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MAGIC AND MESMERISM

An Episode

OF

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

AND OTHER TALES.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.

IN the autumn of 184—, a party of friends, male and female, started from Manheim, on an expedition up one of the lovely valleys that shelter those mountain-streams, whose beauties scarcely yield the palm to the proud Rhine, whose tributaries they are. The party was numerous; and for the first two or three days, all went right. But just as they were about to escape from the worst roadside-inn it had yet been their ill luck to fall in with, a mountain-storm broke overhead with such fury, and of

such duration, as to render the narrow, precipitous road—bad enough in fair weather—perfectly impassable for a few days, especially for the ladies, whose fears magnified the inconveniences of the venture.

Thus weather-bound, in the fullest meaning of the word—an incessant cold rain alternating with a high sharp wind by day, and early biting frosts by night, that made the smoky stoves of mine host, crammed full of greenwood, and his unswept, uncurtained rooms, a luxury—the spirits of the society, and the general stock of patience, was much tried. Passing under silence those nameless privations, whose enumeration would fill a volume, but which any traveller whom chance or caprice has led into the more unfrequented parts of Germany will have no trouble in calling back to his remembrance, I will barely hint at the blue-devils that seized upon and tor-

mented each in turn; and though to record the sighs, and yawns, and sundry exclamations, were a hopeless task, I will declare, that a more complete specimen of immeasurable ennui—ennui of the deepest, darkest hue—was never seen.

There was not a musical instrument in the whole house! Not one of the ladies had strung her blue or pink ribboned guitar on the top of a bandbox—bandboxes having been most ungallantly prohibited by the male portion of the society. Not one of the gentlemen had with him so much as a flute-cane, or had smuggled even a Jew's-harp into his pocket! The heavy, iron-tipped oak, that helped to climb the rocks, was alone *à l'ordre du jour*; and the gentlemen's shooting-jackets boasted little more in the way of musical resources than pocket-combs. Draught or chess board—nay, even the very oldest pack of cards—would

have been hailed with delight, had the landlord of the Stork been able to produce any such ; but he seemed not even to have an inkling of such town-fangled notions, and there were no other resources left the travellers but those of their own conversational powers. As politeness precludes controversy, and people invariably tire of assenting to each other's propositions, these soon flagged ; and—in default of any of those pink-bound volumes that Galignani strews with so untiring a hand over all the highways and by-ways of the Continent, and of which, strange to say, not one copy had found its way in the scanty luggage of the travellers,—it was at last agreed that story-telling should fill up the blank ; and those who, in the course of those few days' domestication, had betrayed the slightest anecdotal powers, were now unmercifully plied to exert those powers on an enlarged scale. “ Anything would do,” the ladies said ;

but when divers subjects were started, it came to light, that “they did not like pure fiction; it required a master-hand to make anything of it; something that had really happened always had an interest of its own that would greatly aid the manner of the telling;”—in short, the historical was decided upon, *una voce*. Needles were soon plied by delicate white fingers, whilst the male portion of the audience, with laudable feelings of tender reminiscences of their schoolboy days, busied their hands in cutting out figures on their sticks, or indenting them in mine host’s already much-damaged tables.

The bravest among the gentlemen, then, devoted themselves to the slippery task of amusing others. They succeeded, however, so well, that it was suggested that the Tales which had whiled away the ennui of a chosen few, might, perchance, render the same service to others, if

given a wider circulation by means of the Press. In vain did he upon whom the chancy task of Editing them was forced, grumble and represent how under different circumstances the same things assumed different aspects, and how much the partiality of friendly listeners may blind them to the defects of the productions they patronise. All was of no avail; the fiat had gone forth from lips that would take no denial, and the Editor now, perhaps, stands committed past redemption.

THE CAPTAIN'S STORY.

MAGIC AND MESMERISM.

VOL. I.

B

MAGIC AND MESMERISM.

I WAS yet a very young man, and but just gazetted as a second lieutenant, when my ill luck ordained that I should be sent, with many other English prisoners, to Toulon ; at which place, Napoleon's name being held in even more enthusiastic reverence than elsewhere, our prospect of comfort was not re-assuring.

Many of my countrymen have complained of the sufferings they endured, and the hard treatment they met with, in this time of probation ; but I must confess much of this was drawn upon them by their own obstinacy in refusing to remain at large on parole—an alternative generally offered, and which, though it

debarred the prisoner from any chance of an early release, made, at least, the detention less irksome. Of the few who preferred a comparatively free *séjour* in a town to the gloomy confinement of a prison, I was one of the first; and I soon found I had made proof of no small sagacity in my choice.

The French are, or at least were when I knew them—but that's a long while ago—a very polite, kindly race, and evinced a generous sympathy in favour of the poor prisoners who came in their way, of which I, at least, am a grateful instance. I could not, however, afford to remain an idler on the *pavé*, and was soon obliged to chalk out for myself some plan for procuring a livelihood. Many in my situation might have been tempted to adduce, as a motive for so doing, the difficulty of receiving regular remittances; I owned the truth—I had none to receive.

I knew something of music, more of drawing, could paint very tolerably in water colours; in short, I was not deficient in that smattering *des arts d'agrémens*, which—for at that time

artists did not everywhere abound as at present—might, I thought, suffice to help me out of my difficulties. I soon, indeed, got more pupils than I had time to attend to, and found that their kindness contributed even more to my comfort than their money. In some families, acquaintance ripened into friendship, or—what generally answers as well, if not better, for social enjoyment—into intimacy unfettered by the duties and cares that friendship entails upon its votaries.

Of these families, I must mention one in particular. The father, though very rich, would not afford his daughters the accomplishments deemed so indispensable to modern education at the usual costs, yet was not unwilling to bestow board and lodging upon any one who would consent to instruct them on those terms. The proposal implied the comforts of a social, though not a luxurious home, and was accepted by me with infinite pleasure; and a source of pleasure it proved, in every sense, during the many years of my captivity.

Doubtless, I could dwell with untiring com-

placency upon these reminiscences of my youth, and of those with whom its heyday was spent; but as they might prove more wearisome than interesting, and do not bear upon the point, I will at once make you acquainted with the only member of this family who has any reference to my story, and whose introduction I may as well premise by stating, that, although the most singular mortal that ever fell in my way, he was at this period my constant companion, and one of the men I have liked best of all those, young or old, I ever associated with, not excluding the officers of my mess.

Mr. Chaudon—this was his name—was past sixty, at the head of no inconsiderable competency, a confirmed bachelor, and being godfather, besides, to all the younger children, great expectations were entertained of him; a circumstance that led my friends to make very flattering advances to the old gentleman, who, in his turn, availed himself of them in a manner to justify the presumption that he meant to repay them one day in full. Thus were we continually thrown into each other's society;

and as I spoke French with great fluency, despite the dissimilitude of our ages, tastes, habits, and, above all, nationality, we soon became great cronies.

In order to make you understand our dissimilitude and points of attraction more clearly, I must, even at the risk of being thought tedious, dilate a little on our characters and peculiarities. Although barely twenty, and rather good-looking than otherwise, I was more fond of reading and thinking than most men possessed of these advantages, especially in the profession I had embraced. Of a very cheerful temperament, endowed with that most precious of nature's gifts—which I have ever striven to retain, through fair and foul—the power of being easily pleased and amused, I was thus far qualified to meet half way his natural bibliomania and national *gaieté de cœur*. But the leading feature of my mind was coolness of judgment—so, at least, I and my friends qualified it; those who were not so well disposed towards me called it want of imagination: be that as it may, anything out of the common routine of

life and of the beaten track of ideas, has ever appeared to me extravagant—preposterous, and never took root in my brain. Some said this was a happy gift; but so, probably, did not think my companion, who was in nothing more opposed to me than in this particular.

Monsieur Jules Chaudon's sixty years had cooled none of the fire of youth. His overabundance of imagination, by leading him constantly from the practical to the theoretical, and rendering impossible the constant application and persevering attention necessary to all professions, but especially that which he had adopted—the law—had materially interfered with his advancement; and never having risen above mediocrity, in spite of strong natural powers, he had, in consequence, retired from its arduous duties even before his age justified the measure: but his was the contemplative disposition and the studious habit, which invest a life of ease with charm.

During the twenty years that my worthy friend had found himself at liberty to follow the bent of his own inclinations, he had devoted

the greater portion of his time to reading. That reading being, however, of the most promiscuous kind, and the natural romance of his mind tinged with peculiar interest the wilder and more chimerical speculations of his and other times, he soon suffered himself to be led away by them, and became what the French so well describe by the epithet "*bizarre*," which was universally applied to him, although he was otherwise held in great esteem for his acknowledged talents.

"They call me singular, original," he would often say, "and make this a matter of reproach; but I accept the denomination as the highest possible compliment, for neither virtue nor genius are commonplace. Everybody, on the contrary, must allow they are most unlike what we observe in the generality of mankind; and by their very dissemblance from the inferiority that, at every turn, meets and checks them, often, alas! jar, like a chord too tightly strung, in the harmony of this world, where their aspirations remain unsatisfied and their efforts misunderstood."

I used to laugh heartily at the frankness of my friend's vanity; but if, like most of his countrymen, he was addicted to much talking, especially about himself, and even to boasting on occasions, still did he more than counter-balance these slight peculiarities by his many and rare qualities. Most of my leisure hours were devoted to his society; and this circumstance was doubly favourable to me, tending, as it did, to exercise my intellectual faculties, and to keep me out of harm's way, for the ladies of the South of France are very fascinating, I assure you.

One day, calling, according to my wont, to share his *demie tasse de café*, after a very early dinner, I was somewhat surprised to find him in a less vivacious humour than ordinary. His fit of silence embarrassed me; and, *par manière de contenance*, I began to survey the various objects that surrounded me, although habit had made them perfectly familiar. The small, white-curtained windows, always opened to the mild breezes of Provence, letting in the effulgence of a southern sun through the tempering medium

of a couple of tall trees which shaded his little flower garden—the perfume the latter exhaled in that luxuriant clime—all this I had enjoyed before. My eye wandered to the well-stored bookcases on either hand of the door—to the door itself with its *Watteau* panels, representing puffy, rosy swains, making love in a very playful and becoming manner by the intervention of a flute or bagpipe, to smiling, courtly-looking shepherdesses, with a profusion of roses and sheep and doves, to enhance the poetry of the conception—the quiet lamp on the *console*, placed carefully in front of a dish of waxen fruits under glass—the landscape over the door, in which the village church did not forget to chime the hour with more precision than many a Brégué—the magnificent *boule* cabinet, no longer appreciated for its own merits, retained in a corner out of respect for the past—the pictures, all daubs in their way, and merely interesting as family portraits—the very prints, hung round the wall, were known to me in all their details. I gazed, mechanically, from that representing the death of the unfortunate

Louis XVI. to that of the *Jeu de Paume* and the Coronation of Napoleon. Reminiscence, rather than political opinion, seemed to have guided the choice of those engravings, several of which were portraits of celebrities contemporary with himself—Mesmer, Puysegur, D'Eslon, and a few others, whose names escape my memory, more or less famous in the annals of magnetism.

“Strange men and bold, those,” said Chaudon, following the direction of my eyes as they rested on the last named personages.

“Dreamers! idle dreamers,” I answered, with a shrug—“dreamers, if not knaves and villains.”

“Far too sweeping a conclusion,” said Chaudon. “May not a science exist, though folly and knavery may have abused it? May not the fairest flowers spring up from the same soil that will bear a toadstool?”

“Perhaps,” said I, “but the mere chimera of the brain I consider to be a most barren ground, productive of little better than the thorns of disputation.”

“Then you take upon yourself to deny, al-

together, the existence of Mesmerism, and its effects for good or for evil?"

"I should, indeed, feel inclined to do so," I replied, "but that I do not consider myself sufficiently master of the subject to give a decided opinion."

"Far be it from me to deny that Mesmerism has had its charlatans and its victims—but so has medicine, and yet what science is nobler? Has not religion itself had its abuses?"

"But," I timidly urged, "public opinion has so completely done justice by the votaries of magnetism ——"

"It is natural, my young friend," hastily interrupted Chaudon, "that the first who wander through unknown regions, and bring back new stores of ideas and facts to others, should expose themselves, by communicating them, to ridicule and animadversion. For, strange to say, fond as he thinks himself of change, and eager as he is in its pursuit, all novelty is hateful to man—but this is one of the many contradictions of his nature. Thus we see ignorant people ever ready to laugh at the simplest truth which

has escaped their sphere of intelligence. Perfect incredulity on all points is an infallible token of the total absence of intellectual development; none know how to credit what is new to them but persons of cultivated understanding."

"True," said I; "but if it be folly to reject, without investigation, any proposition whatever, surely it is more foolish to admit any theory as true without due proof."

"Granted," said the old man—"granted; but how few ever pause to balance a question, however vital its import. The greater portion of mankind decide at once, without being able to adduce any better reason for their decision than caprice or prejudice. I dare say your opinions, my young friend, are not based on firmer ground."

Without renouncing my scepticism, I gracefully yielded this point.

"I thought as much," said he; "without having duly weighed the arguments *pro* and *con* in your own mind, merely because those are stigmatized as enthusiasts and dreamers who have given into the system. *Fausse honte*, my young friend, and worldly prudence, are the

graves of science and discovery. Now, if you will patiently listen to a few reasons I can adduce in favour of the existence, if not the merits of animal magnetism, I think I can convince you, or, at least, lead you on the road to conviction."

"Most willingly," said I.

"Then we will adjourn to the beach, and, in the face of nature's sublimest work, discuss one of her deepest mysteries."

The old *bonne* had soon helped my friend to exchange his flowered silk robe de chambre for a coat of somewhat antediluvian fashion—for he still clung to former habits, and had renounced neither his *queue*, powder, nor shoe-buckles; and having donned this somewhat antiquated apparel, he sallied forth with me to enjoy the invigorating sea breeze. Hardly had we come within view of the waves, when he took up the subject of discussion precisely where we had left it, with the air of one who sets regularly in for a prose. I confess I had forgotten it altogether.

"Mesmerism," said he, "might, perhaps, as justly be called sympathy; that word, more

familiar to our understanding, will bring the notion of the thing more clearly to our minds. It is the great link that binds man, not only to man, but to the creation throughout all its parts, and causes everything in nature to act upon the rest in some way or other. Every object of which we are conscious must, I hold, be made evident to us merely by sympathy; and where sympathy ceases, there must perception cease also. No one thinks of denying the influence of the emanations from plants, waters, and mines upon the human body. If, then, these inanimate things possess a spirit that escapes them in an impalpable form, independently of their more palpable qualities,—if in animal life we do not doubt the power of the snake to fascinate its fluttering victim, why should man, the most perfect of created things, be incapable of emitting a portion of *his* spirit in an invisible, but no less active manner.”

“Maladies are catching,” said I, laughing, “but they can hardly be called the workings of the spirit; but beyond that ——”

“Are not sighs, yawns, and laughter infec-

tious?—does not the sight of a clouded brow chill the spirit as much as that of a sunny one cheers it? These are the involuntary, spontaneous results of this great agent called sympathy. Its guidance into any given channel by the power of volition is termed magnetism; and since the one can hardly be denied, why should the other be deemed impossible?"

"But if no delusion," I persisted, "why should so simple a theory find so few partisans?"

"Its very simplicity is its greatest enemy," replied my companion. "Remember Columbus' egg. Why, most of us, in the details of every-day life, unconsciously practise or yield more or less to the influence of magnetism. The low monotonous song by which the nurse seeks to calm the cries of a troublesome infant—the chafing of the hand, by which the most ignorant will seek to soothe pain—the stern look, by which madness may be quelled and brute nature tamed—all these are results of the same cause. But let us proceed to bolder speculations, and trace the power of sympathy beyond the physical, into the mystic world. Whence is

it that dreams so often shadow forth to us coming events, though in a misty, doubtful form? How is it that our own thoughts are apt to reflect facts, and suggest consequences, the most unlike what bare supposition founded on probability would have prompted, which yet subsequent events justify; that some people have been known to foresee the time and manner of their death years before it actually took place; or how to account for that most ordinary phenomenon—so ordinary as to have passed into a proverb—the sudden appearance among us of those we talk of, even when least expected; or of the letter, at whose delay we but that moment wonder; or of an object to which chance alone directed our thoughts;—and yet who has not often experienced something of this sort himself? In short, the endless catalogue of presentiments and coincidences, sympathies and antipathies, all come, as I believe, within the range of magnetism, and are but effects of that primary cause. I will not pursue this theory in all its branches, it would lead us too far, and, perhaps, make us lose

sight altogether of the *point de départ*, for it is a field for thoughts as infinite as space."

"Yes," said I, laughing, "your world of thought is indeed illimited; it is, in good sooth, that of dreams. Chaudon, of course you, who admit so willingly and defend so warmly, the fashionable bubbles of modern philosophy, will not dare to laugh at the follies and delusions of our forefathers—astrology and its long chain of errors."

"I consider astrology at best but an idle question put to nature, which, if answered, could produce no useful result. But I have not the slightest doubt the planets have as much influence upon our constitutions as they exert over other sublunary bodies. So far there may be some foundation for the medical system of the Arabs, so much in favour during the Middle Ages."

"When physicians," said I, laughing, "suffered their patients to die of the disease, whilst they were quietly awaiting the proper moment indicated by the stars to administer the saving potion."

“Every system has its flaws. It is in vain that human ingenuity shifts its ground. Perfection is not attainable,” said Chaudon, gravely; “and I am sometimes tempted to fear, that, even in these enlightened times of ours, excess of light often blinds us to what our ancestors saw and our descendants may yet see. Science, my young friend, has its rotations, like every other thing in this world. The wheel is eternally revolving, and objects are lost sight of in the movement, to appear again after the necessary lapse of forgetfulness. It is thus that reality and speculation now stand forth from, and then sink back into, the shadows of time; that opposite systems are now enthusiastically admitted, anon rejected with scorn; and that human knowledge is ever turning round truth, as does the earth around the sun, like it to feel the alternation of night and day. There can be no doubt but many things we now rail or laugh at will one day be taken up again with avidity. Magnetism, classified by Mesmer, was known throughout all ages, and has served, in turn, to the deceptions of the priests of Isis and those

of other and more modern creeds—was familiar to the natural philosophers of the Dark Ages, and formed the groundstone of those cures by sympathy that created so much wonder in these simple days. Magnetism, in fact, and the vague dreams it may inspire, the errors it sometimes gives rise to, the crimes to which it has in many instances undeniably ministered,—magnetism, veiled and unrecognised, was the source of most of those trials for sorcery and magic to which we could find no key, except by admitting this science and its phenomena.”

“In short,” said I, “according to your views, magnetism existed always and everywhere—*c’est tout, dans tout.*”

“Assuredly, my young friend; that makes part of my theory of the harmony of nature.”

“You feel, doubtless,” said I, “the beauty of these lines—

“ ‘ From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began ;
 From harmony to harmony,
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
 The diapason closing full in man.’ ”

“ I confess, they have ever appeared to me fraught with the deepest meaning.”

Chaudon listened to my translation of these beautiful lines, imperfect as it was, with evident satisfaction.

“ We feel alike there,” he said, warmly grasping my hand. “ Ah, my young friend, Milton was a mighty spirit—a natural philosopher, as well as poet! I have no doubt, had he lived in our days, he would have been a devoted adherent of Mesmer.”

I could not refrain from laughing heartily at a thought which seemed to me so truly preposterous.

“ And why not?” asked my old friend, reddening very much at the same time—“ and why not, pray? Is it not a sublime thing even to dream of a power that could heal both mind and body, renovate the wearied spirit in the sinking frame, and cause the lamp of life to burn with a fresh glow, when about to sink for ever? Think what a sublime mission were that of the good man here below, if he could infuse a portion of his vigour, mental and corporeal, into the misled and the suffering; if he could,

by this means, make wickedness openly avow and turn away from its dark designs, alleviate but a few of those multifarious evils that afflict our organs, defeat what is bad, and promote what is excellent. This was poor Mesmer's dream—worthy indeed of a philanthropic genius like his—when he first conceived that responsive nerves could enable the magnetizer not only to read the thoughts, but even to guide the will and the feelings of the being subjected to his influence, empowering him, like a mighty conqueror, to cast the spirit he had enslaved into chains.”

“ You allow, then,” said I, “ that Mesmer was a mere visionary?—his system a dream?”

“ Nay, I fear, you have misunderstood me,” he replied. “ I would assert, that its happier influences are still a matter for much doubt. I must in conscience admit they rather exist in the contemplation of the well-intentioned than in the regions of reality; nor am I less prepared to own that its dangers so far out-balance its possible and speculative advantages, as to make its general practice a great evil.”

“It were an ample field for quackery and the grossest deception,” I exclaimed, “if given fair play.”

“Far worse than that,” he replied. “My views on this subject, delusive, extravagant, as they are deemed on many others, have been sobered down by a very sad story, so early grafted on my memory as to have sunk into my very soul, and which has inspired me at once with a firm belief in, and a salutary terror of, the power of magnetism, by associating it in my mind with the very worst species of abuse of which it is capable. This morning, whilst rummaging among papers long laid aside as useless, and well-nigh forgotten, my eye lighted upon some documents referring to this same affair; and the sight awakened a long train of painful reminiscences, which your presence alone, to confess the truth, but partially dispelled. I have more than half a mind to relate the melancholy tale to you, in support of that agency’s power whose very existence you deny, and as, alas! but too melancholy a proof of the misery it may inflict.”

“Indeed,” said I, eagerly, “you could not clothe your proofs in a more acceptable form, I assure you. I’ll swallow any hook, if baited with a story.”

“Ay; but alas! it is no fiction,” said the old man, with a deep sigh; “and, I dare say, enough of the thousands of volumes written at the time have escaped the fury of the Jesuits, to enable you to satisfy your curiosity without the help of my poor narration.”

I had no trouble in seeing through this artless coquetry of the storyteller, and pleaded my preference for verbatim instruction with so good a grace, that I soon obtained the narrative, which I will endeavour to repeat, word for word, as it was given me (so far, at least, as my memory will permit), although I am afraid I never can do it justice as it came from the lips of my good old friend.

Here, he began,—seating himself at a point from whence he could command equally the town and the sea,—here, in sight of the theatre where the scenes I am about to relate were

enacted, where the heroes of the story fretted away their hour on the human stage, where every object our eyes rest upon has probably been gazed at by them a hundred times over— here, where their feet must often have trod, I feel I can best talk of them, their sorrows, their deceptions; and you will perceive that magnetism alone can account for things so passing strange, that they will appear beyond belief, and yet for the truth of which I can vouch; for my father, from whom I had all the details, was himself deeply implicated in the affair. Indeed, he not only related it to me, but talked of the matter over and over again; and I still possess the papers concerning it, which he had carefully preserved.

It was early in the year 1726, when my father, Monsieur Jules Chaudon, then a young man, left his native town, Marseilles, to come and practise here as an *avocat*. He knew no one in Toulon, except an old relation of his, who had caused him to be bred up to his own profession, intending to pass over to him his *clientelle*, when he grew old and tired, and

bequeath him his fortune at his death. The first epoch had arrived; and it was on this account that my father, although an only son, was sent forth from home to try his fortune in life. The old gentleman was a confirmed valetudinarian; and my father's existence would have been but a dull one, had not the solicitude of his parents provided him with those means of honest recreation, which are a young man's best safeguard on entering life, against illicit and degrading amusements. He had letters of introduction to two of the most respectable families of the city. One such, in a provincial town, where society is so confined to *coteries* and classes, is sufficient to open to every tolerably connected young man the doors of that society to which he by birth belongs; and when once admitted, his own misconduct can alone close them against him.

I know, now-a-days, young men, far from seeking such quiet circles, vote them dull and stupid, and avoid them as they would the plague, caring for nothing but noisy and doubtful company; that horses, actresses, and orgies,

appear to them the zenith of fashion and the acme of enjoyment. But it was not so in my father's day; and had it been, I think I may safely aver that such would not have been his inclination.

One of these letters was addressed to a certain Madame Cadières, the widow of a rich merchant, who kept a very good house, and was a lady of some figure in this city. She was the mother of four children, one of whom, her eldest son, was married, and had left the maternal roof; but the three others—two sons, who were preparing for the clerical profession, and a daughter—still resided with her when my father first visited the family.

Before entering upon the history of this family and its connexion with my father, I think it advisable to give you an idea of the first impression its various members produced upon him, and describe his youthful feelings as circumstantially as I may. This will help to bring more vividly before you the actors of the drama which I am about to recount.

His recollection of that first visit was so

strong, and he so often recurred to it in the latter years of his life, that every detail of it is as present to my mind as if I had actually been there. Upon the strength of his introduction, given by a very near relation of Madame Cadières—perhaps, also, upon that of his future expectations—he was at once invited to join her party at her country-house, situated within a convenient walk from the town, where he was received with a frank and hearty cordiality, which is now fast fading away even from our southern provinces.

It was then customary to dine at the hour when lunch is now served; and this necessitated another meal between dinner and supper, that generally went by the name of collation, at which, however, nothing solid was ever offered—fruits and creams in summer, comfits and cakes in winter, were its only ingredients. The family were at collation when my father entered. Madame Cadières was taking her coffee with a few respectable-looking matrons, at one end of the room; whilst a group of laughing young girls, clustered round a marble

table at the further extremity, were enjoying their strawberries and cream. They were in the very sweetest season of life, just budding into womanhood—for the most part, of that rich, dark, voluptuous beauty peculiar to our clime, and laughing with the exhilarating merriment which is a no less distinguishing characteristic of its sunny influence.

My father was at first so dazzled with this galaxy of loveliness, that he could scarcely discern any individuality in the fair assemblage; but his attention and admiration soon became exclusively rivetted on one as dissimilar in form and expression to the others as, in his eyes at least, she was superior. Although rather below than above the middle stature, her figure was sufficiently rounded to betray her age—she was just turned seventeen, and moulded into the perfection of grace. Her hair, simply parted on the brow and brought to the back of her head in a wreath of tresses, which seemed by their weight to set at defiance the thralldom of the combs and sky-blue ribbons that confined them, was of so brilliant a hue, that it

well deserved the term golden. Her eyes generally sought the ground with a modesty of expression that seemed the chief characteristic of her physiognomy, and imparted to it an unnameable charm; but when raised, they were of a blue, brilliant and vivid as the purest summer sky, and as calm and serene in aspect. Her features were delicate and regular; no smile hovered round her small and well-formed mouth; her looks were grave beyond her years, even unto severity; her skin, dazzlingly fair as though it had caught a reflection from the snows of the North, did not contrast more with the dark complexions of her companions than did the composure of her countenance and bearing with the animation that distinguished them. My father always told me that, in the midst of this group, she put him in mind of a Christian virgin surrounded by the houris of the Mahomedan Paradise.

In spite of all his efforts he could not keep his eyes off this little circle, and had barely presence of mind sufficient to answer the polite, encouraging observations addressed to him by

the matrons whilst sipping their favourite beverage. At last, Madame Cadières very considerably conducted him towards the party he so much longed, but had not the courage, to join, saying, at the same time, it was not fair to keep him away from the society best suited to his age.

“My dear Catherine,” said Madame Cadières, addressing one of the young ladies, “this is the stranger of whom I spoke to you this morning—he is to be for the future *l’ami de la maison*, and it is in this light I wish you and your brothers to treat him from this evening forth. Pray, my dear, endeavour to make him as comfortable as you can amongst you until their return.”

At this address all eyes were, for one instant, raised to my father’s blushing countenance; the next they were demurely fixed on the floor. Mademoiselle Cadières invited him to be seated; the tones of her voice were singularly clear and decided, but very sweet; and he perceived with delight that the speaker was the very girl whose personal appearance had so much struck

him. The mother then retired, leaving the young people to make acquaintance as they best could.

Like all strictly brought up young men whose youth has been free from premature excess, my father was, at this period of his existence, painfully shy in the presence of females, especially of the young and beautiful ; so that, even while he felt it a delight to look at them from afar, it was a proportionable agony to be placed in juxtaposition with them, and compelled to endure the formidable battery of their bright eyes. Happy the man, my young friend, who, like him, has known youth in the full meaning of the word—has suffered from the bashfulness natural to its first phases—has yielded to its warm impulses—enjoyed its freshness of feeling, and has not been blighted in the bud by the hotbed of a forced and premature experience ; like him will the timid, ardent boy grow up to vigorous manhood, and know a green old age. The young men of our days are older at twenty than the septuagenarians of the past generation. Manhood, real sterling manhood, such as can

only be based on regularity of conduct and steadiness of mind, is fast passing away altogether from my degenerate countrymen. Forgive this digression of an old grumbler. I cannot omit now and then moralizing, especially when talking with the young, to whom I think my opinions and advice may be of some use.

My father soon found that his awkwardness excited the risible faculties of his young companions in no ordinary degree, who exchanged nods and looks and smiles anything but flattering to his vanity. Mademoiselle Cadières and another young lady, called Eleonore Raymond, whom my father observed for the first time as a plain, nay, the only plain one of the party, endeavoured by their gravity to check this inhospitable merriment, and he felt grateful for the support thus afforded him.

But vain were the endeavours of the former to make him take any share in the conversation that was going forward, or partake of the collation; his excessive embarrassment for a time neutralized all the effects of her kindness, and

of his keen sense of the ridicule attached to his want of assurance. Still no one felt pity for him but Catherine; the others finished by fairly giving way to their mirth, which Mademoiselle Raymond, although far from joining, did not attempt to palliate by any gracious display of sympathy on her own part, nor did she in any way assist Catherine in her weary task of relieving him from his state of trial. At last his power of volition triumphed over his sheepishness; and he became more able to attend to what was passing around him, if not actually to mix in it.

The repast, which had seemed to him insufferably long while it lasted, soon came to what he now considered a too early termination. The whole party passed into the garden, where the elder ladies sauntered carelessly about, whilst the younger sought divertisement at a swing, and apparently found it, if a judgment might be formed from the peals of laughter that soon issued from the thick grove within which the swing was placed. Mademoiselle Cadières stood at the entrance, in the attitude of a not

very interested spectator ; and my father gazed at her from the parlour door, with an admiration which, little as he was conscious of the fact, was depicted in every line of his speaking physiognomy.

My father, in his day, was reckoned the handsomest man in Toulon. Cast in a Herculean mould, his figure was devoid of all clumsiness, and his swarthy countenance bore evidence, in its correct but somewhat stern lines, that the strength of his mind corresponded with that of his frame. He looked, what nature had turned him out, a fine specimen of a vigorous, fiery, and resolved race ; but his vigour was tempered by goodness, his fire by reason, and his resolves were guided by wisdom. In short, if ever man came nigh unto perfection, that man was my father ; and I, his son, am not the only person now living who can bear testimony to this assertion.

Of his personal advantages, as well as of his undisguised and ardent admiration of her daughter, Madame Cadières seemed very leisurely taking cognizance from a short distance,

and after a somewhat prolonged examination, of which he was scarcely aware of being the object, she came up to him, and at once embarked upon a conversation that caused him no small surprise.

