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This eBook was produced by Dagny, dagnypg@yahoo.com
and David Widger, widger@cecomet.net

BOOK II.

"He, of wide-blooming youth's fair flower possest,
Owns the vain thoughts--the heart that cannot rest!"

SIMONIDES, /in Tit. Hum/.

CHAPTER I.

"Il y eut certainement quelque chose de singulier dans mes
sentimens pour cette charmante femme."*--ROUSSEAU.

* There certainly was something singular in my sentiments for this
charming woman.

IT was a brilliant ball at the Palazzo of the Austrian embassy at
Naples: and a crowd of those loungers, whether young or old, who attach
themselves to the reigning beauty, was gathered round Madame de
Ventadour. Generally speaking, there is more caprice than taste in the
election of a beauty to the Italian throne. Nothing disappoints a
stranger more than to see for the first time the woman to whom the world
has given the golden apple. Yet he usually falls at last into the
popular idolatry, and passes with inconceivable rapidity from indignant
scepticism into superstitious veneration. In fact, a thousand things
beside mere symmetry of feature go to make up the Cytherea of the hour.
--tact in society--the charm of manner--nameless and piquant
brilliancy. Where the world find the Graces they proclaim the Venus.
Few persons attain pre-eminent celebrity for anything, without some
adventitious and extraneous circumstances which have nothing to do with
the thing celebrated. Some qualities or some circumstances throw a
mysterious or personal charm about them. "Is Mr. So-and-So really such
a genius?" "Is Mrs. Such-a-One really such a beauty?" you ask
incredulously. "Oh, yes," is the answer. "Do you know all about him or
her? Such a thing is said, or such a thing has happened." The idol is
interesting in itself, and therefore its leading and popular attribute
is worshipped.

Now Madame de Ventadour was at this time the beauty of Naples: and
though fifty women in the room were handsomer, no one would have dared
to say so. Even the women confessed her pre-eminence--for she was the
most perfect dresser that even France could exhibit. And to no
pretensions do ladies ever concede with so little demur, as those which
depend upon that feminine art which all study, and in which few excel.
Women never allow beauty in a face that has an odd-looking bonnet above
it, nor will they readily allow any one to be ugly whose caps are
unexceptionable. Madame de Ventadour had also the magic that results
from intuitive high breeding, polished by habit to the utmost. She
looked and moved the /grande dame/, as if Nature had been employed by
Rank to make her so. She was descended from one of the most illustrious
houses of France; had married at sixteen a man of equal birth, but old,
dull, and pompous--a caricature rather than a portrait of that great

French /noblesse/, now almost if not wholly extinct. But her virtue was without a blemish--some said from pride, some said from coldness. Her wit was keen and court-like--lively, yet subdued; for her French high breeding was very different from the lethargic and taciturn imperturbability of the English. All silent people can seem conventionally elegant. A groom married a rich lady; he dreaded the ridicule of the guests whom his new rank assembled at his table--an Oxford clergyman gave him this piece of advice, "Wear a black coat and hold your tongue!" The groom took the hint, and is always considered one of the most gentlemanlike fellows in the county. Conversation is the touchstone of the true delicacy and subtle grace which make the ideal of the moral mannerism of a court. And there sat Madame de Ventadour, a little apart from the dancers, with the silent English dandy Lord Taunton, exquisitely dressed and superbly tall, bolt upright behind her chair; and the sentimental German Baron von Schomberg, covered with orders, whiskered and wigged to the last hair of perfection, sighing at her left hand; and the French minister, shrewd, bland, and eloquent, in the chair at her right; and round on all sides pressed, and bowed, and complimented, a crowd of diplomatic secretaries and Italian princes, whose bank is at the gaming-table, whose estates are in their galleries, and who sell a picture, as English gentlemen cut down a wood, whenever the cards grow gloomy. The charming De Ventadour! she had attraction for them all! smiles for the silent, badinage for the gay, politics for the Frenchman, poetry for the German, the eloquence of loveliness for all! She was looking her best--the slightest possible tinge of rouge gave a glow to her transparent complexion, and lighted up those large dark sparkling eyes (with a latent softness beneath the sparkle) seldom seen but in the French--and widely distinct from the unintellectual languish of the Spaniard, or the full and majestic fierceness of the Italian gaze. Her dress of black velvet, and graceful hat with its princely plume, contrasted the alabaster whiteness of her arms and neck. And what with the eyes, the skin, the rich colouring of the complexion, the rosy lips and the small ivory teeth, no one would have had the cold hypercriticism to observe that the chin was too pointed, the mouth too wide, and the nose, so beautiful in the front face, was far from perfect in the profile.

