French Life

Elizabeth Gaskell

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I

Paris, February, 1862.

We went to−day along the Boulevard Sevastopol, Rive Gauche, to pay a call. I knew the district well about six years ago, when it was a network of narrow tortuous streets; the houses high, irregular, picturesque, historical, dirty, and unhealthy. I used to have much difficulty in winding my way to certain points in the Quartier Latin from the Faubourg St. Germain, where I was staying. Now, the Hotel Cluny is enclosed in a neat garden, the railings of which run alongside of the Boulevard Sevastopol; a little further, on the same side to the left, the Sorbonne Church is well exposed to view; and the broad artery of the new Boulevard runs up to the Luxembourg gardens, making a clear passage for air and light through the densely populated quartier. It is a great gain in all material points; a great loss to memory and to that kind of imagination which loves to repeople places. The street in which our friend lived was old and narrow; the trottoir was barely wide enough for one uncrinolined person to walk on; and it was impossible to help being splashed by the passing carriages, which indeed threw dirt upon the walls of the houses till there was a sort of dado of mud all along the street. In the grander streets of former days this narrowness did not signify; the houses were of the kind called entre cour et jardin (of which there are specimens in Piccadilly), with the porter's lodge, the offices, and stables abutting on the street; the grand court intervening between the noise and bustle and the high dwelling−house of the family, which out−topped the low buildings in front. But in the humbler street to which we were bound there were few houses entre cour et jardin; and I could not help wondering how people bore to live in the perpetual noise, and heavy closeness of atmosphere.

The friend we were going to see, Madame A−−, had lived in this street for many years. Her rooms were lofty and tolerably large. The gloomy outlook of the long narrow windows was concealed by the closed muslin curtains, which were of an irreproachable whiteness. I knew the rooms of old. We had to pass through the satle−a−manger to the salon; and from thence we, being intimate friends, went on into her bedroom. The satle−a−manger had an inlaid floor, very slippery, and without a carpet; the requisite chairs and tables were the only furniture. The pile of clean dinner−plates was placed on the top of a china stove; a fire would be lighted in it, half−an−hour before dinner, which would warm the plates as well as the room. The salon was graced with the handsome furniture of thirty or forty years ago; but it was a room to be looked at rather than used. Indeed, the family only sit in it on Sunday evenings, when they receive. The floor was parquete in this room, but here and there it was covered with small brilliantly−coloured Persian carpets: before the sofa, underneath the central table, and before the fire. There were the regular pieces of furniture which were de rigueur in a French household of respectability when Madame A−− was married: the gilt vases of artificial flowers, each under a glass shade; the clock, with a figure of a naked hero, supposed to represent Achilles, leaning on his shield (the face of the clock); and the "gueridon" (round,

marble−topped table), which was so long the one indispensable article in a French drawing−room.

But, altogether, Madame A−−'s salon does not look very habitable; and we pass on into the bed−room, which has little enough of daylight coming through the high narrow windows, but is bright and home−like from the brilliant blaze and flicker of the wood−fire on the hearth. In the far corner is the bed: a grand four−post, with looped−up draperies of some warm colour, which I dare say would prove to be faded if one were to see them close, in full country daylight; but which look like a pictorial background to the rest of the room. On each side of the fire is a great arm−chair; in front is a really comfortable sofa: not elegant, nor hard, nor gilded like the sofas in the drawing−room, but broad, low, clean, fit to serve, as I dare say it has done before now, for a bed on occasion. Parallel to this, but further from the fire, is a table with Madame's work−box; her two pots of flowers, looking as fresh as if the plants were growing in a country garden; the miniatures of her children, set up on little wooden easels; and her books of devotion.

But Madame reads more than books of devotion. She is up in the best modern literature of more than one country. To−day, we were exceedingly struck with her great powers of narration. She seizes the points of a story and reproduces them in the most effective simple language. She is certainly aided in this by her noble, expressive face, still bearing traces of remarkable beauty in the severe and classical style. Her gesticulation, too, is unlike what we commonly call French; there is no rapid action of the graceful hands and arms, but a gentle and slow movement from time to time, as if they sympathised with the varying expression of her face. She sat by her fire−side, dressed in black, her constant colour; which she wears as appropriate to her age rather than to her condition, for she is not a widow. Every now and then, she addressed a few tender words to an invalid of the family; showing that with all her lively interest in the histories she was telling us, her eye and ear were watchful for the slightest signs of discomfort in another. . . .

Our conversation drifted along to the old French custom of receiving in bed. It was so highly correct, that the newly−made wife of the Duc de St. Simon went to bed, after the early dinner of those days, in order to receive her wedding−visits. The Duchesse de Maine, of the same date, used to have a bed in the ball−room at Sceaux, and to lie (or half−sit) there, watching the dancers. I asked if there was not some difference in dress between the day− and the night−occupation of the bed. But Madame A−− seemed to think there was very little. The custom was put an end to by the Revolution; but one or two great ladies preserved the habit until their death. Madame A−− had often seen Madame de Villette receiving in bed; she always wore white gloves, which Madame A−− imagined was the only difference between the toilette of day and night. Madame de Villette was the adopted daughter of Voltaire, and, as such, all the daring innovators upon the ancient modes of thought and behaviour came to see her, and pay her their respects. She was also the widow of the Marquis de Villette, and as such she received the homage of the ladies and gentlemen of the ancien regime.

Altogether her weekly receptions must have been very amusing, from Madame A−−'s account. The old Marquise lay in bed; around her sat the company; and, as the climax of the visit, she would desire her femme de chambre to hand round the heart of Voltaire, which he had bequeathed to her, and which she preserved in a little golden case. Then she would begin and tell anecdotes about the great man; great to her, and with some justice. For he had been travelling in the South of France, and had stopped to pass the night in a friend's house, where he was very much struck by the deep sadness on the face of a girl of seventeen, one of his friend's daughters; and, on inquiring the cause, he found out that, in order to increase the portions of the others, this young woman was to be sent into a convent a destination which she extremely disliked. Voltaire saved her from it by adopting her, and promising to give her a dot sufficient to insure her a respectable marriage. She had lived with him for some time at Ferney before she became Marquise de Villette. (You will remember the connexion existing between her husband's family and Madame de Maintenon, as well as with Bolingbroke's second wife.)

Madame de Villette must have been an exceedingly inconsequente person, to judge from Madame A−−'s very amusing description of her conversation. Her sentences generally began with an assertion which was disproved by what followed. Such as, "It was wonderful with what ease Voltaire uttered witty impromptus. He would shut

himself up in his library all the morning, and in the evening he would gracefully lead the conversation to the point he desired, and then bring out the verse or the epigram he had composed for the occasion, in the most unpremeditated and easy manner!" Or, "He was the most modest of men. When a stranger arrived at Ferney, his first care was to take him round the village, and to show him all the improvements he had made, the good he had done, the church he had built. And he was never easy until he had given the new−comer the opportunity of hearing his most recent compositions." Then she would show an old grandfather's high−backed, leather, arm−chair, in which she said he wrote his Henriade, forgetting that he was at that time quite a young man.

Madame A−− said that Madame de Villette's receptions were worth attending, because they conveyed an idea of the ways of society before the Revolution. There was one old French marquis, a contemporary of Madame de Villette's, who regularly came with his chapeau−bras under his arm, to pay her his respects, and to talk over the good old times when both were young. Voltaire had called her "Belle et Bonne," and by these epithets her friend the Marquis saluted her to her dying day.

"Belle et bonne Marquise," (and she had long ceased to be "belle;" even the other adjective was a matter of doubt,) "do you know why I preserve this old hat with so much care, with reverence, I may say?" said this friend to her one day. "Years ago it had the privilege of saving your lovely cheek from being cut by the glass of your carriage−window, when by some mal−adroitness you were on the point of being overturned, ma belle et bonne Marquise."

February. We are staying with a French family of the middle class; and I cannot help noticing the ways of daily life here, so different from those of England. We are a party of seven; and we live on the fourth floor, which is extensive enough to comprise the two sitting−rooms, the bedrooms, the kitchen, and the chamber for the two maids. I do not dislike this plan of living in a flat, especially as it is managed in Paris. I have seen the same mode adopted in Edinburgh and Rome, besides other continental towns; but, as in these towns there is no concierge, I have never liked it so much as in Paris. Here it seems to me to save one servant's work, at the least: and, besides this, there is the moral advantage of uniting mistresses and maids in a more complete family bond. I remember a very charming young married lady, who had been brought by her husband from the country to share his home in Ashley Buildings, Victoria Street, saying that she had two of her former Sunday scholars as servants, but that, if they had had to live in the depths of a London kitchen, she should not have tried bringing them out of their primitive country homes; as it was, she could have them under her own eye without any appearance of watching them; and, besides this, she could hear of their joys and sorrows and, by taking an interest in their interests, induce them to care for hers. French people appear to me to live in this pleasant kind of familiarity with their servants a familiarity which does not breed contempt, in spite of proverbs.

The concierge here receives letters and parcels for the different families in the house, which he generally brings up himself, or sends by one of his family. Sometimes they are kept in the compartments appropriated to each family in the conciergerie; and any one of the inhabitants who may return to the house looks in, and seldom fails to have the complaisance to bring up letters, cards, or parcels for any family living below his etage. The concierge is paid by the landlord for these services, in which is included the carrying up or down of a moderate quantity of luggage. A certain portion of every load of wood or coal belongs to the concierge, as payment for carrying it up to the respective apartments for which it is destined. If he cleans the shoes and knives for any family, they pay him separately. He also expects an etrenne from each of the locataires on New Year's day; say a napoleon from each family, and half that sum from any bachelors lodging in the house. Very often he knows how to wait at table, and his services are available for a consideration to any one living in the house. But he must always provide a deputy in case of absence from his post. As the concierges are, however, generally married, this does not press very hard upon him.

In the house where we are staying, the custom is for every one going out at night to lock up their apartment, desiring the servants to go to bed at the usual time; to hide the key in some well−known and customary place (under the door−mat for instance), and to take a bed−candle down to the conciergerie. When we return from our

party, or whatever it may be, we ring the bell, and the concierge, perhaps asleep in bed in his little cabinet, "pulls the string, and the latch flies up," as in the days of Little Red Ridinghood; we come in, shut the great porte−cochere, open the ever−unfastened door of the conciergerie, light our own particular bed−candles at the dim little lamp, pick out any letters, belonging to us, which may have come in by the late post, and go quietly up stairs. This sounds unsafe to our English ears, as it would seem that any one might come in; but I believe there is a small window of inspection in all conciergeries which may be used in cases of suspicion. The French at any rate esteem it more safe than our self−contained houses; and French servants in a modest household, where no personal attendants are kept, would be very indignant if they had to sit up for their mistresses' gaieties. For, as a rule, French servants are up earlier than English ones.

In this house is a salle−a−manger with a fire−place, and a parquetted floor without a carpet. The shape is an oblong, with the two corners near the door of entrance cut off to form cupboards. The walls are wainscoted with deal, that is afterwards painted oak. The window−curtains and portieres are made of handsome dark Algerine stripe. As far as I can see, carpets are not considered a necessary article of furniture in France, but portieres are. And, certainly, the rich folds of the latter, and the polished floors, off which every crumb or drop of grease is cleansed immediately, take my fancy very much. A door on one side of the windows opens into Madame's room; on the opposite side, another leads into the drawing−room.

If we were French we should have a cup of cafe−au−lait and piece of bread brought into our bedrooms every morning; but, in deference to us as strangers, a tray (without a napkin) with sugar, a copper pan containing the boiling milk just taken off the kitchen fire, and the white covered jug of bright strong coffee, is put on the dining−room table. Also, in deference to our English luxury, there is a plate of butter; our French friends never take butter, and not always bread, at this early breakfast. But where is the bread? I look round, and at last see a basket, about a yard high, standing on the ground near the fireplace; it is of dimensions just sufficient to hold a roll of bread a yard long and more, and about as thick as a man's wrist. It looks like a veritable staff of life. None of our French friends think of completing their toilette for this early breakfast, which indeed, as I have said, they would have taken in their bedrooms, if we had not been here. Nor, indeed, is it any family gathering. I sometimes see the old black skirts of our hostess quickly vanishing into her bedroom at the sound of my approach; and perhaps I find Nanette, the youngest daughter, in a coloured petticoat and white camisole, her thick black hair put neatly away under a cap which is on the full−dress side of a nightcap. She reddens a little as she wishes me Bon jour, as she knows that hers is not the finished morning−toilette of an English young lady. But, two hours hence, who so neat as Nanette in her clean print−gown of some delicate pattern, her black hair all brushed, and plaited, and waved, and crepe? For now she has done her household work; perhaps she has helped Julie to make her own bed; she has certainly dusted her room, with all its knick−knacks and ornaments.

Madame, too, has been out to market; half across Paris, it may be, in her old black gown, to some shop she knows of, where she fancies such and such an article can be had better or cheaper. She has gone by the omnibus, taking advantage of the correspondance, by which, on payment of thirty centimes, and declaring her wish for a correspondance ticket to the conducteur of that which passes her door, she is conveyed in it to the general omnibus office, close to the Place des Victoires, where she may have to wait for a few minutes for an omnibus going in the direction for which her correspondance ticket is taken. If she has to return by any of the midway stations at which omnibuses stop, she has to purchase a ticket with a number upon it at the bureau, and await her turn, at busy times of the day say at five o'clock, at the Place Palais−Royal. Her number may be eighty−seven, while the next Grenelle omnibus is filling with twenty−three, twenty−four, twenty−five, and so on, as the conducteur calls the numbers. But in the morning they are not so crowded; and Madame is always at home, and dressed with delicate neatness, by eleven o'clock, the time of our "second deje ner," or what we should call lunch in England. This breakfast consists generally of cold meat, a rechauffe of some entree or dressed vegetables of the day before, an omelette, bread, wine, and a pot of confitures. For us our kind hostess has tea; but I can see that this is not their ordinary custom. It is curious to see how little butter is eaten in a French family; they, however, make up for this by the much greater use of it in cookery; for vegetables form, a dish by themselves, always requiring either gravy, butter, or oil, in their preparation. After lunch is over, we all sit down to work; perhaps

Nanette practises a little, and perhaps some of us go out for a walk, but always with some object, either of pleasure or business. A Frenchwoman never takes a walk in the English constitutional sense. There are books about in the salon, but not so many as in England. They have nothing equivalent to "Mudie" in Paris, and the books of their circulating libraries are of so very mixed a character, that no careful mother likes to have them lying about on the table, Indeed, "novels and romances" are under much the same ban as they were under in England seventy or eighty years ago. There is the last Revue des Deux Mondes, and a pamphlet or two besides, lying by Madame's work−basket, and there are the standard French authors in the bookcase in the cupboard. Yet, somehow, my friends always know what is going on in the literary world of Paris. The newspapers here are so doctored that they are deprived of much of the interest which usually attaches to political news; but I generally see La Presse lying about.

Once a week, Madame "receives." Then the covers are taken off the furniture in the salon; a fresh nosegay is put in the vase; Madame and Mademoiselle and Nanette put off their final dressing for the day till after the second breakfast, and then appear in the gowns they wear on jours de fetes. Monsieur keeps out of the way, but nevertheless is much disappointed if, when we all meet together at dinner, we have not accumulated a little stock of news and gossip to amuse him with. Madame's day of reception is well known to all her friends and acquaintances, who make a point of calling on her two or three times a season. But sometimes no one comes at all on the Thursdays, and it is rather flat to sit from two to five or thereabouts in our company dresses, with our company faces, all for no use. Then again, on other Thursdays, the room is quite full, and I sit and admire Madame's tact. A new arrival comes up to her, and, without appearing to displace any one, the last comer invariably finds an empty chair by the lady of the house. The hostess also accompanies every departing guest to the room−door, and they part with pretty speeches of affection and good−will, sincere enough, I do not doubt, but expressive of just those feelings which the English usually keep in the background.