“ My daughter,” she said, “ seems to have found favour in your eyes?” My father felt himself blushing crimson. “ Do not be distressed,” she continued, kindly. “ If you think her pretty, you are of one mind with all Toulon, I believe, and there is nothing offensive in it ; but it reminds me that I have a duty to perform with regard to yourself. Forewarned, forearmed, as the saying goes ; I had better let you at once into the secret of my Catherine’s views. She never means to marry ; so, you see, it were no use in the world your falling in love with her.”

My father was even more astonished at the manner than at the matter of the good lady’s communication, but could not help owning in his secret heart there was some ground for the warning, premature as it was, since he felt so unwilling to receive it. Some remark of his,

trite and commonplace, elicited further explanation.

“Yes,” she said, “Catherine is a singular being—gifted beyond the gifts of ordinary women—and who, unless I be much mistaken, will run through no ordinary course of life. I cannot help thinking, and many of my friends are of the same opinion, that she will one day shine forth as a brilliant light of sanctity. She is, and has always been, an angel—why may she not become a saint?”

My father thought it was something very like a fall instead of a promotion to quit an angelship for a saintship; but he was too prudent to give vent to the juvenile sarcasm, and suffered the old lady to proceed, who, flattered by his deep attention, opened her communicative vein.

“She intends to devote herself wholly to religion, and to permit no earthly affections to interfere with this great object of her life. From earliest childhood, piety has been the corner stone of her existence. I could cite to you instances of her faith and charity for eight days running,

and never have done. So perfect a creature never was; so meek and humble—so unconscious of her merits, yet so abounding in Christian virtues; her first communion alone would furnish matter for a volume; her soul was more spotless than her veil, and her fervour amazed and confused even the reverend Father Alexis himself. One instance of her singular devotion will suffice. Imagine, sir, that when scarcely turned of seven, a delicate, puny child—for my Catherine never was strong,—she insisted upon tending the sick at the hospital, where, on account of a contagious disease raging within its walls, even the most necessary attendance failed the poor invalids. But Heaven spared her to me then, to make, I doubt not, an example of her in this land; and in these days of growing unbelief such examples are indeed needful.”

“Mademoiselle Cadières seems, indeed, from your account, a person of no ordinary character,” observed my father, mechanically, as she paused in her narration.

“Ordinary! certainly not!” exclaimed the eager mother. “In infancy she disliked and

avoided the idle games of other children—cast away from her the toys in which they delighted. As she grew, vanity and frivolity, the thirst for admiration and love of dress, that mostly influence other young women, had no hold on her. Books of devotion were her dearest companions; to aid the poor, to console the afflicted, her chief pleasures. Thus has she from day to day improved in virtue and grace, until she is the wonder of all who know her. She begins already to be much talked of. I do not wonder at it, nor shall I be astonished at anything she may turn out, for I myself was very pious, and always prayed above all things that my children might be so too. I knew I bore no ordinary being in my bosom even before her birth. I could not touch aught that had life in it—not a mouthful of anything coarse or nutritive could pass my lips; like the hermits of yore, herbs were my food and water my drink until after she was born.”

“Perhaps,” said my father, “you destine Mademoiselle Catherine to the veil?”

At these words a shade passed over Madame Cadières' countenance ; she looked as if they had caused a disagreeable chord to vibrate within her, and she resumed, in a less emphatic and animated tone—

“ Well, my dear young friend, I have given you fair warning, so look to your heart. If you were to fall in love with my daughter, I should not be the one to rebuke you, assuredly ; but I am convinced you would only expose yourself to a severe disappointment. Now let me give you another piece of advice, which may be equally useful if you are wise enough to avail yourself of it. I know it to be the wish of your parents that you settle early in life. Among these young ladies you will find many unexceptionable matches, and I do not think you have any refusal to apprehend on their part. There's Marie Langières, the best soul alive, though a little indolent, perhaps languid, but the duties of a housewife soon drill activity into a young girl ; she has many relations in the magistracy, and has good expectations. Mademoiselle Guyol, too, is very

lively and pretty, though somewhat flighty and coquettish, but marriage tames down all superabundance of spirit, and once fairly settled, she'll grow steady enough, I dare say. She has an uncle, a judge, in Montpelier, who might be of use to you in your profession. Marie Reboul and Mademoiselle la Rue, again, belong to commercial families, and are very well off; the former is rather heavy and not over bright in the head, it is true, but some people are of opinion that fools make the best wives—as to the latter, her avarice is a guarantee for her economy; she would take care of your gains, and a thrifty housewife causes the house to flourish. Ah! I had forgot to mention Eleonore Raymond; she is very rich indeed; but though a catholic herself, has protestant relations, and that's an objection. However, I have given you the *carte du pays*; you may now think of whom you please, provided it be not of Catherine."

This abrupt and extraordinary warning, though doubtless well meant, on the whole did more harm than good; for by the pleasure with which my father listened to the mother's rhap-

sodical encomiums of her daughter, he already felt himself a lover, for who else but a lover can understand a mother's praise of her child. But, with a tact that was at that time rather the instinct of nature than the growth of experience, he was at no loss to discover how matters stood in the family. He saw that the affection of Madame Cadières for her handsome, gentle daughter, which partook of a sort of involuntary respect for her imagined superiority, was mixed with no small alloy of pride and ambition. To make you fully understand how ambition could be gratified in this circumstance, I must remind you—or rather inform you, for you may chance never to have heard of the influence of religion among us previous to the revolution.

The different classes of society were then so distinctly marked, that there was no possibility of passing the boundary which divided the *tiers état* from the aristocracy. Wealth, talent, beauty, genius, the gifts of fortune and of nature, were alike inadequate to smooth away the obstacles that lay between the unprivileged and the privileged, however deficient the latter

might be in equivalent merits. Now, as is usual in such cases, the secondary classes had nothing so much at heart as to pass the forbidden frontier, and in proportion as they neared that point, were they considered and looked up to by their own society. Such was the power of the priesthood, however, that what nothing else could effect, religion could; and before its members all doors flew open, all artificial barriers fell. Royalty itself was fain to humble its head before the cowl, and the veil had precedence of the coronet. Hence, perhaps, the secret of many a misnamed religious calling, the source of many a fervent devotion and of a certain mania for saintship, a prevailing distemperature of mind at that epoch, which was a convenient channel for female ambition.

My father perceived, without much difficulty, that Madame Cadières was silly, bigoted, and very ambitious. To such a woman the thought of giving the world a saint, and a pretty one,—for ugly female eminences are always at a discount,—would most naturally present itself; and chance having met her half

way in the merits and disposition of her daughter, what more natural than that she should hail the prospect with delight?

That Catherine had wholly yielded up her young soul to the feelings thus carefully instilled into her was evident, and what might have been expected. But my father began to suspect that a warm imagination lay concealed beneath her calm exterior, and he could not help thinking that she was more calculated to bless a husband and children with the sources of love lying as yet unrevealed within her young bosom, than for the frigidity of a monastic seclusion. He approached the object of his meditations, and timidly asked why she did not mingle in the amusements of her friends.

“Because they do not amuse me,” she replied. “When the thoughts are often fixed on grave subjects, it becomes difficult to bring them to bear on lighter things.”

Although the observation might have seemed affected and odd in most girls of her age, Catherine’s manner was so simple and natural that there was no possibility of misunderstand-

ing her. Whatever she said came spontaneously to her lips, and was the offspring of her thoughts; but those thoughts—her very nature—had taken a forced and unnatural bent.

“I understand,” said my father. “By remaining fixed too long on any one object, the mind is apt, like the limbs, to lose its elasticity. You are perfectly right, Mademoiselle Catherine; but ought we not, in such a case, to apply the same remedy we use for the body—a change?”

“Surely there is no need of remedy where there is no evil,” was Catherine’s answer; and my father dared not yet venture his real opinions on so delicate a theme.

When the party again gathered together he felt almost relieved from his former embarrassment, so fast had his imagination familiarized him with those whom Madame Cadières had so amply described to him; but neither the languishing, voluptuous beauty of Marie Langières, whose long silken lashes fell over orbs that glowed with passion; nor the lustrous, laughing eyes of the merry Mademoiselle Guyol,

whose light step seemed scarcely to touch the earth, and whose *espieglerie* lighted up an irregular, but very pretty face, nor any grace or charm of any of them, could induce him to change his former impression of Catherine Cadières' incomparable superiority; in short, he was fast yielding himself up to the all-delightful illusions of a first love.

More than once he attempted to enter into something like conversation with Mademoiselle Raymond, next to whom he sat; but the frigid, disagreeable manner of that young lady so totally discouraged him, that, although he could perceive she was the most intimate of Catherine's companions, he could not make up his mind to win her good graces; and, moreover, doubted the possibility of the achievement.

The young men of the family came home very late, but, the evening being inviting for a walk, they accompanied my father back to town. During that time he had an opportunity of perceiving that they partook, in a great degree, of their mother's poverty of intellect, and

entered fully into her views and opinions with regard to Catherine, whom they evidently fancied must, one day, become the footstool of their own promotion in the church, and cause the elevation of the whole family. My father listened with apparent acquiescence to all they advanced on this subject, but determined, in his own mind, to carry off the prize if he could, despite all the saintships in the world.

Now began, for him, the golden dreams of youth, mingled with the realities of life. Grounded in excellent studies, gifted with a fine organ and natural eloquence, he soon made way in his profession, whilst his good qualities—intercourse with the world gaining for him a sufficient ease of manner to set them off—began to develop themselves, and in a very short time he became a general favourite with young and old. He was quoted as an example to the sons, and looked upon as a very desirable suitor for the daughters. But the parents were not alone in discovering his merits; he was not slow in perceiving that Madame Cadières had prophesied rightly, in assuring him that he

had no rejection to apprehend on the part of their fair scions. Even the languid and proud Marie Langières grew more animated in his presence, and the sprightly Marie Guyol more pensive; but his heart, from the first hour of meeting, acknowledged no other sovereign but Catherine.

Whether, after all, the mother triumphed in Madame Cadières' bosom, and she could not remain insensible to the advantage of settling her daughter so happily and comfortably as she had an opportunity of doing with my father, and therefore thought it a matter of conscience to keep her doors open to him, or that she was actuated merely by a feeling of kindness, he could never discover; but her house became a sort of second home, where all his leisure hours were spent; his place was marked at the hospitable board, where a frank welcome ever awaited him.

He was treated by Catherine with the utmost cordiality; and, though her manner remained as calm and grave as ever, he could not help fancying that he was daily gaining

ground in her esteem, and that her preference was insensibly ripening into a warmer feeling. The bare possibility of such a thing sufficed to gild every hour of his life with sunshine. How often did he picture to himself the rapturous joy with which he would clasp the dear girl to his bosom,—his own, his Catherine, for life. With what downcast eyes and blushing cheeks would she still, even when a wife, receive him on his return home; and how he would teach her lip to smile, and something sweeter still. How quietly, but yet cheerfully, would she fulfil the little home duties that make home so comfortable—the only comfortable spot on earth. How her meek virtues would clothe her in a lasting beauty, that, like his love, would grow with coming years. All the dreams of an honourable love were his. He would sit gazing on her in silence by the hour together, rapt in thought, whilst a glowing, ardent admiration filled his breast, equally inspired by the sun-beam playing on his mistress' golden tresses, the passing pallor of her cheek, or the soft murmur of her voice. In short, love made him a poet.

Having no reason to conceal these sentiments, they soon became pretty generally known, and formed the topic of conversations it was sometimes his chance to overhear. One autumnal evening, as he was quietly reclining against one of the prim, tall box hedge rows in Madame Cadières' garden, a few of her merry young guests happened to seat themselves on the other side of the leafy barrier; and, unconscious of his vicinity, handled the subject with no great ceremony.

“As for me,” said Marie Langières, as if in reply to something previously advanced, “I am sure I do not see why the Cadières should refuse Monsieur Jules Chaudon. I am even better connected than Catherine; my uncle is a judge; I might hope for a *de*, at least, before my name, whenever I chose to change it, and yet I don't know that I should have refused him myself, had he proposed to me.”

“Nor I,” said Mademoiselle Guyol, “although he is so grave, and likes so little the theatre. However, if she should marry him, it is a comfort to think that he will never take her to Paris,

where it is my great ambition to reside, for any girl with tolerable looks is said to cut an uncommon figure there."

"For my part," exclaimed Mademoiselle Reboul, "I had rather marry him than that old Monsieur Renoir, whom my parents wish me to wed, for all that he is so rich, and certainly, as most people would think, the best match of the two."

"Not I, *par exemple*," returned Mademoiselle la Rue, whose predilection for money Madame Cadières had touched upon in her first conversation with my father; "I wish Monsieur Renoir would ask me, that's all! Were he fifty times as old and as ugly, I'd accept him at the very first asking. 'If fortune be not happiness, 'tis the better half of it,' says my grand-mamma, and I believe her."

"That's dutiful," said Mademoiselle Guyol, laughing; "and now, young ladies, let's see if we shall each of us be gratified in our dearest wishes. Here is a daisy I pluck for Marie Langières; I'll tear each leaf off with a *yes* or a *no*, alternately, and we'll see with what word

the last will fall—that will be fate's decision. Come, say, pretty daisy,—Shall Marie Langières marry a chevalier, or a monsieur *de*, or even an officer—she would so fain be a fine lady? *Yes—no—yes—no.* No! ha, ha, ha!” laughed the merry girl; “she'll marry an underwriter after all, or an usher, or a schoolmaster, or, perhaps, take the veil. Well—let's see! now it's my turn.—Shall I ever see Paris? Again the flower says—*no.* Shall Mademoiselle Reboul marry Renoir?—*no!* Well, that's strange! And Marie de la Rue, shall she find a Cræsus for a suitor?—*no!* Well, that's odd! Shall any one of us marry at all, I wonder?” But the harmless flowret seemed unpropitious, for again it determined—*no!* “Well, that's stupid!” said Mademoiselle Guyol, impatiently; “I'll know if Catherine will accept Monsieur Jules?”

My father did not hear the conclusion of the childish trick, for Catherine herself came up the alley in which he sat, and he had not yet sufficient courage to put the question to the only true oracle, the sweet girl herself.

A short time after this, my father witnessed

a strange incident, which I must not omit to relate, for it bears upon the story.

It was a frequent amusement of the inhabitants of Toulon to make excursions into its delightful vicinities, on which occasions the old axiom of the more the merrier seemed to be the order of the day ; and, in the summer season, gay caravans were constantly seen issuing from the town gates.

Madame Cadières had invited a large party to accompany herself and her bevy of young companions on a visit to a cave of celebrity in the neighbourhood, that had served as a resting-place to some saint or other, but ninety-two and ninety-three have so sadly confused these superstitious traditions, that I cannot precisely inform you of the whereabouts, nor the exact object, of their curiosity or devotion. I only know it was to answer both ends, and that my father was, as usual, invited to make one of the party.

This place was at a considerable distance from the town, to which it was agreed they should return by moonlight, being too many—

for their servants accompanied them—to have anything to fear from the unsettled state of the roads. Gay was the little band, and none gayer than my father. The warmer glow which the sun of the south gives to man's spirits, as it lends a richer hue to its flowers, a sweeter fragrance to its breezes, ripening all it lights upon to a more finished existence, imparted to the whole cavalcade a tone of hilarity, to which old and young, master and man, yielded without control, and all laughed in the face of smiling nature around them. Even Catherine seemed, to a certain degree, infected with the general cheerfulness, though her enjoyment in no way interfered with her usual repose of manner. My father rode the whole day by her side unreproved by herself, and unmolested by others, as though his right to that place of honour was silently acknowledged by all. Catherine spoke freely and feelingly on all subjects; and though not brilliantly witty, her frank and gentle earnestness imparted to her conversation a charm which rendered him perfectly insensible to the gloomy silence maintained by her insepa-

rable friend, Mademoiselle Raymond, whose joyless countenance and chilling aspect made her like unto a shadow thrown across their path.

The merry devotees reached the aim of their pilgrimage in safety, performed their somewhat protracted devotions, and refreshed themselves with a plentiful cold repast, the ingredients for which had been brought from town, in large baskets, wherewith a couple of strong mules had been laden.

Up to this time every thing had been most favourable ; but when their meal was finished, and they prepared to return, the sky, which had gradually assumed a threatening appearance, poured forth a shower of rain as violent as it was unexpected, forcing every one to cover. The same tree sheltered my father and Mademoiselle Cadières, nor did either seem to feel the circumstance an annoyance.

They all fancied the cloud would soon spend its fury, and the weather clear again, such sudden and apparently causeless atmospherical changes being very common in our climate ; but instead of mending, matters grew worse

with every minute. The thunder growled, at first indistinctly, and the lightning occasionally illumined the lurid heavens with a faint flash ; but soon the storm broke forth with unparalleled might, and it was as much as my father could do to prevent his fragile companion from being dashed to the ground by the hurricane.

He was at first amazed,—then frightened at the effect of the storm upon her nerves. As it increased, she grew more silent and more pale, seemed gradually to lose all consciousness of his kind attentions, and even of his very presence, and yielded herself up completely to her terror. Remonstrances and encouragement were alike disregarded ; he took her hand, but she tore it impatiently from him. He then grasped her by the arm to force, since he could not persuade, her to leave the shelter of the tree, which bowed to the wind in a manner to make him dread it would snap, and crush them in its fall.

The rain was blinding. Large hail stones were driven furiously into their faces ; he vainly strove to conduct Catherine towards some bushes that grew at a short distance, and which

afforded, at least, protection from the wind. Escaping his grasp, she uttered a few angry expressions, in a sharp tone, such as he never thought to have heard from her lips; and, cowering down upon the field amid the rank grass laid by the rain, panting breathless with the excess of terror, she lay in dangerous proximity to the tree.

Fortunately, however, the hurricane was not of long duration, and the air soon became filled with calls and shouts, as, one by one, the scattered members of the party emerged from their various places of refuge. The young ladies looked all the lovelier for the unavoidable disarray of their costume, in spite of pale cheeks and lank hair; but the elder dames were greater sufferers by this trivial mishap, and more concerned for its consequences. They looked disconsolately at the rain, which, although the wind had ceased, continued to pelt them most unmercifully,—then at their dripping clothes, and at the lowering heavens, to which the dusk of evening now began to impart an additional obscurity, and finally called upon the aged

servant, who acted as guide, to join them in a hasty consultation.

My father, all this time, stood near Mademoiselle Cadières, to whom he did not venture again to speak. She still lay apparently insensible in the wet grass, and he was much relieved by the approach of Mademoiselle Raymond, who stepped up to the prostrate Catherine, and addressed her in a decided manner.

“Rise, Catherine—for shame—why will you ever remain a child? Rise, I say! Do you not see that all is over? I hope these ladies are not going to remain here all night, or ride in their damp clothes; you and I, at least, must walk forward.”

Mademoiselle Raymond spoke rather with an air of authority than affection, and my father observed with surprise that it produced an almost instantaneous effect. Catherine rose at her bidding, and walked on with the passive obedience of a child, looking with reviving confidence into her stern features.

“Ah!” thought my father, “hers is a weak as well as a gentle spirit, and requires no less

guidance than support—the most amiable of all characters for a wife. Well, I am able to afford her both.”

“It is not easy to understand,” said Madame Cadières, in an apologetic manner to the company fast gathering around, “how so gifted a being as my Catherine, so superior to others of the same age and sex, can be afraid of thunder, and tremble at the wind. To be sure, I was always a dreadful coward in these things, but that’s no reason why——”

“It is the weakness of her nerves,” said Eleonore Raymond, somewhat sharply; “they are singularly irritable, though you will not perceive it, and I advise you not to expose her any longer to this cold shower-bath than you can help.”

Though the advice was ungraciously given, its wisdom went directly home to the mother’s heart; besides, it accounted favourably for a weakness in her daughter’s character which she imagined to be a flaw, and she gratefully availed herself of this opportunity of turning the attention of the listeners into another channel.

It was promptly decided that they should proceed on foot along a cross road leading to a village well known to their guide, where they hoped to find an inn of some sort or other. The attendants were to bring up the rear with the mules and baggage.

Again it fell to my father's lot to escort Catherine and Eleonore. The latter gave him little or no trouble; it was but seldom she needed his assistance, and never his encouragement. Not so his fairer companion; not a step could she advance alone. As the gloom deepened, she looked around in vague apprehension; now fancying a bat was flying about her head—now, that a toad leaped before her in the pathway; then, that dark figures flitted along behind the hedgerows; started at the sound of her own voice, and feared to look back, lest she might behold—she could not herself say what.

For all these imaginary terrors Eleonore every now and then reproved her friend in no gentle tone; and my father perceived, with displeasure, that her remonstrances had more

weight with Catherine than his gentle persuasions. He could have wished Mademoiselle Raymond at the other end of the world; but still Catherine's trembling hand rested on his arm. He could distinctly feel her heart beat against it; she called on his name with soft and timid accents, and he felt happy, as young lovers only can feel, and wished it might be permitted to walk on thus, hand in hand, throughout all space and time.

“ At last an inn was discovered. It was crowded with wayfarers surprised by the storm; and all that the surly hostess would or could do, was to allow this new influx of visitors to dry themselves by the kitchen-fire, and to pass the night in a large comfortless room, boasting no beds, and very little furniture of any kind; along the walls of which she distributed heaps of straw for their accommodation; and, poor as this was, they had reason to congratulate themselves upon it; for it was with the utmost difficulty they obtained that no strangers should share the apartment with them.

After much scrambling and laughing on

the part of the juniors, and much grumbling on that of the seniors, the disasters of the evening were tolerably repaired; and all busied themselves in making preparations, as best they could, for the enjoyment of rest, rendered doubly necessary by the exertions of the day.

Catherine, who had by this time completely recovered her equanimity, provided, with the most engaging solicitude, for her mother's comfort. A few cushions, taken from the mules by her brothers, and arranged by her own careful hand, and a coverlid borrowed from the hostess (by a miracle clean and fresh), soon made the old lady a tolerable couch. Madame Langières pillowed herself on her daughter's shoulder; Mesdemoiselles la Rue and Reboul were equally eager in displaying their filial affection; whilst Marie Guyol kept in exercise the gallantry of the few young men who had neither mothers nor sisters to claim their attention.

Eleonore Raymond stood pensively gazing on the various movements of her young friends, with an expression of sadness not habitual to her austere countenance, and which softened

its harsher lines. My father approached her, and inquired if he could be of any service.

“No, I thank you,” she replied, in a less abrupt tone than usual.

“I thought you looked as if you missed something,” he said, apologetically.

“You were right,” she answered. “When I behold these happy children and parents thus occupied, and anxious for one another, I miss my own mother.”

Tears started to her eyes as she spoke, and her voice trembled. For the first time, she appeared to him not absolutely repulsive. She is not pretty, thought he, but decidedly interesting. He would have continued a conversation begun in a tone so congenial to his own feelings, for he was the best of sons; but Mademoiselle Raymond suddenly turned her back upon him, and moved off to another end of the room, as if ashamed of her momentary communicativeness.

“She has not a bad heart; but what a surly, uncongenial temper,” thought my father.

“At last, every thing and every body was

settled. Catherine, whose exhaustion had for some time been visible, now lay stretched upon a couch composed of cloaks and shawls thrown upon the straw; and her brothers already began to nod in their chairs by her side. My father, too, had taken his station at no great distance, in a situation so shaded, that, while no motion of Catherine's could escape him, she could not easily become aware of his vicinity. Even Eleonore Raymond, who sat at the table, on which burned dimly a couple of villanous tallow candles, with her head buried in her hands, remained so still, that it was impossible to say whether she slept or not.

That my father felt neither weary nor sleepy I need perhaps scarcely tell you; and yet young men seldom now-a-days possess sufficient freshness of feeling to know the luxury of a real *bona fide* passion—a pure, yet glowing first love. I am sorry for them; for I think them great losers by the change. Sentiment has its epicurism as well as sensuality; and I consider him a pitiful wight indeed, who knows too much of the latter ever to have tasted the

sweets of the former. However, this is a digression, *revenons à nos moutons*.

It has often been said, and my father felt on this occasion the full force of the observation, that nothing ripens intimacy faster than a journey, or anything resembling it. Weeks, months, of almost daily associations in the usual routine of society, do not mature a budding affection, rub off the mutual diffidence, and efface the doubts, which are its chief impediments, like a whole day spent together. It has something of the familiarity of domestic habits; nor is it possible for the fair lady to maintain herself within the strong ramparts of icy reserve, when exposed to the incessant skirmishes of polite attentions, needed kindnesses, and all the chances that throw young people on such occasions into each other's way. I see by your smile, my young friend, that you think my comparisons and sentiments as *roccocos* as myself; so I will even on with my story.

For the first few hours, everything was hushed in the large crowded chamber, and every one slept, or seemed to sleep. Catherine was

wrapt in the peaceful slumbers of a child, from which even the loud snorings of her brothers were unequal to arouse her. To the young lover's enamoured fancy she seemed more lovely in this placid, gentle repose, than in her most animated moments. But he loved as we of Toulon and Marseilles love; whether she spake or was silent, laughing or sad, kind or otherwise, her last mood ever seemed the most fascinating, and herself more perfect with every passing hour.

Midnight tolled from the neighbouring church in thin, sharp accents, denoting, by the meagre sound, how much it stood in need of fresh bells. My father started at the chime, and looked around. Mademoiselle Raymond was yet in the same position; Marie Guyol had dropped asleep, in the midst of her frolics, like a wearied Hebe; and her admirers had glided to a heap of straw not far off, doubtless with the intention of never losing sight of their divinity, where, nature having overcome them, they lay in a state of the deepest oblivion. Scarcely had the hour ceased to chime, when the moon,

emerging from the cloud that had hitherto veiled her, shone forth in uncontrolled brilliancy, streaming full through the curtainless windows upon Catherine's reclining figure. My father, dreading lest the light should disturb her, was about to seek the means of excluding it, when suddenly she rose to a sitting posture, and stretched forth her hands anxiously.

"I must dress my hair," she said, in an audible, though low voice; "but I cannot find my comb—I fear it is left behind."

He was surprised at the extraordinary demand, and no less so when the elder brother gently roused the younger, who immediately produced the desired object.

"That's right," she said. "Now, bring me a mirror. How can I braid my hair without one? Thank you. Now, take away this odious kerchief—so. Joseph, don't stand in my light."

My father was startled; for it was he, and not her brother, who stood between her and the light of the moon. He moved off, saying to Joseph, as he did so—

"I am afraid my presence annoys Mademoiselle Cadières."

“Not the least in the world,” was the reply. “She is not even aware of it. If it interests you to watch her just now, you may do so, provided you do not attempt to wake her.”

“But she is no longer asleep.”

“She is,” answered Joseph, with a smile. “Have you never before witnessed an instance of somnambulism? My poor sister has been subject to this affliction since her childhood; it is, however, fast wearing off. But hush! she is about to speak.”

“Joseph, bring the light nearer.”

He lighted a candle and placed it by her with great precaution, and my father then perceived that her eyes were completely closed. One brother, at her desire, held the candle, the other, the mirror,—then removing the silk kerchief, she carefully unbraided her tresses and suffered them to flow in natural luxuriance down her shoulders.

I have often heard it said by those who had known her, that Catherine’s hair was finer than any they had ever seen. Of the purest, palest gold colour, and of the softest, most silken tissue, it fell in glittering showers about her, and

literally veiled her person. The only touch of vanity her friends and detractors had been able to trace in Catherine, was in reference to this beautiful ornament of nature. A menial hand was never suffered to profane it, but she braided and smoothed it herself with peculiar care ; and, setting at nought the perverse taste of the time, when ladies befrizzled and bespangled themselves most unmercifully, she gathered them up at the back of her head in a simple Grecian knot, aware, doubtless, that this simplicity displayed their beauty to the greatest possible advantage, and would now and then pass a sky-blue ribbon through them with a coquettish and becoming grace.

Most men, besides admiring beauty in its more broad and general acceptance, are devoted to some separate, individual grace. Some praise a small foot, others offer their homage at the shrine of a snowy, well-formed hand, a third fancies beauty rests in the eye ; my father had always a caprice for fine hair, and this charm in Mademoiselle Cadières, although so strangely exhibited, made no small impression on his imagination.

The light caught the long rich locks as she carefully combed and separated them, and even occasionally played on her closed eyelids without discomposing her. At last she seemed satisfied, and well she might be so, for the most expert practitioner could not, with open eyes and in full daylight, have achieved the work better. She then rose to her feet and made towards the window, feeling with her hands for a curtain.

“There’s no shutting out the moon,” she said. “Well, it can’t be helped. It is but for one night, to-morrow I shall be home again.”

“She must be awake,” said my father, in a whisper to Joseph, who watched his sister narrowly, without, however, attempting to impede her movements. “She speaks quite connectedly.”

“She is asleep, notwithstanding, and we must be careful not to wake her, for that the physician declares is the only danger.”

Catherine walked, indeed, somewhat hesitatingly, with outstretched hands, like a blind person, or one groping in the dark, yet contriving with singular nicety to avoid coming in contact with any person or object that stood in her way, ad-

dressing herself to Joseph alone, as if unconscious of the presence of any other.

She next approached the table where Eleonore sat, who, by a slight movement, betrayed that she was either aroused by the circumstance, or, what is more probable, had never slept at all. Catherine took up the light; my father sprang forward to snatch it from her uncertain hold, but Mademoiselle Raymond interfered. Gently pushing him back, she took the candlestick from Catherine's unresisting hand, saying, with her wonted abruptness,—

“Go to your bed, Catherine; night is the time for sleep. Go and rest.”

Catherine hung her head like a chided child, and moved slowly to her couch. She knelt by its side and recited her evening prayer in a sweet, though smothered voice. She never omitted to cross herself at the appropriate places, and even gently struck her breast at certain words expressive of penitence and humility; then laid herself down, and, in another instant, seemed as calm and motionless as though her sleep were unvexed even by dreams.

My father had heard much and read more about the singular abnormality called somnambulism, but had never before witnessed this phenomenon. Now that he, for the first time, beheld its effects in a beloved object, he had sufficient food for meditation until the early dawn broke upon the uncomfortable party, and roused them to fresh exertions. Joseph had warned him that Catherine, in her waking hours, was totally unconscious of having walked and talked during sleep; and that it was thought advisable by her friends not to allude, in any manner, to the circumstance. He therefore greeted her as if nothing unusual had happened, and, after a hasty meal, they mounted and rode homewards.

He would have resumed his place by Catherine's side, but perceived she had fallen to the rear, and was engaged in an earnest conversation with Eleanor Raymond, of which, by the direction of their glances, he could not but guess he was the subject.

"They are discussing your merits," said Mademoiselle Guyol, in the free gay manner of childhood which she had retained while woman-

hood and its graces were rapidly growing upon her; "you never advocated a cause more warmly than Mademoiselle Raymond does yours at this moment, I can assure you."

