

The Parisians, Book 4.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton

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THE PARISIANS

By Edward Bulwer-Lytton

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

FROM ISAURA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL.

It is many days since I wrote to you, and but for your delightful note just received, reproaching me for silence, I should still be under the spell of that awe which certain words of M. Savarin were well fitted to produce. Chancing to ask him if he had written to you lately, he said, with that laugh of his, good-humouredly ironical, "No, Mademoiselle, I am not one of the Facheux whom Moliere has immortalized. If the meeting of lovers should be sacred from the intrusion of a third person, however amiable, more sacred still should be the parting between an author and his work. Madame de Grantmesnil is in that moment so solemn to a genius earnest as hers,--she is bidding farewell to a companion with whom, once dismissed into the world, she can never converse familiarly again; it ceases to be her companion when it becomes ours. Do not let us disturb the last hours they will pass together."

These words struck me much. I suppose there is truth in them. I can comprehend that a work which has long been all in all to its author, concentrating his thoughts, gathering round it the hopes and fears of his inmost heart, dies, as it were, to him when he has completed its life for others, and launched it into a world estranged from the solitude in which it was born and formed. I can almost conceive that, to a writer like you, the very fame which attends the work thus sent forth chills your own love for it. The characters you created in a fairyland, known but to yourself, must lose something of their mysterious charm when you hear them discussed and cavilled at, blamed or praised, as if they were really the creatures of streets and salons.

I wonder if hostile criticism pains or enrages you as it seems to do such other authors as I have known. M. Savarin, for instance, sets down in his tablets as an enemy to whom vengeance is due the smallest scribbler who wounds his self-love, and says frankly, "To me praise is food, dispraise is poison. Him who feeds me I pay; him who poisons me I break on the wheel." M. Savarin is, indeed, a skilful and energetic administrator to his own reputation. He deals with it as if it were a kingdom,--establishes fortifications for its defence, enlists soldiers to fight for it. He is the soul and centre of a confederation in which each is bound to defend the territory of the others, and all those territories united constitute the imperial realm of M. Savarin. Don't think me an ungracious satirist in what I am thus saying of our brilliant friend. It is not I who here speak; it is himself. He avows his policy with the naivete which makes the charm of his style as writer. "It is the greatest mistake," he said to me yesterday, "to talk of the Republic of Letters. Every author who wins a name is a sovereign in his own domain, be it large or small. Woe to any republican who wants to dethrone me!"

Somehow or other, when M. Savarin thus talks I feel as if he were betraying the cause of, genius. I cannot bring myself to regard literature as a craft,--to me it is a sacred mission; and in hearing this "sovereign" boast of the tricks by which he maintains his state, I seem to listen to a priest who treats as imposture the religion he professes to teach. M. Savarin's favourite _eleve_ now is a young contributor to his journal, named Gustave Rameau. M. Savarin said the other day in my hearing, "I and my set were Young France; Gustave Rameau and his set are New Paris."

"And what is the distinction between the one and the other?" asked my American friend, Mrs. Morley.

"The set of 'Young France,'" answered M. Savarin, "had in it the hearty consciousness of youth; it was bold and vehement, with abundant vitality and animal spirits; whatever may be said against it in other respects, the power of thews and sinews must be conceded to its chief representatives. But the set of 'New Paris' has very bad health, and very indifferent spirits. Still, in its way, it is very clever; it can sting and bite as keenly as if it were big and strong. Rameau is the most promising member of the set. He will be popular in his time, because he represents a good deal of the mind of his time,--namely, the mind and the time of 'New Paris.'"

Do you know anything of this young Rameau's writings? You do not know himself, for he told me so, expressing a desire, that was evidently very sincere, to find some occasion on which to render you his homage. He said this the first time I met him at M. Savarin's, and before he knew how dear to me are yourself and your fame. He came and sat by me after dinner, and won my interest at once by asking me if I had heard that you were busied on a new work; and then, without waiting for my answer, he launched forth into praises of you, which made a notable contrast to the scorn with which he spoke of all your contemporaries,--except indeed M. Savarin, who, however, might not have been pleased to hear his favourite pupil style him "a great writer in small things." I spare you his epigrams on Dumas and Victor Hugo and my beloved Lamartine. Though his talk was showy, and dazzled me at first, I soon got rather tired of it, even the first time we met. Since then I have seen him very often, not only at M. Savarin's, but he calls here at least every other day, and we have become quite good friends. He gains on acquaintance so far that one cannot help feeling how much he is to be pitied. He is so envious! and the envious must be so unhappy. And then he is at once so near and so far from all the things that he envies. He longs for riches and luxury, and can only as yet earn a bare competence by his labours. Therefore he hates the rich and luxurious. His literary successes, instead of pleasing him, render him miserable by their contrast with the fame of the authors whom he envies and assails. He has a beautiful head, of which he is conscious, but it is joined to a body without strength or grace. He is conscious of this too,--but it is cruel to go on with this sketch. You can see at once the kind of person who, whether he inspire affection or dislike, cannot fail to create an interest, painful but compassionate.

You will be pleased to hear that Dr. C. considers my health so improved that I may next year enter fairly on the profession for which I was intended and trained. Yet I still feel hesitating and doubtful. To give myself wholly up to the art in which I am told I could excel must alienate me entirely from the ambition that yearns for fields in which, alas! it may perhaps never appropriate to itself a rood for culture,--only wander, lost in a vague fairyland, to which it has not the fairy's

birthright. O thou great Enchantress, to whom are equally subject the streets of Paris and the realm of Faerie, thou who hast sounded to the deeps that circumfluent ocean called "practical human life," and hast taught the acutest of its navigators to consider how far its courses are guided by orbs in heaven,--canst thou solve this riddle which, if it perplexes me, must perplex so many? What is the real distinction between the rare genius and the commonalty of human souls that feel to the quick all the grandest and divinest things which the rare genius places before them, sighing within themselves, "This rare genius does but express that which was previously familiar to us, so far as thought and sentiment extend"? Nay, the genius itself, however eloquent, never does, never can, express the whole of the thought or the sentiment it interprets; on the contrary, the greater the genius is, the more it leaves a something of incomplete satisfaction on our minds,--it promises so much more than it performs; it implies so much more than it announces. I am impressed with the truth of what I thus say in proportion as I re-peruse and re-study the greatest writers that have come within my narrow range of reading; and by the greatest writers I mean those who are not exclusively reasoners (of such I cannot judge), nor mere poets (of whom, so far as concerns the union of words with music, I ought to be able to judge), but the few who unite reason and poetry, and appeal at once to the common-sense of the multitude and the imagination of the few. The highest type of this union to me is Shakspeare; and I can comprehend the justice of no criticism on him which does not allow this sense of incomplete satisfaction augmenting in proportion as the poet soars to his highest. I ask again, In what consists this distinction between the rare genius and the commonalty of minds that exclaim, "He expresses what we feel, but never the whole of what we feel"? Is it the mere power over language, a larger knowledge of dictionaries, a finer ear for period and cadence, a more artistic craft in casing our thoughts and sentiments in well-selected words? Is it true what Buffon says, "that the style is the man"? Is it true what I am told Goethe said, "Poetry is form"? I cannot believe this; and if you tell me it is true, then I no longer pine to be a writer. But if it be not true, explain to me how it is that the greatest genius is popular in proportion as it makes itself akin to us by uttering in better words than we employ that which was already within us, brings to light what in our souls was latent, and does but correct, beautify, and publish the correspondence which an ordinary reader carries on privately every day between himself and his mind or his heart. If this superiority in the genius be but style and form, I abandon my dream of being something else than a singer of words by another to the music of another. But then, what then? My knowledge of books and art is wonderfully small. What little I do know I gather from very few books and from what I hear said by the few worth listening to whom I happen to meet; and out of these, in solitude and reverie, not by conscious effort, I arrive at some results which appear to my inexperience original. Perhaps, indeed, they have the same kind of originality as the musical compositions of amateurs who effect a cantata or a quartette made up of borrowed details from great masters, and constituting a whole so original that no real master would deign to own it. Oh, if I could get you to understand how unsettled, how struggling my whole nature at this moment is! I wonder what is the sensation of the chrysalis which has been a silkworm, when it first feels the new wings stirring within its shell,--wings, alas! they are but those of the humblest and shortest-lived sort of moth, scarcely born into daylight before it dies. Could it reason, it might regret its earlier life, and say, "Better be the silkworm than the moth."

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

Have you known well any English people in the course of your life? I say well, for you must have had acquaintance with many. But it seems to me so difficult to know an Englishman well. Even I, who so loved and revered Mr. Selby,--I, whose childhood was admitted into his companionship by that love which places ignorance and knowledge, infancy and age, upon ground so equal that heart touches heart, cannot say that I understand the English character to anything like the extent to which I fancy I understand the Italian and the French. Between us of the Continent and them of the island the British Channel always flows. There is an Englishman here to whom I have been introduced, whom I have met, though but seldom, in that society which bounds the Paris world to me. Pray, pray tell me, did you ever know, ever meet him? His name is Graham Vane. He is the only son, I am told, of a man who was a celebrite in England as an orator and statesman, and on both sides he belongs to the haute aristocratic. He himself has that indescribable air and mien to which we apply the epithet 'distinguished.' In the most crowded salon the eye would fix on him, and involuntarily follow his movements. Yet his manners are frank and simple, wholly without the stiffness or reserve which are said to characterize the English. There is an inborn dignity in his bearing which consists in the absence of all dignity assumed. But what strikes me most in this Englishman is an expression of countenance which the English depict by the word 'open,'--that expression which inspires you with a belief in the existence of sincerity. Mrs. Morley said of him, in that poetic extravagance of phrase by which the Americans startle the English, "That man's forehead would light up the Mammoth Cave." Do you not know, Eulalie, what it is to us cultivators of art--art being the expression of truth through fiction--to come into the atmosphere of one of those souls in which Truth stands out bold and beautiful in itself, and needs no idealization through fiction? Oh, how near we should be to heaven could we live daily, hourly, in the presence of one the honesty of whose word we could never doubt, the authority of whose word we could never disobey! Mr. Vane professes not to understand music, not even to care for it, except rarely, and yet he spoke of its influence over others with an enthusiasm that half charmed me once more back to my destined calling; nay, might have charmed me wholly, but that he seemed to think that I--that any public singer--must be a creature apart from the world,--the world in which such men live. Perhaps that is true.

CHAPTER II.

It was one of those lovely noons towards the end of May in which a rural suburb has the mellow charm of summer to him who escapes awhile from the streets of a crowded capital. The Londoner knows its charm when he feels his tread on the softening swards of the Vale of Health, or, pausing at Richmond under the budding willow, gazes on the river glittering in the warmer sunlight, and hears from the villa-gardens behind him the brief trill of the blackbird. But the suburbs round Paris are, I think, a yet more pleasing relief from the metropolis; they are more easily reached, and I know not why, but they seem more rural,--perhaps because the contrast of their repose with the stir left behind, of their redundancy of leaf and blossom compared with the prim efflorescence of trees in the Boulevards and Tuileries, is more striking. However that may be, when Graham reached the pretty suburb in which Isaura dwelt, it seemed to him

as if all the wheels of the loud busy life were suddenly smitten still. The hour was yet early; he felt sure that he should find Isaura at home. The garden-gate stood unfastened and ajar; he pushed it aside and entered. I think I have before said that the garden of the villa was shut out from the road and the gaze of neighbours by a wall and thick belts of evergreens; it stretched behind the house somewhat far for the garden of a suburban villa. He paused when he had passed the gateway, for he heard in the distance the voice of one singing,--singing low, singing plaintively. He knew it was the voice of Isaura--he passed on, leaving the house behind him, and tracking the voice till he reached the singer.