On Thursdays we have generally much the same sort of dinner that in England we associate with the idea of washing−days; for both Julie and Gabrielle have been busy admitting or letting out visitors; or at any rate Madame anticipated this probability when she ordered dinner.

The dinner−hour is six o'clock; real, sharp six. And here I may warn my English friends of the necessity of punctuality to the hour specified in a French dinner invitation. In England, a quarter of an hour beyond the time is considered as nothing, and half an hour's grace is generally acceded. But it is not so in France; and it is considered very ill−bred to be behind the time. And this remark applies not merely to the middle−class life I have been describing, but to the highest circles. Indeed, the French have an idea that punctuality is a virtue unknown among the English; and numerous were the stories of annoyance from English unpunctuality which the French officers brought home from the Crimea. But, to return to our day at Madame −−'s. We do not dress for dinner, as we should do in England; that ceremony, as they consider it refreshment, as we should call it is reserved for the days when we go into society, and then it takes place after dinner.

We have soup−always good. On Fridays we have fish; not from any religious feeling, but because that is the day when the best fish is brought into Paris, and it is not very fresh even then. Then we have a made−dish, or two or three times a week the bouilli from which the stock for the soup is made−a tender, substantial, little hunch of boiled beef of no known joint. Then come the vegetables, cooked with thick rich gravy, which raises them to the rank they hold in a French dinner, instead of being merely an accessory to the meat, as they are in England. The roti and the salad follow. The mixing of the salad is too important an operation to be trusted to a servant. As we are here, Madame does not like to leave her visitors; but I see Gabrielle peep from behind the portieres, and make a sign to Mademoiselle about five minutes before dinner; and Mademoiselle goes into the salle−a−manger, and Madame rather loses the thread of her discourse, and looks wistfully after her daughter; for, if Monsieur is particular about anything, it is about his salads. Strictly speaking, Madame tells me, the vegetables ought to be gathered while the soup is on the table, washed and cleansed while we are eating the bouilli, and sliced and dressed with the proper accompaniments while the roti is being brought in. Madame's mother always mixed it at the table, she says, and I have no doubt Madame follows the hereditary precedent herself, when she has no foreign

visitors staying with her. After this, a chocolate custard, or a sweet omelette, a puree of apples, perhaps; and then dessert is put on the table a bit of gruyere cheese under a glass, and the "Quatre Mendiants," i.e., nuts, almonds, raisins, figs, called after the four begging Orders of friars, because these fruits are so cheap that any beggar can have them.

We have a little cup of black coffee all round, when we return to the salon; and, if we were not here, our friends would have nothing more that night; but out of compliment to us there is tea at nine o'clock, that is to say, there is hot water with a spoonful of tea soaked in it. They look upon this mixture in much the same light as we consider sal volatile not quite as a dram, but as something that ought to be used medicinally, and not as a beverage.

March 10th. Madame and I have had a long talk about prices, expenditure, As far as I can make out, provisions are to the full as dear as in London; house−rent is dearer, servants' wages are much the same. She pays her cook and housemaid four hundred and fifty and four hundred francs respectively. But the household work is differently arranged to what it is in England. The cook takes the entire charge of a certain portion of the apartment, bedrooms included; the housemaid attends to the rest, waits at table, helps one of the daughters of the house to get up the fine linen, and renders them any little services they may require in dressing. The cook is enabled to take part of the household−work, because it is the custom in Paris to prepare provisions in the shops where they are sold, so that the cook can buy a sweetbread, or small joint, or poultry, ready−larded, the spinach ready−boiled and pulped for a puree, vegetables all cut into shapes for her soup, and so on. The milk, which I had remarked upon as so remarkably good, is, it appears, subjected to the supervision of inspectors armed with lactometres, delicately−weighted glass−tubes marked with degrees: this ought to sink up to a particular number in good unadulterated milk, and all that is brought into Paris is tested in this and other ways at the various barrieres. It is very difficult, however, to obtain milk in the afternoons or evenings, even at the cremeries, without ordering it beforehand. The Government regulates the price of bread, which is lower in Paris than in the neighbouring towns; the legal tariff is exposed in every baker's shop, and false weights and measures are severely punished.

As to dress, from what I can gather, I think that good articles bear the same price as in England; but in our shops it is difficult to meet with an inferior article in even moderately good taste, while in France those who are obliged to consider expense can find cheap materials of the most elegant design. Then French ladies give up so much more thought and time to dress than the English do; I mean in such ways as changing a gown repeatedly in the course of a day if occasion requires, taking care never to wear a better dress when an inferior one will do no! not even for five unnecessary minutes. And, when handsome articles are taken off, they are put by with as much care as if they were sleeping babies laid down in a cot. Silver paper is put between every fold of velvet or of silk; cushions of paper are placed so as to keep the right sit of any part; ribbons are rolled up; soiled spots are taken out immediately; and thus the freshness of dress which we so much admire in Frenchwomen is preserved; but, as I said, at a considerable expense of time and thought in the case of people of moderate means. Madame −− declares that she knows many a young French couple who have reduced their table to the lowest degree of meagreness, in order that the wife (especially) might be well dressed. She says that dress is the only expenditure for which a Frenchwoman will go into debt.

I remember some years ago hearing a letter from the Prince de Ligne read at Lord E−−'s. He gave an account in it of the then recent coronation at Moscow, and went on to speak of the French Emperor's politics. As one of his engines of influence, the Prince gravely named le luxe de la toilette, as an acknowledged political means. At the time, I remember, I wondered in silence; but things have come to my knowledge since then which make me understand what was then meant. Six years ago a friend took me to call on Madame de −−. It was a raw, splashy, February day; and, as we walked through the slushy streets, half−covered with melting snow, my friend told me something about the lady we were going to see. Madame de −− was married to the eldest son of a Frenchman of rank; she herself belonged to an old family. Her husband was a distinguished member of one of the Academies, and held a high position among those who had devoted themselves to his particular branch of recondite knowledge. Madame de −− was one of the lionnes of Paris, and as a specimen of her class we were now going to see her. She and her husband had somewhere about seven thousand a year; but for economy's sake they lived in an

apartment rather than a house. They had, I think, two or three children. I recollect feeling how out of place my substantial winter−dress and my splashed boots were, the moment I entered the little ball or anteroom of her apartment.

The floor was covered with delicate Indian matting, and round the walls ran a bordering of snowdrops, crocuses, violets, and primroses, as fresh and flowering as if they were growing in a wood, but all planted by some Paris gardener in boxes of soil, and renewed perpetually. Then we went into the lady's own boudoir. She was about thirty, of a very peculiar style of beauty, which grew upon me every moment I looked. She had black hair, long black curling eyelashes, long soft grey eyes, a smooth olive skin, a dimple, and most beautiful teeth. She was in mourning; her thick hair fastened up with great pins of pearls and amethysts, her ear−rings, brooch, bracelets, all the same. Her gown was of black watered silk, lined with violet silk (wherever a lining could be seen), her boots black watered silk, her petticoat of stiff white silk, with a wreath of violet−coloured embroidery just above the hem. Her manners were soft and caressing to the last degree; and, when she was told that I had come to see her as a specimen of her class, she was prettily amused, and took pains to show me all her arrangements and coquetteries. In her boudoir there was not a speck of gilding; that would have been bad taste, she said. Around the mirrors, framed in white polished wood, creeping plants were trained so that the tropical flowers fell over and were reflected in the glass. There was a fire, fed with cedar−wood chips; and the crimson velvet curtains on each side of the grate had perfumes quilted within their white silk linings. The window−curtains were trimmed with point lace. We went through a little ante−chamber to Madame de −−'s bed−room − an oblong room, with her bed filling up half the space on one side; the other all wardrobe, with six or seven doors covered with looking−glass, and opening into as many closets. After we had admired the rare Palissy ware, the lace draperies of the mirror, the ornaments on the toilette−table, and the pink silk curtains of the bed, she laughed her little soft laugh, and told me that now I should see how she amused herself as she lay in bed of a morning: and pulling something like a bell−rope which hung at the head of her bed, the closet doors flew open, and displayed gowns hung on wire frames (such as you may see at any milliner's): gowns for the evening, and gowns for the morning, with the appropriate head−dresses, chaussures, and gloves, lying by them.

"I have not many gowns," said she. "I do not like having too many, for I never wear them after they are a month old; I give them to my maid then, for I never wear anything that is old−fashioned."

I was quite satisfied with my lionne. She was quite as much out of the way of anything I had ever seen before as I had expected. But, to go on with the bearing she had upon the Prince de Ligne's letter, I must not forget to say that Madame de −− expressed very strong political opinions, and all distinctly anti−Bonapartean. Among other things she mentioned was the fact that, when her husband went to pay his respects as a member of the Academy of −−, to the Emperor at the Tuileries, she would not allow him to use their carriage (nor indeed was he willing to do it, but went in a hackney coach), saying that the arms of the de −−s should never be seen in the courts of a usurper. Two years afterwards I came to Paris, and I inquired after M. and Madame de −−. To my infinite surprise, I heard that he had become a senator, one of that body who receive about a thousand pounds a year from Government, and who are admitted to that dignity by the express will of the Emperor. How in the world could it have come about? And Madame, too, at all the balls and receptions at the Tuileries! The arms of the de −− were no longer invisible in the courts of a usurper. What was the reason of this change? Madame's extravagance. Their income would not suffice for her luxe de toilette, and the senator's salary was a very acceptable addition.

April 24th. We were asked to go in some evening, pour dire le petit bon−soir, at a neighbour's house. Accordingly we walked thither about eight o'clock. M. E−−'s house is one of the most magnificent in this quartier: it is on the newly−built Boulevard de Sevastopol. M. E−− himself is a leading man in his particular branch of trade, which, in fact, he has made himself; and he is now a French millionaire, as different from an English one as francs are different from pounds. I remember, when I first knew monsieur and madame, they lived in an apartment over the shop; and this was situated in one of the narrow old streets of the Quartier Latin. I was asked there to dinner, and I had to make my way through bales of goods, that were piled as high as walls on each side of the narrow passage through the shop. I went through madame's bed−room, furnished with purple velvet and

amber satin, to the room where we assembled before dinner.

It was a weekly dinner, at which all M. E−−'s family came, as a matter of course; and any one connected with him in business was also sure of finding a place there. The table was spread with every luxury, and there was almost an ostentatious evidence of wealth, which contrasted oddly and simply with the hard signs of business and trade down below. I fancy their way of living at that time must have been like that of the great old City families of the last century. And there was another resemblance. Two generations ago it was customary for our own London merchants to retain their married children under the paternal roof, for the first year at least; and so it was at M. E−−'s. His own child, his wife's children for they had each been married before lived in the same house as he did, both in winter and summer, in town and country. Yet the younger generation were all married, and had families. All the grandchildren, little and big, were assembled at these weekly dinners; if there was not room for them at the principal table, there were nurses and servants ready to attend upon them at side−tables. And now, when increasing and well−deserved prosperity has enabled M. E−− to remove into the large hotel to which we have been to−night, to "say our little good−evening," I find that his sons and his daughters, his maid−servants and his men−servants, have all migrated with him in truly patriarchal fashion.

We did not see them all to−night, for some have already gone into the country, whither the others are going to follow in a day or two. Out of compliment to us, tea was brought in tea at a guinea the pound, as Madame E−− informed us. I saw that the family did not like the drink well enough to wish to join us. There was a little telegraphing as to who was to be the victim, and keep us company; and the young lady singled out as the tea−drinker for the family took care to put in so much sugar that I doubt if she could recognise the flavour of anything else. The others excused themselves from taking tea by saying one, that she had been so feverish all day; another, that he felt himself a good deal excited, and so on. Sugar is considered by the French as fitted to soothe the nerves, and to induce sleep. I really am becoming a convert to this idea, and can take my glass of eau sucree as well as any one before going to bed; indeed, we have a little tray in our bed−room, on which is a Bohemian glass caraffe of water, a goblet with a gold spoon, and a bowl of powdered sugar. But I think it is a drink for society, not for solitude. Inspirited by the example of others, I relish it; but I never tipple at it in private.

Somehow, to−night we began to talk upon the custom of different families of relations living together. I said it would never do in England. They asked me, why not? And, after some reflection, I was obliged to confess we all liked our own ways too much to be willing to give them up at the will of others were too independent, too great lovers of our domestic privacy. I am afraid I gave the impression that we English were too ill−tempered and unaccommodating; for I drew down upon myself a vehement attack upon the difficulties thrown in the way of young people's marrying in England.

"Even when there is a great large house, and a table well−spread enough to fill many additional mouths, they tell me that in England the parents will go on letting their sons and daughters waste the best years of their lives in long engagements," said Madame E−−. "That does not sound to me amiable."

"It is not the custom in France," put in her husband. "You English are apt to think us bad−tempered, because we talk loud, and use a good deal of gesticulation; but I believe we are one of the most good−tempered nations going, in spite of the noise we make."

By−and−by, some one began to speak of Les Miserables; and M. E−−, like a prosperous merchant as he is, objected to the socialist tendency of the book. From that we went on talking about a greve (or strike) which had lately taken place among the builders in Paris. They had obtained their point, whatever it was, because it was the supreme aim of the Government to keep the "blouses" the Faubourg St. Antoine in good−humour; and "Government," in fact, has the regulation of everything in France. M. E−− said that the carpenters were now about to strike, encouraged by the success of the builders, and that he heard from his own carpenter that the object they were going to aim at was that skilled and unskilled labour should be paid at the same rate viz., five francs a−day. He added that the carpenter, his informant, looked upon this project with disfavour, saying it might be all very

well as long as there was enough of work for all; but, when it grew scarce, none but the best workmen would have any employment, as no one would send for an inferior craftsman, when he could have a first−rate one for the same money.

May 4th. It is becoming intolerably hot in Paris. I almost wish the builders would strike, for my part, for the carriages scarcely cease rambling past my open windows before two; and at five the men are clapping and hammering at the buildings of the new boulevard opposite. I have had to go into the narrow streets of the older parts of Paris lately; and the smells there are insufferable a mixture of drains and cookery, which makes one loathe one's food. Yet how interesting these old streets are! and the people inhabiting them are quite different to those of the more fashionable quarters: they have so much more originality of character about them; and yet one sees that they are the descendants of the Dames de la Halle, who went out to Versailles on the memorable fifth of October.

I see curious little customs too in these more primitive parts of the town. Every morning a certain number of Sisters of Charity put themselves at the disposal of the Mairie of the Arrondissements. There were formerly only twelve arrondissements; but now, owing to the extension of the city of Paris, there are twenty. In the former days, before the annexation of the suburbs to the city in 1859, by which the number of the arrondissements was increased to twenty, it was "slang" to speak of any disreputable person as belonging to the treizieme an arrondissement not recognised by any law. Every such division has a maire and two adjoints, who are responsible for the well−doing and well−being of the district in their charge. I see the "Sisters" leaving the Mairie on their errands of mercy early every morning. About the same time the chiffonier comes his rounds, eagerly raking out the heaps of dust and rubbish before the doors. Then, by−and−by generally, however, after eleven, that universal meal−hour I meet an old woman busily trotting along towards the Luxembourg Gardens, surrounded by fifteen or twenty little children, aged from two or three years to seven or eight. Their parents pay the old lady about ten centimes an hour to take their children out, and give them a walk or a game of play in the gardens.