Before he could frame a reply, she had urged her horse forward and headed the cavalcade. Her words, whether spoken in jest or earnest, somewhat disconcerted him. He could not help fancying they came nearer the mark, as to the fact of his merits being under discussion, than the speaker herself was aware of, though he became nervous at the bare thought that Catherine might be prejudiced against him by the harsh opinions which, in spite of Mademoiselle Guyol's assertion, he doubted not her friend entertained of him, as well as of all the world besides.

The weather, though cloudy and uncertain in the morning, cleared up in the course of the day, and young and old recovered their spirits, which had been damped by the mischance of the previous night. But when my father again joined Catherine, all his efforts to resume the unembarrassed confidential tone of the eve

were unsuccessful; long pauses intervened in their conversation, which Eleonore, as usual, took no trouble to fill up. But whether this chilling restraint originated with himself or Mademoiselle Cadières, he was at a loss to determine. This trifling check naturally rendered their ride back to Toulon less agreeable than their departure; still my father, on the whole, was sorry when it was over, and felt that this excursion had rivetted his chains.

Matters remained for a few months in statu quo. The intimacy continued, obviously encouraged by the mother, and anything but discouraged, as he thought, by the daughter. His parents, to whom he had openly declared his feelings and intentions, approved highly of his choice, and thus all things looked propitious. He fancied, too, that Catherine's disposition gradually became modified, by some unknown cause or other, but which he did not fail, with the sanguineness of youth, to attribute to his own growing influence. She seemed every day less of a saint and more of a woman. This change, while it damped the ambitious hopes

and disconcerted the personal views of her friends, gratified him unspeakably. All parties appeared to soften towards him; even her brother's jealousy diminished, in exact ratio, as the hopes they had built upon their sister began to wane.

It was again spring. Catherine and her mother had removed to their country house, where my father continued to be an every day visitor; and he determined, at last, to venture on the grand question, whose answer was to fix his future happiness or misery. But it would be wearisome to relate, and incredible to believe, how often he went to the house with the firm resolution that that very evening should be the last of suspense, and returned without even having hinted at the subject nearest his heart. Whenever he attempted to bring himself to the point, his courage failed him. Uncertainty was bliss compared to the misery a rejection would inflict.

At last he took heart, and made his proposals in due form to the mother. She was, evidently, by no means taken by surprise; her answer

was fair and candid—it revealed her innermost thoughts.

“It were my duty as a mother,” she said, “to decide for my inexperienced daughter in so grave a business, and most mothers in my condition would, unhesitatingly, and gladly avail themselves of such an offer as yours, so every way satisfactory are your prospects, your connections, and especially your own qualities. But my Catherine is so superior a being, that what would be wisdom in the mothers of ordinary daughters, would be folly in me. She is the only authority to whom I can refer you in such matters: if she accept you, no one can be more willing than myself to call you son. However different may once have been my hopes and views for my daughter—whatever wishes I may still entertain in my secret heart,—I do not feel justified in depriving her of the earthly advantages that Providence may throw in her path; besides, if she do not reject you, it is a proof heaven willed her not to be of the elect; but if, as I believe, she be one of the chosen, then are such proposals as yours merely the test by which her

virtue is tried. Speak to her yourself, Monsieur Chaudon—I will not seek to influence her either way—we must all abide by her decision.”

He was received by Mademoiselle Cadières with the same kind smile that ever greeted him ; but, somehow, it assumed a more sisterly expression than usual, in his disturbed fancy. She listened to him throughout—and, though awkward enough at first, he grew eloquent with his subject—with a calm, grave attention, and a collectedness of manner, that almost damped his hopes. She blushed once or twice, indeed, at the ardour of his expressions, but never turned away her head, nor trembled, nor, in short, shewed any of those symptoms of embarrassment and fear, so reassuring to a lover’s doubts.

“ And now,” she said, in a firm though gentle tone, “ now that I have listened to all you have to say, pray do the same by me, and do not interrupt me. I have long guessed the preference with which you honour me. Indeed, Eleonore opened my eyes to it the day we rode back from —” (she mentioned the very excur-

sion, the incidents of which I have detailed to you), "and I would then have renounced your acquaintance, although a source of much real pleasure, but for her advice, which I thought wise, like everything she utters. 'Do not judge hastily, Catherine,' she said; 'you are perfectly aware of Monsieur Jules' qualities; give yourself the time to be just to them, and to know your own heart. Try it by every test in your power before you consider it altogether Heaven's—a mistake might cost you dear.' She spoke at great length of my being misled by vanity—delusions of all kinds—of the necessity of giving my feelings fair play. I yielded to the truth of her observations. I thought you then, as I still do—and I feel a pride in owning the fact—a man whom I could love, because I esteem—to whom I could willingly, gladly, yield up my destiny." My father's heart bounded with joy. "But,"—Oh! those *buts*; how they trifle with our best hopes in life, and nip them in the bud, as a hoar frost does the early spring blossoms;—"but, though I could have been content to wed you—could

have loved you—I did not, because I loved God more, and wished to devote myself wholly to his service. Interrupt me not, I entreat. I gave myself a fair trial—saw you every day—received your attentions—courted, rather than avoided, the opportunities of judging your merits—and every day asked my own heart the question you have put me to-day. The answer has invariably been the same. I am not destined for the calm joys and easy duties of a housewife; my vocation speaks loudly in my bosom, haunts me in my dreams, and points out to me the path I must tread.”

My father vehemently contradicted her assertion, and blamed her desire for a conventional life.

“You mistake,” she said, with a quiet smile, “I do not wish to take the veil. Nothing can be further from my thoughts or desires. The idle, dreamy existence of a nun, appears to me the most insignificant and useless of any. My sphere of action and of feeling must be enlarged, not curtailed. No! my mind is fixed on other points. To take up, one day, the

pilgrim's staff, and turn my steps towards the holy city,—such is my plan;—to reach it, through many perils and troubles, and be blessed by his Holiness, my hope. There, under the shadow of his wing, will I dwell,—devote myself and my fortune entirely to the service of the unhappy—the suffering. All women can be kind mothers, complacent wives—they but fulfil nature's instinct; but it is a noble mission for a weak, timid woman, made strong by the spirit of Christianity, to encounter, willingly, danger under every shape—to bear privation and discomfort—to renounce the deceptions and vain joys of the world, that she may soothe, in their excess of misery, the poor, the afflicted, the abandoned; smooth the pillow of infirm dotage, guide the steps of the sightless, bring repentance to the bosom of the wicked, and care for those who have none to protect them. Oh! it is a holy mission, and one to which I burn to devote myself. Seek not to interfere with my vocation; no temptation earth can offer could induce me to renounce it.”

My father listened with mixed feelings of

consternation, pity, and admiration. The heart of an angel seemed unveiling itself. He knew she spoke not vain, calculated words—that they welled from her inmost soul. But, beautiful as he thought the aspirations of that soul, he deemed her views visionary, and was convinced that time would prove this even to herself. Suspecting that, after all, she was more attached to him than she was aware of, he did not renounce his hopes at once, and frankly told her so.

She smiled and sighed at the same time; but he obtained the permission to continue the trial, with the result of which, she said, having forewarned him—since he was willingly courting error and disappointment—she would not have to fear the reproaches of her conscience.

The words with which she closed the interview were balm to the wounds she had inflicted; —“ If ever I should change my determination, which is not likely, rest assured it will be in your favour only.”

After this explanation my father was very unhappy, but not hopeless; and continued his

visits to the house. Indeed, his footing there seemed exactly the same as heretofore, and a stranger to the circumstances of the case would never have guessed but that he was an accepted, not a rejected suitor.

Upon being informed of her daughter's final decision, Madame Cadières' feelings were of a mixed kind. She was glad and sorrowful, proud and humbled; for, should Catherine accomplish her destiny in obscurity, she, like most mothers, would not have been best pleased to see her daughter remain a spinster, whilst she would have the mortification to behold the fair scions of almost every other matron of her set more or less advantageously settled. But she was consoled by the reflection that my father's love would, in all probability, outlive his refusal, and that she could at any time secure him if nothing better turned up.

My father, as I have said, suffered himself by no means to be discouraged; he even became, every day, more convinced that he was gaining ground in Catherine's affections,—that her childish adherence to early plans and fan-

tastic notions was giving way to the voice of nature and the force of truth. He was not the only one to perceive that she was gradually descending from those imaginary spheres wherein her young imagination had been foolishly suffered to wander; that the tone of her feelings was growing more natural, and that her thoughts were becoming more bent towards the realities of life. Fools and the envious deplored the change; but all people of sense rejoiced, especially the young men of the town, for Catherine was blessed with a good inheritance as well as with beauty and goodness.

It was very much the fashion with the idle youths of the day—not being, as now, allowed to dabble in politics ere they were fledged—to make a great parade of gallantry. It was one of their customs to elect, every now and then, some fair idol of the hour, who was adulated, talked over, and rhymed at, until she either wedded or faded, when a new election took place. Catherine, from earliest dawn of womanhood, had been the standard *belle* of her own society; but, at this epoch of her life, her

loveliness ripened into such fulness as to become the theme of universal homage. Officers and students, *aspirants de marine* and seminarists, all agreed in electing her, with one voice, the queen of beauty; and strove, with envious emulation, to throw themselves in the way of the young girl, who could not take a walk round the ramparts, or look out of her window by the merest chance, without encountering a host of eager eyes, ready to drink in the most casual of her glances.

My father was more distressed than flattered by the general homage thus rendered to the object of his affections; for he dreaded the appearance of competitors to the prize which he was so eager to snatch to himself; nor were his misgivings altogether without foundation.

One young man, who had just arrived from a northern province to join his regiment, quartered for the time at Toulon, viewed Catherine with a deeper, purer admiration, than the idle throng. He belonged to the privileged classes; for he not only had a *de* before his

name, but bore one of those made illustrious in the annals of our country, by the deeds of his forefathers. His fortune was not inferior to his birth; yet he did not disdain, a few months after his arrival, to depose all these advantages at Mademoiselle Cadières' feet, and entreat her to share them with him.

Catherine unhesitatingly refused. To understand fully the merit of this rejection, I must again remind you of the state of society previous to the Revolution. The king in the fairy tales, who wedded a shepherdess tending her flock, scarcely conferred upon her a greater honour, than did the gentleman of those days upon a bourgeoisie, in making her his spouse. One must bear in mind the different position of the *gentilhomme* at that epoch, and how inconceivably greater were its advantages, to understand clearly that such a refusal was actually a sacrifice.

In this case, too, the young lady could not reasonably object to the person or mental qualities of the lover. Youthful, tolerably good-looking, thoroughly enamoured of her, he pos-

sessed besides that high polish of manner, which it is not prejudice to believe the property of those only who have leisure to bestow on its cultivation.

Still vanity and ambition left the heart untouched which love had failed to move ; and the agonizing suspense my father endured whilst the affair was on the *tapis*, gave way to the most exuberant feelings of triumph when it was decided. His rival, deeply galled at what he conceived to be an insult, and yet too sincerely attached to resent his disappointment by an affectation of contemptuous indifference, obtained leave of absence, and eventually an exchange of regiment ; so that he left the town immediately, never to return.

Madame Cadières' ambition, all devotee as she was, had received a severe blow by Catherine's determination. But when she pressed her on this point, the answer was invariably the same —“ If you insist on my choosing a husband, then let it be Monsieur Jules Chaudon :” and there the matter rested ; for, like most weak mothers, Madame Cadières found it impossible

to take up the reins she had once suffered to escape from her hands.

Gratified as my father was at this decision of his mistress, so favourable to his own wishes, still he felt daily more anxious about the issue of his suit. His own ardent devotion, together with that of the rejected officer, contributed to spread the fame of Catherine's charms; and he doubted not but rivals would spring up from every quarter. They soon indeed became numerous as blackberries; but Mademoiselle Cadières was as inexorable to her many lovers as ever was that model of female truth and excellence, fair Penelope herself. Thus my father's fears again gave way to brighter hopes. Her manner to him continued the same as ever; still he fancied he now and then could trace the semblance of a blush on her countenance, when he ventured to praise; but her damask cheek was habitually tinged with so soft a glow, that he might easily have been mistaken.

Mademoiselle Raymond, who, in spite of her uncourteous, chilling demeanour, he could not but think, was well disposed towards him,

since the kind advice she had once bestowed in his favour, might perhaps best have informed him of what he really had to expect; for she possessed the whole of Catherine's confidence. Indeed, though constantly surrounded by the young ladies he had met on his first visit to the house, Catherine's intimacy dated with them but from the epoch of her first communion, having received their religious instructions at the same time, and from the same person. With the Catholics, especially in the narrow circles of provincial life, this often forms a bond that lasts throughout existence; at any rate, is seldom broken during the first few years that elapse after the event. But Eleonore Raymond was a friend from the very cradle, as it were, and one whom Catherine could love and trust without reserve. They were constantly with each other; and more serious in disposition, graver in manner, than their youthful companions, often kept aloof and to themselves, even in moments of the greatest apparent sociability.

Although my father was fully aware of the

immense power of a female companion and confidante in the furtherance of a love affair—and it may be imagined that a certain degree of intimacy had arisen between them from their daily meetings for the space of a couple of years—there was that about Mademoiselle Raymond which checked all advance to familiarity. Always with Catherine, she seemed like the shadow-side of a bright picture, in which objects are so indistinctly represented, that the beholder can with difficulty discern them. When spoken to, it was impossible to decide whether she was affronted or pleased, amused or wearied, when listening to the conversation of others. She was kind to Catherine alone—communicative with no one else; to every other individual, without exception, her manner was cold to repulsion.

My father could not often overcome a certain disagreeable sensation, when addressing her, even though convinced she had once acted a friendly part towards him, and might do so again. But, one evening, finding her alone in the parlour, while the company were dispersed

in the garden, he summoned up sufficient resolution to entreat her good offices with Catherine. Her answer was of a nature to preclude all recurrence to the subject for the future.

“I never,” she said, “would meddle or mar in so grave an affair as the marriage of other people. It is a trouble for which one seldom reaps thanks, whether success attend the endeavour or the reverse. Parents are the only lawful advisers in such cases.”

“I am, then, totally without friendly assistance,” said my father, despondingly.

“Catherine herself is your best friend,” said Mademoiselle Raymond, with marked emphasis; and turning away with her usual abruptness, she left him to digest the meaning of her words at his leisure.

The autumn of 1728 had just begun, and Toulon was sadly at a loss for some novelty wherewith to while away the tedious hours of rainy weather which they had for some time to endure. Even the little *coterie* to which my father belonged was at a stand still; for Monsieur Jules Chaudon’s long-protracted attachment to Made-

moiselle Cadières had grown to be so stale an affair, that the intelligence of their marriage would scarcely have elicited an exclamation, when suddenly a new star appeared in their hemisphere, and roused the inhabitants of our good town from their momentary torpor.

Among the numerous beehives of cowls and shaven crowns that Toulon possessed, it boasted a seminary of Jesuits, and several establishments belonging to the order of Mount Carmel. The latter certainly had more partisans in the town than the former; and even the Lord Bishop himself was supposed to favour them greatly. The Carmelites had the best preachers, the guidance of the most fashionable souls, and, in short, carried it with a high hand over the Jesuits.

For a long while were the latter forced to bear this mortification—not without complaint or murmur, it is true; but still they were compelled to yield the step to their rivals. That this could not last for ever, that something must be done, was certain; but what that something should be, it took some time to consider—as

much indeed as a few years, it would seem, since my father had spent already a couple in Toulon—before they thought of the expedient which they finally fell upon.

They had—namely, in one of their communities at Aix—a preacher, who was singularly distinguished by his eloquence and fiery zeal. His reputation had spread far and wide over the country, and his order considered him as one of its most useful members. Such a person only could be opposed to the barefooted Carmelites with success. He would bear down every thing before him at Toulon, as he had done wherever he had appeared: the triumph of the Jesuits, and the defeat of the Carmelites would be complete.

This man was accordingly called to Toulon, under the title of Rector of the Royal Seminary of Chaplains to the Navy. He was expected with great anxiety by the rival parties, and with intense curiosity by the whole town; for the Jesuits had artfully enough contrived that many interesting rumours should be afloat respecting their new champion.

The gossips of the place took up the subject with avidity. The success of the new preacher in the pulpit, his incredible zeal for the conversion of erring souls, the mighty persuasions by which he brought new votaries to the church, his power over the hearts of men, or rather women—for among them, it would appear, his talents had been chiefly exercised—were the theme of every conversation, from the highest to the lowest circles. The Carmelites indeed assumed a scornful, incredulous smile, as if very well assured that all this great stir would turn out much ado about nothing, whilst the Jesuits looked as if about to celebrate a *Te Deum* for victory.

At last, the news of the reverend father's arrival was spread throughout the town. It was announced that he would preach at the church of the Jesuits on the ensuing Sunday; and until that hour of trial, he was carefully kept from prying eyes, lest his novelty should wear off.

The decisive Sunday at length arrived. The moment the doors of the church were

thrown open, a rush was made by the expecting multitude, as if they were going to a show, instead of the decent, grave approach due to the house of God. Everybody who was anybody was there; and among the rest, my father, who was not without some curiosity about the matter.

When John Baptiste Girard entered the pulpit, all eyes were bent on him, with the anxious curiosity with which spectators examine a new actor, on whose merits they are about to decide.

He was plain to ugliness, which my father considered detrimental to an orator. Already past fifty, his tall, gaunt, emaciated frame made him look considerably older. His skin, sallow and drawn like parchment, adhered tightly to the frontal and cheek bones, giving to their cavities beneath a remarkably ascetic appearance—his pallor, contrasting with harsh, heavy un-intellectual brows—his large mouth, and ears that stuck to his head like two plates, formed altogether one of the coarsest and most un-gainly exteriors imaginable. His eye was the

only redeeming point about the man—large, dark, and fiery, it scanned the assembled crowd with a glance of fierce assurance that seemed the prologue to success, and was not devoid of a sort of rude dignity.

His voice was at first husky, but cleared by degrees, until it became loud and full, and, like his glance, seemed to search every conscience and descend into every heart.

He chose a simple text, and developed it with singular perspicuity, avoiding to overburthen it with hyperbolical amplification. His periods were well rounded, without exaggeration; every sentence had a point—every word a meaning; his comparisons were just, though sufficiently flowery to be graceful; his argument was close and rapid;—in short, my father said he might have been a lawyer, and an uncommonly good one.

As a preacher that day, his success was complete. The Carmelites were routed; and the Jesuits looked that ineffably humble and meek triumph of which women and monks only have the secret.

From that day the issue of the quarrel was not dubious. Father Girard's celebrity daily accrued, to the no small satisfaction of his order. His eloquence and ambition took bolder flights as he grew more at home in his new residence ; and soon the town was filled with the account of the proselytes he was making.

Gradually, the churches of the bare-footed Carmelites were deserted, their preachers voted tame, their confessors unsatisfactory, and the tide of public favour was rapidly ebbing from them. Father Girard understood, marvellously, the art of warming the zeal of elderly ladies, and making them denounce and renounce the pleasures in which they could scarcely continue to take a share ; but he had for some time no opportunity of exercising his power over the minds of the junior members of the community, and this for a reason which I must explain.

Catherine was considered by all the young girls of her age, or thereabouts, as their model and guide in religious matters ; and though many were anxious to try the new confessor, they dared not even so much as manifest their

desire openly, before it had received the sanction of her example. But there reigned a great curiosity among them to discover her opinion upon the subject; for although resolved to abide by it, they were naturally desirous that her views should coincide with their own. Though she had attended his sermons several times, without ever dropping the slightest hint about the matter in question, they did not think fit to mention it until such time as she should afford them a fair opening for so doing. They felt confident that she would explain herself one day or other, and awaited the moment in silent but eager expectation.

In their anxiety concerning the all-absorbing question, they forgot other topics that had lately much engrossed them, such as the approaching nuptials of Marie Langières and Marie La Rue, which promised to be very brilliant, the former being about to unite herself with the only son of a *fermier general*, who had just obtained a *savonnette à vilain*, as it was called (a position among the aristocracy, by means of the purchase of an estate, to which a

title was annexed—a term applied in derision by the nobility, who meant thereby to insinuate that the purchaser had acquired means whereby to wash off his plebeianism); and Mademoiselle La Rue was shortly to be led to the altar by Monsieur Renoir, the Crœsus of the province. Thus the taste of the one for grandeur and the other for wealth was in a fair way to be gratified. Mademoiselle Guyol's flirtations and *inconséquences* with her admirers among the officers had also been much discussed, as well as the obstinate refusals of all proposals by Eleonore Raymond, whose wealth tempted many families to seek her alliance. All these interesting subjects were swallowed up for the moment by the new interest excited by Father Girard.

Several weeks elapsed before the desired explanation took place. At last, Mademoiselle Cadières formally invited all her young friends to a species of conclave, on which occasion it was understood she would explicitly announce her opinion on the much-mooted point. A collation was, as usual, to soften the fatigue of so grave a debate. All the young ladies of

her coterie joyfully accepted the invitation, which included no gentlemen, except Catherine's brothers, and my father, whom she treated with the same confidence as though he in reality made part of her family.

The sitting amused him not a little at the time, ignorant as he was of the influence it would have upon his own fate and that of all present. How little did any of those there reunited, revelling in their youth and their prospects, laughing rather to ease their heart of its fulness of joy than at the objects that raised that laughter—how little did they dream they were nearing, with careless, dancing steps, the abyss that was about to engulf them.

Catherine sat, in childish state, in a purple velvet chair of antique shape, that had been brought down from the lumber-room for the purpose of giving the meeting a more imposing effect. On her right, on a plain tabouret, sat the languishing Marie Langières, who already spoke confidently of soon having a tabouret *à la cour*; and next to her was placed Mademoiselle La Rue, who remarked on the oc-

casion, that once in her new home, such vile things as these *mesquins* settees should never be seen. On Catherine's left was Mademoiselle Raymond, and next to her my father. The two brothers stood behind their sister's chair, as gentlemen of honour; and opposite to her sat the *piquante* Marie Guyol, whose pretty head passed that of all the rest by one good half, so that, as she herself observed, she might easily have been mistaken for the president.

The girlish fancy that had inspired these arrangements was a happy augury in my father's eyes; the more Catherine's character would lose of its loftiness and austerity, the more likely and near seemed the realization of his hopes. When silence was established, and all were willing to listen, Catherine began:—

“I know, my dear friends,” she said, “that you have long tacitly awaited my decision upon a grave and important point—namely, whether it be best to adhere to the Carmelite priests, who have hitherto guided and enlightened our consciences, or choose a new director in the person of the celebrated Father

Girard, of the Jesuits. I feel flattered by your reliance on me, but would not misuse it by seeking to influence you in a matter where conscience alone can decide. But I owe it to myself, as well as to you, to lay before you the real cause of the line of conduct I myself am about to pursue, which might otherwise be imputed to motives furthest from my heart. It is not Father Girard's brilliant eloquence that has touched me, nor am I dazzled by his great reputation; for I should have resisted both these impulses, as being too worldly to induce me to resign my soul into the keeping of a stranger. No! it is the will of Heaven. You all remember St. John's Day, when Father Girard preached at the church of the Carmelites. The service being over, I was about to depart, when, crossing the porch, I happened to meet him, and caught his eye, as I had often done before, resting upon me. At the same instant, an angel form appeared visibly to me, pointing towards him, and a voice distinctly murmured in my ear—'This is the man who is to lead thee unto Heaven.' I well nigh fainted with

surprise, and can well imagine yours in listening to this extraordinary fact. Yet, when we remember how of yore the will of God was revealed in visions to his chosen, we may wonder, but may not doubt. His voice bids me seek Father Girard, to whom, alone, the mission of my salvation is given. I follow not, therefore, my own blind, erring judgment, which might deceive, but the guidance of Providence, which I obey with joyful confidence. But you, who have not received such direct warnings from above, should weigh the matter gravely in your own minds, and submit it to another course of reasoning, before you follow my example, if indeed you wish to do so."

The whole party was, as you may conceive, amazed at this communication, which evidently was new, even to Eleonore, who looked the extreme of displeasure while listening to it. My father, too, felt pained by an announcement, which exhibited the object of his affection in a less favourable light than that in which he had hitherto regarded her. He and Eleonore testified their disapprobation by a cold silence,

whilst Catherine's eye—lighted up with the secret triumph of a devotee, who fancies herself singled out by Heaven as an object of especial predilection—sought in vain for sympathy in their grave countenances. But the rest of the party expressed their admiration of the secret ways of Providence, and obviously attached the most ridiculous importance to this, as my father then thought it, fantastic communication.

He could, at the time, scarcely listen to Catherine with common patience; but frequently in after times did he remember the details of her recital with much interest, for they afforded him the first clue to the unravelling of a succession of mysteries, upon which for years his reason could throw no light.

The general curiosity being sated, the suffrage was loud in favour of Father Girard, who was henceforth to direct all the tender consciences there present. For although not favoured, like Mademoiselle Cadières, with an especial call, they conceived that she had merely been the chosen vehicle whereby Providence deigned to

make manifest its will unto them. Catherine was too much carried away by the elation of her spirits at the moment to notice the reserve and silence of Eleonore, which was evidently intended as a reproof. As to my father, he was merely angry with the fuss made about what he conceived at best but an extraordinary hallucination, which he thought it unpardonable in Catherine to bring thus forward. For the rest, he cared but little who was the director of her conscience; Girard was old and ugly, and, in his opinion, would do quite as well as another. When, however, at last, Mademoiselle Raymond's opinion was thought of and solicited, he perceived she viewed the matter in another light.

“I am sorry to say,” she answered, “I differ from you all—most especially from Catherine—but opinion is personal, and we are all at liberty to think as we please. We have been trained from childhood by the worthy Father Alexis of the Carmelites—what we know of our religion we owe to his care. Hitherto he has had the sole management of our consciences,

and we are not worse than our neighbours. Why should we, suddenly, turn ungrateful for the many benefits which we have so often acknowledged, and pain our good, kind, old confessor? This, I regret to say, seems, to me at least, a mere love of change, caprice, imitation. I, for one, am quite certain of having no part or parcel in Catherine's vision, and I am not likely to be visited by one myself. I shall not, therefore, attend Father Girard either at the confessional or even at mass, though I allow him to be an excellent preacher."

A murmur of disapprobation went round the circle, and the words heretic—heretical relations, more than once reached my father's ear, to whose memory they recalled what Madame Cadières had told him of Mademoiselle Raymond's situation and parentage.

He was deeply impressed with the good sense of her remarks, and the clearness with which they were delivered; but they had evidently given offence, for the others did not again address her, and even Catherine's manner was cooler than usual until the party broke up.

His road led past the house of Eleonore's guardian, and for the first time since their acquaintance he accompanied her to the door. Although not alone, they walked somewhat in advance together, and could exchange some few sentences unheard. He turned to account this opportunity of sifting her feelings more closely concerning that evening's proceeding, and to his surprise she threw off, in great measure, the frigidity from which he had not yet seen her depart.

"I am much grieved," she said, "by what I have just heard; and by the manner in which Catherine has announced her intention, I know it will be in vain for me to attempt to dissuade her."

My father begged her to explain herself further, for he could see no harm in this caprice *de confesseur*, independently of the pain the change might inflict on the worthy man who had hitherto officiated in that capacity. Her answer struck him forcibly.

"I could not well convey my real opinion, or rather, I should say, develop it completely,

before so many biassed persons as were there to-night," she said, "because the mere fact of my poor mother, whom I do not remember, and her relations, whom I have never seen, having been protestants, is enough to create a strong prejudice against me; but you, I am sure, are not so bigoted, and will not misunderstand me if I tell you that I object to Father Girard as a confessor for Catherine on account of his zeal. The good fathers who have until now guided us, used all their efforts to maintain my poor friend within the bounds of real piety, and prevent her imagination from taking too wild a flight. They thought of her happiness and their duty only, and were not, like this idol of the day, struggling for notoriety. I hear that of him which convinces me he will be but too glad to have such a disciple, and will make of her an instrument for the advancement of his own vainglory and ambition. But I am afraid," she added, hesitatingly, "you will think it very bold in one so young, so inexperienced, to advance such opinions."

Being reassured on this point, she continued.

“Next to the danger of over-exciting a young person so predisposed to religious enthusiasm as Catherine is, there will be another and very serious evil attendant upon this. There will arise among these young ladies an emulation of holiness, a struggle to get furthest in the esteem and good graces of their teacher, who will know how to turn this rivalry to the advantage of his reputation. His disciples will no longer consider religion a duty, but desecrate it into an occupation—an amusement to fill up the void that must at times be felt in such a quiet life as ours. The loftier feeling of religion will be lost, in the hearts of many, amid its grimaces.”

Mademoiselle Raymond had reached home before my father could utter a reply; he would have been puzzled, indeed, how to frame one—and he felt grateful for the circumstance that released him from the necessity of so doing. He required time to think over all she had said, and to reflect on the strong masculine good sense she had that evening evinced. “If she has not many of the graces of her sex,” thought

he, " she has some of the qualities of ours—she is sincere, clear-headed, and plain-spoken. The very woman one would select for a friend."

From that hour dated a total revulsion of feeling in favour of Mademoiselle Raymond. When once a woman has honoured a man with any portion of her confidence, however slight, and finds that he respects it, from that time forth he is no longer indifferent to her, and it is his own fault if he do not improve the opening thus afforded him. The evil spell that had kept so long asunder two beings formed to understand and appreciate each other was now broken; and henceforth, whenever they met, Eleonore and my father spoke freely and kindly to each other.

The change which Eleonore had foretold, took place more rapidly than either she or my father expected, and extended even to the families and friends of the young ladies. Through its tender offshoots the wily Jesuit was regenerating the whole of the *Toulonaise* society, or rather filling it with reports of his own fame.

None dreamed of noticing my father's growing

intimacy with Eleonore, so wrapt were they in their new confessor. They talked of nothing among themselves but his humility, his austerity, his surpassing love of God, the severity with which he scanned the consciences of others, the hopes, the fears he knew so well how to awaken; even Catherine's brothers could join in these discourses, from which my father and Eleonore only were excluded, knowing nothing of the subject. It is incredible in how short a time this want of sympathy estranged them from her who had but lately prized them so highly, and how much it threw in the background those who had hitherto played principal parts in that limited circle.

What is stranger yet, is the deep pain this circumstance caused my father, independently of his attachment to Catherine. To understand fully his feelings on this occasion, we must have felt ourselves ousted out of our intimacies and habits by a total stranger, who comes across us, and everywhere fills our place. Eleonore bore the growing coolness of her friend, and the glances of suspicion and dislike cast askance at

her by the others, with a stoical indifference, which my father thought did more credit to her nerves than her heart.

A change had, indeed, come over everybody. Marie Langières seemed, like Pygmalion's statue, to have become animated under the hands of Father Girard — and Mademoiselle Guyol to forget her smiles and to learn the use of frowns, for the advantage and better teaching of the young aristocratic officers of the garrison, whose flighty homage she had but lately received with so much pleasure. Even Mademoiselle La Rue forgot her ruling passion, and spoke of the blessing of poverty, which gives a meek spirit. As to the approaching nuptials of some of the young ladies, it seemed that, by a tacit understanding, a subject so full of levity and worldliness was altogether to be eschewed. They walked as though they dreaded the contact of anything so material as earth, even with the soles of their feet; and their eyes sought the ground as if to avoid the subjects of scandal with which the air around must be filled. Confession, communion, and penance, employed all

their days—holy converse with each other their evenings — and melancholy meditations their nights. The great reform that the rector had wrought in these lovely young pupils soon became known, and his power in reclaiming and purifying souls was the theme of every tongue.

