;' and Heaven only knows how rapidly French gamins grow into giants when Colonels talk about the indignation of Paris and the honour of France!”

“But what has happened?” asked Mrs. Morley, turning to the Colonel.

“Madame,” replied the warrior, “it is rumoured that the King of Prussia has turned his back upon the ambassador of France; and that the *pekin*—who is for peace at any price—M. Ollivier—will say tomorrow in the Chamber, that France submits to a slap in the face.”

“Please, Monsieur de Vandemar, to tell my coachman to drive home,” said Mrs. Morley.

The carriage turned and went homeward. The Colonel lifted his hat, and rode back to see what the gamins were about. Enguerrand, who had no interest in the gamins, and who looked on the Colonel as a bore, rode by the side of the carriage.

“Is there anything serious in this?” asked Mrs. Morley.

“At this moment, nothing. What it may be this hour to-morrow I cannot say. Ah! Monsieur Vane, *bon jour*. I did not recognise you at first. Once, in a visit at the chateau of one of your distinguished countrymen,

I saw two game-cocks turned out facing each other: they needed no pretext for quarrelling—neither do France and Prussia—no matter which game-cock gave the last offence, the two game-cocks must have it out. All that Ollivier can do, if he be wise, is to see that the French cock has his steel spurs as long as the Prussians. But this I do say, that if Ollivier attempts to put the French cock back into its bag, the Empire is gone in forty-eight hours. That to me is a trifle—I care nothing for the Empire; but that which is not a trifle is anarchy and chaos. Better war and the Empire than peace and Jules Favre. But let us seize the present hour, Mr. Vane; whatever happens to-morrow, shall we dine together to-day? Name your restaurant.”

”I am so grieved,” answered Graham, rousing himself, ”I am here only on business, and engaged all the evening.”

”What a wonderful thing is this life of ours!” said Enguerrand. ”The destiny of France at this moment hangs on a thread—I, a Frenchman, say to an English friend, ’Let us dine—a cutlet to-day and a fig for to-morrow;’ and my English friend, distinguished native of a country with which we have the closest alliance, tells me that in this crisis of France he has business to attend to! My father is quite right; he accepts the Voltairean philosophy, and cries, *„Vivent les indifferents..!”*

”My dear M. de Vandemar,” said Graham, ”in every country you will find the same thing. All individuals massed together constitute public life. Each individual has a life of his own, the claims and the habits and the needs of which do not suppress his sympathies with public life, but imperiously overrule them. Mrs. Morley, permit me to pull the check-string—I get out here.”

”I like that man,” said Enguerrand, as he continued to ride by the fair American, ”in language and esprit he is so French.”

”I use to like him better than you can,” answered Mrs. Morley, ”but in prejudice and stupidity he is so English. As it seems you are disengaged, come and partake, *„pot au feu..*, with Frank and me.”

”Charmed to do so,” answered the cleverest and best bred of all Parisian *„beaux garcons..*, ”but forgive me if I quit you soon. This poor France! *„Entre nous..*, I am very uneasy about the Parisian fever. I must run away after dinner to clubs and cafes to learn the last bulletins.”

”We have nothing like that French Legitimist in the States,” said the fair American to herself, ”unless we should ever be so silly as to make Legitimists of the ruined gentlemen of the South.”

Meanwhile Graham Vane went slowly back to his apartment. No false excuse had he made to Enguerrand; this evening was devoted to M. Renard, who told him little he had not known before; but his private life overruled his public, and all that night he, professed politician, thought

sleeplessly, not over the crisis to France, which might alter the conditions of Europe, but the talk on his private life of that intermeddling American woman.

CHAPTER IV.

The next day, Wednesday, July 6th, commenced one of those eras in the world's history in which private life would vainly boast that it overrules Life Public. How many private lives does such a terrible time influence, absorb, darken with sorrow, crush into graves?