Isaura was seated within an arbour towards the farther end of the garden,--an arbour which, a little later in the year, must indeed be delicate and dainty with lush exuberance of jessamine and woodbine; now into its iron trelliswork leaflets and flowers were insinuating their gentle way. Just at the entrance one white rose--a winter rose that had mysteriously survived its relations--opened its pale hues frankly to the noonday sun. Graham approached slowly, noiselessly, and the last note of the song had ceased when he stood at the entrance of the arbour. Isaura did not perceive him at first, for her face was bent downward musingly, as was often her wont after singing, especially when alone; but she felt that the place was darkened, that something stood between her and the sunshine. She raised her face, and a quick flush mantled over it as she uttered his name, not loudly, not as in surprise, but inwardly and whisperingly, as in a sort of fear.

"Pardon me, Mademoiselle," said Graham, entering; "but I heard your voice as I came into the garden, and it drew me onward involuntarily. What a lovely air! and what simple sweetness in such of the words as reached me! I am so ignorant of music that you must not laugh at me if I ask whose is the music and whose are the words? Probably both are so well known as to convict me of a barbarous ignorance."

"Oh, no," said Isaura, with a still heightened colour, and in accents embarrassed and hesitating. "Both the words and music are by an unknown and very humble composer, yet not, indeed, quite original,--they have not even that merit; at least they were suggested by a popular song in the Neapolitan dialect which is said to be very old."

"I don't know if I caught the true meaning of the words, for they seemed to me to convey a more subtle and refined sentiment than is common in the popular songs of southern Italy."

"The sentiment in the original is changed in the paraphrase, and not, I fear, improved by the change."

"Will you explain to me the sentiment in both, and let me judge which I prefer?"

"In the Neapolitan song a young fisherman, who has moored his boat under a rock on the shore, sees a beautiful face below the surface of the waters; he imagines it to be that of a Nereid, and casts in his net to catch this supposed nymph of the ocean. He only disturbs the water, loses the image, and brings up a few common fishes. He returns home disappointed, and very much enamoured of the supposed Nereid. The next day he goes again to the same place, and discovers that the face which had so charmed him was that of a mortal girl reflected on the waters from the rock behind him, on which she had been seated, and on which she had

her home. The original air is arch and lively; just listen to it." And Isaura warbled one of those artless and somewhat meagre tunes to which light-stringed instruments are the fitting accompaniment.

"That," said Graham, "is a different music indeed from the other, which is deep and plaintive, and goes to the heart."

"But do you not see how the words have been altered? In the song you first heard me singing, the fisherman goes again to the spot, again and again sees the face in the water, again and again seeks to capture the Nereid, and never knows to the last that the face was that of the mortal on the rock close behind him, and which he passed by without notice every day. Deluded by an ideal image, the real one escapes from his eye."

"Is the verse that is recast meant to symbolize a moral in love?"

"In love? nay, I know not; but in life, yes,—at least the life of the artist."

"The paraphrase of the original is yours, Signorina, words and music both. Am I not right? Your silence answers 'Yes.' Will you pardon me if I say that, though there can be no doubt of the new beauty you have given to the old song, I think that the moral of the old was the sounder one, the truer to human life. We do not go on to the last duped by an allusion. If enamoured by the shadow on the waters, still we do look around us and discover the image it reflects."

Isaura shook her head gently, but made no answer. On the table before her there were a few myrtle-sprigs and one or two buds from the last winter rose, which she had been arranging into a simple nosegay; she took up these, and abstractedly began to pluck and scatter the rose-leaves.

"Despise the coming May flowers if you will, they will soon be so plentiful," said Graham; "but do not cast away the few blossoms which winter has so kindly spared, and which even summer will not give again;" and placing his hand on the winter buds, it touched hers,—lightly, indeed, but she felt the touch, shrank from it, coloured, and rose from her seat.

"The sun has left this side of the garden, the east wind is rising, and you must find it chilly here," she said, in an altered tone; "will you not come into the house?"

"It is not the air that I feel chilly," said Graham, with a half-smile; "I almost fear that my prosaic admonitions have displeased you."

"They were not prosaic; and they were kind and very wise," she added, with her exquisite laugh,—laugh so wonderfully sweet and musical. She now had gained the entrance of the arbour; Graham joined her, and they walked towards the house. He asked her if she had seen much of the Savarins since they had met.

"Once or twice we have been there of an evening."

"And encountered, no doubt, the illustrious young minstrel who despises Tasso and Corneille?"

"M. Rameau? Oh, yes; he is constantly at the Savarins. Do not be severe on him. He is unhappy, he is struggling, he is soured. An artist has

thorns in his path which lookers-on do not heed."

"All people have thorns in their path, and I have no great respect for those who want lookers-on to heed them whenever they are scratched. But M. Rameau seems to me one of those writers very common nowadays, in France and even in England; writers who have never read anything worth studying, and are, of course, presumptuous in proportion to their ignorance. I should not have thought an artist like yourself could have recognized an artist in a M. Rameau who despises Tasso without knowing Italian."

Graham spoke bitterly; he was once more jealous.

"Are you not an artist yourself? Are you not a writer? M. Savarin told me you were a distinguished man of letters."

"M. Savarin flatters me too much. I am not an artist, and I have a great dislike to that word as it is now hackneyed and vulgarized in England and in France. A cook calls himself an artist; a tailor does the same; a man writes a gaudy melodrama, a spasmodic song, a sensational novel, and straightway he calls himself an artist, and indulges in a pedantic jargon about 'essence' and 'form,' assuring us that a poet we can understand wants essence, and a poet we can scan wants form. Thank heaven, I am not vain enough to call myself artist. I have written some very dry lucubrations in periodicals, chiefly political, or critical upon other subjects than art. But why, a propos of M. Rameau, did you ask me that question respecting myself?"

"Because much in your conversation," answered Isaura, in rather a mournful tone, "made me suppose you had more sympathies with art and its cultivators than you cared to avow; and if you had such sympathies, you would comprehend what a relief it is to a poor aspirant to art like myself to come into communication with those who devote themselves to any art distinct from the common pursuits of the world, what a relief it is to escape from the ordinary talk of society. There is a sort of instinctive freemasonry among us, including masters and disciples; and one art has a fellowship with other arts. Mine is but song and music, yet I feel attracted towards a sculptor, a painter, a romance-writer, a poet, as much as towards a singer, a musician. Do you understand why I cannot condemn M. Rameau as you do? I differ from his tastes in literature; I do not much admire such of his writings as I have read; I grant that he overestimates his own genius, whatever that be,--yet I like to converse with him. He is a struggler upwards, though with weak wings, or with erring footsteps, like myself."

"Mademoiselle," said Graham, earnestly, "I cannot say how I thank you for this candour. Do not condemn me for abusing it, if--" he paused.

"If what?"

"If I, so much older than yourself,--I do not say only in years, but in the experience of life, I whose lot is cast among those busy and 'positive' pursuits, which necessarily quicken that unromantic faculty called common-sense,--if, I say, the deep interest with which you must inspire all whom you admit into an acquaintance even as unfamiliar as that now between us makes me utter one caution, such as might be uttered by a friend or brother. Beware of those artistic sympathies which you so touchingly confess; beware how, in the great events of life, you allow fancy to misguide your reason. In choosing friends on whom to rely,

separate the artist from the human being. Judge of the human being for what it is in itself. Do not worship the face on the waters, blind to the image on the rock. In one word, never see in an artist like a M. Rameau the human being to whom you could intrust the destinies of your life. Pardon me, pardon me; we may meet little hereafter, but you are a creature so utterly new to me, so wholly unlike any woman I have ever before encountered and admired, and to me seem endowed with such wealth of mind and soul, exposed to such hazard, that--that--" again he paused, and his voice trembled as he concluded--"that it would be a deep sorrow to me if, perhaps years hence, I should have to say, 'Alas!' by what mistake has that wealth been wasted!"

While they had thus conversed, mechanically they had turned away from the house, and were again standing before the harbour.

Graham, absorbed in the passion of his adjuration, had not till now looked into the face of the companion by his side. Now, when he had concluded, and heard no reply, he bent down and saw that Isaura was weeping silently.

His heart smote him.

"Forgive me," he exclaimed, drawing her hand into his; "I have had no right to talk thus; but it was not from want of respect; it was-- it was--"

The hand which was yielded to his pressed it gently, timidly, chastely.

"Forgive!" murmured Isaura; "do you think that I, an orphan, have never longed for a friend who would speak to me thus?" And so saying, she lifted her eyes, streaming still, to his bended countenance,--eyes, despite their tears, so clear in their innocent limpid beauty, so ingenuous, so frank, so virgin-like, so unlike the eyes of 'any other woman he had encountered and admired.'

"Alas!" he said, in quick and hurried accents, "you may remember, when we have before conversed, how I, though so uncultured in your art, still recognized its beautiful influence upon human breasts; how I sought to combat your own depreciation of its rank among the elevating agencies of humanity; how, too, I said that no man could venture to ask you to renounce the boards, the lamps,--resign the fame of actress, of singer. Well, now that you accord to me the title of friend, now that you so touchingly remind me that you are an orphan, thinking of all the perils the young and the beautiful of your sex must encounter when they abandon private life for public, I think that a true friend might put the question, 'Can you resign the fame of actress, of singer?'"

"I will answer you frankly. The profession which once seemed to me so alluring began to lose its charms in my eyes some months ago. It was your words, very eloquently expressed, on the ennobling effects of music and song upon a popular audience, that counteracted the growing distaste to rendering up my whole life to the vocation of the stage; but now I think I should feel grateful to the friend whose advice interpreted the voice of my own heart, and bade me relinquish the career of actress."

Graham's face grew radiant. But whatever might have been his reply was arrested; voices and footsteps were heard behind. He turned round and saw the Venosta, the Savarins, and Gustave Rameau.

Isaura heard and saw also, started in a sort of alarmed confusion, and then instinctively retreated towards the arbour. Graham hurried on to meet the Signora and the visitors, giving time to Isaura to compose herself by arresting them in the pathway with conventional salutations.

A few minutes later Isaura joined them, and there was talk to which Graham scarcely listened, though he shared in it by abstracted monosyllables. He declined going into the house, and took leave at the gate. In parting, his eyes fixed themselves on Isaura. Gustave Rameau was by her side. That nosegay which had been left in the arbour was in her hand; and though she was bending over it, she did not now pluck and scatter the rose-leaves. Graham at that moment felt no jealousy of the fair-faced young poet beside her.

As he walked slowly back, he muttered to himself, "But am I yet in the position to hold myself wholly free? Am I, am I? Were the sole choice before me that between her and ambition and wealth, how soon it would be made! Ambition has no prize equal to the heart of such a woman; wealth no sources of joy equal to the treasures of her love."