"Pray was Madame in the Strada Nuova to-day?" asked the German, with as much sweetness in his voice as if he had been vowing eternal love.

"What else have we to do with our mornings, we women?" replied Madame de Ventadour. "Our life is a lounge from the cradle to the grave; and our afternoons are but the type of our career. A promenade and a crowd,--/voila tout! We never see the world except in an open carriage."

"It is the pleasantest way of seeing it," said the Frenchman, drily.

"I doubt it; the worst fatigue is that which comes without exercise."

"Will you do me the honour to waltz?" said the tall English lord, who had a vague idea that Madame de Ventadour meant she would rather dance than sit still. The Frenchman smiled.

"Lord Taunton enforces your own philosophy," said the minister.

Lord Taunton smiled because every one else smiled; and, besides, he had beautiful teeth: but he looked anxious for an answer.

"Not to-night,--I seldom dance. Who is that very pretty woman? What lovely complexions the English have! And who," continued Madame de Ventadour, without waiting for an answer to the first question, "who is that gentleman,--the young one I mean,--leaning against the door?"

"What, with the dark moustache?" said Lord Taunton. "He is a cousin of mine."

"Oh, no; not Colonel Bellfield; I know him--how amusing he is!--no; the gentleman I mean wears no moustache."

"Oh, the tall Englishman with the bright eyes and high forehead," said the French minister. "He is just arrived--from the East, I believe."

"It is a striking countenance," said Madame de Ventadour; "there is something chivalrous in the turn of the head. Without doubt, Lord Taunton, he is 'noble'?"

"He is what you call 'noble,'" replied Lord Taunton--"that is, what we call a 'gentleman;' his name is Maltravers. He lately came of age; and has, I believe, rather a good property."

"Monsieur Maltravers; only Monsieur?" repeated Madame de Ventadour.

"Why," said the French minister, "you understand that the English /gentilhomme/ does not require a De or a title to distinguish him from the /roturier/."

"I know that; but he has an air above a simple /gentilhomme/. There is something /great/ in his look; but it is not, I must own, the conventional greatness of rank: perhaps he would have looked the same had he been born a peasant."

"You don't think him handsome?" said Lord Taunton, almost angrily (for he was one of the Beauty-men, and Beauty-men are sometimes jealous).

"Handsome! I did not say that," replied Madame de Ventadour, smiling; "it is rather a fine head than a handsome face. Is he clever, I wonder?--but all you English, milord, are well educated."

"Yes, profound--profound: we are profound, not superficial," replied Lord Taunton, drawing down his wrist-bands.

"Will Madame de Ventadour allow me to present to her one of my countrymen?" said the English minister approaching--"Mr. Maltravers."

Madame de Ventadour half smiled and half blushed, as she looked up, and

saw bent admiringly upon her the proud and earnest countenance she had remarked.

The introduction made--a few monosyllables exchanged. The French diplomatist rose and walked away with the English one. Maltravers succeeded to the vacant chair.

"Have you been long abroad?" asked Madame de Ventadour.

"Only four years; yet long enough to ask whether I should not be most abroad in England."

"You have been in the East--I envy you. And Greece, and Egypt,--all the associations! You have travelled back into the Past; you have escaped, as Madame D'Epinay wished, out of civilisation and into romance."

"Yet Madame D'Epinay passed her own life in making pretty romances out of a very agreeable civilisation," said Maltravers, smiling.

"You know her Memoirs, then," said Madame de Ventadour, slightly colouring. "In the current of a more exciting literature few have had time for the second-rate writings of a past century."