It was the day when the Duc de Gramont uttered the fatal speech which determined the die between peace and war. No one not at Paris on that day can conceive the popular enthusiasm with which that speech was hailed—the greater because the warlike tone of it was not anticipated; because there had been a rumour amidst circles the best informed that a speech of pacific moderation was to be the result of the Imperial Council. Rapturous indeed were the applauses with which the sentences that breathed haughty defiance were hailed by the Assembly. The ladies in the tribune rose with one accord, waving their handkerchiefs. Tall, stalwart, dark, with Roman features and lofty presence, the Minister of France seemed to say with Catiline in the fine tragedy: "Lo! where I stand, I am war!"

Paris had been hungering for some hero of the hour—the Duc de Gramont became at once raised to that eminence. All the journals, save the very few which were friendly to peace, because hostile to the Emperor, resounded with praise, not only of the speech, but of the speaker. It is with a melancholy sense of amusement that one recalls now to mind those organs of public opinion—with what romantic fondness they dwelt on the personal graces of the man who had at last given voice to the chivalry of France: "The charming gravity of his countenance—the mysterious expression of his eye!"

As the crowd poured from the Chambers, Victor de Mauleon and Savarin, who had been among the listeners, encountered.

"No chance for my friends the Orleanists now," said Savarin. "You who mock at all parties are, I suppose, at heart for the Republican—small chance, too, for that."

"I do not agree with you. Violent impulses have quick reactions."

"But what reaction could shake the Emperor after he returns a conqueror, bringing in his pocket the left bank of the Rhine?"

"None—when he does that. Will he do it? Does he himself think he will do it? I doubt—"

"Doubt the French army against the Prussian?"

"Against the German people united—yes, very much."

"But war will disunite the German people. Bavaria will surely assist us—Hanover will rise against the spoliator—Austria at our first successes must shake off her present enforced neutrality?"

"You have not been in Germany, and I have. What yesterday was a Prussian army, to-morrow will be a German population; far exceeding our own in numbers, in hardihood of body, in cultivated intellect, in military discipline. But talk of something else. How is my ex-editor—poor Gustave Rameau?"

"Still very weak, but on the mend. You may have him back in his office soon."

"Impossible! even in his sick-bed his vanity was more vigorous than ever. He issued a war-song, which has gone the round of the war journals signed by his own name. He must have known very well that the name of such a Tyrtaeus cannot reappear as the editor of *Le Sens Commun.*; that in launching his little firebrand he burned all vessels that could waft him back to the port he had quitted. But I dare say he has done well for his own interests; I doubt if *Le Sens Commun.* can much longer hold its ground in the midst of the prevalent lunacy."

"What! it has lost subscribers?—gone off in sale already, since it declared for peace?"

"Of course it has; and after the article which, if I live over to-night, will appear to-morrow, I should wonder if it sell enough to cover the cost of the print and paper."

"Martyr to principle! I revere, but I do not envy thee."

"Martyrdom is not my ambition. If Louis Napoleon be defeated, what then? Perhaps he may be the martyr; and the Favres and Gambettas may roast their own eggs on the gridiron they heat for his majesty."

Here an English gentleman, who was the very able correspondent to a very eminent journal, and in that capacity had made acquaintance with De Mauleon, joined the two Frenchmen; Savarin, however, after an exchange of salutations, went his way.

"May I ask a frank answer to a somewhat rude question, M. le Vicomte?" said the Englishman. "Suppose that the Imperial Government had to-day

given in their adhesion to the peace party, how long would it have been before their orators in the Chamber and their organs in the press would have said that France was governed by poltrons?"

"Probably for most of the twenty-four hours. But there are a few who are honest in their convictions; of that few I am one."

"And would have supported the Emperor and his Government?"

"No, Monsieur—I do not say that."

"Then the Emperor would have turned many friends into enemies, and no enemies into friends."

"Monsieur—you in England know that a party in opposition is not propitiated when the party in power steals its measures. Ha!—pardon me, who is that gentleman, evidently your countryman, whom I see yonder talking to the Secretary of your Embassy?"

"He.—Mr. Vane-Graham Vane. Do you not know him? He has been much in Paris, attached to our Embassy formerly; a clever man—much is expected from him."