CHAPTER III.

FROM ISAURA CICOGNA TO MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL.

The day after I posted my last, Mr. Vane called on us. I was in our little garden at the time. Our conversation was brief, and soon interrupted by visitors,--the Savarins and M. Rameau. I long for your answer. I wonder how he impressed you, if you have met him; how he would impress, if you met him now. To me he is so different from all others; and I scarcely know why his words ring in my ears, and his image rests in my thoughts. It is strange altogether; for though he is young, he speaks to me as if he were so much older than I,--so kindly, so tenderly, yet as if I were a child, and much as the dear Maestro might do, if he thought I needed caution or counsel. Do not fancy, Eulalie, that there is any danger of my deceiving myself as to the nature of such interest as he may take in me. Oh, no! There is a gulf between us there which he does not lose sight of, and which we could not pass. How, indeed, I could interest him at all, I cannot guess. A rich, high-born Englishman, intent on political life; practical, prosaic--no, not prosaic; but still with the kind of sense which does not admit into its range of vision that world of dreams which is familiar as their daily home to Romance and to Art. It has always seemed to me that for love, love such as I conceive it, there must be a deep and constant sympathy between two persons,--not, indeed, in the usual and ordinary trifles of taste and sentiment, but in those essentials which form the root of character, and branch out in all the leaves and blooms that expand to the sunshine and shrink from the cold,--that the worldling should wed the worldling, the artist the artist. Can the realist and the idealist blend together, and hold together till death and beyond death? If not, can there be true love between them?

By true love, I mean the love which interpenetrates the soul, and once given can never die. Oh, Eulalie, answer me, answer!

P. S.--I have now fully made up my mind to renounce all thought of the stage.

FROM MADAME DE GRANTMESNIL TOISAURA CICOGNA.

MY DEAR CHILD,--how your mind has grown since you left me, the sanguine and aspiring votary of an art which, of all arts, brings the most immediate reward to a successful cultivator, and is in itself so divine in its immediate effects upon human souls! Who shall say what may be the after-results of those effects which the waiters on posterity presume to despise because they are immediate? A dull man, to whose mind a ray of that vague starlight undetected in the atmosphere of workday life has never yet travelled; to whom the philosopher, the preacher, the poet appeal in vain,--nay, to whom the conceptions of the grandest master of instrumental music are incomprehensible; to whom Beethoven unlocks no portal in heaven; to whom Rossini has no mysteries on earth unsolved by the critics of the pit,--suddenly hears the human voice of the human singer, and at the sound of that voice the walls which enclosed him fall. The something far from and beyond the routine of his commonplace existence becomes known to him. He of himself, poor man, can make nothing of it. He cannot put it down on paper, and say the next morning, "I am an inch nearer to heaven than I was last night;" but the feeling that he is an inch nearer to heaven abides with him. Unconsciously he is gentler, he is less earthly, and, in being nearer to heaven, he is stronger for earth. You singers do not seem to me to understand that you have--to use your own word, so much in vogue that it has become abused and trite--a mission! When you talk of missions, from whom comes the mission? Not from men. If there be a mission from man to men, it must be appointed from on high.

Think of all this; and in being faithful to your art, be true to yourself. If you feel divided between that art and the art of the writer, and acknowledge the first to be too exacting to admit a rival, keep to that in which you are sure to excel. Alas, my fair child! do not imagine that we writers feel a happiness in our pursuits and aims more complete than that which you can command. If we care for fame (and, to be frank, we all do), that fame does not come up before us face to face, a real, visible, palpable form, as it does to the singer, to the actress. I grant that it may be more enduring, but an endurance on the length of which we dare not reckon. A writer cannot be sure of immortality till his language itself be dead; and then he has but a share in an uncertain lottery. Nothing but fragments remains of the Phrynichus who rivalled AEschylus; of the Agathon who perhaps excelled Euripides; of the Alcaeus, in whom Horace acknowledged a master and a model; their renown is not in their works, it is but in their names. And, after all, the names of singers and actors last perhaps as long. Greece retains the name of Polus, Rome of Roscius, England of Garrick, France of Talma, Italy of Pasta, more lastingly than posterity is likely to retain mine. You address to me a question, which I have often put to myself,--"What is the distinction between the writer and the reader, when the reader says, 'These are my thoughts, these are my feelings; the writer has stolen them, and clothed them in his own words?'" And the more the reader says this, the more wide is the audience, the more genuine the renown, and, paradox though it seems, the more consummate the originality, of the writer. But no, it is not the mere gift of expression, it is not the mere craft of the pen, it is not the mere taste in arrangement of word and cadence, which thus enables the one to interpret the mind, the heart, the soul of the many. It is a power breathed into him as he lay in his cradle, and a power that gathered around itself, as he grew up, all the

influences he acquired, whether from observation of external nature, or from study of men and books, or from that experience of daily life which varies with every human being. No education could make two intellects exactly alike, as no culture can make two leaves exactly alike. How truly you describe the sense of dissatisfaction which every writer of superior genius communicates to his admirers! how truly do you feel that the greater is the dissatisfaction in proportion to the writer's genius, and the admirer's conception of it! But that is the mystery which makes --let me borrow a German phrase--the cloud-land between the finite and the infinite. The greatest philosopher, intent on the secrets of Nature, feels that dissatisfaction in Nature herself. The finite cannot reduce into logic and criticism the infinite.

Let us dismiss these matters, which perplex the reason, and approach that which touches the heart, which in your case, my child, touches the heart of woman. You speak of love, and deem that the love which lasts--the household, the conjugal love--should be based upon such sympathies of pursuit that the artist should wed the artist.

This is one of the questions you do well to address to me; for whether from my own experience, or from that which I have gained from observation extended over a wide range of life, and quickened and intensified by the class of writing that I cultivate, and which necessitates a calm study of the passions, I am an authority on such subjects, better than most women can be. And alas, my child, I come to this result: there is no prescribing to men or to women whom to select, whom to refuse. I cannot refute the axiom of the ancient poet, "In love there is no wherefore." But there is a time--it is often but a moment of time--in which love is not yet a master, in which we can say, "I will love, I will not love."

Now, if I could find you in such a moment, I would say to you, "Artist, do not love, do not marry, an artist." Two artistic natures rarely combine. The artistic nature is wonderfully exacting. I fear it is supremely egotistical,--so jealously sensitive that it writhes at the touch of a rival. Racine was the happiest of husbands; his wife adored his genius, but could not understand his plays. Would Racine have been happy if he had married a Corneille in petticoats? I who speak have loved an artist, certainly equal to myself. I am sure that he loved me. That sympathy in pursuits of which you speak drew us together, and became very soon the cause of antipathy. To both of us the endeavour to coalesce was misery.

I don't know your M. Rameau. Savarin has sent me some of his writings; from these I judge that his only chance of happiness would be to marry a commonplace woman, with separation de biens. He is, believe me, but one of the many with whom New Paris abounds, who because they have the infirmities of genius imagine they have its strength.

I come next to the Englishman. I see how serious is your questioning about him. You not only regard him as a being distinct from the crowd of a salon; he stands equally apart in the chamber of your thoughts,--you do not mention him in the same letter as that which treats of Rameau and Savarin. He has become already an image not to be lightly mixed up with others. You would rather not have mentioned him at all to me, but you could not resist it. The interest you feel in him so perplexed you, that in a kind of feverish impatience you cry out to me, "Can you solve the riddle? Did you ever know well Englishmen? Can an Englishman be understood out of his island?" etc. Yes, I have known well many Englishmen; in affairs of the heart they are much like all other men.

No; I do not know this Englishman in particular, nor any one of his name.

Well, my child, let us frankly grant that this foreigner has gained some hold on your thoughts, on your fancy, perhaps also on your heart. Do not fear that he will love you less enduringly, or that you will become alienated from him, because he is not an artist. If he be a strong nature, and with some great purpose in life, your ambition will fuse itself in his; and knowing you as I do, I believe you would make an excellent wife to an Englishman whom you honoured as well as loved; and sorry though I should be that you relinquished the singer's fame, I should be consoled in thinking you safe in the woman's best sphere,-- a contented home, safe from calumny, safe from gossip. I never had that home; and there has been no part in my author's life in which I would not have given all the celebrity it won for the obscure commonplace of such woman-lot. Could I move human beings as pawns on a chessboard, I should indeed say that the most suitable and congenial mate for you, for a woman of sentiment and genius, would be a well-born and well-educated German; for such a German unites, with domestic habits and a strong sense of family ties, a romance of sentiment, a love of art, a predisposition towards the poetic side of life, which is very rare among Englishmen of the same class. But as the German is not forthcoming, I give my vote for the Englishman, provided only you love him. Ah, child, be sure of that. Do not mistake fancy for love. All women do not require love in marriage, but without it that which is best and highest in you would wither and die. Write to me often and tell me all. M. Savarin is right. My book is no longer my companion. It is gone from me, and I am once more alone in the world.

Yours affectionately.

P. S.--Is not your postscript a woman's? Does it not require a woman's postscript in reply? You say in yours that you have fully made up your mind to renounce all thoughts of the stage. I ask in mine, "What has the Englishman to do with that determination?"

CHAPTER IV.

Some weeks have passed since Graham's talk with Isaura in the garden; he has not visited the villa since. His cousins the D'Altons have passed through Paris on their way to Italy, meaning to stay a few days; they stayed nearly a month, and monopolized much of Graham's companionship. Both these were reasons why, in the habitual society of the Duke, Graham's persuasion that he was not yet free to court the hand of Isaura became strengthened, and with that persuasion necessarily came a question equally addressed to his conscience. "If not yet free to court her hand, am I free to expose myself to the temptation of seeking to win her affection?" But when his cousin was gone, his heart began to assert its own rights, to argue its own case, and suggest modes of reconciling its dictates to the obligations which seemed to oppose them. In this hesitating state of mind he received the following note:--

VILLA -----, LAC D'ENGHIEN.

MY DEAR MR. VANE,--We have retreated from Paris to the banks of this beautiful little lake. Come and help to save Frank and myself from

quarrelling with each other, which, until the Rights of Women are firmly established, married folks always will do when left to themselves, especially if they are still lovers, as Frank and I are. Love is a terribly quarrelsome thing. Make us a present of a few days out of your wealth of time. We will visit Montmorency and the haunts of Rousseau, sail on the lake at moonlight, dine at gypsy restaurants under trees not yet embrowned by summer heats, discuss literature and politics, "Shakspeare and the musical glasses,"--and be as sociable and pleasant as Boccaccio's tale-tellers, at Fiesole. We shall be but a small party, only the Savarins, that unconscious sage and humourist Signora Venosta, and that dimple-cheeked Isaura, who embodies the song of nightingales and the smile of summer. Refuse, and Frank shall not have an easy moment till he sends in his claims for thirty millions against the Alabama.

Yours, as you behave,
LIZZIE MORLEY.