The Jesuits deemed their triumph complete ; but the Carmelites bided their time with that quiet, untiring patience of which men of the world cannot even form a conception ; for it requires the leisure of the cell or the solitary closet to admit of the constant recurrence of the same idea, and the tension of the mind on one and the same point for any length of time. Hence the patient, enduring resentment which from time to time has been known to actuate monks and prisoners — in short, all those doomed to inactive, incomplete existences.

But of all the alterations produced by Father Girard's arrival, none was so evident as that wrought in Mademoiselle Cadières. Every time my father beheld her—and his opportunities for so doing were gradually curtailed—he found her less like herself—the heroine of his

first dream of love; and yet, rapid as was the process of the change he was watching with such poignant regret, many months elapsed before it was complete; and he was compelled to confess to his own heart the sad truth that Catherine was, indeed, a new, but not an improved being.

Her manner was strange and fantastic. Whenever the subject mentioned before her had no reference to religion, she either sat abstracted, with folded hands and uplifted eyes, the image of pious meditation, or testified, by fretful tones, her impatience of the topic. Instead, however, of listening with lively interest—as might naturally enough have been concluded—when religious discourse was introduced, she was restless and dissatisfied until she had the lead in the conversation. Then she would break out in the most flighty rhapsodies about visions and martyrdoms, saints and devils, temptations and submissions; in short, her language was mystic and her ideas confused. She assumed a loftiness, a triumph in look, word, and action, that seemed plainly to

intimate her consciousness of angel wings fast growing and spreading around her, shortly to waft her to the world of fleecy clouds above, which alone now filled her mind waking or sleeping. Her feet scarcely touched the earth when she walked; a painter must have been struck with the light buoyancy of her figure when in motion, so dreamy was its grace, and he might have borrowed inspiration from the heaven-wrapt expression of her countenance.

But how much soever a painter—especially one who had an altar-piece on hand—might have been delighted by a glimpse of the fair devotee, in spite of the poetic grace this new mood imparted to her loveliness, my father remarked, with deep sorrow, that it invaded every corner of her heart. Eleonore had prophesied but too truly on every point. Not only had the religious feelings of Mademoiselle Cadières ripened into enthusiasm,—always dangerous in the young and the imaginative, and most destructive to his own hopes and wishes,—but, what grieved him yet more, the beautiful purity and simplicity of her character was

obviously undermined. Vanity had, indeed, mingled with, and stained, every thought, every feeling.

He might still have worshipped the saint, even whilst renouncing all earthly commune with her, and enshrined her within the niche of remembrance as some vision of a better world; but there was in Catherine's sanctity a spiritual pride, a mixture of Saint Theresa's raptures, in their wild sincerity, with a desire to unveil the mysteries of her heart to the world, that it might be amazed and worship, which, in itself, was sufficient to destroy the illusion in one so clear-sighted as my father.

Perhaps he would have been more blind, had his own feelings not been wounded, and his pride hurt, by the growing and marked coolness of Catherine, which extended even to her once beloved Eleonore. She delighted now in the society of none but those who, like herself, were under Father Girard's direction. The intimacy of these young ladies, but lately differing so much from each other in temper, taste, and prospects, was—to borrow their own

quaint, exaggerated style of expression—a bond of union; they were but as one in submission and love to Heaven and Father Girard, and through him, and with him, of Heaven's elect. It was, indeed, clear enough to the meanest comprehension, that he was the corner-stone of this alliance; for they met, as it seemed, merely for the pleasure of talking of him, and spent all their powers of figurative language in the ever-renewed struggle of outstripping one another in the most fulsome and extravagant adulation of his sanctity.

If their evenings were thus devoted to kind reminiscences of him who had so far succeeded in insinuating himself into their good graces, their days were no less so to his society; and the time he could consecrate to them within the precincts of the church not sufficing to the necessities of their consciences, towards the close of the year he began to attend some of them at their homes. Mademoiselle Cadières was not yet of the number thus honoured—a circumstance which appeared to mortify her not a little, although her poor friend Mademoiselle Langières' state of

health,—so delicate as to cause the delay of her marriage,—might well justify the preference which, at this epoch, the reverend father testified in her favour.

My father's visits at the Cadières' were now so evidently barely tolerated, not desired, by any member of the family, that it required all the fortitude of a lover to persevere in them. But what would he not have borne, rather than be altogether banished from his mistress's presence? Whilst all were thus occupied with one object, and he was overlooked, if not forgotten, his only comfort was the society of Mademoiselle Raymond. With her, at least, he could talk of Catherine, abuse Father Girard, and dwell on his grievances, confident in the luxury of a sympathizing listener—for a change had also come over Eleonore, no less advantageous to her, than that of Catherine was the reverse. Her sternness and coldness had gradually melted in their growing intimacy. She proved herself a true friend in his affliction, cheering him to look forward with hope to the future, infusing consolation for the pre-

sent, palliating his mistress's folly, and, above all, patiently repeating to him every particular she could collect respecting her actual state of mind, and the every-day occurrences of her life; for she continued to love Catherine,—no longer, indeed, for the affection she met with in return; not for the qualities her friend had gained or lost; but because where she had once placed her affection she could not withdraw it: she could overlook and forget everything but the fact that they had once been friends, though she plainly saw the time fast approaching, when, without any fault of hers, that friendship would be broken.

As my father discovered, one by one, the sterling qualities of Eleonore's mind, his eye learned to rest with complacency on her features, which he sometimes wondered how he could ever have thought so very plain. The evenings he could no longer devote to Catherine might have hung heavy on his hands, and the sudden rupture of the bond of habit have added an additional pang to those he already endured, had not this fresh interest in life soothed, in

some degree, the loss of the first and greatest his existence had yet known.

Mademoiselle Raymond's store of consolation, however, diminished rapidly. Her bulletin of Catherine's state of feelings grew every day more alarming, so far, at least, as regarded my father's chance of happiness, and—as both he and Eleonore conceived it—of her own.

Her situation was, indeed, such as to warrant some anxiety on the part of her friends. Father Girard, forbidding all books but those which he chose to denominate holy, had substituted for light, moral essays, the dangerous romances of the catholic religion. The imagination of poor Catherine was fast ripening at the fires of Saint Theresa's ecstasies of divine love, and Saint Anthony's temptations in the desert—both which, to the reflective mind, must appear but the self-deceits of poor, erring mortals, who had lost their path in life in seeking that to heaven. Her mind, naturally weak, yielding, and affectionate, requiring, to maintain its equilibrium, a calm, serene state, was, by this constant effervescence of thought, wearied beyond its power,

and in danger of being destroyed altogether. Already her health began to suffer from this feverish excitement: her nights were restless, or visited by the most appalling visions; and her mother, so obtuse in the ordinary matters of life, soon became painfully sensible, by the state of her daughter's nerves, of the necessity of medical assistance, and earnestly consulted Father Girard on the subject. But the rector, who saw, or pretended to see, in the altered state, sinking frame, and disturbed slumbers of his young penitent, nothing but the workings of the Divine Spirit, strongly opposed the intervention of an earthly power, proposed his own aid,—a measure joyfully accepted,—and, finally, established himself as a constant visitor at the house of the Cadières.

This step was decisive as to my father's footing in the family. The mother gave the final blow to his still lingering hopes, which, she said, Catherine herself would long since have done, but for her innate dislike to wound the feelings of another. It became incumbent on her, however, to speak, since Monsieur Chaudon ap-

peared so very insensible to the eloquence of silence. She observed that, as Catherine was decided never to marry, she felt it unjust to herself as well as to him to continue to encourage attentions which could be of no use to either party, and certainly gave no pleasure to the receiver; in short, maidenly modesty in the daughter, and maternal prudence in the mother, alike moved them to forbid his appearance at their house for the future.

My father received his sentence of banishment in the deepest silence, suffered no shadow in his countenance to betray the inward pain, but permitted Madame Cadières, woman fashion, to turn the dagger in the wound without wincing.

“I really do not know, Monsieur Jules, on whom you can now turn your eyes for a wife,” continued the loquacious lady; “and yet it is time a handsome young man like you, and one of such promise, with such good prospects, should think seriously of the matter. You suffered Marie Langières to slip through your fingers. It is true, poor thing, she has no

health, and is obliged to put off her marriage until, people say, her bridegroom has sworn that if she makes him wait much longer, he will cut the matter short by wedding another—youth is so vain and impatient! Then there's Mademoiselle La Rue, who has just broken off her marriage, and she did but what was right and proper. Fancy that impious Monsieur Renoir insisting on her giving up Father Girard, and taking another confessor! Shocking, was it not?—quite her duty to stand firm. I would have proposed her to you, but then I know that, like my Catherine, whom she apes in all things, she objects to marriage altogether."

Madame Cadières, during the course of her address, occasionally paused artfully in the vain hope of hearing her auditor burst forth in some assurances, that no female could be thought of after her incomparable daughter; but he would not gratify so far the feminine and maternal vanity that induced her thus heartlessly to probe the bleeding wound.

"Well, then," she continued, with a look of

evident disappointment, "there's Marie Guyol, now she has turned off the officers that used to swarm around her like so many troublesome mosquitoes,—she might do very well. She has no money, it is true—is, or rather was, a little lightheaded, but Father Girard has put lead enough in it by this time, I warrant you. He would put some in an air balloon, and cause an opera-dancer to repent, I verily believe. She is a pretty girl, Marie Guyol!" Still my father maintained his perverse silence. "There remains, it is true, that half-pagan, half-heretic, Mademoiselle Raymond," she continued, with a frown,—“she has plenty of money to make one forget her uncomeliness; but ah! what can efface the uncomeliness of the heart that comes not unto God?"

“I thought Mademoiselle Raymond gave full satisfaction to the directors of her conscience?"

“The Fathers Carmelite! Lukewarm drowsy set, as they are—Catherine's soul languished beneath their care, like a flower in the shade. No warming up—no elevating—they understood nothing, felt and saw nothing—they would

rather have turned away my Catherine from the glorious path she is about to tread, than, like Father Girard, borne her onward in it with a mighty hand."

"I have no doubt," said my father, with a bitterness he could not check, "that Mademoiselle Cadières will shortly stand forth as a candidate for the honours of the calendar!"

"And you for the hand of Mademoiselle Raymond, I doubt as little," answered Madame Cadières, with ill suppressed choler.

My father looked full in the lady's face, and bowed.

This was too much for the mother's patience. She had expected—nay, secretly delighted in the idea of having to encounter a lover's ravings, and, to her amazement, had to deal with a composed, collected man, who did not put himself at her mercy for one single instant. It is surprising how much women participate, in their dealings with men, in the feline propensity of experiencing pleasure in inflicting a pang. I mean, of course, in love matters, for in all others I have ever known them compassionate and

kind; but this instinct of their nature is so strong, that it dies but with them. The mother still indulges in it by means of her daughter. Yet, after all, it is but the promptings of an innocent vanity.

Madame Cadières was sadly hurt on this occasion, for she had not discernment enough to see beneath the surface. When my father took leave, he uttered none but ordinary phrases,—thanked her for past kindnesses, and for having endured his society so long,—wished all happiness, for the future, to herself and her fair daughter,—was very sorry to have troubled her with a love that had no merit but its sincerity, and bowed himself out of the room with all the grace he could assume.

Prepared as he was for this conclusion to the early romance of his life, it caused him a shock, and an exquisitely painful one. Not only had he to lament the loss of a hope, too fondly cherished, but also to regret ever having suffered himself to be drawn into illusions, that evidently never had the slightest foundation in reality. The preference, the something more than sisterly affection, he once imagined that Cathe-

rine manifested in his favour in spite of her own will, existed but in his fancy—Catherine had not felt, could never feel for him. The cold manner of his expulsion from the house—a trial in itself, of which she must have been conscious—not even softened by a word, a look, a token of kindness or regret, certainly warranted the supposition. My father owed to me, that the first hours of his return home were spent in unmitigated anguish, but having paid this tribute to the weakness of his heart, he struggled manfully against that morbidness of feeling, which is so apt, in extreme youth, to enervate its best powers, when it has to encounter disappointment.

One part of Madame Cadières' conversation had wounded him more than the rest, and seemed to him particularly characteristic of that lady's utter want of refinement and feeling. It was her allusion to his union with Mademoiselle Raymond. He was yet too young to know, that those who are strangers to our own feelings,—and who can read the human heart aright but he who bade it beat?—are apt to jump at conclusions, which the natural course of events

render probable—nay, almost unavoidable, but which, at the moment they are broached, seem to us, from our peculiar state of mind, at the very antipodes of possibility, and we are indignant at being foretold that, which it pleases us not to think about; but the experience of riper years teaches us not only to bear this handling of our finer feelings, but even to inflict it on ourselves. We have so often fancied our sorrows eternal, and yet forgotten them, that we willingly anticipate and permit others to suggest to us those consolations which are within our reach, and of which we are not sorry, in due time, to avail ourselves. For it is another and no less approved truism, that endurance in woe is a luxury only sought and yielded to by the extremely young in feeling; those whose hearts passion or the world has tried, recoil from pain as from an old enemy, whose might they have too cruelly experienced to be willing to face again. Hence the callousness of age. But I am again at my old trick of steering wide of my subject.

Although offended at what he conceived to

be a gross insinuation under the circumstances, my father was not childish enough to give up an intimacy which suited him, merely to prove the falsehood of the lady's suggestion, the more especially that he cared but little what she thought, and was but too painfully convinced that Catherine never gave herself the trouble of thinking about it all, or indeed anything else concerning him. On the other hand, he was not disposed to do anything whatsoever out of pique, or to make a silly parade of an indifference he did not feel; he therefore remained on precisely the same footing with Eleonore as before.

I am afraid I have made use of a great many words to explain a fact, which but a few would have sufficed to establish—namely, that there was in my father's character a manliness which even at this early period of his life displayed itself in every point of his conduct. He bore his sorrow well—denied it to none, but obtruded it on no one; he felt no resentment against Catherine or her family, for his sound understanding told him he had no reason to feel any. They

had never deluded him with false hopes—their conduct had been strictly honourable, from first to last; but, at the same time that he acquitted them of injustice towards himself, he gave up, at once and for ever, all idea of possessing Catherine, plainly perceiving that they were not suited for each other, and that happiness, even should unforeseen circumstances prove eventually favourable to its completion, could never attend their union.

From this time forth my father devoted the energies of his mind to the career he had embraced, and all his leisure hours to Mademoiselle Raymond, whose strong mind could fully understand and cope with his, although she had not disrobed it of those gentle sympathies which make the society of women, especially under affliction, so attractive. She also was soon given to understand by Catherine, that her friendship was one of those earthly pleasures which it was incumbent upon her to resign, as interfering too much with her religious duties. Had Eleonore followed the same course with herself—nay, if even at that late hour, for Catherine's sake, she would put her conscience under

the guidance of Father Girard, then indeed they might remain to each other what they had ever been ; otherwise, it would be a great trial, but one that God would give her strength to bear, they must not meet again. In short, she sacrificed Eleonore without much scruple ; but it is fair to state, that the latter renounced her most unhesitatingly, rather than enlist herself among the Jesuit's fanatical worshippers.

“ This rupture between us may, perhaps, hereafter conduce to Catherine's benefit,” said Mademoiselle Raymond, when communicating this new caprice to my father. “ She will one day come back to me, when I may even turn this breach to account in making conditions, perhaps, in your favour.”

“ Not in mine,” he replied. “ I have ceased to hope, and even to wish anything connected with Mademoiselle Cadières. Her happiness is, and ever will remain, a subject of deep interest to me ; and should it at any time lie in my power to serve her, I shall not neglect the opportunity : love, such as I have felt, may be overcome, but never forgotten.”

“ She bade me tell you she would remember

Eleonore's account of her visit to Catherine astonished and perplexed my father not a little at the time. He could not understand or fathom, any more than Eleonore herself, the phenomenon she described ; nor was it until Mesmer had revived the science of animal magnetism among the studious, and revealed it to the idle vulgar, that my father fancied he had at last obtained the key to the mysteries which, for so many years, baffled his ingenuity. That I have adopted his view of the subject is but natural, considering by whom the tale was told, and the manner in which it was represented to me at an age when impressions are most easily received and retained. The bent of my mind, too,—the systems and studies I afterwards adopted, confirmed me, at a later period, in the opinion thus early formed. It is for you, unbiassed as you are by all such circumstances, to account for the strange facts I am now about to relate, if you can, in another and a more satisfactory manner.

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Catherine was reclining, listlessly, on a couch, her head propped up by a deep crimson cushion, which, by its harsh contrast, caused the paleness of her features to be more apparent. At the slight noise caused by Eleonore's entrance she started up in nervous alarm, and on perceiving who was the intruder on her solitude, she became yet more agitated. Uncertainty, hesitation, a sort of reluctant shame, seemed to overwhelm her; but when Eleonore approached with open arms, she threw herself into them, and sobbed aloud on her bosom. Mademoiselle Raymond gently led her back to the couch, sat by her side, and still retaining her hand in hers, with the other stroked down her hair with a soothing fondness. Her manner was impressed with an eloquence that needed no

you in her prayers," said Mademoiselle Raymond; "and I still persevere in believing that, but for Father Girard, she would ultimately have yielded to your wishes."

"It is better thus," said my father—and what he said he thought—"far better thus, at least for myself, if not for her."

He inquired then, with some curiosity, what spell could possibly have been exercised over the female imagination, by one whose austere bearing, and still more austere language, seemed but little calculated to make amends for his un-gainliness of person; and by what means so ill-endowed an individual as Father Girard had contrived to revolutionize the whole existence of those who had been drawn within his circle.

His very austerity, she said, was, to many women, a charm. Their weakness required a stay, which his severity afforded; their self-love was flattered by the importance which he attached to every trifle connected with his penitents; there was a species of voluptuousness in this petty sinning, constant reproof, performance of daily penances, and the necessity of satis-

fyng his exalted notions of righteousness. It was a perpetual excitement, which chased away all languor from the mind, and kept it in unwearied exercise. The divine love, in short, as taught by Father Girard, had in some sort the advantage of an earthly one. It kept its votaries awake.

One of his fair penitents, however, already began to find all this flurry a bore rather than a pleasure. This was Marie Langières. Her inclination, indeed, for the rector—enthusiasm, her torpid temperament prevented her feeling for any one—had been on the wane at an early epoch of their acquaintance; for her very nature revolted against the excitement that fascinated others, and which had acted so perniciously on her health, as to cause the breaking off of the brilliant marriage she had been on the eve of accomplishing; nor could she help entertaining some resentment against Father Girard—the author, as she conceived it, of her disappointment. Something of this sentiment had already transpired before Eleonore, who determined to avail herself of it, in order to be the better *au*

courant as to what was passing among the Jesuit's votaries.

About this time, my father and Mademoiselle Cadières began to excite much of the public attention, and that in a manner the most flattering to the views of both. He, young as he was, had so distinguished himself by arduous study and close attention to his profession, that he was entrusted with a cause of some note and difficulty. The brilliant style in which he won it, and that when opposed to one of the shrewdest and ablest lawyers of the time, made a great sensation. The powers of his mind now ripened and developed themselves under the sunny influence of public approbation and applause; and it soon became evident, that his progress in the honourable profession to which he belonged would be attended with no ordinary success. His parents were proud of the universal praise he elicited. Eleonore warmly congratulated him; but where was the sympathy of her at whose feet he would have laid his budding laurels? All engrossed with self, as he had but too much reason to know.

Her sanctity was now as much the theme of conversation as her beauty had lately been, and her sayings and doings scarcely occupied the public less than those of Father Girard himself; nay, as Mademoiselle Raymond had foreseen, they even added lustre to his celebrity. The singular fact of her confessing and taking the sacrament daily was obviously, the people said, a proof of a spirit peculiarly holy, whose spiritual necessities were different from those of less gifted mortals, or the priest would not grant such out of the way privileges.

Her visions, too, and celestial colloquies, were much talked of—all crowded the Jesuits' church to obtain a glimpse of this beautiful and holy maid; and Father Girard's reputation spread like a mighty shadow, veiling completely the radiance of Mount Carmel—at least, in Toulon.

Now that they were full blown, the Jesuits wore not their laurels meekly. Under their rector's guidance, saints and angels were trained for the use of heaven, and the edification of the world. Surely, few communities could boast so

many. Eleonore had been right in predicting that Catherine would become the mere instrument of party spirit and personal vanity. What mattered it to the Jesuits in general, or to Father Girard in particular, that her future prospects were blasted by the errors of her judgment, at the very period of woman's life when she has to decide for its weal or its woe? What mattered it that her health gave way under the weight of emotions she had not the strength to bear? What was *she* in the eyes of an ambitious priest, when weighed in the balance with the furtherance of his own private views of elevation?

“ We shall live to see Father Girard a cardinal, and Catherine a canonized saint; and saints are never calendared until after death,” said Eleonore one day to my father, who answered but by a sigh.

Thus had they each entered on a separate path of life who, a few short months before, it was but natural to suppose were destined to end their days together.

There was now no pause in my father's

career. Not willing, like many young men, vain of a day's applause, to rest after his first success, he progressed steadfastly upwards—mounting, step by step, the weary ascent; never pausing to take breath, nor turning round to admire the prospect, but keeping his final aim, and nothing but that, in view, he slowly but unerringly neared the goal of fortune. Poor Catherine, too, held on her course; from visions she passed to miracles, and grew with every day more sick, and more saintly, drawing towards her all the praise the town could spare from Father Girard.

Though not her equals in sanctity or in reputation, nor such favourites of Heaven or Heaven's interpreter at Toulon, as Father Girard styled himself, the health of his other disciples grew every day more precarious. This was more particularly the case with Marie Langières. Roused from the natural sloth of her disposition, it was not to a pleasing animation, but to a state of nervous irritability, so strong as to render it impossible to behold her without dreading its consequences upon her reason, which, Eleonore

thought, was already tottering on its throne. This belief she grounded on a circumstance, certainly of a nature calculated to suggest it: her former disinclination to her confessor had ripened into a most vehement antipathy; no expression of vituperation seemed of sufficient force to gratify this apparently insane hatred—for she could assign no motive for it, and yet she could not live out of his presence. So irresistible indeed had this feeling become, that when he could not come to her, she sought him out, wherever he might happen to be at the time. She strove neither to conceal nor palliate this glaring contradiction—inexplicable, indeed, except by the adoption of Eleonore's supposition.

Upon hearing these evil tidings, my father became seriously alarmed about Catherine; he was not, however, without some hope that she too might experience a portion of that young lady's feelings of repulsion for Father Girard, a sentiment which he would have hailed with delight, as the first step towards a more happy and healthy tone of mind. He therefore en-

treated Eleonore to forgive and forget the unkind and unjust treatment she had met with on the part of her friend, and endeavour to see her at this crisis, when the renewal of their former intimacy might prove so useful to poor Catherine, and sympathy for her failing health afford so natural a pretext for making up the breach between them which had now subsisted for more than a year.

Eleonore shared my father's feelings; for her interest in the poor recluse was still, like his love, glowing beneath the embers. She, therefore, willingly promised to comply with his request.

"And what message am I to bear from you?" said she, with a smile.

"None!" was my father's prompt and decided answer. "To me she can never be anything more than a cherished remembrance of the past. When once rudely awakened from his dream, the slumberer can seldom resume it; so is it with that of love. I have been aroused from my sweet dream, and I would not, if I could, renew it."

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words; Catherine evidently felt and understood it, for when she could control the vehemence of her first emotion, she said, in a tone of gentle reproach—

“ Oh! Eleonore, why did you leave me for so long, or ever?”

“ One word of recal would, long ere this, have brought me to your side,” said Eleonore.

“ Why did you not speak it sooner?”

“ Oh! but you know not, you cannot know how wretched, how miserable I have been—we have all been—how unhappy I now am—you have come too late, Eleonore!”

“ Hush, Catherine! Do not as usual fly into extremes, errors may be repented of and repaired, Father Girard dismissed, and Jules Chaudon recalled. Open your heart to me, Catherine, without reserve; I am still, as ever, disposed to do you what service I may.”

“ I have not deserved this, Eleonore,” said Catherine, again throwing herself on her friend's neck, and indulging in an excess of feeling, which, as such exhibitions were most foreign and uncongenial to Mademoiselle Raymond's

nature, at once surprised and embarrassed her. She attributed this lively display of sorrow, in one of Catherine's susceptible temperament, to remorse for having severed herself from those whom she truly loved, under the passing influence of an utter stranger, and began to administer consolations on that head, by assuring her that she had grieved, but not alienated, their affections; but her kind words seemed rather to irritate than soothe the still weeping Catherine.

"Oh! it is not that!" she impatiently exclaimed—"not that which torments me—not of that I would speak! Had I but followed your advice from the first, and never come near that *man*, or that you had never left me!"

"It was not my choice," gently remonstrated Eleonore; "you must not forget *that*. But why recur to the past, which is every way so painful, since you are again the same dear Catherine as ever, and see things as you were wont to do? It only requires a little self-exertion to throw off your new habits of thought and feelings, and to resume your former ones. Leave Father Girard!"

“Speak not of it,” was the hurried reply. “It is *impossible*, or I had long since thrown him off. But I cannot. No! anything but *that!*”

“So says Marie Langières, and yet she hates him.”

“Yes; it is the same with us all, more or less. Eleonore, he is a *terrible* man. You don’t know his power; you do not dream of it—you who never were exposed to its influence. If you were always there by my side—with your hand on my burning head, and with those calm, penetrating eyes fixed on mine, as now,—always thus, then perhaps I might free myself from him, from every thrall!”

“My poor Catherine, your mind wanders!” exclaimed her friend, for a moment thrown off her guard; then, reassuming as naturally as she could the cold severe tone she had always found from experience to soothe best any casual irritation in her friend, she said:—“Come Catherine—you must exert your reason, and not give way in this childish manner—you know I cannot abide it. Come, tell me, as rationally as you can, all about Father Girard and yourself, from beginning to end.”

“I will obey you,” said Catherine in a calmer tone, whilst a sudden and striking change came over her features, which had assumed a more languid expression as Eleonore’s manners softened. “Suffer your hand to rest on my brow, as you did before, nothing clears my ideas better—so—that’s right—my other hand in yours. Oh! had you never left me, Eleonore, it had perhaps fared better with me. I see you are impatient that I should proceed, and yet I scarcely know how to do so; all is confusion in my brain—discord in my heart. Sometimes I think Father Girard the best, the most holy of men, and myself a wretch to doubt him; at other times, I see in him but the vilest and worst of mankind. It has ever been thus with me, since I first knew him. I have lost all power of discrimination—I had almost said of thought; but, no, that is my misfortune; I still think, and that, too, differently from him; but this is only when he is away. When he is present, I am his slave—enthralled by his will, even when it is most opposed to mine. I sometimes cannot help fancying that he has bound me by some power—

ful, unhallowed spell, which I vainly struggle to break,—at others, I again believe him sent to me by Heaven, on a special mission of grace; and my sufferings, whether in body or mind, a most signal favour. Then I accuse myself of faint-heartedness in not being able to bear up against them, and weep over my own frailty of purpose, and the weakness that makes me rebel against the will of Heaven and unworthy of the trials which are awarded me.”

“But of what trials are you speaking?” inquired Eleonore, with some curiosity. “Do you mean the regret you feel, at having permitted a comparative stranger to exercise an undue influence over your mind, and cause an estrangement between you and those who most cherished you? That, indeed, has been a trial to others as well as to you!”

“That, it is true, has cost me many a sleepless night—many a tearful day,” said Catherine. “The struggle between the impulses of my heart and what I conceived to be a duty was a severe one. *He* bade me discard you from my thoughts, but this I could not do, and when left

to myself, loved you as much as ever. Thus has it been with almost every object of former affection or preference—nay, even with every matter of opinion—until all my notions of right and wrong are confused—and sometimes I feel exalted in my own opinion and the next instant humbled to the very dust; for he has taught me the holiness of self-abasement—the necessity of sinning in order to repent—of yielding in all things to the will of Heaven, blindly, darkly, with the heart, not with the understanding.”

“And *he*, I suppose,” said Eleonore, with a flashing eye and contracted brow—“he is the oracle of that will?”

“Not he alone, he merely expounds it—it is revealed to me in visions, in ecstasies, and the palpable signs of these supernatural communions remain with me!”

“The palpable signs?—I don’t understand you!” said the amazed listener.

“Yes, I can shew them to you as I have to my mother and brothers. Look here!” and, removing the hair that clustered over her brow and neck,

she exposed to view some rather severe and but recently healed wounds.

Eleonore was mute with surprise.

“Yes,” continued Catherine, “these are the inflictions, with which the devils are permitted to visit me, during my trances; but do not look so shocked, there is more fear than pain attending them—my soul alone is conscious at such times, my body lies in a state of torpor that deadens feeling.

“This is passing strange,” said Mademoiselle Raymond as she closely examined the marks thus subjected to her observation. “These are but too real, and cannot well have been self-inflicted, even in the worst fit of—of——”

“Insanity, you would say,” added Catherine, with a mournful smile; “I am not insane—but, oh! I often dread becoming so!”

“Do these fits—these trances, come over you by day or by night?”

“Both; they sometimes rouse me from my sleep, but, strange to say, it is but to another sort of slumber—a numbness steals over my frame whilst my mind wakens to activity.”

“You describe but the state of dreaming, which is common to all,” remarked Eleonore.

“Ay,” resumed her companion; “but dreams do not extend to the waking moments. This phenomenon overtakes me when I least expect it—whilst talking or walking—even at meals.”

“I have read of people being drugged into a forced sleep,” said Eleonore, thoughtfully.

“But Father Girard gives me nothing, nor is he always present at such times. When he is, my slumber is more peaceful, and I feel more tranquil on waking. In his absence, the fits are torture, and on their leaving me I am totally exhausted.”

“If you do not attribute these accidents to Father Girard, how do you account for them unto yourself and others,” demanded Eleonore, who was desirous to sift the matter to the bottom, and to probe her friend’s feelings to the uttermost, before venturing on advice, or even on conclusions.

“Why, I have already told you, I sometimes fancy he has charmed me; but am more often inclined to think myself, like Saint Theresa, one

of those elected to suffer and to love, and unto whom mysteries are revealed in visions—through whom and upon whom miracles are wrought.”

“ This is a most extraordinary delusion,” observed Eleonore, carried away by the feeling of the moment beyond the reserve which it was her desire to maintain until the close of the conference.

“ It is, perhaps, natural you should think so, to whom nothing has been revealed,” said her friend, with a slight shade of hauteur. “ But from earliest childhood I was unlike others, and I believe destined to higher things: and I cannot but believe that Father Girard has been especially appointed to guide me in the path which I should tread.”