"Are not those second-rate performances often the most charming," said Maltravers, "when the mediocrity of the intellect seems almost as if it were the effect of a touching, though too feeble, delicacy of sentiment? Madame D'Epinay's Memoirs are of this character. She was not a virtuous woman--but she felt virtue and loved it; she was not a woman of genius--but she was tremblingly alive to all the influences of genius. Some people seem born with the temperament and the tastes of genius without its creative power; they have its nervous system, but something is wanting in the intellectual. They feel acutely, yet express tamely. These persons always have in their character an unspeakable kind of pathos--a court civilisation produces many of them--and the French memoirs of the last century are particularly fraught with such examples. This is interesting--the struggle of sensitive minds against the lethargy of a society, dull, yet brilliant, that /glares/ them, as it were, to sleep. It comes home to us; for," added Maltravers, with a slight change of voice, "how many of us fancy we see our own image in the mirror!"

And where was the German baron?--flirting at the other end of the room. And the English lord?--dropping monosyllables to dandies by the doorway. And the minor satellites?--dancing, whispering, making love, or sipping lemonade. And Madame de Ventadour was alone with the young stranger in a crowd of eight hundred persons; and their lips spoke of sentiment, and their eyes involuntarily applied it!

While they were thus conversing, Maltravers was suddenly startled by hearing close behind him, a sharp, significant voice, saying in French, "Hein, hein! I've my suspicions--I've my suspicions."

Madame de Ventadour looked round with a smile. "It is only my husband,"

said she, quietly; "let me introduce him to you."

Maltravers rose and bowed to a little thin man, most elaborately dressed, and with an immense pair of spectacles upon a long sharp nose.

"Charmed to make your acquaintance, sir!" said Monsieur de Ventadour. "Have you been long in Naples? . . . Beautiful weather--won't last long--hein, hein, I've my suspicions! No news as to your parliament--be dissolved soon! Bad opera in London this year!--hein, hein--I've my suspicions."

This rapid monologue was delivered with appropriate gesture. Each new sentence Mons. de Ventadour began with a sort of bow, and when it dropped in the almost invariable conclusion affirmative of his shrewdness and incredulity, he made a mystical sign with his forefinger by passing it upward in a parallel line with his nose, which at the same time performed its own part in the ceremony by three convulsive twitches, that seemed to shake the bridge to its base.

Maltravers looked with mute surprise upon the connubial partner of the graceful creature by his side, and Mons. de Ventadour, who had said as much as he thought necessary, wound up his eloquence by expressing the rapture it would give him to see Mons. Maltravers at his hotel. Then, turning to his wife, he began assuring her of the lateness of the hour, and the expediency of departure. Maltravers glided away, and as he regained the door was seized by our old friend, Lumley Ferrers. "Come, my dear fellow," said the latter; "I have been waiting for you this half hour. /Allons/. But, perhaps, as I am dying to go to bed, you have made up your mind to stay supper. Some people have no regard for other people's feelings."

"No, Ferrers, I'm at your service;" and the young man descended the stairs and passed along the Chiaja towards their hotel. As they gained the broad and open space on which it stood, with the lovely sea before them, sleeping in the arms of the curving shore, Maltravers, who had hitherto listened in silence to the volubility of his companion, paused abruptly.

"Look at that sea, Ferrers. . . . What a scene!--what delicious air! How soft this moonlight! Can you not fancy the old Greek adventurers, when they first colonised this divine Parthenope--the darling of the ocean--gazing along those waves, and pining no more for Greece?"

"I cannot fancy anything of the sort," said Ferrers. . . . "And, depend upon it, the said gentlemen, at this hour of the night, unless they were on some piratical excursion--for they were cursed ruffians, those old Greek colonists--were fast asleep in their beds."

"Did you ever write poetry, Ferrers?"

"To be sure; all clever men have written poetry once in their lives--small-pox and poetry--they are our two juvenile diseases."

"And did you ever /feel/ poetry!"

"Feel it!"

"Yes, if you put the moon into your verses, did you first feel it shining into your heart?"

"My dear Maltravers, if I put the moon into my verses, in all probability it was to rhyme to noon. 'The night was at her noon'--is a capital ending for the first hexameter--and the moon is booked for the next stage. Come in."

"No, I shall stay out."

"Don't be nonsensical."

"By moonlight there is no nonsense like common sense."