Graham did not refuse. He went to Enghien for four days and a quarter. He was under the same roof as Isaura. Oh, those happy days! so happy that they defy description. But though to Graham the happiest days he had ever known, they were happier still to Isaura. There were drawbacks to his happiness, none to hers,--drawbacks partly from reasons the weight of which the reader will estimate later; partly from reasons the reader may at once comprehend and assess. In the sunshine of her joy, all the vivid colourings of Isaura's artistic temperament came forth, so that what I may call the homely, domestic woman-side of her nature faded into shadow. If, my dear reader, whether you be man or woman, you have come into familiar contact with some creature of a genius to which, even assuming that you yourself have a genius in its own way, you have no special affinities, have you not felt shy with that creature? Have you not, perhaps, felt how intensely you could love that creature, and doubted if that creature could possibly love you? Now I think that shyness and that disbelief are common with either man or woman, if, however conscious of superiority in the prose of life, he or she recognizes inferiority in the poetry of it. And yet this self-abasement is exceedingly mistaken. The poetical kind of genius is so grandly indulgent, so inherently deferential, bows with such unaffected modesty to the superiority in which it fears it may fail (yet seldom does fail),--the superiority of common-sense. And when we come to women, what marvellous truth is conveyed by the woman who has had no superior in intellectual gifts among her own sex! Corinne, crowned at the Capitol, selects out of the whole world as the hero of her love no rival poet and enthusiast, but a cold-blooded, sensible Englishman.

Graham Vane, in his strong masculine form of intellect--Graham Vane, from whom I hope much, if he live to fulfil his rightful career--had, not unreasonably, the desire to dominate the life of the woman whom he selected as the partner of his own; but the life of Isaura seemed to escape him. If at moments, listening to her, he would say to himself, "What a companion! life could never be dull with her," at other moments he would say, "True, never dull, but would it be always safe?" And then comes in that mysterious power of love which crushes all beneath its feet, and makes us end self-commune by that abject submission of reason, which only murmurs, "Better be unhappy with the one you love than happy with one whom you do not." All such self-communes were unknown to Isaura. She lived in the bliss of the hour. If Graham could have read her heart, he would have dismissed all doubt whether he could dominate her life. Could a Fate or an Angel have said to her, "Choose,--on one side I promise you the glories of a Catalani, a Pasta, a Sappho, a De

Stael, a Georges Sand, all combined into one immortal name; or, on the other side, the whole heart of the man who would estrange himself from you if you had such combination of glories,"--her answer would have brought Graham Vane to her feet. All scruples, all doubts, would have vanished; he would have exclaimed, with the generosity inherent in the higher order of man, "Be glorious, if your nature wills it so. Glory enough to me that you would have resigned glory itself to become mine." But how is it that men worth a woman's loving become so diffident when they love intensely? Even in ordinary cases of love there is so ineffable a delicacy in virgin woman, that a man, be he how refined soever, feels himself rough and rude and coarse in comparison; and while that sort of delicacy was pre-eminent in this Italian orphan, there came, to increase the humility of the man so proud and so confident in himself when he had only men to deal with, the consciousness that his intellectual nature was hard and positive beside the angel-like purity and the fairy-like play of hers.

There was a strong wish on the part of Mrs. Morley to bring about the union of these two. She had a great regard and a great admiration for both. To her mind, unconscious of all Graham's doubts and prejudices, they were exactly suited to each other. A man of intellect so cultivated as Graham's, if married to a commonplace English "Miss," would surely feel as if life had no sunshine and no flowers. The love of an Isaura would steep it in sunshine, pave it with flowers. Mrs. Morley admitted --all American Republicans of gentle birth do admit--the instincts which lead "like" to match with "like," an equality of blood and race. With all her assertion of the Rights of Woman, I do not think that Mrs. Morley would ever have conceived the possibility of consenting that the richest and prettiest and cleverest girl in the States could become the wife of a son of hers if the girl had the taint of negro blood, even though shown nowhere save the slight distinguishing hue of her finger-nails. So had Isaura's merits been threefold what they were and she had been the wealthy heiress of a retail grocer, this fair Republican would have opposed (more strongly than many an English duchess, or at least a Scotch duke, would do, the wish of a son), the thought of an alliance between Graham Vane and the grocer's daughter! But Isaura was a Cicogna, an offspring of a very ancient and very noble house. Disparities of fortune, or mere worldly position, Mrs. Morley supremely despised. Here were the great parities of alliance,--parities in years and good looks and mental culture. So, in short, she in the invitation given to them had planned for the union between Isaura and Graham. To this plan she had an antagonist, whom she did not even guess, in Madame Savarin. That lady, as much attached to Isaura as was Mrs. Morley herself, and still more desirous of seeing a girl, brilliant and parentless, transferred from the companionship of Signora Venosta to the protection of a husband, entertained no belief in the serious attentions of Graham Vane. Perhaps she exaggerated his worldly advantages, perhaps she undervalued the warmth of his affections; but it was not within the range of her experience, confined much to Parisian life, nor in harmony with her notions of the frigidity and morgue of the English national character, that a rich and high-born young man, to whom a great career in practical public life was predicted, should form a matrimonial alliance with a foreign orphan girl, who, if of gentle birth, had no useful connections, would bring no correspondent dot, and had been reared and intended for the profession of the stage. She much more feared that the result of any attentions on the part of such a man would be rather calculated to compromise the orphan's name, or at least to mislead her expectations, than to secure her the shelter of a wedded home. Moreover, she had cherished plans of her own for Isaura's future. Madame Savarin had

conceived for Gustave Rameau a friendly regard, stronger than that which Mrs. Morley entertained for Graham Vane, for it was more motherly. Gustave had been familiarized to her sight and her thoughts since he had first been launched into the literary world under her husband's auspices; he had confided to her his mortification in his failures, his joy in his successes. His beautiful countenance, his delicate health, his very infirmities and defects, had endeared him to her womanly heart. Isaura was the wife of all others who, in Madame Savarin's opinion, was made for Rameau. Her fortune, so trivial beside the wealth of the Englishman, would be a competence to Rameau; then that competence might swell into vast riches if Isaura succeeded on the stage. She found with extreme displeasure that Isaura's mind had become estranged from the profession to which she had been destined, and divined that a deference to the Englishman's prejudices had something to do with that estrangement. It was not to be expected that a Frenchwoman, wife to a sprightly man of letters, who had intimate friends and allies in every department of the artistic world, should cherish any prejudice whatever against the exercise of an art in which success achieved riches and renown; but she was prejudiced, as most Frenchwomen are, against allowing to unmarried girls the same freedom and independence of action that are the rights of women--French women--when married; and she would have disapproved the entrance of Isaura on her professional career until she could enter it as a wife, the wife of an artist, the wife of Gustave Rameau.

Unaware of the rivalry between these friendly diplomatists and schemers, Graham and Isaura glided hourly more and more down the current, which as yet ran smooth. No words by which love is spoken were exchanged between them; in fact, though constantly together, they were very rarely, and then but for moments, alone with each other. Mrs. Morley artfully schemed more than once to give them such opportunities for that mutual explanation of heart which, she saw, had not yet taken place; with art more practised and more watchful, Madame Savarin contrived to baffle her hostess's intention. But, indeed, neither Graham nor Isaura sought to make opportunities for themselves. He, as we know, did not deem himself wholly justified in uttering the words of love by which a man of honour binds himself for life; and she!--what girl pure-hearted and loving truly does not shrink from seeking the opportunities which it is for the man to court? Yet Isaura needed no words to tell her that she was loved,--no, nor even a pressure of the hand, a glance of the eye; she felt it instinctively, mysteriously, by the glow of her own being in the presence of her lover. She knew that she herself could not so love unless she were beloved.

Here woman's wit is keener and truthfuller than man's. Graham, as I have said, did not feel confident that he had reached the heart of Isaura. He was conscious that he had engaged her interest, that he had attracted her fancy; but often, when charmed by the joyous play of her imagination, he would sigh to himself, "To natures so gifted what single mortal can be the all in all."

They spent the summer mornings in excursions round the beautiful neighbourhood, dined early, and sailed on the calm lake at moonlight. Their talk was such as might be expected from lovers of books in summer holidays. Savarin was a critic by profession; Graham Vane, if not that, at least owed such literary reputation as he had yet gained to essays in which the rare critical faculty was conspicuously developed.

It was pleasant to hear the clash of these two minds encountering each other; they differed perhaps less in opinions than in the mode by which

opinions are discussed. The Englishman's range of reading was wider than the Frenchman's, and his scholarship more accurate; but the Frenchman had a compact neatness of expression, a light and nimble grace, whether in the advancing or the retreat of his argument, which covered deficiencies, and often made them appear like merits. Graham was compelled, indeed, to relinquish many of the forces of superior knowledge or graver eloquence, which with less lively antagonists he could have brought into the field, for the witty sarcasm of Savarin would have turned them aside as pedantry or declamation. But though Graham was neither dry nor diffuse, and the happiness at his heart brought out the gayety of humour which had been his early characteristic, and yet rendered his familiar intercourse genial and playful, still there was this distinction between his humour and Savarin's wit,—that in the first there was always something earnest, in the last always something mocking. And in criticism Graham seemed ever anxious to bring out a latent beauty, even in writers comparatively neglected; Savarin was acutest when dragging forth a blemish never before discovered in writers universally read.

Graham did not perhaps notice the profound attention with which Isaura listened to him in these intellectual skirmishes with the more glittering Parisian. There was this distinction she made between him and Savarin,—when the last spoke she often chimed in with some happy sentiment of her own; but she never interrupted Graham, never intimated a dissent from his theories of art, or the deductions he drew from them; and she would remain silent and thoughtful for some minutes when his voice ceased. There was passing from his mind into hers an ambition which she imagined, poor girl, that he would be pleased to think he had inspired, and which might become a new bond of sympathy between them. But as yet the ambition was vague and timid,—an idea or a dream to be fulfilled in some indefinite future.

The last night of this short-lived holiday-time, the party, after staying out on the lake to a later hour than usual, stood lingering still on the lawn of the villa; and their host, who was rather addicted to superficial studies of the positive sciences, including, of course, the most popular of all, astronomy, kept his guests politely listening to speculative conjectures on the probable size of the inhabitants of Sirius, that very distant and very gigantic inhabitant of heaven who has led philosophers into mortifying reflections upon the utter insignificance of our own poor little planet, capable of producing nothing greater than Shakespeares and Newtons, Aristotles and Caesars,—mannikins, no doubt, beside intellects proportioned to the size of the world in which they flourish.

As it chanced, Isaura and Graham were then standing close to each other and a little apart from the rest. "It is very strange," said Graham, laughing low, "how little I care about Sirius. He is the sun of some other system, and is perhaps not habitable at all, except by Salamanders. He cannot be one of the stars with which I have established familiar acquaintance, associated with fancies and dreams and hopes, as most of us do, for instance, with Hesperus, the moon's harbinger and comrade. But amid all those stars there is one—not Hesperus—which has always had from my childhood a mysterious fascination for me. Knowing as little of astrology as I do of astronomy, when I gaze upon that star I become credulously superstitious, and fancy it has an influence on my life. Have you, too, any favourite star?"

"Yes," said Isaura; "and I distinguish it now, but I do not even know its name, and never would ask it."

"So like me. I would not vulgarize my unknown source of beautiful illusions by giving it the name it takes in technical catalogues. For fear of learning that name I never have pointed it out to any one before. I too at this moment distinguish it apart from all its brotherhood. Tell me which is yours."