It is pretty to see her convoy her little regiment over a crossing; it reminds me of the old puzzle of the fox, the goose, and the bag of corn. The elder children are left in charge on one side, while the very little ones are carried over; then one of the oldest is beckoned across and lectured on her care of them, while the old woman trots back for the rest; and I notice she is much more despotic during her short reign of power than the old woman herself. At length they are past all dangers, and safe in the gardens, where they may make dirt−pies to their hearts' content, while their chaperon takes out her knitting and seats herself on a bench in their midst. Say she has fifteen children, and keeps them out for two hours, it makes her a little income of half−a−crown a day; and many a busy mother is glad that her child should have happy play and exercise, while she goes a−shopping, or does some other piece of house−keeping work, which would prevent her from attending properly to her child. Each mairie has its salle d'asile (or infant−school) and its creche (or public nursery), under the superintendence of the "Sisters;" but perhaps these are for a lower class than my little Luxembourg friends. Their mothers are, for the most part, tolerably well off, only not rich enough to keep a servant expressly for the children.

Then the shop−placards in these old−fashioned parts of the town are often amusing enough. For instance the other day I saw a crowd in a by−street, near the Rue l'ƒcole de Medecine, all intent upon a great piece of written paper put out of the window of a shop, where almost every article of woman's dress was to be sold. It was headed, in letters almost a quarter of a yard long:

MA FEMME EST FOLLE.

A person, of whom I asked the meaning, laughed a little as he said −

"Oh! it is only a contrivance for attracting custom. He goes on to state, lower down in the paper, that his wife, being mad, offered certain gown−pieces for sale yesterday at a ruinous price (they are really only about half a franc lower than what you can get them for at any other shop) that he is miserable in the conflict he is undergoing

between his honour and the prospect of the sacrifice he will have to make, if he sells them at the price his wife offered them for; but, 'Honour above all,' they shall be sold at that price, and therefore every one had better rush in and buy."

May 7th. Seeing an apartment to let in the Place Royale, we went over it yesterday. I have always liked the looks of this stately old place; so full of historical associations too. Then, again, the quietness of it charms me; it is almost like a cloister, for no carriages can come in; and the sheltered walks under the arcades must be very pleasant to the inhabitants on rainy days. The houses are built of very handsome red bricks with stone−facings, and all after the same plan, designed by an architect of the time of Henry IV. about our Queen Elizabeth's reign; but, if the Place Royale were in England, we should date it, judging from the style of the architecture, a century later at least. It is more like the later additions to Hampton Court. There is a pleasant square in the centre, with a fountain, shady chestnut trees, and gay flower−beds, and a statue of Louis XIII. in the midst. Tradition says, that it was either on this piece of ground, or very near it, that the famous masque took place in the old Palace des Tournelles, when, the dresses of the masquers catching fire, King Charles VI., who was one of them, became mad in consequence of the fright and, it was to soothe his madness, that our present playing−cards were invented.

When first the present place was built, all the fashionable world rushed to secure houses in it. This was the old hotel of the De Rohans; that was Cardinal de Richelieu's before his Palais Cardinal the present Palais Royal was completed; in this house Madame de Sevigne was born and so on, Now, the ground floor, which was formerly occupied by the offices of the great houses above, is turned into shops, ware−houses, and cafes of a modest and substantial kind; and the upper floors are inhabited by respectable and well−to−do people, who do not make the least pretension to fashion. The apartment we went over consisted of five handsome and very lofty reception−rooms, opening out of one another and lighted by many high narrow windows, opening on to a wide balcony at the top of the arcade. One or two of these rooms were panelled with looking−glass, but old−fashioned, in many pieces, not like our modern plates in size. Possibly it was Venetian, and dated from the times of the early proprietors.

The great height of the rooms, as compared to their area, struck me much. Only two or three of the rooms had fireplaces, and these were vast and cavernous. Besides the doors of communication between the rooms, there was, in each, one papered like the walls, opening into a passage which ran the whole length of the apartment. On the opposite side of this passage there were doors opening into the kitchens, store−rooms, servants' bed−rooms, so small, so close, so unhealthy. Yet in those days there were many servants and splendid dinners. Perhaps, however, some of the lacqueys slept on the upper floor, to which there is now no access from the apartments au premier. At the end of the passage was the bed−room of the late proprietress, with a closet opening out of it for her maid. The bed−room was spacious and grand enough; but the closet−well, I suppose she could lie full length in it, if she was not tall. The only provision for light and air was a window opening on to the passage. We inquired the rent of this apartment: 3000 francs £120. But perhaps Monsieur le proprietaire might reduce it to 2500 francs £100. The front−rooms were charming in their old−fashioned stateliness; but, if I lived there, I should be sorely perplexed as to where my servants were to sleep.

May 10th. Utterly weary of the noise and heat of Paris, we went out to St. Germain yesterday. I had never been there before; and now, once having been, I want to go again. It is only half−an−hour from Paris by railroad. We could just see Malmaison as we went along, past pretty villas with small gardens brilliant with flowers, as French gardens always are. All the plants seem to 'go into flower; the mass of bloom almost over−balances the leaves. I believe this is done by skilful pruning and cutting−in. For instance, they take up their rose−trees at the beginning of February, and cut off the coarse red suckers and the superfluous growth of root. The hedges to these little suburban gardens are principally made of acacia, and pollard trees of the same species border nearly all the roads near Paris. In the far distance, on the left, almost against the horizon, we saw the famous Aqueduct de Marly, formerly used to conduct a part of the water to Versailles. I do not know what it is in the long line of aqueducts and viaducts which charms one. Is it the vanishing perspective which seems to lead the eye, and through it the mind, to some distant invisible country? or is it merely the association with other aqueducts, with the broken

arches of the Claudian aqueduct, stretching across the Campagna, with Nismes, By means of some skilfully−adjusted atmospheric power, the trains have of late years been conducted up to nearly the level of the terrace at St. Germain's by a pretty steep inclined plane. We went up a few steps on leaving the station, and then we were on the plateau, the castle on our left, and a Place at the entrance to the town on the right.

Nothing could be more desolate−looking than the chateau; the dull−red bricks of which it is built are painted dark−lead colour round the many tiers of windows, the glass in which is broken in numerous places, its place being here and there supplied by iron bars. Somehow, the epithet that rose to our lips on first seeing the colouring of the whole place, was "livid." Nor is the present occupation of the grim old chateau one to suggest cheerful thoughts. After being a palace, it was degraded to a caserne, or barracks, and from that it has come down to be a penitentiary. All round the building there is a deep dry area, railed round; and now I have said all I can against St. Germain and recorded a faithful impression at first sight. But, two minutes afterwards, there came a lovely slant of sun−light; the sun had been behind a fine thunderous cloud, and emerged just at the right moment, causing all the projections in the chateau to throw deep shadows, brightening the tints in all the other parts, calling out the vivid colours in the flower−beds that surround the railing on the park side of the chateau, and half−compelling us with its hot brilliancy, half luring us by the full fresh green it gave to the foliage, to seek the shelter of the woods not two hundred yards beyond the entrance to the park.

We did not know where we were going to, we only knew that it was shadowed ground; while the "English garden" we passed over was all one blaze of sunlight and scarlet geraniums, and intensely blue lobelias, yellow calceolarias, and other hot−looking flowers. The space below the ancient mighty oaks and chestnut−trees was gravelled over, and given up to nursery−maids and children, with here and there an invalid sitting on the benches. Mary and Irene were bent upon sketching; so we wandered on to find the impossible point of view which is to combine all the excellences desired by two eager sketchers. So we loitered over another hundred yards in the cool shade of the trees. And suddenly we were on the terrace, looking down over a plain steeped in sunlight, and extending for twenty miles and more. We all exclaimed with delight at its unexpectedness; and yet we had heard of the terrace at St. Germain, and associated it with James II. and Maria d'Este all our lives. The terrace is a walk as broad as a street, on the edge of the bluff overhanging the silver tortuous Seine. It is bounded by a wall. just the right height for one to lean upon and gaze and muse upon the landscape below. The mellow mist of a lovely day enveloped the more distant objects then; but we came again in the evening, when all the gay world of St. Germain was out and abroad on the terrace listening to the music of the band; and we could then distinguish the aqueduct of Many on our right, before us the old woods of Vesinet that ill−omened relic of the ancient forest that covered the Ile de France; and here in the very centre is the star−shaped space called La Table de la Trahison; here it was that Ganelan de Hauteville planned to betray Roland the Brave and the twelve peers of France, at Roncevaux; and on the very spot the traitors were burnt to death by the order of Charlemagne.

Beyond Vesinet rise the fortified heights of Mont Valerien and Montmartre; so we know that the great city of Paris, with its perpetual noise and bustle, must be the cause of that thickening of the golden air just beyond the rising ground in the mid−distance. And some one found out far away again as far as eye could see, the spire of the Cathedral of St. Denis, and Irene fell to moralising and comparing. The palace, she said, was ever present an every−day fact to the great old kings who had inhabited it and fertile life and busy pomp were the golden interspace which all but concealed from them the inevitable grave at St. Denis. But sermons always make me hungry; and Irene's moralising seemed to have the same effect on herself as well as on us, or else it was the "nimble" air for that epithet of Shakespeare's exactly fits the clear brisk air of St. Germain. They sat down to sketch, and I was sent in search of provender.

I could not find a confectioner's, nor, indeed, would it have been of much use, for French confectioners only sell sugary or creamy nothings, extremely unsatisfactory to hungry people. So I went boldly into the restaurant to the right of the station the Cafe Galle, I think it was called, and told the Dame du Comptoir my errand. I was in hopes that she would have allowed one of the garcons to accompany me with a basket of provisions, and some plates, and knives and forks; perhaps some glasses, and a bottle of wine. But it seemed that this was against the

rules; and all I could do was, to have the loan of a basket for a short time. Madame split up some oval rolls of delicious bread, buttered them, and placed some slices of raw ham between the pieces; and with these, and some fresh strawberries, I returned to my merry, hungry sketchers, who were beginning to find that a seat on the hard gravel was not quite so agreeable as sitting on (comparatively) soft English turf. Yet the benches were too high for their purpose. After eating their lunch, they relapsed into silence and hard work.

It was rather dull for me; so I rambled about, struck up an acquaintanceship with one of the gardeners, and with a hackney−coachman, who tried to tempt me into engaging him for a course to Versailles by Marly−le−Roi the Marly, the famous Marly of Louis XIV., of which the faint vestiges alone remain in the marks of the old garden plots. I was tempted. I remembered what St. Simon says; how the king, weary of noise and grandeur, found out a little narrow valley within a few miles of his magnificent and sumptuous Versailles; there was a village near this hollow for it really was nothing more and this village was called Marly, whence the name of the palace or hermitage which the king chose to have built. He thought that he went there to lead a simple and primitive life, away from the flattery of his courtiers. But it is not so easy for a king to avoid flattery. His architect built one great pavilion, which was to represent the sun; in it dwelt Louis XIV. There were twelve smaller pavilions surrounding this large one; in them dwelt the planets, that is to say, the favourite courtiers of the time being. Every morning the king set out to visit his satellites; there were six on one side of the parterre, six on the other; and their pavilions communicated with each other by means of close avenues of lime−trees. It was etiquette for these courtiers to salute the king, who had taken the sun for his device, by placing their right hand so as to shade their eyes from his brilliancy; hence, some people say, our own military salute. Each courtier, as he was visited, followed the king in his round. At first, the king came to Many only two or three times a year, staying from Wednesday to Saturday; he only brought a comparatively moderate train; but in time he grew weary of his so−called simplicity, and the surrounding hills were scooped out to make gardens, and woods, and waterworks; and statues and courtiers thronged the place. Still, as no one could come here without express invitation from the king, to be of the parties to Marly was an object to be longed for, and asked for, and intrigued for. Indeed, it was the highest favour that could be obtained from royalty. At the last moment of awful suspense as to who was to go, the king's valet de chambre, Bontemps, went round with the invitations. There was no need of preparation, for in each pavilion there was a store of all things needed for masculine and feminine toilettes. Only two could inhabit a pavilion; and, if a married lady was asked, her husband was included in the invitation, though not in the compliment.

But, to the end of his reign, the days for Marly were invariable. Sunday the King spent, as became the eldest son of the Church, at his parish of Versailles; Monday and Tuesday he allowed himself to be worshipped by the whole court at Versailles; on Wednesday he went to Marly with the selected few. The amusements at Marly were high play, or, as it might be called, gambling; and a kind of bazaar, where the ladies dressed themselves up as Syrians; Japanese, Greeks, what not, and played at keeping shop; the king furnishing the infinite variety of things sold. Louis XV. and his unfortunate successor went to Marly occasionally; but the great days of Marly were over when Louis XIV. died. After that, the Governor of St. Germain kept the keys of Marly, and occasionally lent the use of the pavilions to his private friends. But the Convention did not approve of this appropriation of national property; and the old statues, the remains of magnificent furniture, the marbles, and the mirrors, were sold for the good of the people. Some one bought the buildings and turned them into a spinning−mill; but it was not a profitable speculation, and by−and−by the whole place was pulled down; but I believe you may yet trace out the foundations of the Palace of the Sun. So that was why I wanted to see Marly a place once so famous and so populous gone to ruin, nay, the very ruins themselves covered up by nature with her soft harmony of grass and flowers.

How much would it cost, how long would it take, I asked the hackney−coachman, to go by Marly to Versailles in time to catch the last train thence to Paris? It would take an hour, not including any stopping at Marly, and it would cost fifteen francs, also not including any stoppage at Marly. I was vexed at the man for thinking I could be so grossly imposed upon. Why, two francs an hour, with a decent pourboire, was on the tariff of every carriage; so I turned. away in silent indignation, heedless of his cries of "Dix francs', madame. Tenez! huit cinq ce que vous voulez, madame!"

And immediately afterwards I was glad I had not planned to leave St. Germain an hour earlier than was necessary the place looked so bright and cheerful, with all the gaily−dressed people streaming over the Place du Chateau, to go to the terrace and hear the band. I went into the restaurant, and ordered coffee to be ready at six, and had a little more gossip with the Dame du Comptoir. She told me that no one was admitted to see the interior of the castle, although it was no longer a penitentiary; that the air at St. Germain was better and purer than at any other place within twenty miles of Paris; and that I ought to come and see the forest of St. Germain at the time of the Fete des Loges a sort of open−air festival held in the forest on the 30th of August; and all the waiters at liberty came forward to make a chorus in praise of the merry−go−rounds, mountebanks, wine, stoves cooking viands, spits turning joints, and general merriment which seemed to go on at this fair, which took its rise in the pilgrimages made to a certain hermitage built by a devout seigneur of the time of Louis XIII.

Then I went back to Mary and Irene, and told them my adventures; and we all, attracted by the good music of the military band, went on to the crowded terrace and leant over the wall, and saw the view I have described, and gazed down into the green depths of the far−stretching forest, and wondered if we should not have done wiser to have gone thither and spent our day there. And so to our excellent coffee and bread, and then back to Paris.

II

Chartres, May 10th, 1862.

We were quite worn out with the ever increasing noise of Paris; or, perhaps, I should rather say, as the heat became greater, so our necessity for open windows by day and by night increased; and the masons opposite rose to their work with the early morning light. So we determined to go off to Britanny for our few remaining days, having a sort of happy mixture of the ideas of sea, heath, rocks, ferns, and Madame de Sevigne in our heads. The one and first destined point in our plans was to see the cathedral at Chartres.