"Ah! I think I have seen him before, but am not quite sure. Did you say Vane? I once knew a Monsieur Vane, a distinguished parliamentary orator."

"That gentleman is his son—would you like to be introduced to him?"

"Not to-day—I am in some hurry." Here Victor lifted his hat in parting salutation, and as he walked away cast at Graham another glance keen and scrutinising. "I have seen that man before," he muttered, "where?—when?—can it be only a family likeness to the father? No, the features are different; the profile is—ha!—Mr. Lamb, Mr. Lamb—but why call himself by that name?—why disguised?—what can he have to do with poor Louise? Bah—these are not questions I can think of now. This war—this war—can it yet be prevented? How it will prostrate all the plans my ambition so carefully schemed! Oh!—at least if I were but in the Chamber. Perhaps I yet may be before the war is ended—the Clavignys have great interest in their department."

CHAPTER V.

Graham had left a note with Rochebriant's concierge requesting an interview on the Marquis's return to Paris, and on the evening after the day just commemorated he received a line, saying that Alain had come

back, and would be at home at nine o'clock. Graham found himself in the Breton's apartment punctually at the hour indicated.

Alain was in high spirits: he burst at once into enthusiastic exclamations on the virtual announcement of war.

"Congratulate me, mon cher!" he cried—"the news was a joyous surprise to me. Only so recently as yesterday morning I was under the gloomy apprehension that the Imperial Cabinet would continue to back Ollivier's craven declaration 'that France had not been affronted!' The Duchesse de Tarascon, at whose campagne I was a guest, is (as you doubtless know) very much in the confidence of the Tuileries. On the first signs of war, I wrote to her, saying that whatever the objections of my pride to enter the army as a private in time of peace, such objections ceased on the moment when all distinctions of France must vanish in the eyes of sons eager to defend her banners. The Duchesse in reply begged me to come to her _campagne_ and talk over the matter. I went; she then said that if war should break out it was the intention to organise the _Mobiles_ and officer them with men of birth and education, irrespective of previous military service, and in that case I might count on my epaulets. But only two nights ago she received a letter—I know not of course from whom—evidently from some high authority—that induced her to think the moderation of the Council would avert the war, and leave the swords of the Mobiles in their sheaths. I suspect the decision of yesterday must have been a very sudden one. _Ce cher Gramont_! See what it is to have a well-born man in a sovereign's councils."

"If war must come, I at least wish all renown to yourself. But—"

"Oh! spare me your 'buts'; the English are always too full of them where her own interests do not appeal to her. She had no 'buts' for war in India or a march into Abyssinia."

Alain spoke petulantly; at that moment the French were very much irritated by the monitory tone of the English journals. Graham prudently avoided the chance of rousing the wrath of a young hero yearning for his epaulets.

"I am English enough," said he, with good-humoured courtesy, "to care for English interests; and England has no interest abroad dearer to her than the welfare and dignity of France. And now let me tell you why I presumed on an acquaintance less intimate than I could desire, to solicit this interview on a matter which concerns myself, and in which you could perhaps render me a considerable service."

"If I can, count it rendered; move to this sofa—join me in a cigar, and let us talk at ease *_comme de vieux amis_*, whose fathers or brothers might have fought side by side in the Crimea." Graham removed to the sofa beside Rochebriant, and after one or two whiffs laid aside the cigar and began:

"Among the correspondence which Monsieur your father has left, are there any letters of no distant date signed Marigny–Madame Marigny? Pardon me, I should state my motive in putting this question. I am intrusted with a charge, the fulfilment of which may prove to the benefit of this lady or her child; such fulfilment is a task imposed upon my honour. But all the researches to discover this lady which I have instituted stop at a certain date, with this information,—viz., that she corresponded occasionally with the late Marquis de Rochebriant; that he habitually preserved the letters of his correspondents; and that these letters were severally transmitted to you at his decease."

Alain's face had taken a very grave expression while Graham spoke, and he now replied with a mixture of haughtiness and embarrassment:

"The boxes containing the letters my father received and preserved were sent to me as you say—the larger portion of them were from ladies—sorted and labelled, so that in glancing at any letter in each packet I could judge of the general tenor of these in the same packet without the necessity of reading them. All packets of that kind, Monsieur Vane, I burned. I do not remember any letters signed 'Marigny!'"