Isaura pointed and explained. The Englishman was startled. By what strange coincidence could they both have singled out from all the host of heaven the same favourite star? "Cher Vane," cried Savarin, "Colonel Morley declares that what America is to the terrestrial system Sirius is to the heavenly. America is to extinguish Europe, and then Sirius is to extinguish the world."

"Not for some millions of years; time to look about us," said the Colonel, gravely. "But I certainly differ from those who maintain that Sirius recedes from us. I say that he approaches. The principles of a body so enlightened must be those of progress." Then addressing Graham in English, he added, "there will be a mulling in this fogified planet some day, I predicate. Sirius is a keener!"

"I have not imagination lively enough to interest myself in the destinies of Sirius in connection with our planet at a date so remote," said Graham, smiling. Then he added in a whisper to Isaura, "My imagination does not carry me further than to wonder whether this day twelvemonth--the 8th of July--we two shall both be singling out that same star, and gazing on it as now, side by side."

This was the sole utterance of that sentiment in which the romance of love is so rich that the Englishman addressed to Isaura during those memorable summer days at Enghien.

CHAPTER V.

The next morning the party broke up. Letters had been delivered both to Savarin and to Graham, which, even had the day for departure not been fixed, would have summoned them away. On reading his letter, Savarin's brow became clouded. He made a sign to his wife after breakfast, and wandered away with her down an alley in the little garden. His trouble was of that nature which a wife either soothes or aggravates, according sometimes to her habitual frame of mind, sometimes to the mood of temper in which she may chance to be,--a household trouble, a pecuniary trouble.

Savarin was by no means an extravagant man. His mode of living, though elegant and hospitable, was modest compared to that of many French authors inferior to himself in the fame which at Paris brings a very good return in francs; but his station itself as the head of a powerful literary clique necessitated many expenses which were too congenial to his extreme good-nature to be regulated by strict prudence. His hand was always open to distressed writers and struggling artists, and his sole income was derived from his pen and a journal in which he was chief editor and formerly sole proprietor. But that journal had of late not prospered. He had sold or pledged a considerable share in the proprietorship. He had been compelled also to borrow a sum large for him, and the debt obtained from a retired bourgeois who lent out his moneys "by way," he said, "of maintaining an excitement and interest in life," would in a few days become due. The letter was not from that

creditor; but it was from his publisher, containing a very disagreeable statement of accounts, pressing for settlement, and declining an offer of Savarin for a new book (not yet begun) except upon terms that the author valued himself too highly to accept. Altogether, the situation was unpleasant. There were many times in which Madame Savarin presumed to scold her distinguished husband for his want of prudence and thrift. But those were never the times when scolding could be of no use. It could clearly be of no use now. Now was the moment to cheer and encourage him; to reassure him as to his own undiminished powers and popularity, for he talked dejectedly of himself as obsolete and passing out of fashion; to convince him also of the impossibility that the ungrateful publisher whom Savarin's more brilliant successes had enriched could encounter the odium of hostile proceedings; and to remind him of all the authors, all the artists, whom he in their earlier difficulties had so liberally assisted, and from whom a sum sufficing to pay the bourgeois creditor when the day arrived could now be honourably asked and would be readily contributed. In this last suggestion the homely prudent good-sense of Madame Savarin failed her. She did not comprehend that delicate pride of honour which, with all his Parisian frivolities and cynicism, dignified the Parisian man of genius. Savarin could not, to save his neck from a rope, have sent round the begging-hat to friends whom he had obliged. Madame Savarin was one of those women with large-lobed ears, who can be wonderfully affectionate, wonderfully sensible, admirable wives and mothers, and yet are deficient in artistic sympathies with artistic natures. Still, a really good honest wife is such an incalculable blessing to her lord, that, at the end of the talk in the solitary alley, this man of exquisite finesse, of the undefinably high-bred temperament, and, alas! the painful morbid susceptibility, which belongs to the genuine artistic character, emerged into the open sunlit lawn with his crest uplifted, his lip curved upward in its joyous mockery, and perfectly persuaded that somehow or other he should put down the offensive publisher, and pay off the unoffending creditor when the day for payment came. Still he had judgment enough to know that to do this he must get back to Paris, and could not dawdle away precious hours in discussing the principles of poetry with Graham Vane.

There was only one thing, apart from "the begging-hat," in which Savarin dissented from his wife.--She suggested his starting a new journal in conjunction with Gustave Rameau, upon whose genius and the expectations to be formed from it (here she was tacitly thinking of Isaura wedded to Rameau, and more than a Malibran on the stage) she insisted vehemently. Savarin did not thus estimate Gustave Rameau, thought him a clever, promising young writer in a very bad school of writing, who might do well some day or other. But that a Rameau could help a Savarin to make a fortune! No; at that idea he opened his eyes, patted his wife's shoulder, and called her "enfant."

Graham's letter was from M. Renard, and ran thus:--

MONSIEUR,--I had the honour to call at your apartment this morning, and I write this line to the address given to me by your concierge to say that I have been fortunate enough to ascertain that the relation of the missing lady is now at Paris. I shall hold myself in readiness to attend your summons. Deign to accept, Monsieur, the assurance of my profound consideration.

J. RENARD.

This communication sufficed to put Graham into very high spirits. Anything that promised success to his research seemed to deliver his

thoughts from a burden and his will from a fetter. Perhaps in a few days he might frankly and honourably say to Isaura words which would justify his retaining longer, and pressing more ardently, the delicate hand which trembled in his as they took leave.

On arriving at Paris, Graham despatched a note to M. Renard requesting to see him, and received a brief line in reply that M. Renard feared he should be detained on other and important business till the evening, but hoped to call at eight o'clock. A few minutes before that hour he entered Graham's apartment.

"You have discovered the uncle of Louise Duval!" exclaimed Graham; "of course you mean M. de Mauleon, and he is at Paris?"

"True so far, Monsieur; but do not be too sanguine as to the results of the information I can give you. Permit me, as briefly as possible, to state the circumstances. When you acquainted me with the fact that M. de Mauleon was the uncle of Louise Duval, I told you that I was not without hopes of finding him out, though so long absent from Paris. I will now explain why. Some months ago, one of my colleagues engaged in the political department (which I am not) was sent to Lyons, in consequence of some suspicions conceived by the loyal authorities there of a plot against the emperor's life. The suspicions were groundless, the plot a mare's nest. But my colleague's attention was especially drawn towards a man not mixed up with the circumstances from which a plot had been inferred, but deemed in some way or other a dangerous enemy to the Government. Ostensibly, he exercised a modest and small calling as a sort of courtier or *_agent de change_*; but it was noticed that certain persons familiarly frequenting his apartment, or to whose houses he used to go at night, were disaffected to the Government,--not by any means of the lowest rank,--some of them rich malcontents who had been devoted Orleanists; others, disappointed aspirants to office or the 'cross;' one or two well-born and opulent fanatics dreaming of another Republic. Certain very able articles in the journals of the excitable *_Midi_*, though bearing another signature, were composed or dictated by this man,--articles evading the censure and penalties of the law, but very mischievous in their tone. All who had come into familiar communication with this person were impressed with a sense of his powers; and also with a vague belief that he belonged to a higher class in breeding and education than that of a petty *_agent de change_*. My colleague set himself to watch the man, and took occasions of business at his little office to enter into talk with him. Not by personal appearance, but by voice, he came to a conclusion that the man was not wholly a stranger to him,--a peculiar voice with a slight Norman breadth of pronunciation, though a Parisian accent; a voice very low, yet very distinct; very masculine, yet very gentle. My colleague was puzzled till late one evening he observed the man coming out of the house of one of these rich malcontents, the rich malcontent himself accompanying him. My colleague, availing himself of the dimness of light, as the two passed into a lane which led to the agent's apartment, contrived to keep close behind and listen to their conversation; but of this he heard nothing,--only, when at the end of the lane, the rich man turned abruptly, shook his companion warmly by the hand, and parted from him, saying, 'Never fear; all shall go right with you, my dear Victor.' At the sound of that name 'Victor,' my colleague's memories, before so confused, became instantaneously clear. Previous to entering our service, he had been in the horse business, a votary of the turf; as such he had often seen the brilliant 'sportman,' Victor de Mauleon; sometimes talked to him. Yes, that was the voice,--the slight Norman intonation (Victor de Mauleon's father had

it strongly, and Victor had passed some of his early childhood in Normandy), the subdued modulation of speech which had made so polite the offence to men, or so winning the courtship to women,--that was Victor de Mauleon. But why there in that disguise? What was his real business and object? My confrere had no time allowed to him to prosecute such inquiries. Whether Victor or the rich malcontent had observed him at their heels, and feared he might have overheard their words, I know not; but the next day appeared in one of the popular journals circulating among the *ouvriers* a paragraph stating that a Paris spy had been seen at Lyons, warning all honest men against his machinations, and containing a tolerably accurate description of his person. And that very day, on venturing forth, my estimable colleague suddenly found himself hustled by a ferocious throng, from whose hands he was with great difficulty rescued by the municipal guard. He left Lyons that night; and for recompense of his services received a sharp reprimand from his chief. He had committed the worst offence in our profession, *trop de zele*. Having only heard the outlines of this story from another, I repaired to my *confrere* after my last interview with Monsieur, and learned what I now tell you from his own lips. As he was not in my branch of the service, I could not order him to return to Lyons; and I doubt whether his chief would have allowed it. But I went to Lyons myself, and there ascertained that our supposed Vicomte had left that town for Paris some months ago, not long after the adventure of my colleague. The man bore a very good character generally,--was said to be very honest and inoffensive; and the notice taken of him by persons of higher rank was attributed generally to a respect for his talents, and not on account of any sympathy in political opinions. I found that the confrere mentioned, and who alone could identify M. de Mauleon in the disguise which the Vicomte had assumed, was absent on one of those missions abroad in which he is chiefly employed. I had to wait for his return, and it was only the day before yesterday that I obtained the following particulars. M. de Mauleon bears the same name as he did at Lyons,--that name is Jean Lebeau; he exercises the ostensible profession of a 'letter-writer,' and a sort of adviser on business among the workmen and petty bourgeoisie, and he nightly frequents the cafe Jean Jacques, Rue Faubourg Montmartre. It is not yet quite half-past eight, and, no doubt, you could see him at the cafe this very night, if you thought proper to go."

"Excellent! I will go! Describe him!"

"Alas! that is exactly what I cannot do at present; for after hearing what I now tell you, I put the same request you do to my colleague, when, before he could answer me, he was summoned to the bureau of his chief, promising to return and give me the requisite description. He did not return; and I find that he was compelled, on quitting his chief, to seize the first train starting for Lille upon an important political investigation which brooked no delay. He will be back in a few days, and then Monsieur shall have the description."

"Nay; I think I will seize time by the forelock, and try my chance tonight. If the man be really a conspirator, and it looks likely enough, who knows but what he may see quick reason to take alarm and vanish from Paris at any hour?--Cafe Jean Jacques, Rue -----; I will go. Stay; you have seen Victor de Mauleon in his youth: what was he like then?"

"Tall, slender, but broad-shouldered, very erect, carrying his head high, a profusion of dark curls, a small black mustache, fair clear complexion, light-coloured eyes with dark lashes, *fort bel homme*. But he will not look like that now."

"His present age?"