We left Paris about three o'clock, and went past several stations, the names of which reminded us of Madame de Sevigne's time Rambouillet, perhaps, the most of all. The station is some distance from the town of Chartres, which, like so many French provincial towns, consists of a Place, and a few appendent streets. The magnificent cathedral stands a little aloof; we left it on one side as we came in an omnibus up to our hotel, which looked on to the Place. But alas for my hopes of a quiet night! The space before the house is filled with booths dancing−booths, acting−booths, wild−beast shows, music−booths, each and all making their own separate and distinct noises; the "touter" to one booth sitting in front of it and blowing a trumpet as hard as any angel in the old pictures; the hero of the theatrical booth walking backwards and forwards in front of his stage, and ranting away in King Cambyses' vein; the lions and tigers are raging with hunger, to judge from their roars; and the musicians are in the full burst of the overture to Guillaume Tell. Mary and Irene have gone out, in spite of it all, to have a. peep at the cathedral before it is too dark; and I have chosen our bed−rooms. If the lion only knew it, he could easily make a spring into our balcony; but I hope, as he is great, he will be stupid. I have rung the bell, and rung the bell, and gone cut in the corridor and called; and, at last, I shall have to go downstairs, to try and find some one to bring up the meal which I have promised the others they shall find ready on their return. I have been and found Madame, and laid my complaint before her. She says the servants are all gone out to see the shows in the Place, which is very wicked in them; but I suspect, from her breathless way of speaking, she has only just rushed in herself, to see that I am not running away with the house. I fancy I am the only person in it. She assures me, with true French volubility, that she will send up some coffee and bread directly, and will scold Jeanette well.

May 11th. Mary and Irene returned from the cathedral last night before anything was ready, and were too full of the extraordinary architectural magnificence they had seen to care about my Martha−like troubles. But I had not seen the cathedral; and I was hungry if they were not. I went down again, and this time I found Madame in full tilt against an unfortunate woman, who looked as if she had been captured, vi et armis, out of the open−air gaiety and the pleasant company of friends in the Place. She brought us up our meal with sullen speed, giving me

occasionally such scowls of anger that I almost grew afraid at the feeling I had provoked. Yet she refused to be soothed by our little expressions of admiration for the fair, and our questions as to what was to be seen. Her only attempt at an apology was a sort of grumbling soliloquy, to the effect that ladies who knew what was comme il faut would never have gone out so late in the evening of a jour de fete to walk about the town; and that, as Mary and Irene had done this improper thing, there was no knowing when, if ever, they would return. I wish she had let us try to comfort her, for I really was very sorry to have dragged a poor creature back from what was, perhaps, the great enjoyment of the year. After our coffee we went to bed; and I am not at all sure if we were not, for some hours, the only occupants of the hotel. But the lion did not take advantage of his opportunity, though we were obliged to leave the windows open for the heat. This morning we went to see the cathedral. It is so wonderfully beautiful that no words can describe it. I am thoroughly glad we came by Chartres.

May 12th. Vitre. We came on here yesterday afternoon. Irene, who is the most wide−awake person I know, sat upright in the railway−carriage, looking out of the window with eager, intelligent eyes, and noting all she saw. It was a fete day; and at all the little cabarets, with their wayside gardens, there were groups of peasants in their holiday dress, drinking what appeared to be cider, from its being in large stone bottles, and eating galette a sort of fiat cake of puff−paste, dusted over with powdered sugar, with which we had become well acquainted in Paris. The eating and drinking seemed, however, to be rather an excuse for sitting round well−scoured tables in the open air, than an object in itself. I sank back in my seat in a lazy, unobservant frame of mind, when Irene called out, "Oh, look! there is a peasant in the goat−skin dress one reads about; we must be in Britanny now; look, look!" I had to sit up again and be on the alert; all the time thinking how bad for the brain it was to be straining one's attention perpetually after the fast−flitting objects to be seen through a railway carriage window. This is a very good theory; but it did not quite hold water in practice. Irene was as bright as ever when we stopped at Vitre; I was tired and stupid. Perhaps the secret was, that I did unwillingly what she did with pleasure.

The station at Vitre is a little outside the town, and is smart and new and in apple−pie order, as a station on a line that has to make its character ought to he. The town, on the contrary, is ancient, picturesque, and deserted. There have been fortified walls all round it, but these are now broken down in many places, and small hovels have been built of the debris wherever this is the case, giving one the impression of a town stuffed too full, which has burst its confines and run over. Yet inside the walls there are many empty houses, and many grand fortified dwellings, with coats of arms emblazoned over the doorway, which are only half−occupied. All the little world of the town seemed to be at the railway−station, and everybody welcomed us with noise and advice. The inn down in our ten−years−old Murray no longer existed; so we were glad to be told of the "Hotel Sevigne," although we suspected it to be a mere trick of a name. Not at all. We are really veritably lodged in the very house she occupied, when she left Les Rochers to come and do the honours of Vitre to the Governor of Britanny − the Duc de Chaulnes. Our hotel is the "Tour de Sevigne" of her letters. On being told this, I asked for the tower itself. It had been pulled down only a year or two before, in order to make the great rambling mansion more compact as an hotel. As it was, they had changed the main entrance from hack to front; and to arrive at it, we had to go over a great piece of vacant irregular ground, the inequalities of which were caused by the debris of the tower.

The place belongs to the Marquis de Nethumieres, a descendant of the de Sevignes, so our host said. At any rate, he lives at Les Rochers, and owns our hotel. It seems as though our landlord had not had capital enough to furnish the whole of this immense, far−stretching house, which is entered in the middle of the building with long corridors to the right and to the left, both upstairs and downstairs corridors so wide and well−lighted by the numerous windows looking to the back (or town−side), that they are used as store−rooms and sculleries. Here there are great sacks of corn and unpacked boxes of possible groceries; there a girl sits and sings as she mends the house−linen by a window, apparently diligent enough, but perfectly aware, all the time, that the ostler in the yard below is trying to attract her attention; and there, again, a woman is standing, shoulders square, to an open window, "topping and tailing" a basket of gooseberries, and shouting out her part of a conversation with some one unseen in the yard below. Yet the great corridor looks empty and strangely deserted. Somehow, I suppose that as soon as I heard the name of "Tour de Sevigne," I expected to see a fair, plump lady, in hanging sleeves and long light−brown ringlets, walking before me wherever I went, half−turning her pretty profile over her white shoulder

to say something bright and playful; and, instead, we follow our rather spruce landlord into the bedrooms at the end of the corridor, and coolly order our dinner for this day of May, 1862.

The rooms in this house are not large, but so very lofty, that I suspect that the panelled partition walls are but later wooden divisions of large? rooms; and so, on tapping, we find to be the case. My window looks out on the country outside the town; Irene's is just on the opposite side, and she sees roofs of deeply furrowed tiles roofs of every possible angle and shape, but mostly high pitched; they are covered with golden and grey lichens which tone down the old original red. There are broad gutters round the verge of every one, regular cats' Pall Malls. And see, there is an old black grimalkin coming round yonder corner, with meek and sleepy gait, of course entirely unconscious of the flock of pigeons towards which she is advancing with her velvet steps. They strut and pout and ruffle themselves up, turning their pretty soft plumage to the sun till they catch the rainbow tints; and whiff they are all off in mid−air, and the hypocritical cat has to go on walking in the gutter, as if pigeons had been the last thing in her thoughts when she made that playful spring round the corner. How picturesque the old town looks beyond, though, to be sure, we see little besides roofs the streets must be so narrow! Let us make haste and have our meal, and go out before the sun sets. Pigeons for dinner! Ah, Pussy, we begin to have a fellow−feeding for you.

May l3th. We have had a busy day, but a very pleasant one. In the first place, we had a long talk with our landlord about the possibility of seeing Les Rochers. The Marquis was very strict about not letting it be shown without his permission, and he and Madame were known to be at Rennes; so we thought of giving it up. Then our landlord turned round in his opinions, and said that doubtless the Marquis and Madame would be very sorry for any foreigners to come so far on a bootless errand; and so after a good many pro's and con's, we always following our landlord's lead, and agreeing to all that he said, in hopes of getting to the end of the discussion we made a bargain for a little conveyance, half Irish car, half market cart, which was to take us to Les Rochers, and to stay there as long as we liked. Who so merry as we this bright dewy May morning, cramped up in our jolting, rattling carriage, the fourth place occupied by sketch−books and drawing materials? First, we rattled along the narrow streets of Vitre; the first floors of the houses are propped up upon black beams of wood, making a rude sort of colonnade, under which people walk; something like Chester and then we passed out of the old turretted gate of the town, into the full and pleasant light of early morning.

We began to climb a hill, the road 'winding round Vitre, till we peeped down upon the irregular roofs and stacks of chimneys pent in the circular walls; and we saw the remains of the old castle, inhabited by the Due and Duchesse de Chaulnes, in the days when Madame de Sevigne came to stay at the "Tour", and show hospitality to her Paris friends in that barbarous region. And now we were on a high level, driving along pretty wooded lanes, with here and there a country chateau or manor house, surrounded by orchards on either side of us. Towards one of these our driver pointed. It was low and gabled; I have seen a hundred such in England. "That is the old house of the Dc la Tremouilles," said he. And then we began to think of a daughter of that house who had been transplanted by marriage into England, and was known in English history and romance as Charlotte, the heroic Countess of Derby. By this time we had made great friends with our driver, by admiring his brisk little Breton pony, and asking him various questions about Breton cows. Suddenly he turned into a field−road on our left; and in three minutes we were in full sight of Les Rochers. We got down, and looked about us. We were on the narrow side of an oblong of fine delicate grass; on our right were peaked−roof farm buildings, granaries, barns, stables, and cow−houses; opposite to us, a thick wood, showing dark in the sunlight; in the corner to our left was the house, with tourelles and towers, and bits of high−roof, and small irregular doors; a much larger and grander building than I had expected; very like the larger castles in Scotland. Then quite on our right was the low wall, and ha−ha of the gardens, and the bridge over the ha−ha, and the richly−worked iron gates. We turned round; we were at the edge of the rising ground which fell rather abruptly from this point into a rich smiling plain the Bocage country, in fact. We could see far away for miles and miles, till it all melted into the blue haze of distance.

Our driver took out his horse, and went to make friends with the farm−servants, who had turned out with lazy curiosity to look at the strangers. We sat down on the ground; the turf was fine and delicate, and the little

flowerets interspersed were all of such kinds as tell of a lime−soil and of pure air. There were larks up above, right in the depth of the blue sky, singing as if they would crack their throats for joy; the sort of open farm−yard before us was full of busy, prosperous poultry of all kinds hens clucking up their large broods of chickens, cocks triumphantly summoning their wives to the feast before the barn−door, fussy turkeys strutting and gobbling, and flocks of pigeons, now basking on the roof, now fluttering down to the ground. There were dogs baying in the unseen background, to add to the various noises. I never saw a place so suggestive of the ideas of peace and plenty. There were cows, too, tethered in the dusky shadows of the open cow−houses, with heaps of cut green food before them.

Our plan was to sketch first, and then to try to see the house. Now and then a servant in rather clumsy livery, or a maid in the country dress of Britanny, went across the space, to have a little talk with the farm−servants, and a sidelong look at us. At last an old man in a blue blouse came out from the group near the barn door, and slowly approach mg, sat himself down on a hillock near. Of course we began to talk, seeing his sociable intentions; and he told us he was a De la Roux, and had relations "in London." I fancied he might mean the De la Rues, but he corrected my mis−spelling with some indignation, and again asked me if I did not know his relations in London the De la Roux. Ah yes! they were noble, he was noble; his ancestors had been as great as the ancestors of the Marquis yonder, but they had taken the wrong side in the wars; and here was he, their grandchild, obliged to work for his daily bread. We sighed out of sympathy with his sighs, and amplified the text, "Sic transit," Then he offered us a pinch of snuff, which we took, and sneezed accordingly; and this afforded our old friend much amusement. To wind up this little story all at once−−when we were going away, we demurred as to whether we could venture to offer a De la Roux a couple of francs, or whether it would not seem like an insult to his noble blood. The wisdom of age carried the day against the romance of youth, and was justified in seeing the eager eyes in the worn sharp face watching the first initiatory sign of a forthcoming gift with trembling satisfaction. How pleasant the long quiet morning was! A cloud−shadow passing over us, a horse coming too near with its loud champing of the sweet herbage, our only disturbance; while before us the evident leisure for gossip, and signs of plenty to eat, filled up the idea of rural happiness. Then we went and saw the house, and the portraits, and passed out of the window into the garden like all French gardens with neglected grass, and stone−fountains, and cut yews and cypresses, and a profusion of lovely flowers, roses especially. We were all very sorry to come away.

Early this evening, Mary and Irene went out to sketch, and planted themselves down in a street already occupied by picturesque booths and open−air shops for pottery, men's clothes, and the really serviceable articles for country use. It seems it was the market−day at Vitre; and it was very pretty to watch the young housewives in their best attire, bargaining and hesitating over their purchases. Their dress was invariably a gown of some bright coloured cotton, a handkerchief of the same material, but a different colour, crossed over the breast a la Marie Antoinette, and a large apron, with a bib of a third hue almost covering the petticoat, and confining and defining the bust. They rung the changes on turkey−red, bright golden brown, and full dark blue. Indeed, the dark narrow streets, with their colonnades, black with the coming shadows, needed this relief of colour.

The little boys of Vitre, let loose from school, came clustering round about our sketchers. It was certainly a great temptation to the lads: but they came too close, and entirely, obstructed the view, and only laughed, at first shyly, afterwards a little rudely, at my remonstrances. I applied to a gendarme, slowly coming down the street, but he only shrugged his shoulders with the hopeless beginning of "Que voulez−vous, Madame! I am not here to impede the concourse of children," and passed on. Just at this moment a stout woman selling men's clothes in the open street close by, observed the dilemma, and came to the rescue. She wielded a pair of good strong fustian trousers, and scolded in right down earnest and also in right−down good−humour, casting her weapon about her with considerable dexterity, so as to make it answer the purpose of a cat−o'−nine−tails. And thus she cleared a circle for us; and whenever she saw us too much crowded she came again; and the lads laughed, and we laughed, and we all ended capital friends. By−and−by she began to pack up her stock of clothes: she had a cart brought to her by her husband, and first she took down the poles of her booth, and then the awning, then the impromptu counter came to pieces, and lastly the coats and trousers, the blouses and jackets, were packed into great sacks. And she was on the point of departure being, as we afterwards heard, a pedlaress who made the circuit of the markets in

the district with her wares when I thought that the only civility I could offer her was to show her the drawings that Mary and Irene had made, thanks to her well−timed interposition. She swore many a good round oath to enforce her admiration of the sketches, and called her little obedient husband to look at them; but, on his failing to recognise some object, she gave him a good cuff on the ear, apologising to us for his stupidity. I do not think he liked her a bit the less for this conduct.

May 4th. We have decided to return to England to see the Exhibition. We are going by Fougeres, Pont Orson, Mont St. Michel, Avranches, Caen, and Rouen; and by that time we shall have made an agreeable "loop" of a little journey full of objects of interest.