“ Fatal error!” burst involuntarily from Eleonore’s lips. “ And bethink you, Catherine, if it *be* an error, it may cost you dear——”

“ If it be an error! ay, indeed, Eleonore! the thought were madness—but no! it cannot be—I will not believe it. Listen to facts: I know nothing else will have any weight with you; but surely to them you must yield belief,

even whilst they, perhaps, exceed your comprehension. Led away by your views and opinions, and those of my ordinary associates, I was beginning to yield to them in all things; my yearnings after higher things gradually diminished—my fervour of piety was cooling, and my soul became more alive to earthly objects.” As she spoke these words, a slight flush crimsoned her cheek. “At this juncture, Father Girard appeared on the scene. You cannot but remember the mysterious circumstance that first attracted me more particularly towards him?”

A mournful expression pervaded the features of Eleonore, but she carefully abstained from breaking the thread of her friend’s narrative.

“As you well know, until that moment,” continued Catherine, “strange to say, his eloquence, the theme of the world’s praise, was quite thrown away upon me—I did not always understand it; and when I did, his sentiments failed to strike me as particularly beautiful; at any rate, *that* had no effect upon me; nor had, I am ashamed to confess, his extraordinary de-

votion. On the contrary, an unnameable, unaccountable feeling of repulsion at times possessed me, which I could with difficulty control. Well, this was again counteracted by his alternate severity and praise. Thus, even whilst secretly disliking him personally, I derived great benefit from his spiritual guidance. It is remarkable that Marie Langières, Anne Guyol, and all his penitents, have felt exactly like me in this respect. The bright side of my existence—I may even call it its glorious sunshine—was the hope I entertained of treading in the footsteps of the blessed virgins who adorn our church. He taught me to believe myself called to the same path as that of my holy patroness, sweet St. Catherine of Sienna. All the bright dreams of my childhood came back to my heart with renewed freshness. I was like one suddenly transported to the summit of a high mountain, whence the eye could bathe itself in the blue of the heavens, the green of the valleys, the radiance of the setting sun. I looked beyond the very heavens, and I was proud and very happy. My mother and brothers also

encouraged me in my new vocation, to the utmost of their power. They already saw the halo of canonization encircling my brow; but we were all too vainglorious—I especially. In vain did Father Girard warn me of the dangers of this self-exaltation; nothing could damp my glowing ardour; the warning was overlooked, but the punishment was not long in overtaking the fault. One day—I had already been a whole year under his care—he breathed gently on my brow, and looked full into my eyes as he did so. From that hour I have been his slave. He often repeated this form, and each time it drew the chain tighter that bound me to him, until I had no will but his. I could neither act nor feel as I pleased, nor even think. Thus I became, if I may so express it, estranged from my own self. Oh!—but you cannot understand me—indeed, how should you, I cannot myself,—this perpetual struggle between my own will and that of another, gliding into my very being, was the dark side of that period of my existence. At last, you and Chaudon were excluded from our house; and since then, how

ever great have been my mental sufferings in consequence of that event, Father Girard at least has no longer tormented me on the subject. I had already had many visions of a mystic and holy character, all of a nature to flatter my inordinate vanity; but now came one predicted by Father Girard, in which I was told I should be possessed for more than a year by evil spirits, to whom the power of tormenting me should be given, in order that a soul in much pain should be freed from purgatory. From that time, my trances have changed their heavenly form—foul fiends have haunted me under every shape, and burnt wounds into my flesh, which, upon waking, I still found there. Father Girard told me this was necessary to my soul's weal and to the perfection of my character, as well as implicit blind obedience to him in all things. All this have I undergone; but I have suffered in body and mind enough to win the crown of martyrdom; my health is, indeed, so impaired, that I could no longer either confess or take the communion, if it were not that Father Girard attends me daily

at home, as he has done his other penitents when indisposed."

"But," said Eleonore, "is it not a profanation to perform such sacred duties daily? You cannot always be in a suitable frame of mind."

"I cannot explain all that," answered Catherine, looking embarrassed, "but Father Girard does, and very clearly, too."

"Then, I am to understand," said Eleonore, "that you are as convinced as himself of the merit—the necessity of this abuse of things most sacred. Unbosom yourself to me, dear girl, without restraint."

"And so I do, Eleonore, you have there probed the sore to the quick. I should agree with you were I to follow my own weak and wicked thoughts: but Father Girard must know best. He has also forbidden me prayer; saying, that it is not an efficient means of binding myself to God—that has cost me the severest pang of all. But since I have fallen into the power of the spirits of darkness, I *can* no longer pray, even when I feel most the necessity for so doing. There is a moral

impossibility, a clog on my thoughts, a seal on my lips, which all the warm impulses of my heart, and even the force of habit, are inadequate to vanquish. This is one of my greatest torments, which I am sure you, who knew me when the outpourings of my spirit flowed as freely from my lips as water from its source, will be well able to imagine."

"There may be a remedy to all this," said Eleonore, thoughtfully. "Have you thought of none?"

"Exorcism might afford a relief to my soul, and a physician to my enfeebled frame; but it is for my own future weal and glory that all this should be unflinchingly borne. How high the price at which both are bought, none shall ever know but myself. Oh! Eleonore, conceive, if you can, what are my feelings; when, in spite of all that *he* can say, I sometimes doubt if my path is a right one—dread that I am altogether misguided—that Father Girard is the only evil spirit which torments me! When that idea crosses my brain, I am for hours the prey to despairing regrets and the bitterest

remorse. Then he comes and talks me over, or barely looks at me—for he reads my thoughts at a glance—and I repent my miserable guilty doubts, so that my soul is ever dark and troubled as the most tempestuous night.”

“It was once clear as a summer morning,” said Eleonore, spiritedly, “why should not the mists that obscure it clear up again? If you would but trust in my advice, as you once did, perhaps all might yet be well.”

“How? What would you advise?” said Catherine, looking up into her friend’s face, with renovated hope lighting up her wasted features, as a ray of autumn’s paly sun is often seen to play on a sickly flower.

Eleonore paused in doubt how to proceed. Should she discuss the character of the director with his half-enlightened proselyte, and endeavour to convince her of the absurdity and villany of which she believed her the victim? or had she better trace out a plan for the future, without attempting to throw too much light upon the past? A two-fold reason induced her to determine upon adopting the latter measure.

In the first place, she could come to no clear understanding of the means and ultimate plans of the Jesuit; and, secondly, the little light that glimmered forth from the darkness was not of a nature calculated to suit the capacity of her friend; for Eleonore, tenderly as she was attached to Catherine, was perfectly aware of her own great superiority in intellect.

“ Well, Catherine, if you really wish for advice, listen to mine, which I am willing to support by every means in my power. I have friends in Paris, I shall go and visit them; you, under pretence of seeking to benefit your health by change of scene, will accompany me. Father Girard cannot pursue you thither; and you will there find more consoling and gentle guides, that will soon quiet your alarmed and disturbed conscience. Other objects, too, will divert your mind from its present painful tension. Nerve yourself but with the courage necessary to break your present fetters, and time and I will contrive to smoothe your way before you.”

“ Never—never !” answered Mademoiselle

Cadières, despondingly; “you cannot do that, Eleonore; no one can. Is Monsieur Chaudon going to Paris?” she demanded, with a sudden revulsion of feeling. “Has he put you up to counsel this? You are silent, Eleonore; you fear, perhaps, I shall dislike the measure on that account; but it is a mistake, I assure you. Pray tell me, does *he* wish to see me, too?”

“I will be quite frank with you, Catherine, as I always am when aught is demanded of me. Jules Chaudon has loved you with a love such as it is seldom woman’s lot to inspire—so deep, pure, and sincere.” She paused, and fancied her friend breathed an audible sigh. “His is a noble heart,” she continued, “and a gift which I fancy few would have rejected as carelessly as you did. He suffered much; a thousand times more than he would have cared to avow to any living creature.”

The subdued, timid, almost deferential expression that had pervaded the manner and look of Catherine up to this point of the conversation, suddenly gave way to one of another character; she seemed not unlike a startled

courser, unrestrained by bit and bridle, about to spring forward on his mad career. Eleonore's self-possession wavered before the wildness of her gaze, and she could not repress an exclamation of alarm.

"Oh, yes; you think me insane, and are more than half afraid of me," said Catherine, with a strange irritability; "but I care not what you think!"

"But, dearest Catherine, why fly out thus at me for a thought I have never expressed."

"Oh! because I *saw* you think it."

This answer somewhat startled Mademoiselle Raymond, who was not pleased that Catherine, contrary to her wont, possessed sufficient discernment to read her unspoken thoughts; justly displeased, too, with the acerbity of her manner, she involuntarily assumed a sterner air.

"I have then been mistaken," she said, coolly, drawing herself up to her full height, as she rose from the couch. "I was induced, by the first glow of your welcome, to believe that it was sincere, and that your feelings were unchanged,

at least towards me. I see my error ; for had it been so, you could have declined my advice without rudeness or scorn. I perceive you neither know your own mind, nor can appreciate mine ; so I had better leave you, until it is your pleasure to recal me."

"Do not part thus, dear, dear Eleonore," exclaimed Catherine, tenderly, throwing her arms around her ; "I will do and say whatever you please. Do not look thus angrily at me, I implore you ; your love is all that remains to me of the happy past—do not withdraw that which you have but so lately restored to me."

"If this be your wish, Catherine, then try to be more consistent in your conduct."

"I cannot ; it is not my fault. I am very sorry, and very, very ill, Eleonore,—far more so than you or any one else can imagine ;" and again the poor girl hid her pale face in the bosom of her friend, and gave vent to her agitation in a succession of hysterical sobs.

Mademoiselle Raymond, in spite of her usual clearness and rapidity of judgment, was completely at fault, at this moment, what to say or

do, or even to think. A few hours of undisturbed meditation were necessary to enable her to collect herself, and to decide upon the course of conduct which it would be most advisable to pursue. One thing she felt intuitively—namely, that the least appearance of hesitation or uncertainty on her part, or any appeal to Catherine in her present odd, unsettled frame of mind, was so much ground lost in her esteem, and, in consequence, a forfeiture of that influence over the unhappy girl, of which she had once possessed so large a share, and which had now become so all-important to the welfare, at least, of one of them. That she might keep all her advantages, therefore, and gain time to reinforce her position, she decided on leaving the house for the present.

“Well, Catherine,” she said, gently extricating herself from the embrace of her weeping companion, “I will exact nothing of you just now, but what I believe you both able and willing to perform. Do not tell Father Girard of my visit, and let me know when you are most likely to be alone, that I may come again

to you; but mind,—do not tell him of this meeting, or he will do his utmost to prevent its repetition.”

“ You are right—quite right,” said Mademoiselle Cadières. “ Yes, if I can, I will keep this visit from him. Come at this hour whenever you please; I am then always alone, and perhaps you may ultimately do something for me.”

“ I hope so,” said Eleonore. “ If you are at all docile and manageable, I am sure I shall prove the most able of physicians. But, for to-day, adieu.”

When Mademoiselle Raymond had leisure to think over what she had just heard, she was not more successful in arriving at a clear, dispassionate view of her friend's case, than during their interview. The most rational, nay, the only solution she could find to this problem, was the admission of a fact, the bare surmise of which was pain,—namely, that her poor friend's intellects were deranged. This idea she could not bear to dwell upon; and remembered, with pleasure, many symptoms of rationality and col-

lectedness which tended to combat this opinion; yet there were but too many flighty assertions she had no other means of explaining.

My father was deeply moved by Mademoiselle Raymond's communication; but hesitated in coinciding with her concerning Catherine's state of mind.

"The constant super-excitement of the brain under which she has laboured for the last two years, is, it is true, well calculated to produce this result," said he; "but if really afflicted by this infirmity, I suspect Father Girard has hurried it on by some foul practice or other, which may one day be brought to light. Far from having the real interest of his church at heart, I believe him to be one of those men who, actuated merely by personal motives and ambition, would not scruple to employ means to obtain their ends, before which even fanaticism would recoil. We must, however, sift this matter thoroughly before passing judgment."

But when he came to ponder over this subject in the silence of his own closet, he was to the full as embarrassed as Mademoiselle Ray-

mond, in tracing out the machinations of which, he doubted not, Father Girard had been guilty. He could, indeed, find no clue to them whatever, except by adopting Catherine's own version of the affair, and disgracing his reason by admitting the truth of all those tales of enchantment and sorcery which the enlightenment of his day already began to class among popular errors.

He pored over the pages of Cornelius Agrippa, and other writers on the same mystic subjects, without being able either satisfactorily to refute, or unscrupulously to admit, the truth of the strange doctrines they contain.

He found that they described, as a means of enchanting, or, in other words, mastering the passions and affections of indifferent persons, the very acts to which Mademoiselle Cadières alluded when speaking of her confessor—breathing upon the brow, and steadfastly gazing into the eyes of the person upon whom it is designed to operate, whilst the fixity of thought was declared a necessary accompaniment to the fixity of gaze recommended. This proceeding was

averred to be infallible; and, could my father but have relied on this exposition, not only might the incoherences of poor Catherine—the singular description she had given of the state of her soul under Father Girard's direction, in some measure, be accounted for, but also his mysterious power over his other penitents, as well as the moral changes and contradictions which each had exhibited in turn.

You will wonder, perhaps, that he did not laugh at what, in the days of the great philosophers then about to dawn on France,—the harbingers of the storm that was to shake her to her very foundation, and root up, for a time at least, all her ancient and respectable uses, together with her abuses,—would have been termed old women's stories. But in his youth sorcery was yet accredited among the mass; and though consigned to ridicule by a few of the bolder spirits of the day, the fancy of the many, even in the better classes, still clung to the traditional delusion.

My father, whose mind was yet fresh from Nature's mint, ready to receive every impression, hovered for some time between the fluctuating

prejudices of his epoch ; but eventually his own reason told him, that to deny the secrets of nature, or to despise them and her all pervading power, betrayed rather a deficiency of ability in unbelievers to read her mysteries aright, than it argued that her dominion was limited. In short, what Cornelius Agrippa terms magic, and Mesmer animal magnetism, that much discussed and not yet thoroughly understood agency, flitted across his imagination, until facts on the one hand, and Mesmer's eloquence on the other, clearly proved it in after times to his understanding.

It is worthy of remark, indeed, that in the exposition of practical magnetism, Mesmer's directions tally so completely with some of the fantastic assertions of the talented secretary of Charles V., in his occult philosophy, that on these points, at least, it may be said they have treated one and the same subject. And it is a no less remarkable fact, that every detail which has transpired concerning Father Girard and his penitents can be referred to that system, and, in my opinion, to nothing else.

You may adduce, and with truth, that by

playing upon the mind—especially in youth—exalting and debasing it by turns, it is easy, without the assistance of any extraneous agency, to affect the reason, if not actually to destroy its equilibrium. You may further urge, and with equal truth, that so complete is the power which he who wields skilfully the dangerous weapon called enthusiasm may obtain over his miserable victims, it remains no difficult task to sway, not only their judgment, but their feelings also. It is, indeed, the knowledge of numerous cases handed down to us in history, and even still of daily occurrence, in which fanaticism conducts to crime—to madness—even to death, that has caused me sometimes to hesitate in my conclusions.

Had this, however, been the Jesuit's real hold on Mademoiselle Cadières, it is not likely that she would have struggled so painfully with the influence he exercised over her; she would rather have yielded cheerfully and wholly to it. But it is averred by the most experienced writers on the subject of magnetism, that the operator has an unlimited power over the

patient, obtained by the concentration of his own thoughts, and their transfusion into the mind of the person subjected to this process, either by means of manipulation, which supposes consent in the party concerned ; or by the mere attraction of gaze, and sympathy with surrounding objects submitted to the ordeal of magnetism by the one party, and unconsciously much used by the other ; which does not imply connivance. This was the case with Mademoiselle Cadières and all the worthy Father's penitents, who yielded to, or rather suffered by an artifice whose very nature and existence was totally unknown to them.

When once affinity is established between the master and the patient—or victim, as the case may be—that strange psychological phenomenon takes place, of which I have often read in works on magnetism, but which I have never witnessed, or even heard of in real life, except in the case of Mademoiselle Cadières—I mean that state of high exaltation of the nerves, which permits spirit to commune with spirit without the grosser intervention of the organs of speech,—when

the half-formed thought is met by a corresponding thought, and the unspoken, unspeakable feelings are, at once, conveyed to a heart that throbs,—that *must* throb with sympathy;—a communion so full of harmony that, when we first contemplate its nature, we are excusable in believing it to belong to spheres and to beings of a higher order than ourselves, and the little world that contains us;—but when we bethink ourselves of the further consequences of this latitude, and perceive that the will of man, the noblest, holiest of his attributes, is also to be enchained by the same mysterious link between a stronger and a weaker mind, while both are yet clothed within their frail human tenements, liable to be shaken and riven by human passion, we shudder and turn away from the picture of mental degradation which this subject may offer to our view.

The antagonists of Mesmer have advanced a fact, which, if true—as it seems likely enough to be—would bear me out in my supposition of his science being applicable to this particular case. They assert that magnetism is highly

prejudicial to the health, and, by over exciting, is apt to cause the most serious derangements of the nervous system,—that the senses are frequently brought to a state betwixt waking and sleeping, which can hardly be said to be either and yet partakes of both,—that this unnatural condition, in which the intellect is constantly struggling betwixt its perceptions of the real and the unreal, is most dangerous alike to mind and body, and that magnetism can produce other consequences as fatal to the sufferer as the convulsions which are its usual accompaniment.

All this, I feel, must seem very obscure to those who, like you, have not dipped much into this theory. We see, however, by daily experience, how miserable are good and innocent young females—and they are the persons in point—when forced into the companionship of the bad and the reckless of our sex. That such trials have often affected their reason is a fact proved beyond dispute, by the fate of many who have been induced to marry notorious rakes. We may suppose, therefore, a close affinity of spirits, such as is said to be produced by mag-

netism between persons of unequal morality, in which the weaker party has been compelled, in spite of its purity, to adopt the loose sentiments and principles of the stronger and more dissolute, to be a thralldom past the human powers of endurance. I see, by your incredulous smile, you believe rather in the possibility of corrupting human purity, than of forcing its barriers; well—I think differently. But then, I am a confirmed believer in this mysterious agency, whose nature is, I own, startling enough at the first glance.

Having given you a faint outline of the pretensions of this doctrine, in order to enable you to understand in what manner I apply it to this particular case, I will return to my story.

When Mademoiselle Raymond next called upon Catherine, she was no longer alone. Father Girard was closeted with her; and Mademoiselle Cadières' confidential maid delivered her the somewhat ungracious message, that she was entreated not to come again to the house, as her friend could in no case see her. This was a relapse which Eleonore had

not expected to take place so soon ; but as she saw that, for a time at least, nothing more was to be done in the matter, she departed.

Some weeks more elapsed, during which little transpired at large of what passed at the Cadières', beyond the fact of Father Girard's daily—nay, hourly—presence there, and the rapid progress of his fair penitent in sanctity. The chapter of miracles was freely broached by himself and her brothers ; the curiosity of the public was strongly excited ; and even the bishop, the worthiest soul alive, dropped a few hints, that proved he began to feel a growing interest in the subject. The Carmelites still shook their heads ominously, and shrugged their shoulders at the bare mention of these things with an affected contempt, which could not veil their real mortification. The Jesuits' triumph was complete, radiant ; and they bore the palm over all competitors at Toulon without dispute.

Such was the state of affairs, when, all of a sudden, the news was spread about the town that Mademoiselle Cadières was about to em-

brace the veil. Various reasons were assigned for this step, and diverse convents named, of which one would be selected by the young saint to become the theatre of her future glory. Mademoiselle Raymond was, however, informed by Marie Langières, whom she still continued occasionally to visit, that Father Girard had appointed the convent of St. Clare of Ollioules as the future residence of Catherine, whom she described as most unwilling to enter it. She declared, also, that Madame Cadières, though fully sharing the reluctance of her daughter, was, like herself, unable to resist the imperative monk, who would suffer no contradiction.

“She loathes the very idea of a convent,” said Marie Langières, in conclusion, “and is growing daily less religious, I fancy. But what then? If that horrid man *wills* it, of course she must take the veil.”

These words roused Eleonore’s attention. She found, upon a closer investigation, that all the peculiarities she had remarked in Catherine’s discourses, as betraying an incipient insanity, were developed almost to a greater de-

gree in Marie Langières: the same depression of spirits and faded appearance, the same inward struggle between opposing emotions,—the natural impulses counteracted and controlled by an unaccountable, inexplicable inner thralldom. She would talk in the same breath on the same subject, now in her own person, and with the feelings that might be supposed natural to her; and again, with an altered tone, would utter sentiments unbecoming her sex and her years, which must have been farthest removed from her sphere of thought.

The similitude which Eleonore found between Catherine and Marie forced themselves upon her notice in Father Girard's other penitents, when accident brought her near them; and they so puzzled and confounded her reason, that she gradually yielded to Catherine's suggestion—namely, that they were all suffering under some powerful spell which Father Girard had cast upon them.

My father, as I have already explained to you, had not sufficiently made up his own mind on this subject to be enabled to enlighten an-

other; and indeed, as all personal interest in the affair was fast subsiding in his heart, he soon discovered that he had enough to think of in other quarters, and had no time to waste in fruitless brooding.

Not so with Mademoiselle Raymond. However superior in intelligence to the mass of young women of her age, especially at an epoch when the education of women was very deficient, still the monotony of her pursuits left her ample leisure for the development of her feminine curiosity; and this was a subject to excite it to the uttermost.

“If,” said my father to her often recurring remarks on this subject—“if you think there is a chance of your being able to move Mademoiselle Cadières from her purpose, I would advise you, by all means, to attempt seeing her before she sets off for the convent. Once there, she will find it perhaps impossible to return to the world, even should she desire it.”

“Could *you* contrive to speak to her,” urged Eleonore.

Her eyes were keenly fixed on his counte-

nance. The colour mounted to his very brow, as he felt conscious of the gaze; but he returned it, and it was Mademoiselle Raymond's turn to blush.

“If I thought any earthly exertion of mine could save Mademoiselle Cadières,” he said, “I would not spare myself, be assured of that; but I am convinced, that any interposition on my part would but hurry on Catherine to her fate. If I could unravel the mystery, and prove but half the villany I suspect in Father Girard, I would *avenge* her; but I must not forget, that I have no right whatever to interfere with the concerns of that young lady, when even that of friendship has been withdrawn from me; and my position as a rejected suitor should make me doubly reserved in all my proceedings.”

“But will you quietly sit by and see Catherine take the veil?”

“You must have too much sense, my good young lady,” was the answer, accompanied by an arch smile, “not to see that had I even the right, I can no longer have any reason for opposing such a measure. After all, if the

family Cadières prefer their *Tartuffe* to all else in the world, who may gainsay them? But you know very well the opinions I must perforce entertain on this subject: I cannot understand why you should insist on making me repeat them so often."

Mademoiselle Raymond's tell-tale cheek might have enlightened him as to her drift, and Madame Cadières' prophecy, which, when spoken two years back, had so grievously displeased him, now flitted across his mind, but this time certainly without causing any disagreeable emotion.

That Eleonore was not too deeply hurt at his being so resigned on the chapter of Catherine's retiring altogether from the world, was evident from her manner growing even more free and unreserved under the influence of his answer.

The footing on which they stood together was peculiar, as indeed, Mademoiselle Raymond's whole bearing and character was reputed to be. Circumstances allowed her, on many points, a greater latitude than other young women of her age are ordinarily permitted in

our country, more especially with regard to the choosing the society that best suited her; for her guardians were but distantly connected with her, and took little or no interest in her welfare. An impoverished elderly gentlewoman had been imposed upon her by way of a duenna; but, beyond this necessary restriction, no control whatever was laid upon her actions. Though nominally residing under the roof of her guardians, she kept a separate establishment, and received in her salon when and whom she pleased.

The liberty that fell thus early to her lot, might have been misused by many, so inexperienced as herself; but Eleonore, guarded by a powerful understanding, and the consciousness that her wealth, rather than her looks, would be generally considered her chief attraction, had steeled herself in an impenetrable armour of coldness and suspicion, that had stood proof against many a well-directed arrow.

Up to her acquaintance with my father, her salon, as well as her heart, had been closed against every intruder; and when he was at last admitted into that sanctum sanctorum, it

still remained inaccessible to others, to the no small mortification of all the speculative sons and parents in our good city. Great, therefore, was the outcry against what was almost deemed an impropriety—their marriage was spoken of as a certainty; then, as neither party took the trouble to notice the many hints thrown out before them on this subject, and as weeks grew to months and the thing remained in statu quo, and Mademoiselle Raymond refused offer after offer, and yet solemnly pledged her word, in so doing, that she was under no pre-engagement, people set down this intimacy as one of the bizarreries of the heiress, and turned to the discussion of some newer topic.

My father, as I have said, had accepted Eleonore's friendship as a substitute for Catherine's love, without much reflection; but, independently of the gratitude he owed her who had softened the sharpness of his first disappointment, he soon discovered in her qualities calculated to fix his esteem.

The uprightness and candour which she displayed on every occasion, even the most trivial,—her fair and dispassionate judgment even in

those things that concerned her most,—the generosity of heart that overlooked the foibles of others, which her own keenness of intellect rendered so glaring,—the firmness of her character and principles, that kept her in everything and at all times true to herself and to others—these sterling qualities, so rarely found in the opposite sex, that we may fairly term them masculine, made her, at once, an object of his respect and admiration. Nor was she devoid of those feminine inspirations, which teach even the most guileless of womankind how to ingratiate themselves with those whom they are desirous of pleasing. Habit, too, often reconciles men to the very plainest exteriors; and my father had long since discovered that Mademoiselle Raymond, whose figure and eyes were really fine, did not belong, absolutely, to that category—her society had become indispensable to him. Her superiority to all the women it had ever been his fortune to meet with, was by this time an established fact in his own mind; and had he been forced to forego her intimacy and renounce her friendship, the pain would have been scarcely less, though perhaps of

another character, than that which he felt when separated from Catherine. In short, though he would doubtless have written better verses in favour of the latter, he would much rather have chosen the former for the companion of his life, now that he had a fair opportunity of comparing their real merits.

But, although the progress of this attachment was so gradual on his part, that it was almost imperceptible to himself, Mademoiselle Raymond's preference for him had dated from the beginning of their acquaintance. It was, probably, the struggle she constantly maintained against her own heart, when she perceived that her friend's beauty had cast her into shade, that caused her usual reserve to deepen into ungraciousness and gloom. Too generous to resent his choice, and too modest not to acquiesce in its justice, she suffered no feeling of mortification or envy to dim the purity of her long established friendship with Catherine. She was careful not to permit the slightest trace of her weakness to become evident, well knowing that Catherine would not have encouraged any attentions likely to distress her, and she was

too proud to owe anything to pity. Thus had she sedulously avoided showing my father any more attention than what the most frigid courtesy exacted, and it was this line of conduct—the principle which influenced it remaining concealed from him—that had so long blinded him to her rare and high merits.

From the moment the fact became public of Catherine being about to leave Toulon, Eleonore was constantly on the look out to procure a final interview; but the vigilance of Father Girard even exceeded her own, and frustrated all her efforts. To her great surprise, now that a powerful motive had made her keep a kind of watch over Madame Cadières' house, she perceived that the confessor scarcely ever left it, nay, even the apartment of his penitent—that he penetrated into the latter at all hours, and sometimes banished her nearest relations from the chamber, whilst he remained alone with its fair tenant. This displeased to the full as much as it surprised Eleonore; nor could she view with patience the degrading, imbecile humility with which the Dominican and the Abbé, Catherine's two brothers, greeted or took leave

of, or indeed even approached the haughty Jesuit.

She was also struck with the alteration that had taken place in his whole person and manner. The latter had grown abrupt and presumptuous—the former more repulsive than ever. A restless, fiery look, that seemed at once to dread and yet defy opposition, gleamed from beneath his shaggy eyebrows, whilst the hollow of his cheeks and corpse-like pallor had even increased, although those who remembered him on his first arrival at Toulon might have deemed the thing impossible.

Most of Mademoiselle Raymond's remarks were made from a house opposite to that of Madame Cadières, to which she had contrived to obtain admission, at first for the express purpose of laying in wait for a favourable opportunity of executing her project of speaking with Catherine previous to her departure; but she soon became aware what an ample field was thus afforded for general observation. In any other case her innate delicacy of mind, and indeed, her perfect indifference to the concerns of strangers, would have made her shrink from

such a mode of gratifying her curiosity ; but she conceived that her love for Catherine gave her a right to inquire more closely into actions which, but for the baneful influence of a stranger, rising suddenly like a cloud between them, and which she trusted might yet in time be blown away, would have been laid bare to her like her own.

She could often catch a glimpse of Madame Cadières, bathed in tears ; a circumstance that convinced her how painful was the sacrifice she was about to make in suffering her daughter's departure. But Catherine was so completely confined to her room, which had no other look-out but upon the yard, that she could form no idea of her real feelings. That Father Girard wielded the sceptre of domestic power with a most tyrannical sway was obvious from a series of trivial occurrences that came within her notice ; and her dislike to, and distrust of the man, amounted to disgust as she perceived how unscrupulously he took the most open and unfair advantage of the weak, almost sottish, infatuation of the Cadières.

Finding all her endeavours to obtain speech

of her friend vain, she had recourse to letters, with no better success. She soon, indeed, became convinced that none ever reached their destination ; and, finally, she had the mortification of seeing her friend safely deposited in a travelling carriage by the side of Anne Guyol, and another of Father Girard's most devoted adherents, by that worthy personage himself. The mode of departure at that time partook but little of the hurry of our present habits, nor were leave takings as unceremonious then as now ; so that Mademoiselle Raymond had time to reach the carriage before, in spite of the Jesuit's impatience, the ponderous vehicle had yet been put in motion. Eleonore's bare head and careless attire denoted the eagerness of the moment ; and no sooner had the Father's angry exclamation drawn Catherine's eyes towards her than she seemed conscious of her friend's devotion, and grateful for the feeling.

“Thank you, Eleonore, thank you, dearest ! I will pray for you,” murmured she, in scarcely audible accents.

“Catherine, do not leave us,” said Eleonore,

fixing her penetrating eye on the young girl, who had already assumed a semi-religious habit.

“ You cannot really desire to do so ! ”

Catherine cast a timid, pleading glance at Father Girard, which tears soon obscured, coursing each other rapidly down her pale cheeks.

Father Girard crushed the mute appeal by a single threatening look, which seemed at once to terrify, not only the frail object on whom it fell, but even the weeping mother, who had looked up, as Eleonore was speaking, with something like an expression of hope depicted on her sunken countenance. The Priest turned sharply on Mademoiselle Raymond, and darting at her one of those withering glances which so well sustained the thunders of his eloquence in the pulpit, and produced such triumphant effects on his female adherents, he stood in haughty expectation of the result; but, in this instance, it fell short of its customary effect. Eleonore returned the look with one of undisguised contempt; and the Jesuit quailed before the firm, steady gaze he encountered in

the large, dark, severely expressive eyes of Mademoiselle Raymond.