"Forty-seven or forty-eight. But before you go, I must beg you to consider well what you are about. It is evident that M. de Mauleon has some strong reason, whatever it be, for merging his identity in that of Jean Lebeau. I presume, therefore, that you could scarcely go up to M. Lebeau, when you have discovered him, and say, 'Pray, Monsieur le Vicomte, can you give me some tidings of your niece, Louise Duval?' If you thus accosted him, you might possibly bring some danger on yourself, but you would certainly gain no information from him."

"True."

On the other hand, if you make his acquaintance as M. Lebeau, how can you assume him to know anything about Louise Duval?"

"Parbleu! Monsieur Renard, you try to toss me aside on both horns of the dilemma; but it seems to me that, if I once make his acquaintance as M. Lebeau, I might gradually and cautiously feel my way as to the best mode of putting the question to which I seek reply. I suppose, too, that the man must be in very poor circumstances to adopt so humble a calling, and that a small sum of money may smooth all difficulties."

"I am not so sure of that," said M. Renard, thoughtfully; "but grant that money may do so, and grant also that the Vicomte, being a needy man, has become a very unscrupulous one,—is there anything in your motives for discovering Louise Duval which might occasion you trouble and annoyance, if it were divined by a needy and unscrupulous man; anything which might give him a power of threat or exaction? Mind, I am not asking you to tell me any secret you have reasons for concealing, but I suggest that it might be prudent if you did not let M. Lebeau know your real name and rank; if, in short, you could follow his example, and adopt a disguise. But no; when I think of it, you would doubtless be so unpractised in the art of disguise that he would detect you at once to be other than you seem; and if suspecting you of spying into his secrets, and if those secrets be really of a political nature, your very life might not be safe."

"Thank you for your hint; the disguise is an excellent idea, and combines amusement with precaution. That this Victor de Mauleon must be a very unprincipled and dangerous man is, I think, abundantly clear. Granting that he was innocent of all design of robbery in the affair of the jewels, still, the offence which he did own—that of admitting himself at night by a false key into the rooms of a wife, whom he sought to surprise or terrify into dishonour—was a villanous action; and his present course of life is sufficiently mysterious to warrant the most unfavourable supposition. Besides, there is another motive for concealing my name from him: you say that he once had a duel with a Vane, who was very probably my father, and I have no wish to expose myself to the chance of his turning up in London some day, and seeking to renew there the acquaintance that I had courted at Paris. As for my skill in playing any part I may assume, do not fear; I am no novice in that. In my younger days I was thought clever in private theatricals, especially in the transformations of appearance which belong to light comedy and farce. Wait a few minutes, and you shall see."

Graham then retreated into his bedroom, and in a few minutes reappeared so changed, that Renard at first glance took him for a stranger. He had

doffed his dress--which habitually, when in Capitals, was characterized by the quiet, indefinable elegance that to a man of the great world, high-bred and young, seems "to the manner born"--for one of those coarse suits which Englishmen are wont to wear in their travels, and by which they are represented in French or German caricatures,--loose jacket of tweed with redundant pockets, waistcoat to match, short dust-coloured trousers. He had combed his hair straight over his forehead, which, as I have said somewhere before, appeared in itself to alter the character of his countenance, and, without any resort to paints or cosmetics, had somehow or other given to the expression of his face an impudent, low-bred expression, with a glass screwed on to his right eye,--such a look as a cockney journeyman, wishing to pass for a "swell" about town, may cast on a servant-maid in the pit of a suburban theatre.

"Will it do, old fellow?" he exclaimed, in a rollicking, swaggering tone of voice, speaking French with a villanous British accent.

"Perfectly," said Renard, laughing. "I offer my compliments, and if ever you are ruined, Monsieur, I will promise you a place in our police. Only one caution,--take care not to overdo your part."

"Right. A quarter to nine; I'm off."

CHAPTER VI.

There is generally a brisk exhilaration of spirits in the return to any special amusement or light accomplishment associated with the pleasant memories of earlier youth; and remarkably so, I believe, when the amusement or accomplishment has been that of the amateur stage-player. Certainly I have known persons of very grave pursuits, of very dignified character and position, who seem to regain the vivacity of boyhood when disguising look and voice for a part in some drawing-room comedy or charade. I might name statesmen of solemn repute rejoicing to raise and to join in a laugh at their expense in such travesty of their habitual selves.

The reader must not therefore be surprised, nor, I trust, deem it inconsistent with the more serious attributes of Graham's character, if the Englishman felt the sort of joyful excitement I describe, as, in his way to the cafe Jean Jacques, he meditated the role he had undertaken; and the joyousness was heightened beyond the mere holiday sense of humouristic pleasantry by the sanguine hope that much to effect his lasting happiness might result from the success of the object for which his disguise was assumed.

It was just twenty minutes past nine when he arrived at the cafe Jean Jacques. He dismissed the fiacre and entered.

The apartment devoted to customers comprised two large rooms. The first was the cafe properly speaking; the second, opening on it, was the billiard-room. Conjecturing that he should probably find the person of whom he was in quest employed at the billiard-table, Graham passed thither at once. A tall man, who might be seven-and-forty, with a long black beard, slightly grizzled, was at play with a young man of perhaps twenty-eight, who gave him odds,--as better players of twenty-eight ought to give odds to a player, though originally of equal force, whose eye is

not so quick, whose hand is not so steady, as they were twenty years ago. Said Graham to himself, "The bearded man is my Vicomte." He called for a cup of coffee, and seated himself on a bench at the end of the room.

The bearded man was far behind in the game. It was his turn to play; the balls were placed in the most awkward position for him. Graham himself was a fair billiard-player, both in the English and the French game. He said to himself, "No man who can make a cannon there should accept odds." The bearded man made a cannon; the bearded man continued to make cannons; the bearded man did not stop till he had won the game. The gallery of spectators was enthusiastic. Taking care to speak in very bad, very English-French, Graham expressed to one of the enthusiasts seated beside him his admiration of the bearded man's playing, and ventured to ask if the bearded man were a professional or an amateur player.

"Monsieur," replied the enthusiast, taking a short cutty-pipe from his mouth, "it is an amateur, who has been a great player in his day, and is so proud that he always takes less odds than he ought of a younger man. It is not once in a month that he comes out as he has done to-night; but to-night he has steadied his hand. He has had six petits verres."

"Ah, indeed! Do you know his name?"

"I should think so: he buried my father, my two aunts, and my wife."

"Buried?" said Graham, more and more British in his accent; "I don't understand."

"Monsieur, you are English."

"I confess it."

"And a stranger to the Faubourg Montmartre."

"True."

"Or you would have heard of M. Giraud, the liveliest member of the State Company for conducting funerals. They are going to play La Poule."

Much disconcerted, Graham retreated into the cafe, and seated himself haphazard at one of the small tables. Glancing round the room, he saw no one in whom he could conjecture the once brilliant Vicomte.

The company appeared to him sufficiently decent, and especially what may be called local. There were some blouses drinking wine, no doubt of the cheapest and thinnest; some in rough, coarse dresses, drinking beer. These were evidently English, Belgian, or German artisans. At one table, four young men, who looked like small journeymen, were playing cards. At three other tables, men older, better dressed, probably shop-keepers, were playing dominos. Graham scrutinized these last, but among them all could detect no one corresponding to his ideal of the Vicomte de Mauleon. "Probably," thought he, "I am too late, or perhaps he will not be here this evening. At all events, I will wait a quarter of an hour." Then, the garçon approaching his table, he deemed it necessary to call for something, and, still in strong English accent, asked for lemonade and an evening journal. The garçon nodded and went his way. A monsieur at the round table next his own politely handed to him the "Galignani," saying in very good English, though unmistakably the good English of a

Frenchman, "The English journal, at your service."

Graham bowed his head, accepted the "Galignani," and inspected his courteous neighbour. A more respectable-looking man no Englishman could see in an English country town. He wore an unpretending flaxen wig, with limp whiskers that met at the chin, and might originally have been the same colour as the wig, but were now of a pale gray,--no beard, no mustache. He was dressed with the scrupulous cleanliness of a sober citizen,--a high white neckcloth, with a large old-fashioned pin, containing a little knot of hair covered with glass or crystal, and bordered with a black framework, in which were inscribed letters,--evidently a mourning pin, hallowed to the memory of lost spouse or child, --a man who, in England, might be the mayor of a cathedral town, at least the town-clerk. He seemed suffering from some infirmity of vision, for he wore green spectacles. The expression of his face was very mild and gentle; apparently he was about sixty years old,--somewhat more.

Graham took kindly to his neighbour, insomuch that, in return for the "Galignani," he offered him a cigar, lighting one himself.

His neighbour refused politely.

"Merci! I never smoke, never; mon medecin forbids it. If I could be tempted, it would be by, an English cigar. Ah, how you English beat us in all things,--your ships, your iron, your tabac,--which you do not grow!"

This speech rendered literally as we now render it may give the idea of a somewhat vulgar speaker. But there was something in the man's manner, in his smile, in his courtesy, which did not strike Graham as vulgar; on the contrary, he thought within himself, "How instinctive to all Frenchmen good breeding is!"

Before, however, Graham had time to explain to his amiable neighbour the politico-economical principle according to which England, growing no tobacco, had tobacco much better than France, which did grow it, a rosy middle-aged monsieur made his appearance, saying hurriedly to Graham's neighbour, "I'm afraid I'm late, but there is still a good half-hour before us if you will give me my revenge."

"Willingly, Monsieur Georges. Garcon, the dominos."

"Have you been playing at billiards?" asked M. Georges.

"Yes, two games."

"With success?"

"I won the first, and lost the second through the defect of my eyesight; the game depended on a stroke which would have been easy to an infant,--I missed it."

Here the dominos arrived, and M. Georges began shuffling them; the other turned to Graham and asked politely if he understood the game.

"A little, but not enough to comprehend why it is said to require so much skill."

"It is chiefly an affair of memory with me; but M. Georges, my opponent, has the talent of combination, which I have not."

"Nevertheless," replied M. Georges, gruffly, "you are not easily beaten; it is for you to play first, Monsieur Lebeau." Graham almost started. Was it possible! This mild, limp-whiskered, flaxen-wigged man Victor de Mauleon, the Don Juan of his time; the last person in the room he should have guessed. Yet, now examining his neighbour with more attentive eye, he wondered at his stupidity in not having recognized at once the *ci-devant gentilhomme* and *beau garçon*. It happens frequently that our imagination plays us this trick; we form to ourselves an idea of some one eminent for good or for evil,—a poet, a statesman, a general, a murderer, a swindler, a thief. The man is before us, and our ideas have gone into so different a groove that he does not excite a suspicion; we are told who he is, and immediately detect a thousand things that ought to have proved his identity.

Looking thus again with rectified vision at the false Lebeau, Graham observed an elegance and delicacy of feature which might, in youth, have made the countenance very handsome, and rendered it still good-looking, nay, prepossessing. He now noticed, too, the slight Norman accent, its native harshness of breadth subdued into the modulated tones which bespoke the habits of polished society. Above all, as M. Lebeau moved his dominos with one hand, not shielding his pieces with the other (as M. Georges warily did), but allowing it to rest carelessly on the table, he detected the hands of the French aristocrat,—hands that had never done work; never (like those of the English noble of equal birth) been embrowned or freckled, or roughened or enlarged by early practice in athletic sports; but hands seldom seen save in the higher circles of Parisian life,—partly perhaps of hereditary formation, partly owing their texture to great care begun in early youth, and continued mechanically in after life,—with long taper fingers and polished nails; white and delicate as those of a woman, but not slight, not feeble; nervous and sinewy as those of a practised swordsman.