"I perfectly understand, my dear Marquis, that you would destroy all letters which your father himself would have destroyed if his last illness had been sufficiently prolonged. But I do not think the letters I mean would have come under that classification; probably they were short, and on matters of business relating to some third person—some person, for instance, of the name of Louise, or of Duval!"

"Stop! let me think. I have a vague remembrance of one or two letters which rather perplexed me, they were labelled, 'Louise D—. Mem.: to make further inquiries as to the fate of her uncle.'"

"Marquis, these are the letters I seek. Thank heaven, you have not destroyed them?"

"No; there was no reason why I should destroy, though I really cannot state precisely any reason why I kept them. I have a very vague recollection of their existence."

"I entreat you to allow me at least a glance at the handwriting, and compare it with that of a letter I have about me; and if the several handwritings correspond, I would ask you to let me have the address, which, according to your father's memorandum, will be found in the letters you have preserved."

"To compliance with such a request I not only cannot demur, but perhaps it may free me from some responsibility which I might have thought the letters devolved upon my executorship. I am sure they did not concern the honour of any woman of any family, for in that case I must have

burned them.”

”Ah, Marquis, shake hands there! In such concord between man and man, there is more entente cordiale between England and France than there was at Sebastopol. Now let me compare the handwritings.”

”The box that contained the letters is not here—I left it at Rochebriant; I will telegraph to my aunt to send it; the day after to-morrow it will no doubt arrive. Breakfast with me that day—say at one o’clock, and after breakfast the Box!”

”How can I thank you?”

”Thank me! but you said your honour was concerned in your request—requests affecting honour between men *comma il faut* is a ceremony of course, like a bow between them. One bows, the other returns the bow—no thanks on either side. Now that we have done with that matter, let me say that I thought your wish for our interview originated in a very different cause.”

”What could that be?”

”Nay, do you not recollect that last talk between us, when with such loyalty you spoke to me about Mademoiselle Cicogna, and supposing that there might be rivalry between us, retracted all that you might have before said to warn me against fostering the sentiment with which she had inspired me; even at the first slight glance of a face which cannot be lightly forgotten by those who have once seen it.”

”I recollect perfectly every word of that talk, Marquis,” answered Graham, calmly, but with his hand concealed within his vest and pressed tightly to his heart. The warning of Mrs. Morley flashed upon him. ”Was this the man to seize the prize he had put aside—this man, younger than himself—handsomer than himself—higher in rank?”

”I recollect that talk, Marquis! Well, what then?”

”In my self-conceit I supposed that you might have heard how much I admired Mademoiselle Cicogna—how, having not long since met her at the house of Duplessis (who by the way writes me word that I shall meet you *chez lui* tomorrow), I have since sought her society wherever there was a chance to find it. You may have heard, at our club, or elsewhere, how I adore her genius—how, I say, that nothing so *Breton*—that is, so pure and so lofty—has appeared and won readers since the days of Chateaubriand,—and—you, knowing that *les absents ont toujours tort*., come to me and ask Monsieur de Rochebriant, Are we rivals? I expected a challenge—you relieve my mind—you abandon the field to me?”

At the first I warned the reader how improved from his old *mauvaise honte* a year or so of Paris life would make our beau Marquis. How a

year or two of London life with its horsey slang and its fast girls of the period would have vulgarised an English Rochebriant! Graham gnawed his lips and replied quietly, "I do not challenge! Am I to congratulate you?"

"No, that brilliant victory is not for me. I thought that was made clear in the conversation I have referred to. But if you have done me the honour to be jealous I am exceedingly flattered. Speaking, seriously, if I admired Mademoiselle Cicogna when you and I last met, the admiration is increased by the respect with which I regard a character so simply noble. How many women older than she would have been spoiled by the adulation that has followed her literary success!—how few women so young, placed in a position so critical, having the courage to lead a life so independent, would have maintained the dignity of their character free from a single indiscretion! I speak not from my own knowledge, but from the report of all, who would be pleased enough to censure if they could find a cause. Good society is the paradise of *mauvaises langues*."