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February 16th, 1863. Again in Paris! and, as I remember a young English girl saying with great delight, "we need never be an evening at home!" But her visions were of balls; our possibilities are the very pleasant ones of being allowed to go in on certain evenings of the week to the houses of different friends, sure to find them at home ready to welcome any who may come in. Thus, on Mondays, Madame de Circourt receives; Tuesdays, Madame −−; Wednesdays, Madame de M−−; Thursdays, Monsieur G−−, and so on. There is no preparation of entertainment; a few more lights, perhaps a Baba, or cake savouring strongly of rum, and a little more tea is provided. Every one is welcome, and no one is expected. The visitors may come dressed just as they would be at home; or in full toilette, on their way to balls and other gaieties. They go without any formal farewell; whence, I suppose, our expression "French leave."

Of course the agreeableness of these informal receptions depends on many varying circumstances, and I doubt if they would answer in England. A certain talent is required in the hostess; and this talent is not kindness of heart, or courtesy, or wit, or cleverness, but that wonderful union of all these qualities, with a dash of intuition besides, which we call tact. Madame Recamier had it in perfection. Her wit or cleverness was of the passive or receptive order; she appreciated much, and originated little. But she had the sixth sense, which taught her when to speak, and when to be silent. She drew out other people's powers by her judicious interest in what they said; she came in with sweet words before the shadow of a coming discord was perceived. It could not have been all art; it certainly was not all nature. As I have said, invitations are not given for these evenings. Madame receives on Tuesdays. Any one may go. But there are temptations for special persons which can be skilfully thrown out. You may say in the hearing of one whom you wish to attract, "I expect M. Guizot will be with us on Tuesday; he is just come back to Paris," and the bait is pretty sure to take: and of course you can vary your fly with your fish. Yet, in spite of all experience and all chances, some houses are invariably dull. The people who would be dreary at home, go to be dreary there. The gay, bright spirits are always elsewhere; or perhaps come in, make their bows to the hostess, glance round the room, and quietly vanish. I cannot make out why this is; but so it is.

But a delightful reception, which will never take place again a more than charming hostess, whose virtues, which were the real source of her charms, have ere this "been planted in our Lord's garden" awaited us to−night. In this one case I must be allowed to chronicle a name that of Madame de Circourt so well known, so fondly loved, and so deeply respected. Of her accomplished husband, still among us, I will for that reason say nothing, excepting that it was, to all appearances, the most happy and congenial marriage I have ever seen. Madame de Circourt was a Russian by birth, and possessed that gift for languages which is almost a national possession. This was the immediate means of her obtaining the strong regard and steady friendship of so many distinguished men and women of different countries. You will find her mentioned as a dear and valued friend in several memoirs of the great men of the time. I have heard an observant Englishman, well qualified to speak, say she was the cleverest woman he ever knew. And I have also heard one, who is a saint for goodness, speak of Madame de Circourt's piety and benevolence and tender kindness, as unequalled among any women she had ever known. I think it is Dekker who speaks of our Saviour as "the first true gentleman that ever lived." We may choose to be shocked at the freedom of expression used by the old dramatist: but is it not true? Is not Christianity the very core of the heart of all gracious courtesy? I am sure it was so with Madame de Circourt. There never was a house where the weak

and dull and humble got such kind and unobtrusive attention, or felt so happy and at home. There never was a place that I heard of, where learning and genius and worth were more truly appreciated, and felt more sure of being understood. I have said that I will not speak of the living; but of course every one must perceive that this state could not have existed without the realisation of the old epitaph

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They were so one, it never could he said
Which of them ruled, and which of them obeyed.
There was between them but this one dispute,
'Twas which the other's will should execute.
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In the prime of life, in the midst of her healthy relish for all social and intellectual pleasures, Madame de Circourt met with a terrible accident; her dress caught fire, she was fearfully burnt, lingered long and long on a sick−bed, and only arose from it with nerves and constitution shattered for life. Such a trial was enough, both mentally and physically, to cause that form of egotism which too often takes possession of chronic invalids, and which depresses not only their spirits, but the spirits of all who come near them. Madame de Circourt was none of these folks. Her sweet smile was perhaps a shade less bright; but it was quite as ready. She could not go about to serve those who needed her; but, unable to move without much assistance, she sat at her writing−table, thinking and working for others still. She could never again seek out the shy or the slow or the awkward; but, with a pretty beckoning movement of her hand, she could draw them near her, and make them happy with her gentle sensible words. She would no more be seen in gay brilliant society; but she had a very active sympathy with the young and the joyful who mingled in it; could plan their dresses for them; would take pains to obtain a supply of pleasant partners at a ball to which a young foreigner was going; and only two or three days before her unexpected death for she had suffered patiently for so long that no one knew how near the end was she took much pains to give a great pleasure to a young girl of whom she knew very little, but who, I trust, will never forget her.

I could not help interrupting the course of my diary to pay this tribute to Madame de Circourt's memory. At the end of February, 1563, many were startled with a sudden pang of grief. "Have you heard? Madame de Circourt is dead!" "Dead! why, we were at her house not a week ago!" "And I had a note from her only two days ago, about a poor woman," And then the cry was "Oh, her poor husband! who has lived but for her, who has watched over her so constantly!

We were at her house not a fortnight before, and met the pretty gay people all dressed out for a Carnival ball at the Russian Embassy. The whole thing looked unreal. They came and showed themselves in their brilliant costumes, exchanged a witticism or a compliment, and then flitted away to exhibit themselves elsewhere, and left the room to a few quiet, middle−aged, or quieter people. A lady was introduced to me, whose name I recognised, although I could not at the moment remember where I had heard it before. She looked, as she was, a French Marquise. I forget how much her dress was in full costume, but she had much the air of a picture of the date of Louis XV.

After she was gone, I recollected where I had heard the name. She was the present lady of Les Rochers, whose ancient manor−house we had visited in Britanny the year before. Instead of a Parisian drawing−room, full of scented air, brilliant with light, through which the gay company of high−born revellers had just passed, the bluff of land overlooking the Bocage rose before me; the short sweet turf on which we lay fragrant with delicate flowers; the grey−turretted manor−house, with here and there a faint yellow splash of colour on the lichen−tinted walls; the pigeons wheeling in the air above the high dove−cot; the country−servants in their loosely−fitting, much−belaced liveries; and old De la Roux in his blouse, shambling around us, with his horn snuff−box and story of ancestral grandeur. I told M. de Circourt of our visit to Britanny, and in return he gave me the following curious anecdote: An uncle of his was the General commanding the Western district of France in or about 1816. He had a Montmorenci for his aide−de−camp; and on one of his tours of inspection the General and aide were guests at Lee Rochers. They were to have left their hospitable quarters the next day; but in the morning the General said to M. de Montmorenci that their host had pressed him to remain there another night, which he found,

on inquiry, would be perfectly convenient for his plans, and therefore he had determined to accept the invitation. M. de Montmorenci, however, to the General's surprise, begged to be allowed to go and sleep at Vitre; and, on the General's inquiring what ebuld be his reason for making such a request, he said that he had not been properly lodged; that the bedroom assigned to him was not one befitting a Moutmorenci. "How so?" said the General. "Did they put you in a garret? Bachelors have often to put up with rough quarters when a house is full of visitors." "No, sir; I was on the ground−floor. My room was spacious and good enough; but it was that which had once belonged to Madame de Sevigne."

M. de Montmorenci after he had said this, looked as though he had given a full explanation; but the General was rather more perplexed than before.

"Well! and why should you object to sleeping in the room which once belonged to Madame Sevigne? From all accounts she was a very pretty, charming woman: and certainly she wrote delightful letters."

"Pardon me, sir; but it appears to me that you forget that Madame de Sevigne was a Jansenist, and that I am a Montmorenci, of the family of the first Baron of Christendom."

The young man was afraid of the contamination of heresy that might be lingering in the air of the room. There are old rooms in certain houses shut up since the days of the Great Plague, which are not to be opened for the world. I hope that certain Fellows' rooms in Balliol may be hermetically sealed, when their present occupants leave them, lest a worse thing than the plague may infect the place.

February 21st. All this evening I have been listening to fragmentary recollections of the Reign of Terror, told us by two ladies of high distinction. One of them said that her remembrances of that time would have a peculiar value, as she was then only a child of five or six years of age; and could not have attempted at that age to join her fragments together by any theory, however wild and improbable. She could simply recall what struck on her senses as extraordinary and unprecedented. I think the first thing she named was her indignation at seeing her mother assume a servant's dress, as she then thought. Evidently it had been considered advisable that Madame de −− should set aside all outward sign of superior rank or riches, and put on the clothes of what we should now call a "working−woman."

The next thing my friend remembered was the temporary absence of her father; who must have been arrested on suspicion, and, strange to say, in those days, released, but kept under strict surveillance. During his absence from home all the servants were dismissed, excepting the child's bonne. They lived in an apartment in the Place Vendome, and there was grass in the centre of the Place; what we, in England, should call a "green," I should imagine. When her father returned home two men came with him. They were "citizens" told off to keep a watch upon M. de −−'s movements. The little girl looked upon them as rude, vulgar men (she was a true little aristocrat, in fact), and wondered and chafed at her mother's trembling civility to these two fellows. They sat in the drawing−room, lolled in the best satin−cushioned chairs, smoked their pipes; and the dainty mother never upbraided them! It was very inexplicable. Madame cooked the family dinner; and probably did not do it remarkably well, even though she was a Frenchwoman. One day, one of the two citizen−guards, finding the idleness of his life in the drawing−room wearisome, or seized with a fit of good−nature, offered to turn cook. I think it was imagined he had been a cook somewhere under the old regime. And, after he had found for himself this congenial appointment, his fellow−guard offered to knit stockings for the family, and to sit in the salle−a−manger, through which every one going in or out of the salon must pass. Either he or the cook left whatever they were about to accompany Monsieur le Suspect whenever he made any signs of wanting to go out. But altogether, and considering the office they held, they were not disobliging inmates, after the first jealousy of neglect was soothed.

Another circumstance which Madame de −− had observed was her mother's silence and depression of spirits at a particular hour. As sure as eleven o'clock drew near, the poor lady ceased talking to her little girl, and listened.

Then by−and−by came a horrid heavy rumble in the distant streets; clearer and clearer it sounded, advancing slowly, then turning, and dying away into a sudden stop. This ominous noise was the more recognisable because of the general silence of Paris streets at that time. The carriage of the Prosecutor General, Fouquier−Tinville, was the only one that rolled about pretty much as it did in former years; any other was put down for fear lest it might be considered a mark of "aristocracy." But the diurnal heavy sound, at which the poor lady grew pale and crossed herself and prayed, was the Charrette, with its daily tale of forty or fifty victims, going to the Place Louis XV. From the Place Vendome a sort of lane between two dead walls led down to the gardens of the Tuileries. These walls bounded the respective gardens of the convents of the Feuillants, and the Jacobins, which gave their names to the different political parties that met in the deserted buildings. Indeed, the iron gate leading into the Tuileries Gardens opposite to the end of the Rue Castiglione is still called the Porte des Feuillants. Along this dreary walled−in lane Madame de −− was taken by her bonne for a daily walk in the Palace Gardens. I asked her how it was that her parents, in sending their child for her exercise into these Gardens, did riot dread the chance of her being shocked by the sights and sounds in the adjoining Place Louis XV. She replied that in those days there was a row of irregular, unshapely buildings at the further end of the Gardens, completely shutting out the Place. Every one about the court who fancied that the erection of any edifice would add to his convenience ordered it to be built at the end of the Gardens, at the national expense; and thus there was a very sufficient screen between the Gardens and the Place. Besides, added her friend, Madame de St. A−−, it was terrible to think how soon people are familiarised with horror; terrible in one sense merciful in another; for elsewise how could persons have kept their senses in those days? She said that her husband, M. de St. A−−, when a boy of ten or twelve, was only saved from being shut up with his parents and all the rest of his family in the Abbaye by the faithful courage of an old servant, who carried the little fellow off to his garret in the Faubourg St. Antoine. Of course this was done at the risk of the man's life, harbouring a suspected aristocrat being almost as criminal as being an aristocrat yourself. The little lad pined in the necessary confinement of his refuge; the close air, the difference of food, the anxiety about his father and mother, all told upon his health; and the man, his protector, seeing this, began to cast about him for some amusement and relaxation for the boy. So once a week he took the boy, well disguised, out for a walk. Where to, do you think? To the Place Louis XV., to see the guillotine at work on the forty or fifty victims! The delicate little boy shrank and sickened at the sight; yet tried to conquer all signs of his terror and loathing, partly out of regard to the man who had run so much risk in saving him, partly out of an instinctive consciousness that in those times of excitement, and among that impulsive race, his very friend and protector might have a sudden irritation against him, if he saw the boy's repugnance to the fearful exhibition, and might there and then denounce him as a little enemy to the public safety.

And again, and also to mark the apathy as to life, and the wild excitement which people took in witnessing the deadly terror and sufferings of others, Madame de St. A−− went on to say that her husband's family, to the number of six, were imprisoned in the Abbaye, and made part of that strange sad company who lived there, and resigned themselves to their fate by keeping up that mockery of the society they had enjoyed in happier days: visiting each other, carrying on amusements and etiquette with dignity and composure; and, when the day's list of victims was read out by the gaoler, bidding farewell to those who still bided their time with quiet dignity and composure. One morning the gaoler's daughter, a bonny, good−tempered girl of fourteen or fifteen, who was a favourite with all that sad company, came instead of her father to read out the list of those for whom at that very minute the tumbril was waiting outside the gate. Every one of the six members of the St. A−− family were named. It was well; no one would remain in bitter solitude awaiting their day. One after another rose up, and bade the remaining company their solemn, quiet farewell, and followed the girl out of the door into the corridor, through another door, and then she stopped; she had not the key of the next. She turned round and laughed at those who were following her, with the glee of one who had performed a capital practical joke. "Have not you all been well taken in? Was it not a good trick? Look! it is only a blank sheet of paper. The list has not come yet. You may all go back again!" And their names, by some good fortune, were never placed on the lists; and the death of Robespierre set them free.

The conversation then turned upon the marvel it was now to think upon the immunity which Robespierre seemed to enjoy from all chances of assassination. There was no appearance of precaution in either his dress or his

movements. His hours of going out and coming in were punctiliously regular; his methodical habits known to any one who cared to inquire. At a certain time of day he might be seen by crowds issuing forth from his house in the Rue St. Honore, dressed with the utmost nicety, neither hurried in gait, nor casting any suspicious glances around him. His secretary, so said my friends, was alive not more than twenty years ago; living in an apartment in the Quartier Latin, which he seldom left for any purpose. He had managed to avoid all public notice at the time of his master's death; and, long after most of those were dead who might have recognised him, the old man lived on in the seclusion of his rooms; maintaining to the few who cared to visit him his belief that Robespierre was a conscientious, if a mistaken, man. Then my friend Madame de −− took up the tale of her childish remembrances, and told us that the next thing she remembered clearly was her terror when one day, being at the window, she saw a wild mob come dancing and raging, shouting, laughing, and yelling into the Place Vendome, with red nightcaps on their heads, their shirtsleeves stripped up above the elbows, their hands and arms discoloured and red. Her mother, shuddering, drew the child away before she saw more; and the two cowered together in the farther corner of the room till the infernal din died away in the distance. The following summer, or so she thought it was it was hot, bright weather at any rat some order was given, or terrific hint whispered she knew not which; but her parents and all the inhabitants of the houses in the Place had their tables spread in the open air, and took their meals al fresco, joined at pleasure by any of the Carmagnoles who chanced to be passing by, dressed much as those whom I have just mentioned as having so terrified the little girl and her mother. This enforced hospitality was considered a mark of good citizenship; and woe to those who shrank from such companionship at their board!