“Leave us, Mademoiselle,” he said, in a tone of ill-suppressed rage; “leave this holy maiden, whom you never approach but with the attempt to lead her astray from a path of light which you have not the grace to follow. Go, I say,” he continued, raising his voice in the nervous impatience of the moment, above the pitch of decorum, and grasping, at the same time, the arm of the young lady in no gentle or reserved manner. “Go! impious heretic—or—” and he compressed the arm he held in a rude, rough manner, equally unbecoming his habit, and the sex of her whom he addressed.

“You forget yourself,” said Mademoiselle Raymond, coolly drawing herself up, and seeking, by a slight gesture, to release herself from the bold grasp of the Jesuit, but instantly ceasing the effort upon discovering that it would not avail her.

“It is not I, it is you!—you!” An excess of resentment, for which there appeared scarcely sufficient cause, seemed about to transport

the Monk beyond the bounds of decency. In vain did the Cadières, mother and sons, and the young girls in the carriage exhort him to be pacified; it was evident that rage was fast mastering his reason, when Eleonore, bending her tall form towards him, whispered a few words in his ear.

No spell spoken by necromancer ever produced a more magical effect. A hue still more ghastly than usual overspread his countenance,—his trembling hand released the frail arm it had grasped as though no longer able to retain it,—his knees knocked against each other,—his eyes rolled wildly in his head,—the most abject terror was depicted in every feature. Had Eleonore stabbed him, the change could not have been more sudden, or more striking. It was so much so that Madame Cadières exclaimed—

“ Good God! what has happened to the reverend Father?—what has she done to him?”

“ Nothing, assuredly, madame,” said Eleonore. “ But what is he doing to you? Rob-

bing you of your daughter, and yet you know not how to resist !”

An embarrassing pause ensued, to which Mademoiselle Guyol put an end by ordering the coachman, somewhat fiercely, to drive off. Father Girard seemed to breathe anew as the wheels began slowly to revolve, and the coachman's whip cracked cheerily in the air. Madame Cadières re-entered the house abruptly, as if unwilling to mark the progress of the vehicle that was bearing from her what she held dearest on earth. The Jesuit, without speaking another word, hastily darted up the street, following the carriage with rapid strides, whilst the brothers remained rooted to the spot. Eleonore's keen eye caught the figure of Catherine, at the next turning, as, leaning with her whole body out of the carriage window, she stretched forth her arms towards her—the next instant she was out of sight. Whether the movement had been an adieu, or an appeal, was a point which it troubled much Mademoiselle Raymond to decide. Luckily, for all parties, the early hour at which this scene took

place precluded the possibility of its getting bruited about. This was especially fortunate for Eleonore ; for, bigoted as were the times and the people, had the report once gained ground that she had insulted a member of the church, and so holy a man, too, as Father Girard was considered to be, it might have blighted her fair fame. She recounted, however, the affair to my father, down to the smallest detail. His answer was:—

“ The *Tartuffe* will never forgive you, and I am afraid you have braved his anger to little or no purpose. I, too, have taken my informations, and we have little to fear for Catherine. I understand that the nunnery of St. Clare belongs to a mild order, and boasts, besides a very sensible and high-born abbess, many sisters of distinction. Should she not feel disposed to take the veil, no one there will exert any undue authority, or even persuasion, to induce her to that step ; and, should she really perform the vows, she has every chance of happiness that such an existence can afford. At all events, there she will be delivered from that odious director’s

presence and control ; he will hardly dare to follow her to the sisterhood—if, indeed, he could quit Toulon. He believes, however, his object attained ; her person and fortune are secured to the church, and he will now turn his thoughts to some other victim, perhaps Marie Langières.”

“ God grant you may be right,” said Mademoiselle Raymond ; but she looked very much as if she could not bring herself to share his opinion.

Catherine’s departure, and the manner of it, had put an end to all Eleonore’s hopes of a reconciliation. That unfortunate being would, probably, now, for the rest of her life, be dead to them and to the world, as completely as though the grave had closed upon her ; and, having mourned this easy to be foreseen event long before it actually took place, both my father and Mademoiselle Raymond felt themselves very much at liberty to think of each other,—the only other object of interest that stood in their way being withdrawn from them.

I will cut a long story short—or one that might be spun out into such—nor detail to you

by what rapid gradations my father became aware of the real nature of his attachment to Eleonore — that she alone could render him truly happy. Neither will I dwell on the manner in which he communicated this discovery, nor on that in which it was received. Mademoiselle Raymond was free from all even the slightest shadow of coquetry, and probably would have been thought, upon the whole, too deficient in that respect by a vulgar-minded man; but my father was as superior to the generality of his sex as she was to hers, and was able to appreciate her every quality. The frank, candid admission she at once made of the state of her feelings, even previous to the existence of his own love for her, was received by him with delight and gratitude. He wondered, in his soul, how he could ever have preferred the rose to the pearl—Catherine to Eleonore; but, as he expressed it in after life, one was the romance, the other the reality of love. It is right and proper that youth should have its dreams, and manhood its happiness. The first choice of the heart depends so much on cir-

presence and control ; he will hardly follow her to the sisterhood—if, indeed, he quit Toulon. He believes, however, that he has attained ; her person and fortune are secured, and he will now turn to some other victim, perhaps Mademoiselle Raymond.

“God grant you may be right,” said the mademoiselle Raymond ; but she looked as if she could not bring herself to give any opinion.

Catherine’s departure, and the death of her father, had put an end to all Eleazar’s hopes of reconciliation. That unfortunate was probably, now, for the rest of his life, shut out from them and to the world, though the grave had closed long before it actually did. His father and Mademoiselle Raymond were very much at liberty, the only other obstacle that stood in their way being

I will cut a long story short, and might be spun out if I were to

Justice committed against all the marriages of the good city.

Now that the beauty and the heiress—Catherine and Eleonore—were both disposed of, it was not reasonable to expect they would be forgotten. As far as regards Eleonore this was indeed the case. You must not suppose, however, that her marriage had actually taken place. Matrimony, like every other thing, was treated then with far more importance than it is at present; and the *fiançailles*, or betrothals—a ceremony seldom, if ever, observed now in France—was in full use at that epoch. It generally preceded the marriage by many months, but bound the parties almost irrevocably to the performance of that engagement.

But Mademoiselle Cadières did not subside into forgetfulness. On the contrary, never had she been so much talked of as since her arrival at Ollioules. Father Girard having requested her admission to this convent in no very humble terms—for he had announced his *protégée* as one whose peculiar holiness would shed a fresh lustre on the establishment, and in whom he

cumstances, and on the imagination, and every man's tastes and opinions alter so much with time and experience, that the object of his boyish passion would seldom, if obtained, conduce to the happiness of his after years.

My father's proposal came at a most fortunate and critical moment for poor Eleonore. In a very short time her minority would cease; her guardians had determined on leaving Toulon, and had she wished to remain there, she would have found it no easy matter to procure a home.

I will not tell you of all the tittle-tattle of the town, when this news was made public by the parties whom it most concerned. After having loudly predicted it nearly three years before it had any basis on truth, they would not credit it, even from the lips of the future couple. It was not until the parents of Monsieur Chaudon came from Marseilles, in great haste, to attend the *fiançailles* of the young people, that at last the thing was believed; and then, again, it gave rise to as much jealousy and animadversion, to as many heart-burnings and calumnies, as though such an event had been a flagrant act

of injustice committed against all the marriageables of the good city.

Now that the beauty and the heiress—Catherine and Eleonore—were both disposed of, it was but reasonable to expect they would be forgotten. So far as regards Eleonore this was indeed the case. You must not suppose, however, that her marriage had actually taken place. Matrimony, like every other thing, was treated then with far more importance than it is at present; and the *fiançailles*, or betrothals—a ceremony seldom, if ever, observed now in France—was in full use at that epoch. It generally preceded the marriage by many months, but bound the parties almost irrevocably to the performance of that engagement.

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himself took a special interest, on account of the extraordinary graces with which she was gifted—and being, moreover, personally known to the superior,—she was received with singular honours; and all the strange, unusual conditions he made in her behalf were acquiesced in without demur.

But his after proceedings, and her own, attached a still greater importance to Catherine, and brought her before the public in a far more glaring manner than heretofore. Abandoning almost entirely his concerns at his seminary, more to the satisfaction of his superiors than to the edification of his other penitents, the whole of Father Girard's time was taken up with journeys to and from Ollioules; and the soul of Catherine occupied his attention so exclusively as to cause much jealousy and discontent among those whom it had long been his habit, and was now more than ever his duty, to attend to; for they all seemed to live but in his presence.

Marie Langières, Madame la Rue, and her daughter, were loudest in their complaints on this occasion, and stood forth the representatives, as it were, of the malecontents.

Among these, neither last nor least were the Cadières; nor were they slow in making their uneasiness known. Serious rumours now began to circulate about miracles having been wrought upon Catherine, visibly and palpably impressing her with the sign manual of special election; and they soon became not only universally discussed, but credited in every circle, drawing the attention of the clergy and the great, in a marked manner, towards the convent. The nearer she approached the culminating point at which they had long desired to see her, the greater became the mortification of her relations at having the saint of Ollioules, as she was now called, removed beyond their sphere, her glory profiting utter strangers rather than themselves. This was certainly the first consideration that roused the indignation of her brothers, who, if they were not brought into notice by her means, had but little advancement to hope for in their profession.

The mother, doubtless, was influenced by tenderer and less interested motives. Her great source of anxiety, that which really pressed heavily on her mind, was the state of her

daughter's health, which seemed materially impaired since the last few months. She reproached herself constantly with having yielded to Father Girard's persuasions in delaying to call in medical aid, whilst she had yet an opportunity of so doing. She felt, moreover, severely the loss of her idol—for Catherine might be called such in the fullest sense of the word; and her confidence in, and reverence for, Father Girard, began to diminish from the moment she no longer beheld in him the promoter of, but rather the bar to, the realization of those plans and ambitious desires which she had cherished in her bosom for years. But Father Girard was not probably very desirous of sharing the glory redounding upon him for having made a saint with any one else, not even with the Dominican or the Abbé, whose interest in their sister was thus completely neutralized.

At Ollioules, as at Toulon, Catherine had trances, ecstasies, and fits of a character that almost bordered on epilepsy. At other times, she seemed to walk, talk, and exist, like one in a perpetual dream. The miracles spoken of had

indeed wrought visibly on her person. She received the communion, and confessed almost daily with Father Girard; and the fame of her sanctity spread far and wide over the country, so that priests and *laics*, *grandeés* and beggars, devotees of all classes, ages, and sexes, were daily entreating admittance to this new saint, of whom the strange fact is recorded, that she could read the thoughts, and guess the ailings or troubles, of those who approached her, before they had even spoken them.

Miraculous cures and heaven-inspired advice was soon reported to have emanated from her, and curiosity attracted even those to see the lovely saint of Ollioules whom credulity did not bring to her shrine.

The bishop several times meditated a personal visit to her, which Father Girard was careful to prevent, in order to keep her humble, as he said; but he could not prevent the grand vicar, and other dignitaries of the church from doing her that honour. It seemed, indeed, from the Jesuit's account, that his chief difficulty in guiding his young votary's soul aright consisted in

combatting her growing pride in her own surpassing sanctity, and the privileges it drew down upon her from heaven.

My father was much pained at the growing honours of Mademoiselle Cadières. A conviction he could no longer repel induced him to believe they were due to imposture alone; and that Catherine herself—his but so lately beloved Catherine—was the chief impostor. It was most reluctantly that he admitted this truth even unto himself; but his reason spoke loud enough to silence the pleadings of his heart. These miracles and wondrous signs from above—this gift of prophecy in one so simple-minded and little enlightened—this power of penetrating into the secrets of consciences, reading the darkest mysteries of the human heart—of diving with equal skill into the past and future—seemed to him, not, as to the superstitious and illiterate vulgar, a voice from Heaven speaking to the amazed multitude through the lips of an innocent and favoured agent, but rather the well-played comedy of an artful priest, performed by a no less cunning stager. When he reflected how pure and

spotless was her mind at the epoch of his first introduction to her, and then thought of her actual position, so young, and brought up in such reserve and obscurity, and yet exhibiting herself in so glaring a manner to public notice, displaying acting so consummate as to deceive and blind men of the strictest honour, and of no mean capacities, he shuddered at the moral depravity which so much perseverance and boldness in falsehood betrayed.

These feelings of disgust weighed heavily on his spirits; and although he permitted them to be apparent to no one else, he frankly communicated them to Eleonore. Her answer was, as usual, calculated to dispel the clouds from his brow.

“You are kind enough to say you have some confidence in my judgment,” she said; “allow me, then, like so many others, to perform a pilgrimage to Ollioules; I shall then be better able to tell you how much of all these reports that affect you so painfully is founded in truth; for exaggeration has doubtless laid on its colours with no sparing brush. I shall, also, I doubt

not, be able to detect how far Catherine is herself the dupe of her own imagination. I will, at all events, be a careful observer of all that I may be permitted to see, and will report everything most faithfully, even in its minutest details. May I go to Ollioules?"

The approbation she sought was not withheld; and Eleonore, always prompt in following up an idea, was that very day on the road to St. Clare's. Many, and of various kinds, were the wayfarers she fell in with—all bound to the same goal as herself. She addressed several females, who evidently belonged to the lowest class, and discovered that their trust in the new saint of Ollioules was illimited; and as they seemed sufficiently burthened by misery and illness already, Eleonore thought it a cruelty to seek to lessen the comfort which their strange delusion afforded them. They recounted to her the most incredible facts that had occurred to some of their friends and relations through the intervention of the Holy Virgin of St. Clare's, as they called Catherine. The stories they recited, in spite of her utmost efforts to repress

the rising smile, brought it more than once to her lips, and once even forced a laugh, the real cause of which she had some trouble in concealing from her simple interlocutor, whose severest indignation would doubtless have been roused by her avowed incredulity. The obvious interest, however, with which she listened to their lengthened tales of distress and sickness, ingratiated her with them too much to allow of their suspecting her real sentiments.

When, however, she was at last ushered along with the others into the convent parlour to await Catherine's appearance, she was surprised, on examining those who surrounded her, to perceive that many were of a standing in life not only far superior to her own, but some even apparently of the most exalted station.

These clustered together at one end of the long dark chamber, whilst the poorer devotees grouped themselves at the opposite extremity, thus leaving Eleonore, in solitary dignity, the sole possessor of the centre immediately facing the grate. This circumstance might have intimidated some young women ; but Eleonore Ray-

mond was ever above the trivial occurrences of life that so often disturb less well-strung nerves ; and she sat quietly surveying the scene, unconscious perhaps of the effect her calm demeanour, and the depth of intelligence reflected in her lustrous eyes, was calculated to produce on the beholders. Having been for some time the subject of much scrutiny, especially from the aristocratic end of the room, she was not surprised when a young lady detached herself from the group, and took a seat beside her.

“ You are of Toulon, madam, I presume ? ” said the stranger, in tones, the slight hauteur of which was almost veiled by their sweetness, and whose accent was decidedly Parisian.

Eleonore guessed the rank of her interlocutor at a glance ; and though certainly not in the habit of conversing with, or even of seeing marquises out of their glass coaches, she was far from being overwhelmed by the condescension of the pretty sprig of aristocracy who honoured her thus far.

“ I am, ” was the reply, conveyed in Mademoiselle Raymond’s most ungracious manner.

The lady was evidently shocked at the want of respect, even of courtesy, to which she had exposed herself, and was about to turn away in disgust; but a second thought seemed to prevail with her; for, pushing aside the profusion of curls and laces that obscured her features, she exhibited them in full to Mademoiselle Raymond, whose gaze, in spite of herself, was rivetted by their exquisite loveliness, although time, and the fatigue of an agitated life, had already somewhat dimmed their brightness. The impertinence of a slightly turned up, but most delicately formed nose, was fully amended by the gentle smile that played on her ripe and pouting lips. There lay a world of love in her deep hazel eyes, fringed with darker lashes; and the grace of courts, and the assurance of fashion, rather than that of rank, was revealed in her careless attitude.

“Then,” she said, “you must know something of this—this——” she paused a moment, as if embarrassed to find the fitting expression—“this young person,” she continued, remarking the sardonic smile that lighted up for a moment the gravity of the Toulonese lady.

“I do,” was the blunt answer; “we have been friends from earliest childhood.”

“Really!—oh! charming! Then, you can tell us all about her. Come, come,” she cried out, in a gleeful tone to her companion—“come, we have what we want.”

“I do not understand,” said Eleonore, laughing, “what you want; but if it is me, or any information I am able to afford, how can you make sure of securing either.”

The handsome and animated Parisian lady turned her soft eyes upon her with a stare expressive of anything but pleasure, and already her lips opened, doubtless, to utter some ungracious reply, which would certainly not have furthered her views with the person she addressed, when another came forward, whose countenance, though scarcely less beautiful than that of the former speaker, was more touched by time, and evidently had ever been of a thoughtful cast.

“Ah! come, my dear Madam, to my assistance,” said the repulsed fair one, “if you would while away time, and procure some light on

the important subject that has lured us so far.”

“Yes,” was the answer, “but above all, I must remind you, *tête folle*, that we are to keep our incognito, or you will infallibly betray us. Down with that veil.”

“Oh! it is merely some *Toulonèse roturière*,” was the whispered reply, which Eleonore’s quick ear caught, nevertheless, most distinctly.

“Never mind—we must deal cautiously by her, or she may guess who we are,” said the other, in a tone scarcely less low; “and if it were to gain wind that we have been here this day, it would cover us with ridicule. To have come so far, and incognito, for such folly—and I a philosopher too—it is too bad!—” And the lady laughed and coloured at the same time.

“No fear for the incognito, if your wit does not betray us, fair Canoness—”

“Or your beauty, thoughtless one!” said the graver lady.

Not a word of this colloquy was lost upon the unnoticed listener; and when the elder turned to address her, she already knew they were of

high distinction in the capital—the one an acknowledged wit, the other a beauty ; but her utter ignorance of Paris and the exalted sphere in which such orbs were accustomed to move, prevented these discoveries from being of any service to her with regard to satisfying her awakening curiosity. A Canoness and a Philosopher were two qualities which, united in one and the same person, might have sufficed to betray a name but too well known to the public, had Eleonore been less provincial ; but, as it was, the ladies were perfectly safe from discovery, so far as she was concerned.

“ Being of this neighbourhood, to which we are perfect strangers,” said she, whom Eleonore had heard complimented on her talents, in a natural and simple manner, which, in proportion as it was freer from courtly graces and *minauderies* than that of the other, was more congenial to the person she addressed, “ perhaps you will be kind enough to inform us if there be any truth in the extraordinary things that are reported concerning this new marvel of Provence. Is she so beautiful, so gifted, and, above all, so trustworthy, as people say ?”

The deep, thoughtful blue eyes of the lady were fixed on Mademoiselle Raymond's, with an expression that said, as plainly as words could have spoken it, she felt confident of obtaining a satisfactory answer to *her* question. Eleonore rose with that involuntary feeling of respect which the mere presentiment of talent in others awakens in those who are conscious of possessing some share of it themselves ; and she unhesitatingly replied :—

“The young lady you have come to see out of mere curiosity has been most lovely and excellent, and was once truth itself. What she may have become during the few months we have not met I can scarcely determine until I have again seen her ; and it is that purpose which has drawn me here to-day.”

“I understand,” said the stranger, with a deep sigh—“she has been during that time in this convent ; and sincerity is not always the lesson best taught in cloisters.”

During the full hour that intervened previous to Catherine's appearance, there ensued between the two courtly friends and Eleonore an animated colloquy, in which the latter was un-

consciously drawn out by the extraordinary conversational powers of the elder lady, who joined to much depth of thought a gentle earnestness of manner that pleased Mademoiselle Raymond, and made her overlook at the moment, though it afterwards came back to her memory most distinctly, a few startling paradoxes, bold views of religion, and flighty ones of morality, which were calculated to amaze a mind like hers, firm in womanly strength of principle, but which soared not beyond the limits assigned to her sex by education and society. The other lady testified, now by her wearied looks and yawns, and now by a few sparkling phrases, shining through the discourse like the facets of a diamond, and bringing a smile even to Mademoiselle Raymond's grave lips, that her wit, more brilliant than solid, was of that light order which distils just as much essence from the flower of all things as it can conveniently retail to a crowd of admirers, that has no time to be charmed too long; whereas the honey the other had gathered, whether of a good or bad quality, was evidently extracted for her own use, the world only

deriving advantage from the overflow of its abundance. But if this trio was sufficiently concentrated in itself to wait with patience for the appearance of the saint, not so the poorer votaries, whose hopes began to cool at the chill of their reception; and their murmurs were growing very loud indeed, when they were silenced by the sound of many steps behind the grate: then ensued much shuffling of feet—the dragging of some heavy piece of furniture was distinctly heard, and another awful pause of suspense followed.

“I wonder they did not prepare their comedy beforehand,” said the wit, in a whisper to Eleonore.

“The worst of convents is, they are so very unpoetical in the country,” said the Beauty. “A dark, dingy parlour, with a few high-backed, hard-stuffed, villanous oak chairs, a rusty grate, behind which hangs a dirty black curtain of moth-eaten wool—it is quite chilling. If ever I made my retreat, it should be, like the Duchesse de la Vallière, into a Parisian sisterhood, where the Lady Abbess was a princess of the blood at the very least.”

“Princess Adelaide’s, perhaps,” murmured the other.

“Perhaps,” was the answer; but it was accompanied with a deep sigh, which shewed the heart was not quite so light as the gay roving glance would have bespoken it.

The heavy, dark curtain, so scornfully described by the fair advocate of the capital, after sundry jerks and tugs, was withdrawn; and a novice appeared behind the grate, seated in state in an antediluvian arm-chair, from the old hard-stuffed arms of which the brass knobs appeared ready to drop with age. Beside her was a *prie Dieu*, to match with two miserable-looking thin tapers burning before it; and a flaming heart, surmounted by doves wrapt in a chaste embrace, cut delicately out of paper by the cunning hand of some of the sisterhood, and resembling the lace-like tracery one finds on some of our *bonbons* boxes, stood out in relief on a dark-coloured missal placed upon it. On either hand of the novice a few nuns had grouped themselves, self-importance and idle curiosity being strongly stamped upon their features.

These *mesquine* details were taken in at a glance by the trio, who stood yet aloof from the grate, and raised a smile, that shewed how unfavourable to the effect intended are the toy-like resources of the catholic faith when addressed to cultivated intellects, or even to such as have been ripened by the mere influence of elegant habits and the refinements attendant upon wealth and rank.

The poorer class, of course, were more edified with this little display, however simple; but Catherine herself occupied most their attention, and they drew nigh to where she sat with an expression of holy confidence, ennobling in itself the object to which it was addressed.

The few persons there present that belonged to the higher order of society grouped themselves in the background, as their inferiors crowded on the first ranks, but occasionally caught glimpses of the young saint through the waving motions of her votaries.

Catherine, far from looking pale or dejected as when last Eleonore beheld her, had a colour in her cheeks so bright and transparent as to

contrast with the waxy whiteness of her brow and hands in a manner that almost betrayed the hand of art rather than that of nature; and the lustre of her eye and the delicacy of her features were heightened beyond the degree that is agreeable by this lovely but unnatural tint. The novice's veil shrouded her slight figure, and lent additional dignity to the perfect oval of her physiognomy; but it was not the well-known lineaments, nor even the unusual colouring, that startled Eleonore—it was the expression pervading that once familiar countenance, and making it as strange to her eye as though it had never rested on it before.

There was a radiance on the brow, a light in the eye, a suavity in the smile hovering round the half-unclosed lips, the very impress of heaven itself seeming to surround her lovely head with a halo of refulgent light, invisible to mortal eye, except by the reflection it cast upon her irradiated countenance.

“She's a saint—one has only to look on her to say so!” exclaimed one of the common women, in ecstasy.

“Ay, the glory is round her, 'tis plain,” said another.

“She looks like one in a dream,” said the beauty to Eleonore—“was she always thus?”

But Eleonore's whole soul was in her eyes, and there was echo in her breast but for the words her friend might speak. The concentration of her faculties was too evident for her courtly companion to insist on claiming an attention which was evidently rivetted elsewhere; and the profoundest silence reigned in this strange and heterogeneous assembly.

“If,” said one of the nuns, coming forward, “you would anything of this holy maiden, good people, she who would hold converse with her must give her hand through the grate.” And the nun opened a little wicket for the purpose.

A woman, in circumstances apparently above those by whom she was surrounded, advanced hastily, and said, in a voice half choked with sobs—

“I am not come for myself—but they say you are a holy maid, and can read the secrets

of nature as well as those of afflicted hearts. Here is a lock of my daughter's hair. Oh tell me—tell me, in the Virgin's name! something about her, sweet lady!"

Catherine looked earnestly at the lock of soft, dark hair which had been placed by the sobbing mother in her hand, put it on her heart, and kept it there some time, when she said, in low but distinct tones, as audible as if they had been spoken in the ear of each person in the room—

"I see your daughter; she is very young—almost a child—and very beautiful."

"She is but fifteen," murmured the grieved parent.

"She lies on her snowy bed, all decked out in white. The marriage wreath binds her dark locks, and the small gold ring glitters on the third finger of her left hand. But the lights for the dead are burning at her head and at her feet; people in mourning are kneeling around her; a young man is weeping;—yes, she is dead—I see the seal of death upon her brow!"

"No, no,—not dead!" exclaimed the wo-

man, putting forth her hand and clasping, in the anguish of the moment, that of the young novice, who in turn held it tightly imprisoned within the grasp of her own slender, delicate fingers.

“Woman! woman!—why should you doubt that the hand of God has withdrawn what it had given? But though your lips move in prayer, and speak of submission, your heart murmurs and rebels against his will. It is all of no avail! The physician has spoken it—the priest has read the prayers for the dead over her—friends have wept her loss! What more would you know?”

“Ay, but it must be a trance—a lethargy!” said the mother, impetuously, the despair at her heart drying up the tears at their source. “But fifteen, and so fair!—my only darling!—so happy, too! The priest had but just spoken the blessing—the husband pressed his lips to hers for the first time—all her little ailments had ceased—she looked as bright and smiling as the angels—and as she turned from the altar, fell into my arms—dead!—no, no! impossible!—it

is false, I tell you! and so I would tell the angels were they to come on earth and tell me so! It cannot be—they laid her on her bridal bed, in her wedding-clothes; but it is now six days ago, and yet no trace of death has come to mark her for his prey. Her hand is not yet cold—her face is pale, but not discoloured. Oh, sweet Saint of Ollioules! say the priest and the doctor are wrong—that she is but in a swoon!—oh, say so, and I will worship you evermore!”

Catherine again looked intently at the lock of hair which the mother had given her, pressed it to her bosom, and after a somewhat protracted pause, replied—

“No, you must no longer resist the orders of the physician, nor refuse the dead the peaceful grave. Let flowers spring up from the bed of sod where must rest your innocent child. Her sleep is that of eternity—her heart is broken.”

“Broken!” shrieked the mother, “broken! Oh, no!—the lark that sang at her window was not gayer than she.”

“The fibres of that heart were too weak to

resist its throbs of happiness," murmured Catherine, gazing intently on the curl. "She is well—she is happy now—all her little ailings, the beatings of that fitful heart are over—she is *dead*, I tell you. Woman, bow your head in submission to the Divine decree."

But the mother was alike insensible to reproof or sympathy,—she had fainted. The poor women who surrounded her, manifested the greatest attention and feeling, but were evidently more awe-stricken than encouraged by the scene that had reduced her to this state.

Mademoiselle Raymond, for the first time since the appearance of Catherine, cast her eyes on the mysterious strangers. All trace of merriment or affectation had vanished from the dimpled and capricious countenance of the younger, and tears stood in the eyes of the elder as she gazed sorrowfully on the prostrate form of the bereaved mother.

The nuns took the lock of hair from the novice's passive hand, and, closing around her, for a moment effectually veiled her from sight.

Then, after a short consultation as it appeared, one of them again came forward and announced that those who had any more demands to make of the novice should hasten, as she would not be much longer able to reply to them.

The humbler votaries seemed now far less anxious than previously to draw near the Saint of St. Clare's, and after some hesitation, observed that, as their betters were waiting, they would retire for that day. This design they soon put into execution, bearing the still insensible woman in their arms, whom, with the sudden and warm impulse of southern natures, they were now more intent upon reviving and consoling than concerned about the business that had brought them thither. The few ladies who were there, lingered not long behind, but, seemingly too painfully affected with what they had just witnessed to have the courage to expose themselves to anything of the kind, left the parlour with looks and gestures sufficiently indicative of their deep conviction of the supernatural agency visible in Catherine.

As they were moving away, the strangers,

who still stood at Eleonore's elbow, spoke in low hurried tones that gradually became audible, discussing the propriety of remaining yet awhile, or of following the example set by others.

"After having come so far," said the graver lady, who was the first to recover her composure, "it were absurd to depart thus unsatisfactorily. To have made all this fuss, and yet to lack the courage to face the matter out! Nay, if you go, I stay; and see, we are not alone," and her glance plainly intimated that Mademoiselle Raymond was the presence alluded to.

"May be, but I like not the aspect the thing has taken," answered the other, tremulously. "At a distance, it looked a very amusing *plaisanterie*, but it is a very different matter now. I tell you, I do not feel nerve to go through it."

"Nonsense, my dear!" urged the other, with reviving spirits—"it is, I assure you, but a well got up comedy; it is easy for this pretended marvel of the place to gain intelligence of what has been passing so immediately in her vicinity;

the trick is a stale one, and ought not to be palmed off with success upon a person who knows so much of the world as you do."

"But really I——" began the other, hesitatingly.

"You must, *ma toute belle*, allow yourself to be persuaded—overruled even, if you please—by me, in this affair. Let us advance bravely, hand in hand, and you will soon see that, to unexpected visitors, of whose identities and history she must be wholly ignorant, her answers will be altogether of another nature. She will get embarrassed, speak nonsense, or take refuge in an obstinate silence; and after what you have this morning seen, it will, perhaps, be a soothing conviction to your mind that she is nothing but an impostor."

"Truly, if I could bring myself to believe so—" but before the timid beauty had time to finish her sentence, her companion had taken her by the hand, and with gentle violence brought her close to the grate.

Eleonore, who had not lost a syllable of the foregoing dialogue, although it was spoken in

too low a voice to have reached the ears of the nuns or novice, followed them closely; taking care, however, to conceal herself behind the tall form of the elder of the two friends, for the other was rather diminutive in stature—that she might avoid, if possible, withdrawing Catherine's attention from those whose object it was to attract it.