Graham watched the play, and Lebeau good-naturedly explained to him its complications as it proceeded; though the explanation, diligently attended to by M. Georges, lost Lebeau the game.

The dominos were again shuffled, and during that operation M. Georges said, "By the way, Monsieur Lebeau, you promised to find me a *locataire* for my second floor; have you succeeded?"

"Not yet. Perhaps you had better advertise in 'Les Petites Affiches.' You ask too much for the habitues of this neighbourhood,—one hundred francs a month."

"But the lodging is furnished, and well too, and has four rooms. One hundred francs are not much."

A thought flashed upon Graham. "Pardon, Monsieur," he said, "have you an *appartement de garçon* to let furnished?"

"Yes, Monsieur, a charming one. Are you in search of an apartment?"

"I have some idea of taking one, but only by the month. I am but just arrived at Paris, and I have business which may keep me here a few weeks. I do but require a bedroom and a small cabinet, and the rent must be modest. I am not a milord."

"I am sure we could arrange, Monsieur," said M. Georges, "though I could not well divide my logement. But one hundred francs a month is not much!"

"I fear it is more than I can afford; however, if you will give me your address, I will call and see the rooms,--say the day after to-morrow. Between this and then, I expect letters which may more clearly decide my movements."

"If the apartments suit you," said M. Lebeau, "you will at least be in the house of a very honest man, which is more than can be said of every one who lets furnished apartments. The house, too, has a concierge, with a handy wife who will arrange your rooms and provide you with coffee--or tea, which you English prefer--if you breakfast at home." Here M. Georges handed a card to Graham, and asked what hour he would call.

"About twelve, if that hour is convenient," said Graham, rising. "I presume there is a restaurant in the neighbourhood where I could dine reasonably."

"_Je crois bien_, half-a-dozen. I can recommend to you one where you can dine _en prince_ for thirty sous. And if you are at Paris on business, and want any letters written in private, I can also recommend to you my friend here, M. Lebeau. Ay, and on affairs his advice is as good as a lawyer's, and his fee a bagatelle."

"Don't believe all that Monsieur Georges so flatteringly says of me," put in M. Lebeau, with a modest half-smile, and in English. "I should tell you that I, like yourself, am recently arrived at Paris, having bought the business and goodwill of my predecessor in the apartment I occupy; and it is only to the respect due to his antecedents, and on the score of a few letters of recommendation which I bring from Lyons, that I can attribute the confidence shown to me, a stranger in this neighbourhood. Still I have some knowledge of the world, and I am always glad if I can be of service to the English. I love the English"--he said this with a sort of melancholy earnestness which seemed sincere; and then added in a more careless tone,--"I have met with much kindness from them in the course of a chequered life."

"You seem a very good fellow,--in fact, a regular trump, Monsieur Lebeau," replied Graham, in the same language. "Give me your address. To say truth, I am a very poor French scholar, as you must have seen, and am awfully bother-headed how to manage some correspondence on matters with which I am entrusted by my employer, so that it is a lucky chance which has brought me acquainted with you."

M. Lebeau inclined his head gracefully, and drew from a very neat morocco case a card, which Graham took and pocketed. Then he paid for his coffee and lemonade, and returned home well satisfied with the evening's adventure.

CHAPTER VII.

The next morning Graham sent for M. Renard, and consulted with that experienced functionary as to the details of the plan of action which he

had revolved during the hours of a sleepless night.

"In conformity with your advice," said he, "not to expose myself to the chance of future annoyance, by confiding to a man so dangerous as the false Lebeau my name and address, I propose to take the lodging offered to me, as Mr. Lamb, an attorney's clerk, commissioned to get in certain debts, and transact other matters of business, on behalf of his employer's clients. I suppose there will be no difficulty with the police in this change of name, now that passports for the English are not necessary?"

"Certainly not. You will have no trouble in that respect."

"I shall thus be enabled very naturally to improve acquaintance with the professional letter-writer, and find an easy opportunity to introduce the name of Louise Duval. My chief difficulty, I fear, not being a practical actor, will be to keep up consistently the queer sort of language I have adopted, both in French and in English. I have too sharp a critic in a man so consummate himself in stage trick and disguise as M. Lebeau not to feel the necessity of getting through my role as quickly as I can. Meanwhile, can you recommend me to some *_magasin_* where I can obtain a suitable change of costume? I can't always wear a travelling suit, and I must buy linen of coarser texture than mine, and with the initials of my new name inscribed on it."

"Quite right to study such details; I will introduce you to a *magasin* near the Temple, where you will find all you want."

"Next, have you any friends or relations in the provinces unknown to M. Lebeau, to whom I might be supposed to write about debts or business matters, and from whom I might have replies?"

"I will think over it, and manage that for you very easily. Your letters shall find their way to me, and I will dictate the answers."

After some further conversation on that business, M. Renard made an appointment to meet Graham at a cafe near the Temple later in the afternoon, and took his departure.

Graham then informed his *_laquais de place_* that, though he kept on his lodgings, he was going into the country for a few days, and should not want the man's services till he returned. He therefore dismissed and paid him off at once, so that the *laquais* might not observe, when he quitted his rooms the next day, that he took with him no change of clothes, etc.

CHAPTER VIII.

Graham Vane has been for some days in the apartment rented of M. Georges. He takes it in the name of Mr. Lamb,--a name wisely chosen, less common than Thompson and Smith, less likely to be supposed an assumed name, yet common enough not to be able easily to trace it to any special family. He appears, as he had proposed, in the character of an agent employed by a solicitor in London to execute sundry commissions and to collect certain outstanding debts. There is no need to mention the name of the solicitor; if there were, he could give the name of his own solicitor,

to whose discretion he could trust implicitly. He dresses and acts up to his assumed character with the skill of a man who, like the illustrious Charles Fox, has, though in private representations, practised the stage-play in which Demosthenes said the triple art of oratory consisted; who has seen a great deal of the world, and has that adaptability of intellect which knowledge of the world lends to one who is so thoroughly in earnest as to his end that he agrees to be sportive as to his means.

The kind of language he employs when speaking English to Lebeau is that suited to the role of a dapper young underling of vulgar mind habituated to vulgar companionships. I feel it due, if not to Graham himself, at least to the memory of the dignified orator whose name he inherits, so to modify and soften the hardy style of that peculiar diction in which he disguises his birth and disgraces his culture, that it is only here and there that I can venture to indicate the general tone of it; but in order to supply my deficiencies therein, the reader has only to call to mind the forms of phraseology which polite novelists in vogue, especially young-lady novelists, ascribe to well-born gentlemen, and more emphatically to those in the higher ranks of the Peerage. No doubt Graham, in his capacity of critic, had been compelled to read, in order to review, those contributions to refined literature, and had familiarized himself to a vein of conversation abounding with "swell" and "stunner" and "awfully jolly," in its libel on manners and outrage on taste.

He has attended nightly the cafe Jean Jacques; he has improved acquaintance with M. Georges and M. Lebeau; he has played at billiards, he has played at dominos, with the latter. He has been much surprised at the unimpeachable honesty which M. Lebeau has exhibited in both these games. In billiards, indeed, a man cannot cheat except by disguising his strength; it is much the same in dominos,--it is skill combined with luck, as in whist; but in whist there are modes of cheating which dominos do not allow,--you can't mark a domino as you can a card. It was perfectly clear to Graham that M. Lebeau did not gain a livelihood by billiards or dominos at the cafe Jean Jacques. In the former he was not only a fair but a generous player. He played exceedingly well, despite his spectacles; but he gave, with something of a Frenchman's lofty fanfaronnade, larger odds to his adversary than his play justified. In dominos, where such odds could not well be given, he insisted on playing such small stakes as two or three francs might cover. In short, M. Lebeau puzzled Graham. All about M. Lebeau, his manner, his talk, was irreproachable, and baffled suspicion; except in this,--Graham gradually discovered that the cafe had a quasi-political character. Listening to talkers round him, he overheard much that might well have shocked the notions of a moderate Liberal; much that held in disdain the objects to which, in 1869, an English Radical directed his aspirations. Vote by ballot, universal suffrage, etc.,--such objects the French had already attained. By the talkers at the cafe Jean Jacques they were deemed to be the tricky contrivances of tyranny. In fact, the talk was more scornful of what Englishmen understand by radicalism or democracy than Graham ever heard from the lips of an ultra-Tory. It assumed a strain of philosophy far above the vulgar squabbles of ordinary party politicians,--a philosophy which took for its fundamental principles the destruction of religion and of private property. These two objects seemed dependent the one on the other. The philosophers of the Jean Jacques held with that expounder of Internationalism, Eugene Dupont, "Nous ne voulons plus de religion, car les religions etouffent l'intelligence."

[Discours par Eugene Dupont a la Cloture du Congres de Bruxelles,
Sept. 3, 1868]

Now and then, indeed, a dissentient voice was raised as to the existence of a Supreme Being, but, with one exception, it soon sank into silence. No voice was raised in defence of private property. These sages appeared for the most part to belong to the class of ouvriers or artisans. Some of them were foreigners,--Belgian, German, English; all seemed well off for their calling. Indeed they must have had comparatively high wages, to judge by their dress and the money they spent on regaling themselves. The language of several was well chosen, at times eloquent. Some brought with them women who seemed respectable, and who often joined in the conversation, especially when it turned upon the law of marriage as a main obstacle to all personal liberty and social improvement. If this was a subject on which the women did not all agree, still they discussed it, without prejudice and with admirable sang froid. Yet many of them looked like wives and mothers. Now and then a young journeyman brought with him a young lady of more doubtful aspect, but such a couple kept aloof from the others. Now and then, too, a man evidently of higher station than that of ouvrier, and who was received by the philosophers with courtesy and respect, joined one of the tables and ordered a bowl of punch for general participation. In such occasional visitors, Graham, still listening, detected a writer of the press; now and then, a small artist or actor or medical student. Among the habitues there was one man, an ouvrier, in whom Graham could not help feeling an interest. He was called Monnier, sometimes more familiarly Armand, his baptismal appellation. This man had a bold and honest expression of countenance. He talked like one who, if he had not read much, had thought much on the subjects he loved to discuss. He argued against the capital of employers quite as ably as Mr. Mill has argued against the rights of property in land. He was still more eloquent against the laws of marriage and Heritage. But his was the one voice not to be silenced in favour of a Supreme Being. He had at least the courage of his opinions, and was always thoroughly in earnest. M. Lebeau seemed to know this man, and honoured him with a nod and a smile, when passing by him to the table he generally occupied. This familiarity with a man of that class, and of opinions so extreme, excited Graham's curiosity. One evening he said to Lebeau, "A queer fellow that you have just nodded to.

"How so?"

"Well, he has queer notions."

"Notions shared, I believe, by many of your countrymen?"

"I should think not many. Those poor simpletons yonder may have caught 'em from their French fellow-workmen, but I don't think that even the gobemouches in our National Reform Society open their mouths to swallow such wasps."