March 1st. To−night, at home, the conversation turned upon English and French marriages. As several Frenchmen of note who had married English wives were present (and one especially, whose mother also was English, and who can use either tongue with equal eloquence), the discussion was based on tolerably correct knowledge. Most of those present objected strongly to the English way of bringing up the daughters of wealthy houses in all the luxurious habits of their fathers' homes. Their riding−horses, their maids, their affluence of amusement; when, if the question of marriage arose say to a young man of equal birth and education, but who had his way to make in the world − the father of the young lady could rarely pay any money down. It was even doubtful if he could make her an annual allowance; hardly ever one commensurate with the style in which she had been accustomed to live. In all probability a younger child's portion would be hers when her father died; when either the two lovers had given up all thoughts of uniting their fates, or when perhaps they no longer needed it, having had force of character enough to face poverty together, and had won their way upwards to competence. The tardy five or ten thousand pounds would have been invaluable once, that comes too late to many a one; so they said. They added that the luxurious habits of English girls, and the want of due provision for them on the part of their fathers, made both children and parents anxious and worldly in the matter of wedlock. The girls knew that, as soon as their fathers died, they must quit their splendid houses, and give up many of those habits and ways which had become necessary to them; and their parents knew this likewise; and hence the unwomanly search for rich husbands on the part of the mothers and daughters, which, as they declared, existed in England.

Now, said our French friends, look at a household in our country; in every rank it is the custom to begin to put by a marriage portion for a girl as soon as she is born. A father would think he was neglecting a duty, if he failed to do this, just as much as if he starved the little creature. Our girls are brought up simply; luxury and extravagance with us belong to the married women. When his daughter is eighteen or twenty, a good father begins to look about him, and inquire the characters of the different young men of his acquaintance. He observes them, or his wife does so still more efficiently; and, when they have settled that such a youth will suit their daughter, they name the portion they can give their child to the young man's father or to some common friend. In reply, they are possibly informed that Monsieur Alphonse's education has cost so much; that he is now an avocat in a fair way to earn a considerable income, but at present unable to marry, unless the young lady can contribute her share, not merely her pin−money, but a bona−fide share, towards the joint expenses of housekeeping. Or he is a son of a man of property property somewhat involved at present; but, could it he released from embarrassment by the payment of an immediate sum of money, his father would settle a certain present income upon the young people; and so on. My friends said that there was no doubt whatever that if, after these preliminary matters of business were arranged, either the young man or the girl did not entirely like each other on more intimate acquaintance, the

proposed marriage would fall through in the majority of French families, and no undue influence would be employed to compel either party into what they disliked. But, in general, the girl has never been allowed to be on intimate terms with any one, till her parents' choice steps forward and is allowed by them to court her notice. And as for the young fellow, it has been easy for him to see enough of the young lady to know whether he can fancy her or not, before it comes to the point when it is necessary that he should take any individually active steps in the affair.

III

Paris, March 2nd, 1663.

Staying here in a French family, I get glimpses of life for which I am not prepared by any previous reading of French romances, or even by former visits to Paris, when I remained in an hotel frequented by English, and close to the street which seems to belong almost exclusively to them. The prevalent English idea of French society is that it is very brilliant, thoughtless, and dissipated; that family life and domestic affections are almost unknown, and that the sense of religion is confined to mere formalities. Now I will give you two glimpses which I have had: one into the more serious side of Protestant, the other into the under−current of Roman Catholic life. The friend with whom I am staying belongs to a Dizaine, that is to say, she is one of ten Protestant ladies, who group themselves into this number in order to meet together at regular intervals of time, and bring before each other's consideration any eases of distress they may have met with. There are numbers of these Dizaines in Paris; and now as to what I saw of the working of this plan. One of their principles is to give as little money as possible in the shape of "raw material," but to husband their resources, so as to provide employment by small outlays of capital in such cases as they find on inquiry to prove deserving. Thus women of very moderate incomes find it perfectly agreeable to belong to the same Dizaine as the richest lady in the Faubourg St. Germain. But what all are expected to render is personal service of some kind; and in these services people of various degrees of health and strength can join: the invalid who cannot walk far, or even she who is principally confined to the sofa, can think and plan and write letters; the strong can walk, and use bodily exertion. They try to raise the condition of one or two families at a time to raise their condition into self−supporting independence.

For instance, the Dizaine I am acquainted with had brought. before their notice the case of a sick shoemaker, and found him, upon inquiry, living in a room on the fifth floor of one of those high, dark, unclean houses which lie behind the eastern end of the Rue Jacob. Up the noisome, filthy staircase, badly−lighted and frequented by most disreputable people to the close, squalid room in which the man lay bed−ridden, did the visitors from the Dizaine toil. He was irritable and savage. I think the English poor are generally depressed and sullen under starvation and neglect; but the French are too apt to become fierce even to those who would fain help them; or it might be illness in the case of this man. His wife was a poor patient creature, whose spirit and intelligence seemed pressed out of her by extreme sorrow, and who had neither strength of mind nor body to enable her to make more of an effort than to let one of the Dizaine know of the case. There were children, too, scrofulous from bad air and poor living. The medical men say, that the diseases arising from this insidious taint are much more common in Paris than in London.

Well, this case was grave matter of consideration for the Dizaine; and the end of the deliberation was this: One lady undertook to go and seek out a lodging in the same quarter as that in which the shoemaker lived at present, but with more air, more light, and a cleaner, sweeter approach. It was a bad neighbourhood, but it was that in which the family had taken root; and it would have occasioned too great a wrench from all their previous habits and few precious affections, to pull them up by force, and transplant them to an entirely different soil. Another lady undertook to seek out among her acquaintance for a subscriber to a certain sea−bathing charity at Dieppe, who could give an order to the poor little boy who was the worst victim to scrofula. An invalid said that, while awaiting this order, she would see that some old clothes of her own prosperous child should he altered and arranged, so that the little cripple should go to Dieppe decently provided. Some one knew a leather merchant, and

spoke of getting a small stock of leather at wholesale prices; while all these ladies declared they would give some employment to the shoemaker himself; and I know that they great ladles as one or two of them were − toiled up the noisome staircase, and put their delicate little feet up on to the bed where he lay, in order to give him the cheerful comfort of employment again. I suppose this was disturbing the regular course of labour; but I do not fancy that cases of this kind are so common as to affect greatly the more prosperous tradespeople. The last I heard of this shoemaker was, that he was in a (comparatively) healthy lodging; his wife more cheerful, he himself slightly sarcastic instead of positively fierce, and, though still bed−ridden, managing to earn a tolerable livelihood by making shoes to be sold ready−made in the American market; a piece of permanent employment procured for him through the instrumentality of the Dizaine.

Of course these ladies, being human, have their foibles and faults. Their meetings are apt to become gossipy, and they require the firm handling of some superior woman to keep them to the subject and business in hand. Occasional bickerings as to the best way of managing a case, or as to the case most deserving of immediate assistance, will occur; and may be blamed or ridiculed by those who choose rather to see blemishes in execution than to feel righteousness of design. The worst that can be said is, that Dizaines (like all ladies' committees I ever knew) are the better for having one or two men amongst them. And some of them at least are most happy and fortunate in being able to refer for counsel and advice to M. Jules Simon, whose deep study of the condition of the workwoman (l'ouvriere) in France, and the best remedies to he applied to her besetting evils whose general, wise, and loving knowledge of the life of the labouring classes empower him to judge wisely on the various cases submitted to him.

Now as to my glimpse into Roman Catholic wisdom and goodness in Paris. Not long ago it is probably still going on there was a regular service held in the crypt under St. Sulpice for very poor workmen, immediately after the grand (high) mass. It was almost what we should call a "ragged church." They listened to no regular sermon on abstract virtues; but among them stood the priest, with his crucifix, speaking to them in their own homely daily language speaking of brotherly love, of self−sacrifice, like that of which he held the symbol in his hands of the temptations to which they were exposed in their various trades and daily lives, using even the technical words, so that every man felt as if his own individual soul was being entreated. And by−and−by there was a quete for those still poorer, still more helpless and desolate than themselves; many of them of course could not give even the sons, or the five−centime piece. But after that the priest went round, speaking low and softly to each individual, and asking each what effort, what sacrifice he could make "in the name of the Lord." One said, he could sit up with a sick neighbour who needed watching in the night; another offered a day's wages for the keep of the family of the incapacitated man; the priest suggested to a third that he and his wife might take one of the noisy little children to play among their own children for the day; another offered to carry out the weekly burden of a poor widow. One could not hear all; it was better that such words should be spoken low; that the left hand should not know what the right hand did. But the priests seemed always ready with little suggestions which nothing but an intimate acquaintance with the lives of these poor men could have enabled them to give.

We are talking of leaving Paris, and going leisurely on to Rome. M. de Montalembert was here last night, and wrote me down a little detour which he said we could easily make, rejoining the railroad at Dijon.

March 5th. Avignon. After all we were not able to follow out M. de Montalembert's instructions, but I shall keep his paper (written in English), as 'the places he desired us to visit sound full of interest, and would make a very pleasant week's excursion from Paris at some future time.

"Provide yourself with Ed. Joanne's Guide du Voyageur. Est−et−Mur.

"By the Lyons railway to Auxerre (a beautiful city with splendid churches).

"At Auxerre take the diligence (very bad) to Avallon, a very pretty place with fine churches. At Avallon hire a vehicle of some sort to Vezelay, only three leagues off; the most splendid Romanesque church in Europe; and to

Chastellux, a fine old castle belonging to the family of that name, from the Crusade of 1147. Returning to Avallon, there is a very bad coach to Semur, another very pretty place, with a delightful church; seven or eight leagues off. From Semur by omnibus to Montbard, or Les Launes, which are both railroad stations. Stop at Dijon, a most interesting city, and be sure you see the museum.

When M. de Montalembert wrote out his little plan, I said something about the name "Avallon," "the Isle of Avallon" being in France, instead of Bretagne; but he reminded me of the fact that the fragments of the Arthurian romances were to be found in one shape or another all over the west of Europe, and claimed Avallon as the place

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Where fails not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly but it lies
Deep−meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.
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He said that there is also a Morvan, a Foret de Morvan, in the same district. Speaking of the Crusades (apropos of the family of de Chastellux, alluded to in the sketch of a possible journey which he had drawn out for us), the company present fell to talking about the rapid disappearance of old French families within the last twenty or thirty years; during which time the value for "long pedigrees" has greatly increased after the fifty years of comparative indifference in which they were held. The five Salles des Croisades, at Versailles were appropriated to the commemoration of the events from which they take their names, by Louis−Philippe, in 1837; previously to which the right of the hundred and ninety−three families that claim to be directly descended from the Crusaders who went on the three first Crusades (from 1106 to 1191 A.D.) was thoroughly examined into, and scrutinized by heralds and savants and lawyers acquainted with the difficulty of establishing descent, before the proud hundred and ninety−three could have their arms emblazoned in the first Salles des Croisades. Among them rank de Chastellux, de Biron, de Lamballe, de Guerin (any ancestor of Eugenie de Guerin, I wonder?) de la Gueche de Rohan, de La Rochefoucauld, de Montalembert, And now in 1864 not two−thirds of these families exist in the direct male line! Yet such has become the value affixed to these old historical titles and names, that they are claimed by collateral relations, by descendants in the female line nay, even by the purchasers of the lands from which the old Crusaders derived the appellations; and it has even become necessary to have an authorised court to judge of the rights of those who assume new titles and designations. The Montmorencis, indeed, to this day hold a kind of "parliament" of their own, and pluck off the plumage of any jay who dares to assume their name and armorial bearings. There is apparently no power of becoming a "Norfolk Howard" at will in France. They spoke as if our English nobility was a very modern race in comparison with the French; but assigned the palm of antiquity to the great old Belgian families, even in preference to the Austrians, so vain of their many quarterings.

We could not manage to go by Avallon and Dijon, and so we came straight on here, and are spending a few days in this charming inn; the mistral howling and whistling without, till we get the idea that the great leafless acacia close to the windows of our salon has been convulsed into its present twisted form by the agony it must have suffered in its youth from the cruel sharpness of this wind. But, inside, we are in a lofty salon, looking into the picturesque inn yard, sheltered by a folding screen from the knife−like draught of the door; a fire heaped up with blazing logs, resting on brass and irons; skins of wild beasts making the floor soft and warm for our feet; old military plans, and bird's−eye views of Avignon, as it was two hundred years ago, hanging upon the walls, which are covered with an Indian paper; Eugenie de Guerin to read; and we do not care for the mistral, and are well content to be in our present quarters for a few days.

March 8th. It was all very well to huddle ourselves up in in−doors comfort for a day or two; but, after that, we longed to go out in spite of the terrible mistral. We certainly found Avignon "cum vento fastidioso;" and began to wish that we had delayed our progress by stopping at Avallon, if that indeed was the place "where never wind blows loudly." So on the day but one after our arrival here, we happed and wrapped ourselves up tightly and well, and sailed out of the court−yard. We were taken and seized in a moment by the tyrant; all we could do was to shut our eyes, and keep our ground, and wonder where our petticoats were. Going across the bridge was impossible;

even the passers−by warned us against the attempt; but, after we had caught our breath again, we turned and went slowly up the narrow streets, choosing those that offered us the most shelter, until we had reached the wide space in front of the Palace of the Popes. With slow perseverance we made our way from point to point, and at length came to a corner in the massive walls where we could rest and look about us. Up above our heads rose the enormous walls the far−extending shadow of Rome; for never did the French build such a mighty structure; it seemed like a growth of the solid rock itself. The prettiness of the garden round the base of the Palace looked to us mean and out of place, with its tidy flower−beds and low shrubs. All entrance to the Palace was forbidden; it is now a prison.

We went into the cathedral, and the calm atmosphere was so soothing and delightful, that we were inclined to stop there till the mistral had ceased blowing; but, as that might not be for a month or six weeks, on second thoughts we believed it would be better to return to our hotel. We stood for a few minutes on the cathedral−steps, looking at the magnificent view before us, and only regretting the clouds of fine dust, which from time to time were whirled over the landscape. Close to us rose the colossal walls of the Palace; before us, in the centre of the open space, there was a bronze statue of a man dressed in Eastern robes; and we asked whom it represented what saint? what martyr? It was that of the Persian Jean Althen, the Persian who first introduced the culture of madder into the South of France. His father had held high office under Thomas Koulikhan, but was involved in the fall of his master, and his son fled for protection to the French Consul of Smyrna. It was forbidden under penalty of death to carry the seed of the madder−plant out of the district; but Althen managed to bring some of it to Marseilles, and thus originated the cultivation of madder in le Comtat; the profits of which to the inhabitants may he imagined from the fact that the revenue from this source in one department alone (Vaucluse) amounts annually to more than fifteen millions of francs. Althen and his daughter died in poverty; but of late years the statue which we saw in the Place Rocher des Doms, has been erected to the Persian unbeliever, right opposite to the cathedral and the Palace of the Popes where once John XXII. (that most infamous believer) lived. I had often seen madder in England, in the shape of a dirty brown powder the roots ground down; it has a sweetish taste, and the workmen in calico print−works will not unfrequently take a little in their hands as they pass the large bales, and put it into their mouths. I had heard a young English philanthropist say that he had often entertained thoughts of buying a tract of land in Eastern Italy, and introducing the cultivation of madder there, as a means of raising the condition of the people; but I had never heard of Jean Althen before, and, tempestuous as it was, I made my way up to the statue, so that I could look up at the calm, sad face of the poor Persian. I suppose the newly discovered Aniline dyes may uproot the commerce he established, at some future period; but he did a good work in his day, of which no man knew the value while he lived. Our kind landlady at the Hotel de l'Europe was at the hall−door to greet us on our return, and warned us with some anxiety against going out in the mistral; we were not acclimatised, she said; the English families resident in Avignon did not suffer, because they had been there so long. Of course we asked questions as to these English families, and heard that some had resided in the city for two or three generations; all engaged in the commerce de la garance; so they too had cause to Hess the memory of Jean Althen.