Her curiosity was excited to the uttermost by the scene about to take place; for, like the lady who had suggested the idea, she thought it very likely that Catherine had heard in her retreat of an event which at that time created some sensation at Toulon. A pretty young girl, namely, had fallen dead at the foot of the altar, where she had but just pronounced vows that were to bind her on earth—a bond broken asunder at the very moment it was formed;—and yet there was nothing in the handsome bridegroom to excite the suspicion of his having called down upon himself such a catastrophe by any dark deed of his own. The wild overwhelming grief of the mother,—her reluctance and that of her friends to believe in her de-

cease,—their formal opposition to the burial taking place according to custom and police regulations—all this was a matter of notoriety, and caused much discussion among the public, who began to shew manifest alarm lest the ceremony of interment should be, in some cases, too promptly performed; a possibility to which the rumours excited by this event gave some colour. What Eleonore had just witnessed, therefore, was not conclusive evidence of her friend's veracity. She might still be acting a part, though Mademoiselle Raymond was forced to acknowledge that in that case she had proved a most consummate actress.

“We have been informed you can divine as well the mysteries of the future as declare those of the past,” said the bolder of the two ladies to Catherine, with a somewhat incredulous smile. “We would have a proof of the latter talent, that we may repose more trust in the former.”

The nuns were, at first, struck dumb, with this irreverent mode of addressing their saint; then suddenly gave vent to their reprobation in terms of anything but placid reproof. To their

vehement objurgations the offender replied in the most winning and honeyed phrases, evidently anxious to make up for her mistake, and succeeded after a time, though not without difficulty, in laying the storm she had raised. The softened sisters withdrew from before their idol, to whose person they had momentarily formed an impenetrable barrier; peace was restored, and the lady prepared herself to address Catherine in more appropriate terms.

“It is not to gratify idle curiosity, or to dissipate an hour of languor, that we open our gates to the followers of folly or mundane vanities. Our motives for departing from the strictness of our rules are of a graver, higher nature,” said one of the nuns, who seemed, both in manner and rank, above the rest, and who was addressed as the mistress of the novices. “It is that the grace and light which it has pleased God to bestow upon this humble maiden, and which exalt her above her years and station, may, peradventure, recal an erring soul from its career of mortal sin, and turn it to repentance; or,” she added, with a severe look and marked

emphasis—"or to confound, perchance, shameless scepticism, that would seek, in the brightness of the sun itself, a proof of the darkness which it advocates."

The reproach cut deep into the soul of the younger lady, who devoutly crossed herself; but the elder cast an inquiring glance on the nun, in whom the freemasonry of education and manner had at once revealed to her practised eye an equal. Nor was she mistaken. Madame de L'Escot, the mistress of the novices at the convent of St. Clare, of Ollioules, was a lady by birth as well as breeding. The result of this discovery was a slight bow of acquiescence in the stranger; who now, turning to Catherine, and extending her left hand through the wicket, whilst with the right she still tightly grasped her companion, as if afraid that she would break away, and leave her alone and unassisted to get out of the dilemma in which she had placed herself, said, in a grave, submissive tone—

"You behold two women, who would willingly atone by the future for many an error in the past, if they but knew how; they are come

to claim assistance of your holier spirit, that you may point out to them by what means such errors may best be expiated, and how they may deserve that their remaining days should know nothing of the storms that agitated their youth."

Madame de L'Escot placed the ungloved hand of the stranger, on which a wedding ring stood conspicuous amidst many an accompanying gem, into that of Catherine, who had relapsed into a sort of reverie, apparently wholly unconscious of what was passing around her. She seemed transported in thought to some far distant world, whose bright tints were reflected in her deep, radiant gaze.

She started as she felt the contact of the small, delicate palm of the stranger with her own, and appeared gradually recalled by the touch to a sense of her situation. She stared for a few seconds rather wildly at this new interlocutor, then heaved a deep sigh, as renewed activity of thought beamed from her bright eyes. When the visitor had ceased speaking, she answered, in the same calm, clear, low, yet searching tone as before—

“ Yours has been a stormy youth, lady. Your besetting sin was pride ; it is humbled, not broken. Ambition was your idol ; to it you have sacrificed duty and honour—for it, stifled alike the voice of your heart and that of your conscience—you broke the vows that bound you to heaven, the tie that bound you to earth—you forgot your convent, and later, your child, in the guilty pursuit of a guilty aim. Yes, you have known the court well, and its hollowness and deceit. It makes me suffer to think of such things—to behold them is pain, very great pain. You have known power, too, but that dream is over now ; pleasure, pomp, and power, are alike left behind in the rapid flight of time. Born to obscurity, fate has elevated you on its pinions for a time, to fling you back into your native element. Your son, inheriting your gifts, and, perchance, some of the errors of your judgment, will rise on this hemisphere, a brilliant star, but will deny you in his hour of triumph, as you have denied him in his helplessness. You rejected a mother’s care—a mother’s joys will never be yours. But the past may yet be

atoned ;—to the world by your talents, to heaven by sincere contrition——”

“Enough—enough !” said the lady, haughtily, tearing her hand from the novice. “It is now your turn, madam,” addressing her companion.

The latter stood as if rooted to the spot by some irresistible power. As her friend fell back, she involuntarily extended her hand to the saint, who seized, and kept it in hers for a few moments without speaking, then gazed intently at it for a few more, as if willing to read, in the almost imperceptible lines of the rosy palm, the secrets of the heart whose throbs were almost audible.

“It is fair to look upon, and yet there is blood on that hand,” she said. The lady gasped for breath and closed her eyes, whilst a slight, but visible shudder passed over her frame. “Yes, there is blood—it sickens me to look at it.”

“I have not spilled any,” murmured the fair penitent. “Oh! if you know aught, you surely know that.”

“Not you,—but it was spilt through you ;

your smiles were his destruction. Had he looked less often into your bright eyes, never knelt at your feet—had he not been surprised there by a jealous, a princely lover—his doom had never been sealed. Yes, that is what weighs heaviest on your heart. All your manifold sins—your broken vows—your adulterous amours—your shame—your hours of dalliance and of guilt, are all light, forgotten offences, compared with that one fatal consequence of your levity. He loved you with all the devotion of a reckless, an erring, but a truthful heart; and you accepted the homage that was to prove his ruin, thoughtlessly—carelessly; but he was handsome, young, high-born; you loved him too. *His* portion was the rack and the wheel—his noble blood was spilt as though it had been that of the meanest boor that ever crawled. Yes, he loved you well—your name was on his dying lips; and yet your head rested again on his princely rival's bosom; you heard him call a cowardly revenge, justice; you drank in his cup, sat in his halls, wreathed gay flowers in your locks for his banquets, and the pale spectre

of the dead never rose to your mind—the thought of your guilt never caused you to turn pale at the sight of the ruby wine, or to sicken at the touch of that hand which had signed his doom. He looks at us even now—there—so pale and yet so noble in aspect—his fair hair clotted with blood—he beckons to you——”

“Where! where!” wildly shrieked the lady. “De Hornes, unhappy de Hornes, why torment me? It was the regent—the regent’s insane jealousy—and not my love, that caused your death!”

“This is too much!—you forget yourself, Madame de Parabères!” said the elder lady, authoritatively, tearing the trembling, agonized female from the grate, and leading her forcibly away.

“Oh! Madame de Tencin, you have killed me,” said she, in a broken murmur, as her companion dragged her from the parlour.

All stood amazed and paralysed at this sudden, unlooked for revelation.

The errors of both these celebrated mistresses of the Regent had been too flagrant to have

escaped the knowledge even of such recluses as the virgins of Ollioules. The literary fame of Madame de Tencin had indeed survived, in the world of Paris, the renown of her beauty and her intrigues; but nought could mitigate their heinousness in the eyes of the nuns, though swallowed up, for the moment, in the deep interest created by the supposed heroine of the tragical event just alluded to—the death of the young Count de Hornes—which was yet fresh in every mind.

Although all creditable historians have agreed in charging him with the offence for which he suffered, yet there were many at the time, especially among the privileged classes to which he belonged, who were inclined to doubt both the justice of his sentence and the Regent's motives for enforcing it with a relentless purpose so much at variance with his usual easiness of temper. The dissolute habits of the Prince naturally led the suspicious to couple this unwonted severity with some portion of the scandalous chronicle of his life; and they asserted that jealousy of the Count's success with one of

the very few objects of his gallantry for whom he ever professed, or felt, a real passion, the lovely Marquise De Parabères, was the real cause of his secret rage against De Hornes, which a chance accident, by involving the Count in a mysterious and criminal affair, had favoured. Others there were, who affirmed that the desire to oblige law, and protect his system, was the only reason for this act of inclemency.

However slight the foundation for such rumours may have been, and however obvious the motives of those who brought them into circulation, still none can read the sad fate of this ill-starred young nobleman without feeling some surprise, perhaps even suspicion, at such unwonted, and in some details almost malignant severity, as the Regent displayed, in a case where so many attenuating circumstances might have pleaded in favour of the culprit. His extreme youth, his illustrious origin, his more than doubtful sanity of mind, his quality of foreigner—the mean condition and lost character of his accusers—all these were so many facilities

afforded to the Prince's mercy. But vainly did the highest in the realm humble the pride they almost invariably opposed to the Regent on every possible occasion, to petition the youth's life, or at least a commutation of the sentence into inflicting death in a more humane manner. Vainly did they implore that his blood, which claimed affinity to that of the Regent himself, should not be disgraced by a *peine infâmante*—the voice of petition and that of mercy were alike disregarded; and at the early age of nineteen, the handsomest youth of the day perished like the lowest and worst of malefactors.

The general outline of this sad story was, as I have said, but too well known to admit of what had just passed not being fully understood by all present; and there ensued at its close a pause of surprise and indignation, during which the unfortunate woman who had so powerfully excited the latter feeling in the bosoms of the quiet sisterhood, was shoved by her friend, more dead than alive, into the chaise that had brought them to the convent door.

It was the rattle of its wheels that first re-

called the wandering thoughts of those in the parlour. Catherine had fallen back into the arm-chair, apparently in a state of total exhaustion. It seemed as if an enchanter's wand had passed over her frame, dispelling at one touch the magic beauty he had lent, so complete and remarkable was the change. There she lay, ghastly pale, with closed eyes and lips apart, the veil flung back from her emaciated features, from which all expression had fled except one of intense fatigue.

“Her fit is coming on,” murmured one of the nuns to the mistress of the novices; “we must remove her.”

The little candles were blown out; after a few violent tugs, the curtain was again hermetically drawn to; the shuffling of feet was heard, the rolling away of the heavy chair, with its half insensible burthen; then that of the *prêre Dieu*; a banging of many doors ensued, and the scene was over.

The terrified Eleonore still stood rooted before the grate, unable to determine if what she had just assisted to was the representation

of an excellently got up, exquisitely played comedy, that only wanted a little better setting off in the way of decoration to be perfect, or if it were a strange awful mystery of nature which she had for the first time beheld. How long she might yet have remained thus absorbed and unmindful of time or place, it is impossible to say; for a light, though firm grasp was laid on her arm—she started, looked up in surprise, and my father stood before her.

“I have been present almost since the very first moment,” he said, “though you did not see me, lost as I was in the shadow of the entrance door. I have seen and heard everything; so trouble not yourself to relate what it were pain to describe, nor attempt to explain what hardly admits of explanation. I am not ashamed to confess it, it was a womanish curiosity that brought me here; but I am glad of the impulse, let its cause be what it may, since it has brought me to you at the right moment.”

Mademoiselle Raymond indeed had cause to rejoice at his timely presence. Her nerves, strong as they naturally were, had been un-

usually shaken, and she needed an arm on which to lean, a gentle and sympathising but firmer mind than her own to lead her by degrees, if not thoroughly to understand in all its details, or to obliterate the general impression of that morning's proceeding, at least to calm the agitation it had excited, and to regulate the ideas it had engendered.

As to my father, puzzled and perplexed, he once more turned over many a dusty volume, that only perplexed and puzzled him the more, then ceasing from his unfruitful labour, voluntarily, though not without a strong effort, he dismissed the subject altogether from his mind, and trusted to the future to throw more light upon it than his reason, torture it as he would, could well afford at the present moment.

I may as well here mention that when, at a later period, Mademoiselle Raymond had occasion to visit Paris, and the ladies De Tencin and De Parabère were pointed out to her notice, she had no difficulty, though meeting them in a calmer, lighter scene, in recognising in them the strangers of the parlour at St. Clare's; and

when, at a still later period, D'Alembert, the former's natural son, shone conspicuous in the bright but baneful constellation that for a time illumined the horizon of French literature, when his name was pronounced along with those of Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, and the rest, that name recalled, involuntarily, to all who had been present at the scene we have described, Catherine's allusions concerning him. Nor was the fact thought less remarkable that when at last, at the request of the physicians and desire of the authorities, the body of the young girl whose sudden decease had caused such general sensation, was submitted to autopsy, it was discovered that the cause, though totally unsuspected, was very natural. The heart had burst; which, as the poor child had been for the last few years subject to constant and violent palpitations, and was otherwise of a very delicate constitution, was not a matter of marvel to the faculty.

The events which led to the sketch I have so rapidly traced, took, however, many months in developing themselves; and some time had

since elapsed when Mademoiselle Raymond, who was now busily engaged in the arrangements necessary for her approaching nuptials, was one day startled out of her usual composure by the sudden appearance of Madame Cadières, who had never been in the habit of visiting her, even when her daughter's intimacy with Eleonore was at its height. The laces she had just taken up dropped from her hand, and surprise kept her mute; but her visitor was at no loss to explain herself, as indeed a powerful sentiment or desire seldom leaves room for embarrassment.

"I feel," she said, "you must think it very odd of me to come to you in my difficulties, whom I so unscrupulously offended in my time of happiness. But do not forget I did so only at the bidding of another, not from any personal disinclination, and that that other has deceived me. I now know you to have been our real friend throughout."

Had Mademoiselle Raymond consulted her feelings only, she would have frankly confessed how very immaterial she considered what Ma-

dame Cadières thought or had ever thought of her; but the recollection of the daughter softened her towards the mother, to whose folly she could not but remember that she owed her own felicity; and she said, in a gentle tone—

“And so I could wish ever to remain. But, pray, is there anything in my power by which I can testify my friendship at this moment?”

“Oh, yes—many things,” replied the old lady, accepting a proffered seat. “You see, I am sadly afraid I have been altogether mistaken in Father Girard, although not in my daughter, as you must now admit.”

Mademoiselle Raymond not choosing to fill up the pause which Madame Cadières here made for an answer, the latter continued—

“Yes, there will be a Saint Catherine of Toulon, as there is one of Genoa and of Sienna—as for that, heresy itself cannot deny it, although I have heard it denies saints altogether. However, that signifies nothing—mine cannot be talked away; but I will candidly own you were right in thinking Father Girard selfish and overbearing. My son, the Dominican, and

even the ecclesiastic, have come to the same conclusion."

"And is it merely to impart this discovery that you have done me the honour of this visit?" said Mademoiselle Raymond, whose patience was ebbing fast.

"Oh, no—not exactly," said the expansive matron—"I came to ask your advice, your assistance, on a very difficult point for a mother to decide about. I have just received a letter from Catherine."

"Have you it by you?" said Mademoiselle Raymond, with reviving interest—"what does it contain?"

"Why, you must know that neither I nor my poor girl ever liked the idea of her going into a convent. She always declared herself loudly against the plan. No, no! Catherine was destined to be a saint, but not a nun. Father Girard, however, insisted in spite of all her tears and protestations—he also wrung a forced consent from me. His taking her to Ollioules, and that, too, when she was very ill, and needed nothing so much as a mother's care——"

“ You might, you ought to have prevented this; but perhaps it may not be too late,” said Mademoiselle Raymond, endeavouring to cut short the wearisome repetition of facts with which she was well acquainted, and which had ceased to be of paramount interest to her. “ I hope Catherine is no worse. Have you seen her lately ?”

“ Not very recently; but when I last saw her, I thought my heart would break only to look upon her. She is so changed—she looks as if she had just risen from her grave.”

Madame Cadières put her kerchief to her eyes, and Eleonore did not feel wearied by the sight of this natural sorrow, nor at the mode in which it was expressed, but pressed her visitor’s hand in sympathizing kindness.

“ Well, Father Girard’s power being at an end with Catherine, it will be easy to put a stop to all this,” she said. “ Exert yourself but a very little, and you will recover her.”

“ There’s the difficulty; the poor child is completely in his hands—she can’t withdraw herself from him, but wants us to do it; she

needs our assistance, she says, to counteract her own passive obedience—her blind submission to his will,—in short, to take her from the convent.”

“ Then, if she has so decided a will of her own, why does she not express it to her director?—perhaps he might be prevailed upon to yield to it.”

“ There lies the mistake: she has begged and entreated him on her knees to let her return to me; she has sobbed at his feet—besought him by all he holds sacred; but he will not hear of it, and punishes her severely for what he terms her disobedience to the will of God. But as the abbess, who is a lady of great discernment and kindness, has found out that Catherine has no vocation for a monastic life, and does not, under such circumstances, approve of her embracing it, he speaks of removing her to a severer order, that of the Carmelites of Prémole, where she will be so cut off from all communication with the world, that she had as well be entombed alive. Indeed, I am sure she will not survive her noviciate.”

“What can be his motive for this strange insistance?” said Eleonore, thoughtfully, endeavouring in her own mind to find a clue to the seemingly aimless labyrinth of the Jesuit’s system of persecution.

“He says it is to humble my poor Catherine’s pride; but, if you but saw her, she already looks more dead than alive. The convent kills her by inches, and yet the order of St. Claire is very mild. What will she not have to suffer if forced into one of a more austere description! I cannot bring myself to think of it.”

“But after all, my dear madam, what can Catherine object to so much in a convent life?—she dislikes marriage.” Mademoiselle Raymond blushed deeply as she spoke.

“Yes; and some people, doubtless, think themselves lucky that she does.”

Eleonore forbore from answering the taunt with one in the same bad taste, for which the efforts of Madame Cadières, at one time, to obtain her hand and fortune for one of her sons, might have afforded her an ample opportunity;

but, as I before have had occasion to say, she was superior, if not to all the weaknesses of her sex, at least to those that take their rise in narrowness of mind or badness of the heart. Her spirit was as noble as her feelings were generous. She could utter a reproach, but never a sarcasm—she could blame, but never turn any one into ridicule. I fear there are not many like her, or we should see the world abounding with better brought-up families. But this is again a digression—forgive it me, I entreat, I have cause to dwell on this subject with pleasure.

Madame Cadières was utterly unable to understand such sentiments, and accordingly, without paying any attention to the delicacy of the young lady's silence, she added, in the tone of one deeply affronted—

“But although Catherine does not like the notion of matrimony, as you say, she loves her home and her mother.”

“She is happy in possessing either,” said Mademoiselle Raymond, with a sigh.

“Besides,” continued the mother, in eager

vindication of her child, "you should remember that the life she leads is not an easy one for a sick girl, accustomed to all the indulgences of home. To be roused in the depth of night from sound, refreshing sleep, to attend midnight prayers—to kneel on the cold marble—and, above all, to abstain from meat all the year round—are physical sufferings which ordinary beings, such as you and I, can easily comprehend. But to these are added moral struggles, of which we can have no notion. The latter of course come from Heaven, and can't be helped; but it is my duty to spare her those unnecessary trials which can be of little use in elevating such a soul as hers, but must bring her body to premature decay. I am proud and happy to see the palm of the saint in Catherine's hand, but I have not the courage to see her wear the crown of martyrdom."

"Nor I, could I but see in what manner it were possible to extricate one who will not be extricated!"

"That is just the point on which I came to consult. Having fully explained my motives

for withdrawing her from St. Clare's—for should she once enter on her noviciate at Salette, I doubt if we could ever get her back again,—I implore you to point out to me by what means I can effect my purpose, and to aid me in so doing. I am but a simple woman myself, and my sons are but inexperienced youths, rendered more than usually cautious and timid by their profession. It would never do for them, you know, to put themselves in too marked an opposition to Father Girard.”

“ Well, really, deeply grieved as I feel for your daughter, since neither you nor your sons are willing to exert your lawful authority, I scarcely know what advice to give.”

“ I did not exactly expect you would,” said Madame Cadières, at last coming to the point ; “ but you have one at your disposal who can, and, at your bidding, probably will give the best of advice—perhaps even aid us ; and *you*, I am sure, for Catherine's sake, will not refuse to bid him.”

Mademoiselle Raymond stared at her visitor in undisguised astonishment.

“But, my dear madam, if it is Monsieur Chaudon’s advice you require, why not ask it, personally, of him? You know him, and must be convinced of his kind feelings towards you and yours.”

“That is what I could not feel sure of; and as he has experienced so much disappointment at our hands, of course we feel delicate in asking any service of him.”

“But, surely, not now, when his being in a state of consolation is officially announced,” answered Eleonore, laughing. “It is, at the best, an exaggeration of delicacy. Go to him; I can assure you of a kind welcome.”

“Oh, I have no doubt. Still, he might resent the past; my sons, and even I, were obliged to treat him with great distance; well, you know it all, and so——”

“I see that you totally misconceive the whole affair, my dear madam,” said Mademoiselle Raymond; “but if you will follow *my* advice—though, it seems, after all, it is not for that you came here—you will sit quiet for a few minutes longer, when Monsieur Chaudon, whom I ex-

pect every instant, will be able to satisfy all your doubts.”

This was said with a malicious smile, and produced, instantaneously, the desired effect. Madame Cadières rose and took her leave; but in so doing she thrust a sadly crumpled note into Eleonore’s hand, saying—

“This is from Catherine. Oh! do not abandon us!”

Eleonore willingly forgot the silly, vain woman, the moment the mother spoke in Madame Cadières. She promised her assistance, and her promises were sacred as oaths.

The letter contained but these words:—

“If you do not withdraw me hence, my mother, I perish!

“CATHERINE.”

On reading these few words, Mademoiselle Raymond’s emotion was great; but, of course, its first impulses were controlled by the wise hand that in future was to guide her destiny. It was agreed that both her future husband and herself should go to Ollioules, and try to gain

admittance to the saint. They had even fixed the day for this joint visit, when a sudden fit of sickness interfered with Mademoiselle Raymond's wishes, and my father went alone.

After some demur—for, at first, he was not willing to let Catherine know who sought an interview with her, apprehensive of a refusal—he gave in his name, which proved the real *sesame* to the parlour grate of St. Clare's; where, in the habit of a novice of that order, Catherine awaited him.

Had he not been prepared to meet her, he could never have recognised, in the colourless, worn, emaciated being who now stood before him, with pendant arms, half open lips, and a wan brow, from which all intelligence had faded, the object of his early adoration.

Her vestments hung loosely round her shrunken person, that no longer exhibited the graceful outlines of ripening womanhood which had once distinguished it. They were, too, donned with a negligence contrasting much with the scrupulous neatness of attire which she was wont to display; but the change that

most startled him was the careless arrangement of her beautiful hair. This object of her former pride and delight, as well as of his own admiration, was now thrust under the novice's veil, from beneath which a few locks struggled forward, unrepressed and untrained, whose paly gold glittered no longer.

“ Her mother is right—she is dying,” was the thought that involuntarily suggested itself to his mind, as he gazed on this wreck of human loveliness. The next was, “ She must be saved, cost what it may,” and compassion, deep and ardent, was now the predominant feeling with which he regarded the wretched being before him. All unpleasant recollections of the past vanishing at once from his mind, he approached her no longer as a lover, but in a character that partook little less of devotion in one whose soul was so highly toned—that of a friend.

“ I am here, partly at Eleonore's request,” he said, “ who is too ill to come herself, and partly at your mother's. I hope you will receive me as you would them.”

This prelude eliciting no answer, he con-

tinued, with the familiarity of past times, that all awkwardness might be removed on her part, should she feel any in addressing him for the first time since she had so unkindly dismissed him.

“Are you sorry to see me, Catherine?” he said, gently, looking steadfastly at her as he spoke,—for he remembered Eleonore’s assertion, that this was the most effectual means she had discovered of securing her attention.

The novice turned her eyes languidly from his fixed gaze, and answered in a low, toneless voice, that struck painfully on his ear, like the harbinger of approaching decay.

“Oh, no! why should I?—I am never glad or sorry at anything now.”

“But you would be glad to leave the convent, I presume? At least, I have been told as much.”

“Yes, if Father Girard will allow me; but he won’t—he never will.” She uttered these words despondingly, and suffered her head to fall on her breast.

“Exert your own will but for a moment, and

you are free," urged my father. "Your mother is ready to receive you back to her arms, so are your brothers, so is Eleonore,—all who have ever known and loved you; and here am I, with full authority, to claim you in their name, if you will but allow me to do so."

"You!—you want to take me away from here! This is very, very kind, and more than I deserve at your hands,"—she blushed slightly as she made this allusion to the past,—“but it cannot avail me. You had better not put yourself forward in this matter; don't thwart him—he will not bear to be thwarted."

"That is spoken more like your former self, dear Catherine, though not in the same tones. You seem very feeble; you must really return home, were it only for your health's sake. As for me, I neither seek to offend, nor yet dread to do so, in a fair cause, any breathing mortal; monk or soldier are alike to me in that respect. Besides, why should this redoubted Jesuit wish to immure you here, or any where else?"

"Because he wishes my speedy death now he has ceased to like me; that is why he wishes

me to go to Saletta. He may cheat others with fair words, but from *me* he cannot hide his thoughts."

"I dare say you know him thoroughly," said my father, delighted at seeing the soulless apathy, which, at first sight, had seemed to him to have usurped in her the place of every faculty, gradually giving way, as something more of life and human interest lighted up her eye. It was to him as if the mists of night were slowly rolling away from before a well known prospect. He rejoiced in the change, slight as it was, and was pleased to ascribe it to the beneficial effects of his presence; but her voice had still the same monotonous, husky, powerless sound that so painfully grated on his ear, on which still hung the soft, silvery tones that had once charmed him.

"But, knowing him and his purposes well," he continued, "why not defeat them?"

"I may not," muttered the novice, with a slight shudder.

"Then why write to your mother to take you away?"

“I don't know,” was the disconsolate answer.

“This is more like moody madness than sober sense. She must be roused from this,” thought my father; “but first I will try her.”

“If Father Girard be persuaded to let you go,—if he give his free consent, what then?”

“Then—then I should be saved!” exclaimed Catherine, with some vivacity. “But, no; he never will consent!”

“He must have strange reasons for this insistance, Catherine.”

“Of course he has. It would never do if the world at large were to learn that he is a magician—a sorcerer—and has bewitched me! But the lady abbess and all this community know it, and do not approve of my vocation, nor of him,—that is why I am to be withdrawn hence.”

“Catherine, give me your hand through the grate in sign of renewed amity; do not hesitate, mine is pledged to Eleonore; there, that's right. Now, look at me, and answer me succinctly and frankly, as though I were Father Girard, and do not trifle with me. You know I bear no trifling.”

Although well aware how powerful are the rays of the human eye on all those to whom reason is denied, either in our own species, or even in the most wild of the animal creation, my father had recourse to the means recommended by Eleonore to command both Catherine's attention and goodwill, without much trusting in their efficacy. Severity, indeed, he believed to be operative, to a certain extent, over all weak intellects, even when not actually disordered; but never had he so strong an evidence of that doctrine's truth as in this instance, which, he frankly owned to me, made him fully understand the nature of animal magnetism, though, at the time, he vainly struggled to class it under any received denomination, or define its boundaries.

The manner of the young girl underwent a marked change, at the same time that her whole person assumed an air of passive obedience; an animated expression instantly pervaded her features, nor did she attempt to withdraw her hand from the firm grasp that held it.

"Yes," she said, as if in communion with her

own thought rather than with reference to the subject under discussion—"yes, you mean it well by her and by me. Oh, no! you are not like Father Girard! Your hand cools, it does not burn."

"Well, then, let yours rest in it, and answer freely and frankly—Do you *love* Father Girard?"

"Oh, no, no!" almost shrieked Catherine. "Ours is a bond of hatred, not of love. He has bewitched me, I tell you—that is our only tie. But, do not mention this. It maddens me to think of it!"

"I must insist," continued my father, authoritatively, "painful as the interrogatory may be to both. In what way has the spell you complain of worked?"

"You see me after months of absence, and you ask?" said Catherine, reproachfully. "Is there anything left of what I once possessed? Youth, beauty, happiness—he has wrenched everything from me! His words have mocked my ears, his thoughts bewildered my brain, his wickedness seared my heart. From the first hour his unhallowed breath warmed my brow,

fever has throbbd in my pulses, madness burnt my brain, remorse gnawed into my heart. My nights have known no rest, my days no joy, my conscience no peace. My life has been but a protracted torture, and you ask me in what manner the spell has worked?"

My father was startled at this sudden display of vehemence, and though prepared for some such ebullition by Eleonore's account of her own observations, still this strange exhibition of feeling aroused his deepest interest.

"You have suffered much!" he mechanically exclaimed, still retaining within his the passive hand which Catherine thought not of withdrawing.

"Much!" she repeated, with a bitterness of accent that seemed, for a moment, to restore some tone to her voice. "Much!—more, a thousand times more, than you, or any human being who has not been in that fiend's power, can guess! Oh! but, were I to speak for hours, I never could tell all I have suffered. My whole existence is wrecked in this world, and, perhaps, in the next! All I loved he bade me

hate; and I hated and loved the same objects at the same time, until the furious struggles of these contending passions threatened to break the fibres of my heart, too weak to contain them. Yes, I could have loved you,—*I did love you.* I was on the eve of giving up my imagined vocation to the loud dictates of my heart, when he came, like a thunderbolt, to blight every honest feeling—every happy prospect! But I loved you even when my lips denied it—even when they pronounced the doom of our eternal separation—of my own misery!”

She looked full into the face of him whom she thus frankly addressed, and scarcely did the faintest blush tinge her sallow cheek, so intense was the concentration of her feelings upon herself, whilst she lay the secrets of her heart bare to the analysis of another.

A man of ordinary and superficial mind would, on this occasion, either have felt a perfect indifference on hearing that he had been the object of a sentiment in one whom he no longer cared for, and, perhaps, considering the

circumstances, have felt a mean triumph in it; or, admitting that he was influenced by more gentle and gentlemanly feelings, some weakness might have come over him, and the past become blended with the present. Not so my father. His character was as firm as it was noble. The latter quality, indeed, rarely exists where the former is missing. That which had been, was, in his mind, irrevocably separated from what was. Constitutionally free from the infirmity of melancholy brooding, he never looked backwards in life, but ever cheerily forward. When he heard, therefore, this confirmation of a fact long since suspected by him, he was grieved for Catherine's sake, but not for his own, for his affections were now unreservedly in the possession of Eleonore; nor was he depraved enough to misunderstand the words of the wretched inmate of St. Clare's, as they welled from the depth of uncontrollable feeling.

As he paused to consider in what manner he should avoid uttering anything consistent with the truth without offending the young girl, she continued, with increasing warmth:—

“Oh! you cannot fancy such an existence as mine has been. I could not love—I could not pray—that was worse than all beside. I thought blasphemies, even whilst the world called me holy. My soul is lost! lost for ever—that fiend has possessed himself of it!” and suddenly tearing her fingers from my father’s grasp, she wrung her hands in the very wildness of despair.