"Yet I believe the association to which most of those ouvriers belong had its origin in England."

"Indeed! what association?"

"The International."

"Ah, I have heard of that."

Lebeau turned his green spectacles full on Graham's face as he said slowly, "And what do you think of it?"

Graham prudently checked the disparaging reply that first occurred to him, and said, "I know so little about it that I would rather ask you."

"I think it might become formidable if it found able leaders who knew how to use it. Pardon me, how came you to know of this cafe? Were you recommended to it?"

"No; I happened to be in this neighbourhood on business, and walked in, as I might into any other cafe."

"You don't interest yourself in the great social questions which are agitated below the surface of this best of all possible worlds?"

"I can't say that I trouble my head much about them."

"A game at dominos before M. Georges arrives?"

"Willingly. Is M. Georges one of those agitators below the surface?"

"No, indeed. It is for you to play."

Here M. Georges arrived, and no further conversation on political or social questions ensued.

Graham had already called more than once at M. Lebeau's office, and asked him to put into good French various letters on matters of business, the subjects of which had been furnished by M. Renard. The office was rather imposing and stately, considering the modest nature of M. Lebeau's ostensible profession. It occupied the entire ground-floor of a corner house, with a front-door at one angle and a back-door at the other. The anteroom to his cabinet, and in which Graham had generally to wait some minutes before he was introduced, was generally well filled, and not only by persons who, by their dress and outward appearance, might be fairly supposed sufficiently illiterate to require his aid as polite letter-writers,--not only by servant-maids and grisettes, by sailors, zouaves, and journeymen workmen,--but not unfrequently by clients evidently belonging to a higher, or at least a richer, class of society,--men with clothes made by a fashionable tailor; men, again, who, less fashionably attired; looked like opulent tradesmen and fathers of well-to-do families,--the first generally young, the last generally middle-aged. All these denizens of a higher world were introduced by a saturnine clerk into M. Lebeau's reception-room, very quickly and in precedence of the ouvriers and grisettes.

"What can this mean?" thought Graham; "is it really that this humble business avowed is the cloak to some political conspiracy concealed,--the International Association?" And so pondering, the clerk one day singled him from the crowd and admitted him into M. Lebeau's cabinet. Graham thought the time had now arrived when he might safely approach the subject that had brought him to the Faubourg Montmartre.

"You are very good," said Graham, speaking in the English of a young earl in our elegant novels,--"you are very good to let me in while you have so many swells and nobs waiting for you in the other room. But, I say, old fellow, you have not the cheek to tell me that they want you to correct their cocker or spoon for them by proxy?"

"Pardon me," answered M. Lebeau in French, "if I prefer my own language in replying to you. I speak the English I learned many years ago, and your language in the *_beau monde_*, to which you evidently belong, is strange to me. You are quite right, however, in your surmise that I have other clients than those who, like yourself, think I could correct their verbs or their spelling. I have seen a great deal of the world,--I know something of it, and something of the law; so that many persons come to me for advice and for legal information on terms more moderate than those of an *_avoue_*. But my ante-chamber is full, I am pressed for time; excuse me if I ask you to say at once in what I can be agreeable to you to-day."

"Ah!" said Graham, assuming a very earnest look, "you do know the world, that is clear; and you do know the law of France, eh?"

"Yes, a little."

"What I wanted to say at present may have something to do with French law, and I meant to ask you either to recommend to me a sharp lawyer, or to tell me how I can best get at your famous police here."

"Police?"

"I think I may require the service of one of those officers whom we in England call detectives; but if you are busy now, I can call to-morrow."

"I spare you two minutes. Say at once, dear Monsieur, what you want with law or police."

"I am instructed to find out the address of a certain Louise Duval, daughter of a drawing-master named Adolphe Duval, living in the Rue ---- in the year 1848."

Graham, while he thus said, naturally looked Lebeau in the face,--not pryingly, not significantly, but as a man generally does look in the face the other man whom he accosts seriously. The change in the face he regarded was slight, but it was unmistakable. It was the sudden meeting of the eyebrows, accompanied with the sudden jerk of the shoulder and bend of the neck, which betokened a man taken by surprise, and who pauses to reflect before he replies. His pause was but momentary,

"For what object is this address required?"

"That I don't know; but evidently for some advantage to Madame or Mademoiselle Duval, if still alive, because my employer authorizes me to spend no less than L100 in ascertaining where she is, if alive, or where she was buried, if dead; and if other means fail, I am instructed to advertise to the effect that if Louise Duval, or, in case of her death, any children of hers living in the year 1849, will communicate with some person whom I may appoint at Paris, such intelligence, authenticated, may prove to the advantage of the party advertised for. I am, however, told not to resort to this means without consulting either with a legal adviser or the police."

"Hem! have you inquired at the house where this lady was, you say, living in 1848?"

"Of course I have done that; but very clumsily, I dare say, through a

friend, and learned nothing. But I must not keep you now. I think I shall apply at once to the police. What should I say when I get to the bureau?"

"Stop, Monsieur, stop. I do not advise you to apply to the police. It would be waste of time and money. Allow me to think over the matter. I shall see you this evening at the cafe Jean Jacques at eight o'clock. Till then do nothing."

"All right; I obey you. The whole thing is out of my way of business awfully. Bonjour."

CHAPTER IX.

Punctually at eight o'clock Graham Vane had taken his seat at a corner table at the remote end of the cafe Jean Jacques, called for his cup of coffee and his evening journal, and awaited the arrival of M. Lebeau. His patience was not tasked long. In a few minutes the Frenchman entered, paused at the comptoir, as was his habit, to address a polite salutation to the well-dressed lady who there presided, nodded as usual to Armand Monnier, then glanced round, recognized Graham with a smile, and approached his table with the quiet grace of movement by which he was distinguished.

Seating himself opposite to Graham, and speaking in a voice too low to be heard by others, and in French, he then said,

"In thinking over your communication this morning, it strikes me as probable, perhaps as certain, that this Louise Duval or her children, if she have any, must be entitled to some moneys bequeathed to her by a relation or friend in England. What say you to that assumption, Monsieur Lamb?"

"You are a sharp fellow," answered Graham. "Just what I say to myself. Why else should I be instructed to go to such expense in finding her out? Most likely, if one can't trace her, or her children born before the date named, any such moneys will go to some one else; and that some one else, whoever he be, has commissioned my employer to find out. But I don't imagine any sum due to her or her heirs can be much, or that the matter is very important; for, if so, the thing would not be carelessly left in the hands of one of the small fry like myself, and clapped in along with a lot of other business as an off-hand job."

"Will you tell me who employed you?"

"No, I don't feel authorized to do that at present; and I don't see the necessity of it. It seems to me, on consideration, a matter for the police to ferret out; only, as I asked before, how should I get at the police?"

"That is not difficult. It is just possible that I might help you better than any lawyer or any detective."

"Why, did you ever know this Louise Duval?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur Lamb; you refuse me your full confidence; allow me

to imitate your reserve."

"Oho!" said Graham; "shut up as close as you like; it is nothing to me. Only observe, there is this difference between us, that I am employed by another. He does not authorize me to name him, and if I did commit that indiscretion, I might lose my bread and cheese. Whereas you have nobody's secret to guard but your own, in saying whether or not you ever knew a Madame or Mademoiselle Duval; and if you have some reason for not getting me the information I am instructed to obtain, that is also a reason for not troubling you further. And after all, old boy" (with a familiar slap on Lebeau's stately shoulder), "after all, it is I who would employ you; you don't employ me. And if you find out the lady, it is you who would get the L100., not I."

M. Lebeau mechanically brushed, with a light movement of hand, the shoulder which the Englishman had so pleasantly touched, drew himself and chair some inches back, and said slowly,--

"Monsieur Lamb, let us talk as gentleman to gentleman. Put aside the question of money altogether; I must first know why your employer wants to hunt out this poor Louise Duval. It may be to her injury, and I would do her none if you offered thousands where you offer pounds. I forestall the condition of mutual confidence; I own that I have known her,--it is many years ago; and, Monsieur Lamb, though a Frenchman very often injures a woman from love, he is in a worse plight for bread and cheese than I am if he injures her for money."

"Is he thinking of the duchess's jewels?" thought Graham. "Bravo, mon vieux," he said aloud; "but as I don't know what my employer's motive in his commission is, perhaps you can enlighten me. How could his inquiry injure Louise Duval?"

"I cannot say; but you English have the power to divorce your wives. Louise Duval may have married an Englishman, separated from him, and he wants to know where he can find, in order to criminate and divorce her, or it may be to insist on her return to him."

"Bosh! that is not likely."

"Perhaps, then, some English friend she may have known has left her a bequest, which would of course lapse to some one else if she be not living."

"By gad!" cried Graham, "I think you hit the right nail on the head: _c'est cela_. But what then?"

"Well, if I thought any substantial benefit to Louise Duval might result from the success of your inquiry, I would really see if it were in my power to help you. But I must have time to consider."

"How long?"

"I can't exactly say; perhaps three or four days."

"Bon! I will wait. Here comes M. Georges. I leave you to dominos and him. Good-night."

Late that night M. Lebeau was seated alone in a chamber connected with the cabinet in which he received visitors. A ledger was open before him,

which he scanned with careful eyes, no longer screened by spectacles. The survey seemed to satisfy him. He murmured, "It suffices, the time has come," closed the book, returned it to his bureau, which he locked up, and then wrote in cipher the letter here reduced into English:--

"DEAR AND NOBLE FRIEND,--Events march; the Empire is everywhere undermined. Our treasury has thriven in my hands; the sums subscribed and received by me through you have become more than quadrupled by advantageous speculations, in which M. Georges has been a most trustworthy agent. A portion of them I have continued to employ in the mode suggested,--namely, in bringing together men discreetly chosen as being in their various ways representatives and ringleaders of the motley varieties that, when united at the right moment, form a Parisian mob. But from that right moment we are as yet distant. Before we can call passion into action, we must prepare opinion for change. I propose now to devote no inconsiderable portion of our fund towards the inauguration of a journal which shall gradually give voice to our designs. Trust me to insure its success, and obtain the aid of writers who will have no notion of the uses to which they ultimately contribute. Now that the time has come to establish for ourselves an organ in the press, addressing higher orders of intelligence than those which are needed to destroy and incapable of reconstructing, the time has also arrived for the reappearance in his proper name and rank of the man in whom you take so gracious an interest. In vain you have pressed him to do so before; till now he had not amassed together, by the slow process of petty gains and constant savings, with such additions as prudent speculations on his own account might contribute, the modest means necessary to his resumed position; and as he always contended against your generous offers, no consideration should ever tempt him either to appropriate to his personal use a single sou intrusted to him for a public purpose, or to accept from friendship the pecuniary aid which would abase him into the hireling of a cause. No! Victor de Mauleon despises too much the tools that he employs to allow any man hereafter to say, 'Thou also wert a tool, and hast been paid for thy uses.'

"But to restore the victim of calumny to his rightful place in this gaudy world, stripped of youth and reduced in fortune, is a task that may well seem impossible. To-morrow he takes the first step towards the achievement of the impossible. Experience is no bad substitute for youth, and ambition is made stronger by the goad of poverty.

"Thou shalt hear of his news soon."

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