March 12th. I suppose our landlady thought she would keep us prudent and patient indoors, until we receive the telegram from Marseilles announcing that it is safe for the boats to Civita Vecchia to start hitherto they have been delayed by this horrid mistral for she has brought us in a good number of books, most of them topographical, but one or two relating to the legends or history of the district. We are very content to be in the house to−day; the wind is blowing worse than ever; Irene has a bad pain in her side, which we suppose must be a local complaint; for, after trying to cure it by mustard plaisters, she sent our maid out at last to get a blister of a particular size, but without naming what part required the application; and the druggist immediately said, "Ah, for the side! it will last while the mistral lasts; or till she leaves Avignon!" We are learning how to manage wood−fires; the man who waits upon us, and is chambermaid as well as footman, gave us a little lesson yesterday. Always rake the living ashes to the front, and lay on the fresh wood behind; those are his directions, and hitherto they have answered well. This old man is a Pole, and came, an exile, to be a servant in the hotel about thirty years ago. He likes talking to us; but his language is very difficult to understand, though we can quite make out the soft, satiny patois of the South of France, the Provencal dialect, in which our' questions are answered in the streets.

To−night he has brought in our lamp and cleared away our the simple. Mary is sitting by the fire, tempted sorely by the wood logs; for every stroke of the sharp, thin poker brings out springing fountains of lovely sparkles. I, having a frugal mind, exclaim at her; for we pay heavily for our basketful of wood; but she, in a pleading, coaxing way, calls my attention to the brilliant effect of her work, and I cannot help watching the bright little lives which one by one vanish, till at length. a poor solitary spark runs about vainly to find its companions, and then dies out itself. It reminds me of a story I heard long ago in Ramsay, in the Isle of Man; and here I think of it at Avignon! We were questioning a fisherman's wife at Ramsay about the Manthe Doog of Peel Castle, in which she had a firm belief; and from this talk we passed on to fairies. "Are there any in the island now?" I asked, gravely, of course, for it was a grave and serious subject with her. "None now; none now," she replied. "My brother saw the last that ever was in the island. He was making a short cut in the hills above Kirk Maughold, and came down on a green hollow, such as there are on the hill−tops, just green all round, and the blue sky above, and as still as still can be, but for the larks. He heard the larks singing up above; but this time he heard a little piping cry out of the ground; so he looked about him everywhere, and followed the sound of the cry; and at length he came to a dip in the grass, and there lay a fairy ever so weak and small, crying sadly. 'Oh!' she said, when she saw him, 'you are none of my own people; I thought perhaps they had come hack for me: but they've left me here alone, and all gone away, and I am faint and weak, and could not go with them;' and she began to cry again. So he meant it well, and he thought he'd carry her home to be a plaything to his children; it would have been better than lying there playing alone in the damp grass: so he tried to catch her; but somehow he had big hands, had my brother, and an awkward horny way of holding things; and fairies is as tickle to handle as butterflies; and when he had caught her, and she lay very still, he thought he might open his hand after a time, and tell her he was doing it all for her good; but she was just crushed to death, poor thing! So, as he said, there was no use bringing her home in that state; and he threw her away; and that was the end of the last fairy I ever heard of in the island." The last sparks in the wooden logs at Avignon were my last fairies.

Among our hostess's books was the authorised report of the trial for the murder of Madame la Marquise de Gange. It is so interesting, and has so strong a local flavour, that we are determined, blow high, blow low, to go over to Ville−Neuve to−morrow, and see her portrait by Mignard in the Eglise de l'Hopital at Ville−Neuve. She lived in the seventeenth century, and was the daughter of a certain Sieur de Rossau, a gentleman of Avignon, who had married an heiress, the daughter of Joanis Sieur de Nocheres. Her father died when she was very young; and she and her mother went to live with the Sieur de Nocheres, probably in one of the large gloomy houses in the narrow old streets we have passed through to−day, with no windows on the lower floor, only strongly−barred gratings; they are almost like fortified dwellings which, indeed, the state of affairs at the time they were built required them to be. The little girl promised to be a great beauty, and bad besides a dowry of 500,000 livres; and it was no great wonder that all the well−born young men of Provence (and some who were not young, too), came a−wooing to the grand−daughter of the rich old burgess of Avignon. But where force was so often employed as a method of courtship, and at a time when obstacles to success (in the way of fathers or mothers or obstinate relations) were so easily got rid of by determined suitors, it was thought better to arrange an early marriage for the little girl, who was called Mademoiselle de Chateaublanc, after one of the estates of her grandfather; and, accordingly, she was espoused in 1649, at the age of thirteen, by the Marquis de Castellane, grandson of the Duc de Villars. Her husband is described as being as charming as his bride. He was handsome and sweet−tempered, besides being a scion of a great French house. He took his lovely little bride to Paris, where she was the admired of all beholders at the court of the young King Louis XIV His boyish majesty was struck with her rare beauty, and conferred on her the honour of dancing with her in a court ballet; and the docile courtiers followed his lead, and christened her "La belle Provencale," by which name she was thereafter better known than by her legitimate title of Marquise de Castellane.

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When first she Came to town
They ca'ed her Jess MacFarlane,
But, now she's come and gone,
They ca' her The Wandering Darling.
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Poor young Belle Provencale! admired by the King of France and all his men; living a bright, happy life of innocent pleasure in Paris; with a charming husband, by whom she was passionately beloved, and whose affection she fondly esteemed; rich, lovely, and of high rank how little she could have anticipated her rapid descent from the pinnacle of good fortune! Her first deep grief was the loss of her husband. He was drowned off the coast of Sicily; and she came back from the gay life of Paris to mourn him deeply in the austere home of her grandfather, in the city of Avignon. The only change she sought for in these years of mourning was to go into retreat in the convent at Ville−Neuve the village we saw on the opposite side of the Rhone, the other day, when we stood on the cathedral steps. The account of her sorrow and regret at the death of her young husband is evidently so truthful and sincere that one almost wonders at her marrying again; but I suppose in those days a bourgeois grandfather and a widowed mother were considered but poor protectors for a beautiful young woman of great wealth.

At any rate, I read of her having, at length, selected from among many suitors the Sieur de Lanide, Marquis de Gange, Baron du Languedoc, Gouverneur de St. Andre, to be her second husband. She was married to him in 1658, when he was twenty, and she twenty−two years of age. He was as beautiful as she was, but of a violent and ferocious character. For the first few months after their marriage he appeared to he devoted to her; but, by−and−by, he grew both weary of her society and suspiciously jealous of all her former friends. It was rather a lonely life now for the poor lady, shut up in her husband's Chateau de Gange, while he went about enjoying himself in provincial society, and occasionally visiting Paris, where once she had been so sought after and cherished. Still there is no account of her ever having repined at this seclusion; of course, the official reports of events begin at a much later period. Things went on in this way between the husband and wife for some time without any change. Then two of his brothers, the Abbe and the Chevalier de Gange, came to live at the Chateau do Gauge; and a short time afterwards her old grandfather the Sieur do Nocheres died, leaving Madame de Gange his heiress. The Marquis, her husband, was much occupied in looking after the various estates to which his wife had succeeded under her grandfather's will. Gauge is seven leagues from Montpellier, and nineteen from Avignon, in a lonely, wild district; the chateau was the principal house in a small village, the inhabitants of which were dependants of the Marquis. But, for some little time after the Sieur de Nocheres' death, it was necessary for his heiress to be in Avignon; and, whether it was, as the rumour went at the time, that she had reason to suspect that a cream which, one day at her mother's table, her husband pressed her much to eat was poisoned with arsenic, or whether she remembered the horoscope drawn for her in Paris which predicted that she should die a violent death, or whether, as is most likely, her seven or eight years' knowledge of her husband's character made her fearful and suspicious, it is certain that before leaving Avignon at this time, she made a singular will, which was attested with all possible legal forms, to this effect. Her mother was to be her sole heir, with power to leave all the property after her death to either of the children which Madame de Gauge had had by her second husband; the boy was six, the girl five years old at this time, and they were living with their grandmother at Avignon. Although this will was executed in secret, she made a solemn declaration before the magistrates of Avignon to the effect that, though she might be compelled to make a subsequent will, this and this alone was valid.

Poor lady! she had but too much reason to dread the time when she would be obliged to return to the lonely chateau, far away from her friends, in the power of a cruel and negligent husband, who hungered after the uncontrolled and unincumbered possession of her fortune, and who might leave her again, as he had done before, exposed to the profligate and insolent solicitations of the Abbe, the cleverest of the three brothers, who had already traded on her misery at her husband's neglect and ill−concealed dislike of her, by saying that, if his sister−in−law would accede to his wishes, he would bring her back her husband's affection. The Chevalier seems to have been a brutal fool, under the influence of his clever brother, the Abbe. In the interval between her grandfather's death and her return to the Chateau de Gange, these three brothers veiled their designs under an appearance of the greatest complaisance to Madame de Gauge. But all their seeming attention and consideration, all her husband's words and acts of lover−like devotion, ended in this question How soon would she go back to the Chateau de Gange? Avignon was unhealthy in hot weather, while the autumn, the vintage−season, was exquisite at the chateau. At length, wearied out with their urgency, and dreading the consequences of too persistent a refusal, she left Avignon for La Gange. But, first, she gave the sum of twenty pistoles to different convents, to say masses for her soul, in case of her dying suddenly without extreme unction. It gives one an awful

idea of the state of society in those days (reign of Charles II. in England), to think of this help less young woman, possessed by a too well−founded dread, yet not knowing of any power to which she could appeal for protection, and obliged to leave the poor safety of a city to go to a lonely house, where those who wished her evil would be able to work their will.

At the Chateau de Gange she found the two brothers−in−law, who had returned from Avignon a few days previously, and her mother−in−law, a good, kind woman, to whose presence one fancies the young Marquise must have clung. But the Dowager Marquise habitually lived at Montpellier, and she returned there soon after the Marquise's arrival. While the old lady had remained in the chateau, all had gone on well; but on her departure the Marquis set off back to Avignon, leaving instructions to his brothers to coax his wife into making another will. They performed their work skilfully; they told her there could be no perfect reconciliation with her husband, until she had shown full confidence in him by bequeathing him all her property in case of her death. For the sake of peace, and remembering her secret testament at Avignon, she agreed to their wishes; and a will, leaving all her property unconditionally to her husband, was made at the Chateau de Gange. It was short−sighted of the poor lady, if she valued her life. They at any rate did not value it; and now, the sooner they got rid of her the better. So much is stated in the report of the trial on authority, which seems to have satisfied the judges at the time. For the further events, there is the direct testimony of the Marquise on her death−bed and of other witnesses; and there are curious glimpses of the manners of the period, as well as of the state of society.

The dramatis personae were disposed of as follows, on the 17th of May, 1667: The mother of these three wicked sons the Marquis, the Abbe, and the Chevalier de Gauge was at her house in Montpellier; the Marquis himself was tarrying in the neighbourhood of Avignon, ostensibly employed in looking after the estates of his wife; she was at the chateau in the lonely village, keeping up the farce of friendly politeness with her brothers−in−law, whom she dreaded inexpressibly. There was a chaplain in the house, who was their tool, as she well knew; and a few neighbours from the village came to see her from time to time, the wives of the Intendant and of the Huguenot minister; worthy and kindhearted women, as will be proved, though not of the class of society to which she had been accustomed in the happy days in Paris. On the 17th of May, she required some medicine, and sent for a draught to the village doctor. When it came, it was so black and nasty that she took some physic which she had ready in her chamber instead, and threw the draught away. A pig which licked up the draught died that same day. She was not well, and stopped in bed for the whole morning; but in the afternoon, finding it rather dull, she sent for two or three of the good women of the neighbourhood to come and keep her company, and ordered a collation to be served to her friends in her bedroom. Her indisposition, whatever it was, does not seem to have affected her appetite; for she deposed that she ate a great deal, and to that fact she attributes her safety from one way of attacking her life.

The Abbe and the Chevalier, hearing of their sister−in−law's party, and the entertainment that was going on, came into the chamber uninvited, and made themselves very agreeable. By−and−by, the neighbours went away; it was still early in the afternoon; and the Abbe and Chevalier accompanied the good ladies to the great hall, and Madame was left alone in bed. Presently back came the Abbe, with a terrible face; he brought a pistol, a sword, and a cup of poison a greater choice of deaths than that offered to Fair Rosamond; but, all the same, the Marquise must die by either fire, steel, or poison. With quick presence of mind she chose to drink the latter; and after doing so, she turned round as in writhing agony, and spat out the contents of her mouth into the pillow. Her skin was blackened by the burning drops that fell upon it, and her mouth was horribly burnt; and no wonder, for the deposition says that the drink was made of arsenic and corrosive sublimate, mixed up in aqua−fortis. There was evidently no idea of doing things by halves in those days! She left the thick part of the liquid in the bottom of the glass; but the Chevalier, who by this time had come up to see if he could render himself useful in the business, stirred up the sediment and made her drink it. Then she begged hard to have a priest to shrive her soul; and, as they felt pretty secure that no help could now avail her, they went away, and sent the household chaplain, le Pretre Perrette, who was also cure of the village, to give her what spiritual aid he could. He had lived in the de Gauge family for five−and−twenty years, and was ready to connive at any wickedness which they might plan.

Now, while they went to find this worthy chaplain, the poor lady was left alone in her bed−chamber, and looked about for means of escape. There was none, except jumping from the window into the great enclosed court−yard, twenty feet below, and all paved with flags; but that risk was better than remaining where she was; so she took courage, and was on the point of throwing herself out, when Perrette, the chaplain, came in with the viaticum. He ran to the window, and tried to pluck her back; but the petticoat which he caught hold of gave way, and only a fragment of it remained in his hand. She was down below, pushing her long black hair down her throat, and thus, with wonderful presence of mind, trying to make herself sick; in which attempt she succeeded. Then she went round the court−yard, trying all the doors with trembling haste but they were all locked; and that wicked chaplain in the chateau above was hastening to find the relentless brothers−in−law and to tell them Of her escape. She ran round and round the enclosure, beating and striving at the doors; and at length a groom came out of the stables which were at one end of the yard, whom she implored to let her out by the stable−door into the street or road; saying she had swallowed some poison by mistake, and must find an antidote without loss of time.

When she was once out of the accursed premises, she went to the house of the Sieur des Prats, who lived in the village. He was absent; but many of the good women of the place were assembled there on a visit to his wife. We may judge of the rank of the company by the fact that, in the depositions, all the married women are called "Mademoiselle," e.g., "Mademoiselle Brunel, wife of the Huguenot minister," and in the Traite sur la maniere d'Ecrire des Lettres, par Grimarest, 1667, the rules for the addresses to letters are these: If a letter is to a lady of quality, she is to be called "Madame" in the address, and the letter is to be tied up with silk, and sealed with three seals; if the correspondent is only la femme d'un gentilhome, her titles on the superscription must be "Mademoiselle Mademoiselle," so and so; but if she is merely the wife of a bourgeois, simple "Mademoiselle" is all that is to be accorded to her.