Graham caught Alain's hand and pressed it, but made no answer.

The young Marquis continued:

"You will pardon me for speaking thus freely in the way that I would wish any friend to speak of the demoiselle who might become my wife. I owe you much, not only for the loyalty with which you address me in reference to this young lady, but for words affecting my own position in France, which sank deep into my mind—saved me from deeming myself a *proscrit*—in my own land—filled me with a manly ambition, not stifled amidst the thick of many effeminate follies—and, in fact, led me to the career which is about to open before me, and in which my ancestors have left me no undistinguished examples. Let us speak, then, *a coeur ouvert*, as one friend to another. Has there been any misunderstanding between you and Mademoiselle Cicogna which has delayed your return to Paris? If so, is it over now?"

"There has been no such misunderstanding."

"Do you doubt whether the sentiments you expressed in regard to her when we met last year, are returned?"

"I have no right to conjecture her sentiments. You mistake altogether."

"I do not believe that I am dunce enough to mistake your feelings towards Mademoiselle—they may be read in your face at this moment. Of course I do not presume to hazard a conjecture as to those of Mademoiselle towards yourself. But when I met her not long since at the house of Duplessis, with whose daughter she is intimate, I chanced to speak to her of you; and if I may judge, by looks and manner, I chose no displeasing theme. You turn away—I offend you?"

"Offend!—no, indeed; but on this subject I am not prepared to converse. I came to Paris on matters of business much complicated and which ought to absorb my attention. I cannot longer trespass on your evening. The day after to-morrow, then, I will be with you at one o'clock."

"Yes, I hope then to have the letters you wish to consult; and, meanwhile, we meet to-morrow at the Hotel Duplessis."

CHAPTER VI.

Graham had scarcely quitted Alain, and the young Marquis was about to saunter forth to his club, when Duplessis was announced.

These two men had naturally seen much of each other since Duplessis had returned from Bretagne and delivered Alain from the gripe of Louvier. Scarcely a day had passed but what Alain had been summoned to enter into the financier's plans for the aggrandisement of the Rochebriant estates, and delicately made to feel that he had become a partner in speculations, which, thanks to the capital and the abilities Duplessis brought to bear, seemed likely to result in the ultimate freedom of his property from all burdens, and the restoration of his inheritance to a splendour correspondent with the dignity of his rank.

On the plea that his mornings were chiefly devoted to professional business, Duplessis arranged that these consultations should take place in the evenings. From those consultations Valerie was not banished; Duplessis took her into the council as a matter of course. "Valerie," said the financier to Alain, "though so young, has a very clear head for business, and she is so interested in all that interests myself, that even where I do not take her opinion, I at least feel my own made livelier and brighter by her sympathy."

So the girl was in the habit of taking her work or her book into the *cabinet de travail*, and never obtruding a suggestion unasked, still, when appealed to, speaking with a modest good sense which justified her father's confidence and praise; and *a propos* of her book, she had taken Chateaubriand into peculiar favour. Alain had respectfully presented to her beautifully bound copies of *Atala* and *Le Génie du Christianisme*; it is astonishing, indeed, how he had already contrived to regulate her tastes in literature. The charms of those quiet family evenings had stolen into the young Breton's heart.

He yearned for none of the gayer reunions in which he had before sought for a pleasure that his nature had not found; for, amidst the amusements of Paris, Alain remained intensely Breton—viz., formed eminently for the simple joys of domestic life, associating the sacred hearthstone with the

antique religion of his fathers; gathering round it all the images of pure and noble affections which the romance of a poetic temperament had evoked from the solitude which had surrounded a melancholy boyhood-an uncontaminated youth.

Duplessis entered abruptly, and with a countenance much disturbed from its wonted saturnine composure.

"Marquis, what is this I have just heard from the Duchesse de Tarascon? Can it be? You ask military service in this ill-omened war?-you?"