“Brighter days”—began my father.

“Never—never!” she exclaimed. “You know not—I am lost, irretrievably lost, in this world as in the next—he has robbed me of everything—my faith and my hope—even of innocence!”

“Nay, Catherine, you speak wildly; *your* innocence who could taint?”

She covered her face with both her hands, and the tears forced their way through her slender fingers.

“What can this mean, Catherine? I must—I insist on knowing.”

“Yes,” said the poor girl, slowly withdrawing her hands, and exhibiting on her wan cheeks

two hectic spots—"yes—I know what I say—I am disgraced—he has robbed me of everything—home and friends—my God and my early love—he has left me nothing—nothing—not even a woman's honour."

My father was speechless with amazement. Much as he had pondered on Father Girard's character, and the possible motives of his strange conduct towards Catherine, this leading one had never struck him; and when Mademoiselle Raymond recited how she had caused the Jesuit to tremble at the mere epithet, "seducer," which she breathed in his ear on the morning of Catherine's departure for Ollioules, he had not suspected the full meaning which both the young lady and the priest attached to the word. He fancied, indeed, she meant to reproach him with seducing a young girl from her home and friends, inducing her to adopt a course of life diametrically opposed to her real inclinations and their wishes; but the coarser, broader acceptance of the word he had deemed inapplicable in reference to Catherine, had not even Father Girard's disgusting appearance

been a sufficient warrant against such a supposition.

Mademoiselle Raymond's feminine tact had dived into the secret sooner ; but, on perceiving how unconscious was every one else but herself, she had deemed it best to confine her suspicions to her own bosom.

Even now, when my father heard the fact admitted by the unfortunate victim of abominable arts, he could not credit his own senses. That her director had driven her mad was the inference he drew from her whole behaviour and manner. As this thought presented itself to his mind, he gazed on her with unmitigated pity ; and as the ravages of disease forced themselves upon his notice, as he viewed thus, at one glance, the havoc that the hypocrite's tampering with so fine a spirit had produced, he felt every nerve thrill through him with rage, the fiercer because he knew how impossible it was to procure redress, and visit with deserved punishment the Jesuit's villany. As he continued his interrogatories, and Catherine, swayed as usual by the more or less firmness of

those with whom she came in contact, answered the questions he put with almost childlike frankness, the whole web of iniquity was laid bare to his scrutiny. Father Girard's aim, he now plainly saw, was to elevate himself in his order by means of his votaries and proselytes; but his ambition, though strong, was not the master passion of his soul. His baser, grosser instincts came athwart it, and neutralized his other well-ordered plans for bettering himself. This had been more glaringly the case with Catherine Cadières; whose peculiarities of mind had presented him with a glorious opportunity of satisfying his ambition, had not her beauty too fatally tempted him from the pursuit of his primary object. He would, however, have succeeded in blending the glory of proselytism with the indulgence of his cynical libertinism, had not Catherine's violent remorse, and the moody melancholy that preyed on her health, together with the general attention she excited, agitated him with the fear that his foul secret might be discovered.

This, then, was the reason why he insisted on

her removal to St. Clare's, where he hoped all chance of discovery would be buried with her beneath her nun's veil. The resistance, however, which Catherine and her friends opposed to his wishes on this point, both incensed and embarrassed him; but he was determined to overcome every difficulty; for his profane and licentious passion drew him still towards his wretched victim, by a spell as powerful as any that he himself could raise.

But, either fear getting the better of his inclination—as a marked change in the lady abbess's manner warned him that her suspicions were roused, or, as usual with depraved beings, the very violence of his passion wearing it out, he finally saw less of its object; and, at last, formed the project of removing her altogether from any communication either with himself or others—hence his diabolical determination to bury her wrongs and her sorrows in the living tomb of a Carthusian cell.

What a mass of vices—what a tale of misfortune did the few words he elicited from Catherine's lips reveal to her companion! He

could have wept over her as a father over a favourite child ; and he felt it would have been a pleasure, at that moment, to crush the vile Jesuit, like a venomous reptile under his heel.

But his was a profession that teaches self-control better, and tames the passions earlier, than perhaps any other. His warm and generous nature had not, indeed, become chilled, but merely guided by the habits of self-possession it imposes. He dared not trust himself to speak, lest he should utter aught that he might repent of; but his flashing eye and quivering lip betrayed the secret struggle within, and his sympathy with the victim more than words could have conveyed. When he felt conscious of having sufficiently mastered his first indignant emotion, he gave vent to the grief that filled his heart, for the ruin of one whose welfare, in spite of his alienated affection, he yet held so dear, and whose overwhelming wretchedness—whose very loss, made her still dearer.

“ My poor Catherine !” he exclaimed, clothing his sympathy in the words of tenderness with an almost feminine intuition of compassion—

“Dear, unhappy Catherine, redress for such wrongs as yours is impossible. The revenge it might afford us upon”—the mere allusion to the wretch caused a gulping sensation at his throat which he paused to repress—“would be barren, productive of evil to others, perhaps, but chiefly to ourselves—youself, I mean, my poor Catherine. The world, in such cases, stamps with infamy the brow of the innocent victim more than that of the cowardly aggressor. An attempt at redress must be attended with publicity; and the public ought never, with your free will or that of those who love you, to be made a participator in a secret which would blast your name for ever. Innocent you still are and must ever appear to the thoughtful; but to the unreflecting multitude! Oh, Catherine! Catherine! that *you* should have been the victim! I had as soon believed the brightest star of heaven would have fallen!”

Catherine listened with a half-bewildered air, but when she beheld large drops of moisture glitter on his dark lashes, which, after a vain struggle to repress, he was obliged to dash away

repeatedly with his hand, her look became still more strange.

“ You have loved me well,” she said ; “ your advice must be the best ; but you must not be so sad, or my heart will break. If I could only get home again, I should then, at least, sink quietly into my grave.”

“ You *shall* return home. I promise it,” said my father ; and his words seemed to convey assurance to the poor sufferer.

“ But,” continued he, “ surely you can afford me consolation on some points. Make my mind easier on the past and the future, by confessing yourself the involuntary agent of a fraud, not a participator in it,—a pretended saint, in short. Say so, my dear girl ; for your sake as well as mine, say so.”

The tone of my father had become gentle and imploring as he tried to coax Catherine into a conviction, which he conceived an indispensable preliminary to any steps he might think fit to take on her behalf. But, to his great surprise, his manner produced exactly the contrary result to that which he was desirous of effecting.

“I am not obliged to think like other people,” answered Catherine, the permanent irritability of her shattered nerves being in nothing more obvious than in the fitfulness of her mood; it seemed to vary with every tone and turn of her interlocutor. “I may be a saint, or a sinner, or both, for aught that others may wish me to be. I scarcely know myself what I am; it is not likely, therefore, I should be able or willing to tell even you.”

“Catherine, I hoped to have listened to kinder language, the expression of gentler feelings on your part. I am sure, if the most devoted, the most brotherly sentiments can deserve such, I may claim as a right some return of friendship.”

“Doubtless, you are very good; and if my poor head were not so confused, if my pulses did not throb so, I am certain I should be and should say all you desire; but, I do not know how it is, I cannot fix my thoughts. The pleasure I had in first seeing you is ebbing fast. Perhaps,” she added, with a slight degree of embarrassment and perturbation, “perhaps you had better go.”

To be thus coolly discarded after having met with so warm a reception, and especially after having been made the depository of her sad secret, appeared to my father a conclusive evidence of insanity in the poor girl, and a momentary doubt of the truth of all she had so lately narrated flashed across his mind.

“ I were worse than an idiot,” he thought, “ to take offence at her inconsiderate, unconnected conduct,—and most unfeeling as well as unreasonable.” Reassuming, therefore, the severe aspect, which the knowledge gleaned from that morning’s experience pointed out as most calculated to gain his end, he said coldly—

“ I shall depart, Catherine, when I feel inclined to do so, but certainly not before I have obtained from you a promise——”

“ Go—go !” she exclaimed in a low, hurried tone, interrupting him, as it appeared, without even being aware that he spoke. “ I feel nervous, uneasy—I am sure something is wrong. Oh, now I have it! *He* is at the convent gate. Leave me, I entreat, or he will visit upon me your presence here ; if you have any

affection left for me, oh! do not let him meet you.”

As she spoke thus strangely, a marked change came over her. She stood before the grate that divided the convent parlour in equal parts, and which she had approached so near as almost to touch it, with the appearance of being transfixed to the spot. Her limbs gradually stiffened, and her eyes became fixed on the opposite wall with a deep, intense gaze, as if watching the movements of some visible object beyond it; her lips were parted, and her attitude was one of the most rigid and strained attention.

After a pause of some minutes, during which not a muscle relaxed from its tension, she said, in a husky, guttural voice:—

“I see him—he is passing the portal—he has answered the portress’s greeting—his hands are meekly folded on his breast. He crosses the yard with rapid strides that cause his long black robe to hang more negligently than ever,—his flat cap is pressed deep over his brows—its points seem like the horns of Satan. But,” she exclaimed, looking directly at my father,

“ why do you thus remain rooted to the spot? Go! perhaps you may yet have time to evade him by gliding for a few moments along the cloisters until he is passed. But no!” she continued, after another slight pause, “it is too late,—his foot is on the stairs,—in two minutes he will be here!”

Surprise kept my father mute. The solitary parlour window lay outside the grate at the other end of the room, and, though of favourable dimensions, it would have been impossible for Catherine to glance through it, even had she looked in that direction; but her eyes had fallen, as I have said, on the opposite wall, with an intensity of gaze as if desirous of questioning the dark, oaken panels with which it was adorned. The singularity of her manner absorbed him, at first, too much to admit of any interruption on his part; but, when he had recovered from his astonishment, he was about to tax her for yielding to so strange an hallucination, when a heavy step was heard outside the parlour—then, a hand was laid on the lock—it turned, and Father Girard entered the room,

with a perturbation of spirit which he could scarcely conceal beneath the veil—and thin enough it was—of common decency. His countenance, moulded by Nature into a most scowling aspect, looked absolutely savage with scarce contained rage. His step, as he entered the parlour, was even more haughty than usual; he walked up at once to the grate, behind which stood his victim, trembling in every limb, contemplating him with a fixed and mournful gaze, as the poor bird must gaze at the snake that is said to fascinate ere it destroys.

“How is this?” exclaimed Father Girard, in a loud, peremptory voice—“I had forbidden you to receive any more visits, even from your nearest and dearest, and I find a man with you. Catherine—Catherine! are you, then, decided to forfeit the last particle of my good-will?”

“It was not I who wished—who asked—” faltered the poor, overawed creature, as she clung to the grate for support; and her lids drooped heavily on her moist orbs, and her head fell back on her shoulder, as if her senses were about to leave her.

“ But,” resumed the monk, in his hoarse tones, that fell on the tympanum like the croak of a disturbed crow—“ but you consented to speak to him. It is lucky I was on my road hither, else ——”

“ Else what, Sir Jesuit?” said my father, interposing his person between the confessor and his fair, stricken penitent—“ Else what? It is I rather who ought to say—‘ Go hence,’ and you to obey. It is my respect for her alone that shields you. Take a timely warning—meddle not again with her, or anything concerning her, or——”

“ Leave us—leave us this instant!” almost screamed the priest, in the excess of his rage. “ Depart, and let us never meet again on earth, who never can meet in heaven!”

“ Beware, canting hypocrite, what words you speak, and, from this hour forth, what deeds you do! There is a place on earth where we should have met, face to face, but for *her* sake! Now, you know me her avowed protector, beware of foul dealings, for a brother’s eye is upon her!”

“ Impious, unchristian man, avaunt thee ! Satan speaks his wickedness from your lips—leave me, and this dear child ; and think not your idle threats can terrify me. I bear no sword by my side to avenge my honour as a man ; but you insult your faith in aggressing its minister, and it is my turn to say—*beware !* We have thunderbolts wherewith to strike the unbeliever and the scorner.”

“ Your eloquence is lost on me, and your villany known, and may, perhaps, one day be avenged. I go now, not at your bidding, proud priest, but because I care not to stay any longer.”

As he spoke, my father came close up to the Jesuit, and gazed full in the malignant, fierce, dark eyes, that gleamed like those of a tiger at bay, from beneath his shaggy eyebrows. “ But, if we meet again,” he said, in the deep, clear, slowly accentuated tones of suppressed but intense wrath—“ if we meet again, it shall be your fault, not mine ; and then, though neither of us may use the sword, yet will it be a struggle of life and death between us—a struggle to

which, as I live, I will bring all the energy, every capability with which God has gifted me, to blast, to ruin, to *kill* you, as ruthlessly as you have blasted, ruined, and killed *her*. But one step further, one little act of injustice and oppression more, and *then we meet.*”

With these words my father turned away, and strode hastily out of the apartment, without casting a single glance behind at the fainting form of his once beloved Catherine, as, releasing her hold of the iron bars that supported her, she sank heavily on the floor; nor did he mark the terrified, quivering Jesuit, who, lost in his fears, was not even aware of his companion's situation.

My father felt that the ecclesiastical arm alone was long enough to overtake the priest—its grasp alone strong enough to compel him: the only influence, indeed, that could be brought to bear, in order to save Catherine, since the *inertia* and timidity of her natural friends and protectors would paralyse the effects of their sympathy. But how to implicate himself in this affair, without injury to Catherine in any

way, he scarcely knew. Chance, however—as so often happens, at the very moment when an affair seems most complicated to our puzzled brains, and we in vain endeavour to find the right way out of it—served him very satisfactorily at the present crisis.

A family council was to be held at one of the aristocratic mansions of the town that very evening, where, as matters of interest were to be deliberated upon, and contending claims discussed in private, previous to their being debated in public, most of the parties brought with them their legal advisers, among whom was my father. As he never allowed private feelings to interfere with the duties of his avocation, on his return from Ollioules his first care was to prepare immediately for the evening's task. This he did, not only by bestowing upon his toilet the necessary degree of attention, but by forcibly banishing from his mind every thought unconnected with the interests he was about to espouse.

Always scrupulously punctual, it was often the young lawyer's fate to find himself the first

at his *rendezvous* of business, especially when he had to do with patrician clients. It was so on this occasion. When he had defiled through the double row of expecting footmen who stood ranged along the anteroom awaiting the guests, and was formally ushered by the valet whose duty it was to announce, into the grand saloon, brilliantly lighted up, as if for grand reception, he found himself the solitary tenant of its splendours. Its many candelabras revealed without dispelling the gloom of its rich crimson hangings. The light of the tapers fell cold and unfriendly on the white polished surface of the marble *consoles* and tables that stood between the tall windows, glittered on the gilding of their bases, and played mysteriously in the depths of the mirrors that overhung them. The stiff-backed sofas and chairs, ranged in awful precision against the walls, sombre and rich, looked, to his unaccustomed eye, like so many Spanish dons awaiting for the king's presence. In short, the cold magnificence of an apartment furnished à la Louis XIV., and of dimensions of the most lofty description, not much relieved from the

chilling sensation of solitude that pervaded it by a few tables in the centre, ostentatiously covered with paper, pens, and ink, and surrounded with not very elegant, dark, leather chairs—especially and exclusively set apart for the men of business—all that offered itself to the eye was not of a nature to exhilarate his spirits. He mechanically approached the immense chimney, under whose mantel-piece, tall as he was, he could stand with ease. Although nominally autumn, summer yet lingered in this favoured clime; the hearth was fireless and obscure, and he was almost concealed within its shade.

He was not long left to his solitude, however, nor the meditation which it might have inspired. A tall dignified figure slowly advanced from one of the doors leading to the inner apartments, in which my father had no difficulty in recognising the Bishop of Toulon. He soon remembered, as he gazed on the mild benevolent countenance of the venerable prelate, that he was nearly related to the nobleman to whom the house belonged, and ceased to wonder at his presence.

The old man looked wistfully round, as if seeking some one whom he expected to meet there; and as my father stepped respectfully forward to greet him, he became aware that he, and no other, was the individual of whom the Bishop was in quest. In a few brief, simple words, but full of apostolic eloquence, in which he sought to bring over my father to the views of peace, for the establishment of which he had forced his own presence and counsel on the conflicting parties, he communicated the object that had induced him to precede the others.

He succeeded, perhaps, all the better in his Christian mission, that my father was extremely averse to the meaner parts of his profession, which often consist in fanning into a devastating flame the passions of men—sometimes even of those between whom nature and duty should form an indissoluble bond. Far from considering the worthy Prelate's interference in any way disadvantageous to himself, he entered eagerly into his views; and promised to open them to his colleagues, in a manner that should prepare them to support, or at least prevent their

opposing, the amicable arrangements which it was the Bishop's wish to promote.

The Prelate mingled in his conversation a few paternal remarks, and eulogiums on my father's conduct and talents, with the grace peculiar to the sphere in which he habitually moved, and with the sincerity of a kind heart.

The young lawyer was much flattered by this proof of his dawning reputation. He had scarcely dared to hope that his merits should be acknowledged in circles where the names of the obscure of other classes seldom penetrate, and where, consequently, to be known at all argues no small degree of notoriety. By the way, it is worthy of remark that those young men who so loudly proclaim their carelessness of praise, their indifference to public opinion, and think thereby to stamp themselves with the seal of superiority, seldom, if ever, rise above the most vulgar mediocrity. It is only he who has an aim in view, who urges forward in the lists of life, and meets bravely the shock of competition—he only who values the laurel wreath

that can ever hope to win, or deserve to wear it. The poet—the painter—the hero—all need the spur of some such ennobling influence to charm or dazzle the world. Oftener, too, does this unnatural affectation of disdain in the young arise from the consciousness of utter nullity and want of those powers which enable the more favoured to gain applause, than from any real insensibility to its value. The heart that beats with joy at merited distinction is the only one worthy of receiving it.

My father's heart was elated at that instant with a justifiable pride, but still he forgot not those who had an interest in it, even in his hour of triumph. Availing himself of the moment when the Bishop, having obtained his aim, and apparently exhausted every topic of conversation, was evidently meditating a retreat, he arrested his attention by introducing at once the subject uppermost in his thoughts.

“I have this day heard,” he began, “that Toulon is about to lose one of its palms of glory, and yield it up to Saletta. It is said, too, in a secret manner; but I can scarcely

believe that any one would dare to transplant any sprig out of your lordship's garden without your special permission."

"I do not understand you," mildly answered the Prelate—"pray explain, if indeed it be a matter that may concern me," he added, nervously; "for if it be relating to some young person or other whose vocation parents are anxious to promote, I love not, except the case be urgent, to interfere with the privileges and rights of the heads of families in my diocese. Still, it is my duty to interpose my authority in cases of too flagrant an abuse of these privileges; but this requires caution—great caution. Such dealings are extremely delicate—admit of much misrepresentation,—in fact, Monsieur Chaudon, unless the matter be very imperative, it had better be submitted to my grand vicar."

My father having permitted the flow of words to subside, in which the great and those high in office are apt to indulge, in order, probably, to avoid hearing certain addresses from their inferiors, which, for divers reasons, they may be willing to escape, and having listened to them

with the respect due to the rank of the speaker, he replied, with apparent carelessness—

“ Oh no—this is no case of domestic tyranny—it is referable merely to the Saint of Ollioules, whom Father Girard, it appears, wishes to remove to the community of Carthusians at Saletta, that she may, as he says, shine elsewhere, having edified enough at St. Clare’s and Toulon.”

All the *nonchalance* of the *grand seigneur* gave way at once in the Bishop, before the roused and instinctive feelings of the priest.

“ How is this?—the Saint of Ollioules to be snatched by the Carthusians of Saletta from our dear sisters of St. Clare’s! You must be mistaken, Monsieur Chaudon—this cannot be!”

“ I have heard it this day from the novice’s own lips, and yet, when I heard, too, that your lordship’s sanction to so important a measure had neither been obtained nor even solicited, I unhesitatingly declared my disbelief in the power of any member of the clergy to effect it.”

“ Your clear and quick insight, young sir, does your judgment credit,” answered the

Bishop, warmly. "We bear meekly, we trust, our honours and dignity—wield, also, our apostolical sceptre mildly, and with due reserve in all things, whenever we can in conscience do so; but for the sake of ourselves, of our successors, and, above all, for that of the church, we may not permit that dignity to be slighted, that power to be braved, nor that sceptre to be put aside."

"I dared to believe so," modestly put in my father, "and even to predict that you would not think it meet to permit any other diocese to appropriate the glories of your own; for, I argued, the high dignitaries of the church have to consult policy as well as all other rulers; and such a step would be an error, as tending to displease our many excellent religious communities, the boast of this town, who all conceive they have a greater right to a native celebrity than those of other territories—but I am afraid I weary your lordship."

"Nay, proceed, young man—proceed," impatiently urged the Bishop, now evidently deeply interested in the conversation, and ap-

prehensive lest the arrival of the expected guests should put an end to their colloquy. "Your lucid views are peculiarly agreeable to me—they perfectly coincide with my own."

My father, whose artful pause had only been made that he might ascertain, to a certain degree, the impression produced by his words, now continued, with increased assurance—

"I also urged that the town, as well as the clergy would expect their beloved lord to preserve to them their young countrywoman, in whom they take so much pride."

"Of course," said the venerable Bishop—"of course, sound policy and duty, and the care of my own dignity, alike require my interference in this affair—require, I may say, an instantaneous, resolute interference; unless, indeed," he added, "the Saint of Ollioules herself has been guided in this, as in former resolves, by a heavenly voice, which to disobey were sinful even in the highest and most mighty of this earth."

My father perceived, by these words, the shoal on which he might strike in his endea-

vours to guide into the channel of his wishes the gentle, but irresolute, timid, malleable spirit of the Bishop, whose mental abilities were not of the highest order, though his heart was most excellent. Every instant was now of the utmost importance—he might never again command so favourable an opportunity even of addressing, far less of influencing the high personage before him; and he, too, began to feel nervously alive to every sound that seemed to announce an intruder, and to tremble lest he should not have time to utter all he was desirous of grafting on his listener's mind.

“It is far from being the desire of Mademoiselle Cadières to exile herself from her native town,” he replied, “and to carry her fame into other and strange communities; but Father Girard is a bold man—a very bold man. I suppose he presumes on his reputation as a preacher of eminence, and believes that it emancipates him from all ordinary restrictions and the respect due to his superiors. At any rate, I think—and so, I am sure, will all Toulon—that he is very presumptuous in thus acting

upon his own authority in a case of so much delicacy, when our good town is honoured with the presence of a lord bishop."

"Oh! but he shall be taught, and Toulon shall see, that none can brave with impunity their lawful superiors," replied the Bishop, with dignity. "Providence has placed me at the head of the flock, and I were a bad shepherd if I suffered the sheep to be stolen from me in the dead of night, as it were. I thank you, my young sir—heartily do I thank you, for your timely warning. It would not have been seemly in me to have learnt this too late, and might have involved me in great difficulties with our neighbours of Saletta; but—" the prelate slightly hesitated; then, resuming the air of calm dignity habitual to him, which, in the uncommon animation of the moment, had been somewhat ruffled, he continued—"of course, the latter part of our conversation and its subject will remain strictly private for a time—perhaps only for this evening; I must impose secrecy on you, and ——"

What more he might have added was in-

errupted by the arrival of my father's colleagues; his reply to the last words of the prelate was therefore conveyed in a mute but low obeisance, which was acknowledged by his lordship with a most affable nod as he retired from the apartment; nor did he reappear until the valet of the chambers announced the arrival of the expected parties, who awaited nothing but his presence to open the evening's debate.

The worthy prelate was received by all present, however hostile their feelings towards each other, with the deepest reverence; the doors were then closed, and the business of the evening began in earnest.

The difficulties that opposed the bishop's pacific mission were not small, for bitterness of feeling was at its height, and many of the profession gave advice the most contrary to his desires; nor would he, perhaps, in spite of the high veneration in which he was held, have succeeded, had it not been for the eloquent manner in which my father laid his views and wishes before the assembly, not failing to point out adroitly to each, individually, how a fair

accommodation would best further the personal views of each ; so well did he perform this self-imposed task, that his success was complete.

All the preliminaries to a fair compromise were then settled ; and the delighted bishop reaped the grateful thanks of the soothed assembly before the deliberations of the evening closed, which, considering the habits of those days, had been, indeed, protracted to a very late hour. It was midnight when my father was summoned to the door of the good bishop's coach to receive his acknowledgments for the able manner in which he had supported his measures during the last few hours, hinting, at the same time, that his services should not be forgotten, any more than his timely warning about the saint of Ollioules. My father returned home, too agitated by all that had passed in the course of the day to court even the semblance of repose ; but, pacing the narrow limits of his bachelor's apartment with hasty strides, he, according to his wont, resolutely endeavoured to class and arrange the chaos of thoughts and emotions that filled his breast,

and to test them by the calm light of his reason.

He was still very young, although five years had elapsed since his arrival at Toulon, his first entrance into life; and his mind, though equal to the effort, had need of all its powers to regulate itself with the hot blood of youth yet dancing through his veins.

It was impossible for one whose heart's first and purest offering had been made at the shrine of Catherine's virtue and beauty, to behold the idol thus broken into fragments,—the shrine desecrated,—the blossoms of his early love torn, leaf by leaf, and scattered to the winds, without feelings of the most vehement indignation against the author of so much evil.

He felt even more than a brother's sorrow for Catherine's fate,—more than a brother's humiliation in her shame; and his anger, whenever his thoughts reverted to the infamous agent of her ruin, partook somewhat of the violence which generally marks the emotions of us children of the south.

To calm the more bitter feelings, to soothe

the sadder ones, could not, he felt, be the result of a single night of meditation, although it afforded sufficient leisure to trace out, both for himself and the unfortunate object of his solicitude, the line of conduct most advisable to pursue with regard to Father Girard, and to the rest of the world.

There is, perhaps, no better composing draught to administer to the human passions, when excited, than a well-weighed, firmly-embraced, formal resolution, on any point whatever. This is, for most people, of all difficulties, the greatest, for the very simple reason that weak minds are more abundant in this world than strong ones; as my father's, however, belonged most decidedly to the latter order, he did not experience any such embarrassment; and, in pursuance of the measures he had resolved upon, the very first rays of the sun escorted him to the house of Madame Cadières, where he was soon closeted in earnest conference with Catherine's brothers.

A couple of hours later, the Dominican was on his way to the Carmelite convent, where he,

too, claimed and obtained a long interview with Father Alexis, the former confessor and director of Mademoiselle Cadières; and not long after, Father Alexis was seen on his road to the episcopal palace, where, in his turn, a protracted audience was granted him.

For the rest of the day great animation seemed to prevail within its usually quiet walls. Members of the divers religious orders were to be seen gliding in and out of the gateway, with visible traces of agitation on their ordinarily impassible countenances. The lights burned late in the good old Bishop's chamber, and the Grand Vicar, who shared, with a few more privileged councillors, the honours of his table, left him not before, the evening meal being concluded, the Bishop retired for the night.

Whilst the train he had laid was thus slowly taking fire, my father kept himself aloof from it, and was, to all appearance, a careless, uninterested observer; but Eleonore, with whom he spent the better portion of the day, knew better than to suspect him of indifference as to its results.

Nor were they backward in manifesting themselves. At twelve o'clock precisely, next day, the Grand Vicar was seen, accompanied by two other of the most confidential satellites of the Bishop, all three seated, in great pomp, in the Grand Vicar's phaeton, exhibiting, in their whole air and manner, an increase of dignity, that seemed to proclaim the importance of the mission on which they were bound.

Many idlers stood still, gazing after them, as they rattled over the roughly-paved streets, and here and there a casement was flung open at the sound, and a curious female head thrust out. In the streets through which they had to pass in order to gain the Marseilles gate, there were, however, a few houses whose occupants denoted a greater interest in their proceedings, and who evidently were no strangers to them. At the first floor of the one might be seen my father and his affianced bride, joyfully watching the progress of the clerical vehicle, although its tenants did not appear aware of the circumstance. But shortly afterwards, as they encountered the watchful glances of Madame

Cadières and her sons, who were also ornamenting the front windows of their small dwelling with their rubicund faces, they interchanged mysterious nods and smiles. Heartfelt happiness beamed from every face—there was an air of rejoicing and festivity throughout the establishment, proclaiming the celebration of some gladsome event, such as a marriage, a christening, or the return of a very dear and long-absent friend. The most savoury perfumes escaped the kitchen, as the females of that department opened its window to obtain a glimpse of the phaeton. Flowers everywhere met the eye in wreaths and bouquets; and Clara, Mademoiselle Cadières' own maid, had departed for once, and that without reproof, from her usual soberness of habiliment. The little white dog, too, that had once belonged to Catherine, was decked out with most coquettish pink knots and bows, shewing off to advantage the carefully preserved snowiness of his coat.

As the reverend fathers drove past the College of the Jesuits, they examined its long, imposing front in vain for any trace of the atten-

tion which they seemed to imagine their passage must excite ; nor did their investigating glances detect any emotion of curiosity or surprise in the visage of the well-trained porter, whose brow was as dark and chilling as his habit.

Not such, however, was the appearance of the Carmelite convent. Heads were to be seen in every quarter, and anxious eyes peering from beneath every cowl, at the very first glimpse of the Grand Vicar's well-known equipage. The reverend fathers within and those without exchanged glances of intelligence, which were soon converted, by the former at least, when the latter were out of sight, into looks of the most uncontrollable triumph ; for if the Jesuits, unconscious of the cloud that was lowering so near over their heads, had paid little or no attention to the all-important fact that the Grand Vicar was on his road to Ollioules in company with the Prior of the Carmelites,—whose zeal for his order was as notorious as the talents which enabled him to display it to advantage,—the Carmelites were better instructed as to the impending storm, and enjoyed already in antici-

pation the victory they were about to achieve over their proud rivals, though little guessing how complete—how immeasurable it was destined to be.

The next day explained satisfactorily the movements of the preceding one. It was now publicly reported that the Grand Vicar had proceeded to Ollioules to claim Mademoiselle Cadières in the Bishop's name; that she had been most willingly delivered into his hands by the Lady Abbess herself, who, contrary to expectation, seemed anything but mortified at the loss; that, in short, Catherine was restored to her home and her friends, and the Bishop had issued forth his interdiction against Father Girard, to prohibit him from attending her any more in the light of confessor, and had appointed Father Nicholas, the distinguished Carmelite I have already alluded to, in his place.

This intelligence sounded like the trumpet of judgment in the ears of the Jesuit; like the bells of a Te Deum in those of my father and Eleonore; resolving, however, that his own participation in this event should remain per-

fectly unknown—perhaps, indeed, it was already forgotten, or still unsuspected, by those whose more active interference had been but the mere result of his adroit instigations—my father formed a determination to resume his visits at the house, which he felt certain none would now forbid. All motive, indeed, for refusing him admittance had long ceased to exist; and it was a matter of moment to poor Catherine that some wise hand should now re-unite and guide the broken threads of her destiny.

END OF VOL. I.

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