"What! we--who have climbed the Pyramids, and sailed up the Nile, and seen magic at Cairo, and been nearly murdered, bagged, and Bosphorized at Constantinople, is it for us, who have gone through so many adventures, looked on so many scenes, and crowded into four years events that would have satisfied the appetite of a cormorant in romance, if it had lived to the age of a phoenix;--is it for us to be doing the pretty and sighing to the moon, like a black-haired apprentice without a neckcloth on board of the Margate hoy? Nonsense, I say--we have lived too much not to have lived away our green sickness of sentiment."

"Perhaps you are right, Ferrers," said Maltravers, smiling. "But I can still enjoy a beautiful night."

"Oh, if you like flies in your soup, as the man said to his guest, when he carefully replaced those entomological blackamoors in the tureen, after helping himself--if you like flies in your soup, well and good--/buona notte/."

Ferrers certainly was right in his theory, that when we have known real adventures we grow less morbidly sentimental. Life is a sleep in which we dream most at the commencement and the close--the middle part absorbs us too much for dreams. But still, as Maltravers said, we can enjoy a fine night, especially on the shores of Naples.

Maltravers paced musingly to and fro for some time. His heart was softened--old rhymes rang in his ear--old memories passed through his brain. But the sweet dark eyes of Madame de Ventadour shone forth through every shadow of the past. Delicious intoxication--the draught of the rose-coloured phial--which is fancy, but seems love!

CHAPTER II.

"Then 'gan the Palmer thus--'Most wretched man

That to affections dost the bridle lend:
In their beginnings they are weak and wan,
But soon, through suffrance, growe to fearfull end;
While they are weak, betimes with them contend.”
SPENSER.

MALTRAVERS went frequently to the house of Madame de Ventadour--it was open twice a week to the world, and thrice a week to friends. Maltravers was soon of the latter class. Madame de Ventadour had been in England in her childhood, for her parents had been /emigres/. She spoke English well and fluently, and this pleased Maltravers; for though the French language was sufficiently familiar to him, he was like most who are more vain of the mind than the person, and proudly averse to hazarding his best thoughts in the domino of a foreign language. We don't care how faulty the accent, or how incorrect the idiom, in which we talk nothings; but if we utter any of the poetry within us, we shudder at the risk of the most trifling solecism.

This was especially the case with Maltravers; for, besides being now somewhat ripened from his careless boyhood into a proud and fastidious man, he had a natural love for the Becoming. This love was unconsciously visible in trifles: it is the natural parent of Good Taste. And it was indeed an inborn good taste which redeemed Ernest's natural carelessness in those personal matters in which young men usually take a pride. An habitual and soldier-like neatness, and a love of order and symmetry, stood with him in the stead of elaborate attention to equipage and dress.

Maltravers had not thought twice in his life whether he was handsome or not; and, like most men who have a knowledge of the gentler sex, he knew that beauty had little to do with engaging the love of women. The air, the manner, the tone, the conversation, the something that interests, and the something to be proud of--these are the attributes of the man made to be loved. And the Beauty-man is, nine times out of ten, little more than the oracle of his aunts, and the "/Sich/ a love!" of the housemaids!

To return from this digression, Maltravers was glad that he could talk in his own language to Madame de Ventadour; and the conversation between them generally began in French, and glided away into English. Madame de Ventadour was eloquent, and so was Maltravers; yet a more complete contrast in their mental views and conversational peculiarities can scarcely be conceived. Madame de Ventadour viewed everything as a woman of the world: she was brilliant, thoughtful, and not without delicacy and tenderness of sentiment; still all was cast in a worldly mould. She had been formed by the influences of society, and her mind betrayed its education. At once witty and melancholy (no uncommon union), she was a disciple of the sad but caustic philosophy produced by /satiety/. In the life she led, neither her heart nor her head was engaged; the faculties of both were irritated, not satisfied or employed. She felt somewhat too sensitively the hollowness of the great world, and had a low opinion of human nature. In fact, she was a woman of the French memoirs--one of those charming and /spirituelles/ Aspasia's of the

boudoir, who interest us by their subtlety, tact, and grace, their exquisite tone of refinement, and are redeemed from the superficial and frivolous, partly by a consummate knowledge of the social system in which they move, and partly by a half-concealed and touching discontent of the trifles on which their talents and affections are wasted. These are the women who, after a youth of false pleasure, often end by an old age of false devotion. They are a class peculiar to those ranks and countries in which shines and saddens that gay and unhappy thing--/a woman without a home/!