Now all the ladies assembled at the Sieur des Prats were Mademoiselles; but they were brave women, as we shall see. In amongst this peaceful company, enjoying an afternoon's gossip, burst the lady of the Chateau de Gange; her dress (that which she had worn in bed) torn and disordered; her hair hanging about her; her face in all probability livid with mortal terror and the effects of the fierce poison. She had hardly had time to give any explanation of her appearance, when the Chevalier de Gange rushed into the room in search of his half−killed victim; the Abbe remained below, guarding the door of the house. The Chevalier walked up and down the room, saying that Madame was mad; that she must return with him, and uttering angry menaces. While his back was turned, Mademoiselle Brunel, wife of the Huguenot minister of the village, gave Madame de Gange small pieces of orvietan out of a box which she carried in her pocket. Orvietan, be it remembered, was considered a sovereign remedy against all kinds of poisons; and the fact of the minister's wife carrying this antidote about in her pocket, wherever she went, tells a good deal as to the insecurity of life at that period. Madame de Gange managed to swallow a number of pieces of orvietan, unperceived by the Chevalier; but when one of the ladies, pitying her burning thirst, went and brought her a glass of water, he perceived the kindness, and broke out afresh, dashing the glass from Madame's mouth, and bidding all present to leave the room instantly, as he did not like witnesses to his sister−in−law's madness. He drove them out, indeed, but they only went as far as the next room, where they huddled together in affright, wondering what they could do for the poor lady. She, meanwhile, begged for mercy in the most touching manner; she promised that she would forgive all, if he would but spare her life: but at these words he ran at her with his sword; holding it short, so that it could serve him as a dagger and give the surer stabs. She ran to the door, and clung to it, crying out afresh for pity, for mercy, for help. He stabbed her five times before his weapon broke in her shoulder.

Then the ladies burst in to the assistance of Madame, who was lying on the floor bathed in blood. Some ran to her help; others called through the window to the passers−by to fetch the surgeon quickly. Hearing their cry through the window, the Abbe came up; and, finding his sister−in−law not yet dead, he began to hit her with the butt−end of his pistol, till brave Mademoiselle Brunel caught hold of his arm, and hung all her weight upon it. He struck her over and over again, to make her let go; but she would not; and all the women flew upon him "like lionesses," and dragged him by main force out of the house, and turned him into the village−street. One of the ladies, who was skilled in surgery, returned to the room where Madame de Gange lay; and at her desire she put her knee

against the wounded shoulder of Madame, and pulled out the broken point of the sword by main force. Then she staunched the blood, and bound up the wounds. The Chevalier had been in too blind a passion, apparently, to think of stabbing any vital part; and, in spite of poison, and the heavy fall on the paved court−yard, and the five stabs, there seemed yet a chance for Madame de Gange's life. That long and terrible May afternoon was now drawing to a close; and the Abbe and the Chevalier thought it well to take advantage of the coming darkness to ride off to Auberas, an estate of their brother's, about a league from La Gange. There they quarrelled with each other, because their work was left incomplete, and were on the point of fighting, when it seems as if they thought it better to take again to flight. After the steed was stolen, every one bethought him of locking the stable door. The "consuls", as the magistrates of the district were called, came to offer their services to Madame de Gange, who was lying between life and death. The neighbouring barons paid her visits of condolence; one of them was practical enough to think of securing the assassins; but two or three days had then elapsed, and the Abbe and Chevalier had embarked at Ogde, a small port on the Mediterranean.

Her husband, the Marquis, took the affair very coolly. He heard of it at Avignon one morning; but he did not mention it to any friends whom he met in the street, nor did he set off to see his wife till the afternoon of the following day. But he had the will, which his wife had been compelled to make at La Gange, safe with him at Avignon; and before he left the city, he went to see the Vice−Legate, with a view to this document, by which his wife bequeathed him all in case of her death. The Vice−Legate refused to recognise it, and then first informed him of the will by which Madame de Gange had left her property to her mother, and which rendered null any testament made after that date. The Marquis was not induced by this information to be more tender towards his poor wounded wife. He found her lying at the house of the Sieur des Prats, in the most dangerous state. At first she reproached him a little for leaving her at the mercy of his brothers; but almost directly she begged his pardon for what she had said, and was most tender and sweet in her conversation with him. He thought he could take advantage of her gentle frame of mind, and urged her to revoke her declaration about the perpetual legality of the Avignon will; but his pertinacity on this point at such a time opened her eyes, and henceforward she had no hope of touching his stony heart. Her mother, Madame de Ropace, came to see her; but she was so disgusted at seeing the Marquis's pretended affection and assumption of watchful care over his wife, that she left at the close of three days. It was evident now to all that the end was drawing near; the wounds did not touch life, but enough of the poison had been swallowed to destroy any constitution. Madame de Gauge begged to have the extreme unction administered; but the monks in attendance said that, before that could be done, she must forgive all her enemies. She was too gentle to harbour revenge; but when Perrette, the chaplain, and the accomplice of her assassins, came in his sacred vestments to administer the last sacrament, it did cost her a severe struggle to receive the wafer from his hands. But she forgave him, too, as completely as the rest; and, fearing that her little son might at some future time think it his duty to avenge her death, she sent for him, and tried to make him understand the Christian duty of forgiveness. Meanwhile, the report of her assassination had spread far and wide, and the Parliament of Toulouse despatched Monsieur de Catelan to La Gange to take her evidence as that of a dying woman. When he first came, she was in a state of stupor; but the next day she rallied and saw him alone. A fresh terror had seized upon her, and she believed herself not safe at La Gauge, and entreated him to take her to Montpellier; but it was too late then, and in the afternoon she died, nineteen days after the attack upon her life.

Monsieur de Gange now became alarmed, and pretended to be in the deepest distress, and that his grief could only be alleviated by the discovery and punishment of the murderers of his dear wife. But the unmoved M. de Catelan arrested him, and took the charge of prosecution and punishment for the crime upon himself, in the name of the Parliament of Toulouse. The effects of the Marquis were sealed up, and he was to be conveyed to the prison at Montpellier: but he could not arrive there before night for some reason; and the inhabitants of the town illuminated it in order that the populace might see the face of the accused criminal, as he came slowly up the street. The ladies of Avignon, and those of Montpellier, put on mourning for the murdered Madame de Gange, as if she had been a near relation. Her mother, of whom we hear very little until now, led the chorus of feminine indignation. She vowed vengeance against the Marquis, and swore that she would pursue him through every court of justice in the kingdom, till her daughter was avenged. She published a pamphlet on the case, to which M. de Gange replied, saying that her statements were all based on presumption. But the stern hand of the law was upon

him, and from it he could not so easily escape. M. de Catelan twice interrogated the Marquis, the last time for eleven hours; the basis on which he founded his questions being not "presumptions," but the evidence which the lawyer had obtained from the dying Madame de Gange in that interview which they two had had alone. On the 21st of August, 1667, judgment was given through the mouth of the President of the Parliament of Toulouse. It was always supposed by the public that the powerful relations of the Marquis had used unfair means to mitigate the severity of the sentence. But it was severe enough, if only it had been carried into execution. The Abbe and the Chevalier de Gauge were to be broken alive upon the wheel. The Marquis was to be banished for life, to be degraded from his rank, and to have all his lands, goods, and property confiscated to the use of the king. The chaplain, Perrette, was to be deprived of ecclesiastical orders, and to become a galley−slave for life.

The ladies of Avignon and Montpellier were indignant that the Marquis de Gange was not to be broken on the wheel as well as his brothers. But where were these three guilty men? The Abbe and the Chevalier had escaped by sea, months ago; and now the Marquis had made his way out of the prison of Toulouse; prison doors, in those days, had a fatal facility in opening before rank or wealth. The Marquis and the Chevalier met in Venice escaped felons as they were. But they took service for the Republic; and, being good Christians, they went to fight the heathen Turks in Candia, where they met an honourable death in 1669. The Abbe, superior in intellect to the others, lived a longer and more eventful life. He fled into Holland, and after some wanderings about he met with an old acquaintance, who was unscrupulous, or perhaps was ignorant of his crime, and who introduced him to the Count de la Lippe, sovereign prince of Viane, about two leagues from Utrecht. To him the Abbe de Gauge was presented as the Sieur de la Martelliere, a Frenchman of extraordinary learning and merit, of the Huguenot or Protestant religion, who was consequently under social disadvantages in his own country. The Count was pleased with the appearance and manners of the so−called Sieur de la Martelliere, and appointed him governor, or tutor, to his son, a little boy of nine or ten years old.

But by−and−by the persecution of the French Huguenots began, and hundreds of them were leaving France, some one of whom might recognise the former Abbe de Gange, in the Protestant Sieur de la Martelliere; so he opposed the settlement of French refugees in the neighbourhood of Viane on purely political reasons. He had been governor to the son of the Count de la Lippe for several years, when he fell desperately in love with a beautiful young girl, a distant relation of the Countess's, who lived with her. His poverty and his dependent position were no obstacles to his marriage with the lovely portionless maiden; but the obscurity of his supposed birth made a marriage between them impossible. He presumed on his services to the Count, and on the years of moral conduct which he had passed under the Count's own eyes. He wrote an eloquent letter, in which he confessed himself to be that Abbe de Gange for whom the kingdom of France had been ransacked in vain; pleading false witness, perjury, passion, whatever you will, in extenuation of the crime of which he was accused; but proving his sixteen quarterings through it all. He spoke of his many years' life of pure morality, such as the Count de la Lippe himself could bear witness to; of his conversion to the faith which the sovereign Prince of Viane held himself, and of his zeal in its interests: had he not advised the Huguenot refugees not to tarry where the long arm of France might reach them, but to fly further east?

His eloquence was all in vain. The Count de la Lippe seems to have been shocked beyond measure at finding out that in the tutor of his little boy his growing lad he had been harbouring the profligate, terrible, and infamous Abbe de Gange, with whose crimes all civilised Europe had been made acquainted. The Sieur de la Martelliere was ordered to leave the dominions of the Count de la Lippe without delay. He went to Amsterdam, and thither also, without delay, the young girl the poor, pretty relation of Madame la Comtesse followed him, and became his wife. His pupil, the young Count, now growing up to manhood, although told by his father what an infamous criminal he had had for tutor, persevered in sending help to the Sieur de la Martelliere and his wife at Amsterdam; until some unexpected fortune from one of Madame's relations put them at ease, as far as regarded money. M. de la Martelliere bore so high a character that he was admitted into the Consistory of Protestants at Amsterdam. But, wherever he went at church or) at synod, in market or alone with his wife in their most humble secret privacy, he was haunted by the face of Madame de Gange. That was said at the time; that is believed still.

The poor lady's daughter did not do her much credit, and I will say nothing about her. The son, whom she had taught forgiveness on her death−bed, became a captain of dragoons; and, when at Metz, suppressing the Huguenots (perhaps he had never been told of Mademoiselle Brunel, and how she had helped and defended his mother in her great strait), he fell in love with the beautiful wife of a goldsmith. The dragoons were billeted at her house, and tried to force her, at the point of the bayonet, to go to mass. Apparently, her religion was dearer to her than her virtue; for she sent for the captain, and said to him: "Monsieur, vous m'avez dit que vous m'aimez; voulez−vous me le prouver? donnez−moi les moyens de sortir du royaume; et pour recompense de ce service, que votre amour s'imagine le prix." "Non, Madame," said the Marquis, "je ne me prevaudrai point de votre situation; je serais au comble de mes voeux si vous accordiez a ma tendresse ce que je pourrais obtenir ou vous etes, mais je me reprocherais toute ma vie d'abuser de votre etat; je vais vous en delivrer; je ne vous demande pour recompense que la grace de penser quelquefois a moi." After that, he sent her secretly across the frontier.

I shut up my landlady's books, and prepared to go to bed. I am alone in the lofty salon, which was perhaps in existence when Madame de Gauge used to reside in Avignon; the fire is gone out, the lamp flickers. The ever−persistent wind is tearing round the house. Mary and Irene are fast asleep in the chambers beyond. The quietness of all things, the dead stillness of the hour, has made me realise all the facts deposed to, as if they had only happened to−day. Tomorrow we will go to Ville−Neuve, and see the portrait of the murdered lady.

March 16th. Though the mistral has but little abated, we went across to Ville−Neuve this morning. Irene was not well enough to go; so Mary and I, attended by Demetrius, our courier, made the expedition. Demetrius has no fancy for excursions off the common route, and only went with us, because he thought himself bound in duty to humour our eccentricity. The suspension−bridge over the Rhone was shaking and trembling with the wind as we crossed it; and our struggle in that long exposure was so exhausting, that when we were once in the comparative tranquillity of the other side, we stood still and looked about us for some time before going on. The colour of the landscape on each side of the rushing river was a warm grey; rocks, soil, buildings, all the same. There was but little vegetation to be seen; a few olive−trees, of a moonlight green, grew in sheltered places. We thought it must be like the aspect of Palestine, from Stanley's account; and Demetrius, who had been several times in the Holy Land, confirmed this notion of ours; but then he was rather apt to confirm all our notions, provided they did not occasion him extra trouble. After we had crossed the bridge, we turned to the right, and went along a steep rocky road to the summit of the hill, above Ville−Neuve. Below us lay the town founded by Philippe le Bel, but completed by the Popes resident at Avignon, and fallen to comparative decay ever since the papal seat was re−established at Rome.

We dropped down to the centre of the old town; the buildings in it were of the same massive construction as the palace, three miles off, at Avignon; the houses were very lofty, and built of solid blocks of rough yellow−grey stone. There were arcades beneath their lower stories, and but little space between the two sides of the winding streets for carriages or horses. The way through the town was so tortuous that there was no bit of distance ever seen; and we felt as if we had fallen into a crevasse. Not a person was in the deserted streets. After trying at one or two porte−cocheres, we at length hit upon the convent in which there was the portrait of Madame de Gange, painted by Mignard, her famous contemporary. A nun, in attendance upon the hospital at the end of the court−yard, came to receive us, and was all surprise at our request to see the picture. Was it not the famous painting of "The Last Judgement," done by the good King Rene, that we wished to look at? At any rate, both pictures hung side by side in the ante−chapel to our right on entering. So we went in, and gazed at the face of the heroine of the tragical history we had been reading the night before. She was dressed, like our guide the nun, in a black and white conventual dress, such as I suppose she would assume when en retraite after her first husband's death; she held red and white roses in her hands, in her scapular;. the lovely colour was needed by the painter, or perhaps La Belle Provencale was fond of the flowers. Her face was one of exquisite beauty and great peacefulness of expression−round rather than oval; dark hair, dark eyebrows, and blue eyes; there was very little colour excepting in the lips. You would have called it the portrait of a sweet, happy, young woman, innocently glad in her possession of rare beauty.

After gratifying the nun by looking at the newly−painted and tawdry chapel beyond, and by doing our utmost to feel admiration for King Rene's picture, we left the convent. For a minute or two we were full of Madame de Gange; then, I am sorry to say, the carnal feeling of hunger took possession of us, after our long walk; and we sent Demetrius off in every direction to buy us a cake bread anything eatable. He came back to where we were sitting under the shelter of a rock. There was no shop for eatables, not even an hotel, or a restaurant, or a cafe, or an estaminet. So we came back to the Hotel de l'Europe, Avignon, with very good appetites for the table d'hote.

March l7th. A telegram from Marseilles. A boat starts to−day for Civita Vecchia.