"My dear and best friend," said Alain, very much startled, "I should have thought that you, of all men in the world, would have most approved of my request-you, so devoted an Imperialist-you, indignant that the representative of one of these families, which the First Napoleon so eagerly and so vainly courted, should ask for the grade of sous-lieutenant in the armies of Napoleon the Third-you, who of all men know how ruined are the fortunes of a Rochebriant-you, feel surprised that he clings to the noblest heritage his ancestors have left to him-their sword! I do not understand you."

"Marquis," said Duplessis, seating himself, and regarding Alain with a look in which were blended the sort of admiration and the sort of contempt with which a practical man of the world, who, having himself gone through certain credulous follies, has learned to despise the follies, but retains a reminiscence of sympathy with the fools they bewitch, "Marquis, pardon me; you talk finely, but you do not talk common sense. I should be extremely pleased if your Legitimist scruples had allowed you to solicit, or rather to accept, a civil appointment not unsuited to your rank, under the ablest sovereign, as a civilian, to whom France can look for rational liberty combined with established order. Such openings to a suitable career you have rejected; but who on earth could expect you, never trained to military service, to draw a sword hitherto sacred to the Bourbons, on behalf of a cause which the madness, I do not say of France but of Paris, has enforced on a sovereign against whom you would fight to-morrow if you had a chance of placing the descendant of Henry IV. on his throne."

"I am not about to fight for any sovereign, but for my country against the foreigner."

"An excellent answer if the foreigner had invaded your country; but it seems that your country is going to invade the foreigner-a very different thing. _Chut_! all this discussion is most painful to me. I feel for the Emperor a personal loyalty, and for the hazards he is about to encounter a prophetic dread, as an ancestor of yours might have felt for Francis I. could he have foreseen Pavia. Let us talk of ourselves and the effect the war should have upon our individual action. You are aware, of course, that, though M. Louvier has had notice of our intention to pay off his mortgage, that intention cannot be carried into effect for

six months; if the money be not then forthcoming his hold on Rochebriant remains unshaken—the sum is large.”

”Alas! yes.”

”The war must greatly disturb the money-market, affect many speculative adventures and operations when at the very moment credit may be most needed. It is absolutely necessary that I should be daily at my post on the Bourse, and hourly watch the ebb and flow of events. Under these circumstances I had counted, permit me to count still, on your presence in Bretagne. We have already begun negotiations on a somewhat extensive scale, whether as regards the improvement of forests and orchards, or the plans for building allotments, as soon as the lands are free for disposal—for all these the eye of a master is required. I entreat you, then, to take up your residence at Rochebriant.”

”My dear friend, this is but a kindly and delicate mode of relieving me from the dangers of war. I have, as you must be conscious, no practical knowledge of business. Hebert can be implicitly trusted, and will carry out your views with a zeal equal to mine, and with infinitely more ability.”

”Marquis, pray neither to Hercules nor to Hebert; if you wish to get your own cart out of the ruts, put your own shoulder to the wheel.”

Alain coloured high, unaccustomed to be so bluntly addressed, but he replied with a kind of dignified meekness: ”I shall ever remain grateful for what you have done, and wish to do for me. But, assuming that you suppose rightly, the estates of Rochebriant would, in your hands, become a profitable investment, and more than redeem the mortgage, and the sum you have paid Louvier on my account, let it pass to you irrespectively of me. I shall console myself in the knowledge that the old place will be restored, and those who honoured its old owners prosper in hands so strong, guided by a heart so generous.”

Duplessis was deeply affected by these simple words; they seized him on the tenderest side of his character—for his heart was generous, and no one, except his lost wife and his loving child, had ever before discovered it to be so. Has it ever happened to you, reader, to be appreciated on the one point of the good or the great that is in you—on which secretly you value yourself most—but for which nobody, not admitted into your heart of hearts, has given you credit? If that has happened to you, judge what Duplessis felt when the fittest representative of that divine chivalry which, if sometimes deficient in head, owes all that exalts it to riches of heart, spoke thus to the professional moneymaker, whose qualities of head were so acknowledged that a compliment to them would be a hollow impertinence, and whose qualities of heart had never yet received a compliment!

Duplessis started from his seat and embraced Alain, murmuring, ”Listen to

me, I love you—I never had a son—be mine—Rochebriant shall be my daughter’s dot.”

Alain returned the embrace, and then recoiling, said: ”Father, your first desire must be honour for your son. You have guessed my secret—I have learned to love Valerie. Seeing her out in the world, she seemed like other girls, fair and commonplace—seeing her—at your house, I have said to myself, ’There is the one girl fairer than all others in my eyes, and the one individual to whom all other girls are commonplace.’”

”Is that true?—is it?”

”True! does a *gentilhomme* ever lie? And out of that love for her has grown this immovable desire to be something worthy of her—something that may lift me from the vulgar platform of men who owe all to ancestors, nothing to themselves. Do you suppose for one moment that I, saved from ruin and penury by Valerie’s father, could be base enough to say to her, ’In return be Madame la Marquise de Rochebriant’? Do you suppose that I, whom you would love and respect as son, could come to you and say: ’I am oppressed by your favours—I am crippled with debts—give me your millions and we are quits.’ No, Duplessis! You, so well descended yourself—so superior as man amongst men that you would have won name and position had you been born the son of a shoeblick,—you would eternally despise the noble who, in days when all that we Bretons deem holy in noblesse are subjected to ridicule and contempt, should so vilely forget the only motto which the scutcheons of all *gentilhommes* have in common, ’Noblesse oblige.’ War, with all its perils and all its grandeur,—war lifts on high the banners of France,—war, in which every ancestor of mine whom I care to recall aggrandised the name that descends to me. Let me then do as those before me have done; let me prove that I am worth something in myself, and then you and I are equals; and I can say with no humbled crest, ’Your benefits are accepted:’ the man who has fought not ignobly for France may aspire to the hand of her daughter. Give me Valerie; as to her dot,—be it so, Rochebriant,—it will pass to her children.”

”Alain! Alain! my friend! my son!—but if you fall.”

”Valerie will give you a nobler son.”

Duplessis moved away, sighing heavily; but he said no more in deprecation of Alain’s martial resolves.

A Frenchman, however practical, however worldly, however philosophical he may be, who does not sympathise with the follies of honour—who does not concede indulgence to the hot blood of youth when he says, ”My country is insulted and her banner is unfurled,” may certainly be a man of excellent common sense; but if such men had been in the majority, Gaul would never have been France—Gaul would have been a province of Germany.

And as Duplessis walked homeward—he the calmest and most far-seeing of all authorities on the Bourse—the man who, excepting only De Mauleon, most decidedly deemed the cause of the war a blunder, and most forebodingly anticipated its issues, caught the prevalent enthusiasm. Everywhere he was stopped by cordial hands, everywhere met by congratulating smiles. "How right you have been, Duplessis, when you have laughed at those who have said, 'The Emperor is ill, decrepit, done up.'"

"Vive l'Empereur! at least we shall be face to face with those insolent Prussians!"

Before he arrived at his home, passing along the Boulevards, greeted by all the groups enjoying the cool night air before the cafes, Duplessis had caught the war epidemic.

Entering his hotel, he went at once to Valerie's chamber. "Sleep well to-night, child; Alain has told me that he adores thee, and if he will go to the war, it is that he may lay his laurels at thy feet. Bless thee, my child, thou couldst not have made a nobler choice."

Whether, after these words, Valerie slept well or not 'tis not for me to say; but if she did sleep, I venture to guess that her dreams were rose-coloured.

CHAPTER VII.

All the earlier part of that next day, Graham Vane remained in-doors—a lovely day at Paris that 8th of July, and with that summer day all hearts at Paris were in unison. Discontent was charmed into enthusiasm—Belleville and Montmartre forgot the visions of Communism and Socialism and other "isms" not to be realised except in some undiscovered Atlantis!

The Emperor was the idol of the day—the names of Jules Favre and Gambetta were by-words of scorn. Even Armand Monnier, still out of work, beginning to feel the pinch of want, and fierce for any revolution that might turn topsy-turvy the conditions of labour,—even Armand Monnier was found among groups that were laying immortelles at the foot of the column in the Place Vendome, and heard to say to a fellow malcontent, with eyes uplifted to the statue of the First Napoleon, "Do you not feel at this moment that no Frenchman can be long angry with the Little Corporal? He denied La Liberte, but he gave La Gloire."

Heeding not the stir of the world without, Graham was compelling into one resolve the doubts and scruples which had so long warred against the heart which they ravaged, but could not wholly subdue.

The conversations with Mrs. Morley and Rochebriant had placed in a light in which he had not before regarded it, the image of Isaura.

He had reasoned from the starting-point of his love for her, and had sought to convince himself that against that love it was his duty to strive.

But now a new question was addressed to his conscience as well as to his heart. What though he had never formally declared to her his affection—never, in open words, wooed her as his own—never even hinted to her the hopes of a union which at one time he had fondly entertained,—still was it true that his love had been too transparent not to be detected by her, and not to have led her on to return it?

Certainly he had, as we know, divined that he was not indifferent to her: at Enghien, a year ago, that he had gained her esteem, and perhaps interested her fancy.

We know also how he had tried to persuade himself that the artistic temperament, especially when developed in women, is too elastic to suffer the things of real life to have lasting influence over happiness or sorrow,—that in the pursuits in which her thought and imagination found employ, in the excitement they sustained, and the fame to which they conduced, Isaura would be readily consoled for a momentary pang of disappointed affection. And that a man so alien as himself, both by nature and by habit, from the artistic world, was the very last person who could maintain deep and permanent impression on her actual life or her ideal dreams. But what if, as he gathered from the words of the fair American—what if, in all these assumptions, she was wholly mistaken? What if, in previously revealing his own heart, he had decoyed hers—what if, by a desertion she had no right to anticipate, he had blighted her future? What if this brilliant child of genius could love as warmly, as deeply, as enduringly as any simple village girl to whom there is no poetry except love? If this were so—what became the first claim on his honour, his conscience, his duty?

The force which but a few days ago his reasonings had given to the arguments that forbade him to think of Isaura, became weaker and weaker, as now in an altered mood of reflection he resummoned and reweighed them.

All those prejudices—which had seemed to him such rational common-sense truths, when translated from his own mind into the words of Lady Janet's letter,—was not Mrs. Morley right in denouncing them as the crotchets of an insolent egotism? Was it not rather to the favour than to the disparagement of Isaura, regarded even in the man's narrow-minded view of woman's dignity, that this orphan girl could, with character so unscathed, pass through the trying ordeal of the public babble, the public gaze—command alike the esteem of a woman so pure as Mrs. Morley, the reverence of a man so chivalrously sensitive to honour as Alain de

Rochebriant?

Musing thus, Graham's countenance at last brightened—a glorious joy entered into and possessed him. He felt as a man who had burst asunder the swathes and trammels which had kept him galled and miserable with the sense of captivity, and from which some wizard spell that took strength from his own superstition had forbidden to struggle.

He was free!—and that freedom was rapture!—yes, his resolve was taken.

The day was now far advanced. He should have just time before the dinner with Duplessis to drive to A——, where he still supposed Isaura resided. How, as his *fiacre* rolled along the well-remembered road—how completely he lived in that world of romance of which he denied himself to be a denizen.

Arrived at the little villa, he found it occupied only by workmen—it was under repair. No one could tell him to what residence the ladies who occupied it the last year had removed.

"I shall learn from Mrs. Morley," thought Graham, and at her house he called in going back, but Mrs. Morley was not at home; he had only just time, after regaining his apartment, to change his dress for the dinner to which he was invited. As it was, he arrived late, and while apologising to his host for his want of punctuality, his tongue faltered. At the farther end of the room he saw a face, paler and thinner than when he had seen it last—a face across which a something of grief had gone.

The servant announced that dinner was served.

"Mr. Vane," said Duplessis, "will you take into dinner Mademoiselle Cicogna?"