Now this was a specimen of life--this Valerie de Ventadour--that Maltravers had never yet contemplated, and Maltravers was perhaps equally new to the Frenchwoman. They were delighted with each other's society, although it so happened that they never agreed.

Madame de Ventadour rode on horseback, and Maltravers was one of her usual companions. And oh, the beautiful landscapes through which their daily excursions lay!

Maltravers was an admirable scholar. The stores of the immortal dead were as familiar to him as his own language. The poetry, the philosophy, the manner of thought and habits of life--of the graceful Greek and the luxurious Roman--were a part of knowledge that constituted a common and household portion of his own associations and peculiarities of thought. He had saturated his intellect with the Pactolus of old--and the grains of gold came down from the classic Tmolus with every tide. This knowledge of the dead, often so useless, has an inexpressible charm when it is applied to the places where the dead lived. We care nothing about the ancients on Highgate Hill--but at Baiae, Pompeii, by the Virgilian Hades, the ancients are society with which we thirst to be familiar. To the animated and curious Frenchwoman what a cicerone was Ernest Maltravers! How eagerly she listened to accounts of a life more elegant than that of Paris!--of a civilisation which the world never can know again! So much the better;--for it was rotten at the core, though most brilliant in the complexion. Those cold names and unsubstantial shadows which Madame de Ventadour had been accustomed to yawn over in skeleton histories, took from the eloquence of Maltravers the breath of life--they glowed and moved--they feasted and made love--were wise and foolish, merry and sad, like living things. On the other hand, Maltravers learned a thousand new secrets of the existing and actual world from the lips of the accomplished and observant Valerie. What a new step in the philosophy of life does a young man of genius make, when he first compares his theories and experience with the intellect of a clever woman of the world! Perhaps it does not elevate him, but how it enlightens and refines!--what numberless minute yet important mysteries in human character and practical wisdom does he drink unconsciously from the sparkling /persiflage/ of such a companion! Our education is hardly ever complete without it.

"And so you think these stately Romans were not, after all, so dissimilar to ourselves?" said Valerie, one day, as they looked over the same earth and ocean along which had roved the eyes of the voluptuous

but august Lucullus.

"In the last days of their Republic, a /coup-d'oeil of their social date might convey to us a general notion of our own. Their system, like ours--a vast aristocracy heaved and agitated, but kept ambitious and intellectual, by the great democratic ocean which roared below and around it. An immense distinction between rich and poor--a nobility sumptuous, wealthy, cultivated, yet scarcely elegant or refined; a people with mighty aspirations for more perfect liberty, but always liable, in a crisis, to be influenced and subdued by a deep-rooted veneration for the very aristocracy against which they struggled;--a ready opening through all the walls of custom and privilege, for every description of talent and ambition; but so strong and universal a respect for wealth, that the finest spirit grew avaricious, griping, and corrupt, almost unconsciously; and the man who rose from the people did not scruple to enrich himself out of the abuses he affected to lament; and the man who would have died for his country could not help thrusting his hands into her pockets. Cassius, the stubborn and thoughtful patriot, with his heart of iron, had, you remember, an itching palm. Yet, what a blow to all the hopes and dreams of a world was the overthrow of the free party after the death of Caesar! What generations of freemen fell at Philippi! In England, perhaps, we may have ultimately the same struggle; in France, too (perhaps a larger stage, with far more inflammable actors), we already perceive the same war of elements which shook Rome to her centre, which finally replaced the generous Julius with the hypocritical Augustus, which destroyed the colossal patricians to make way for the glittering dwarfs of a court, and cheated the people out of the substance with the shadow of liberty. How it may end in the modern world, who shall say? But while a nation has already a fair degree of constitutional freedom, I believe no struggle so perilous and awful as that between the aristocratic and the democratic principle. A people against a despot--/that/ contest requires no prophet; but the change from an aristocratic to a democratic commonwealth is indeed the wide, unbounded prospect upon which rest shadows, clouds, and darkness. If it fail--for centuries is the dial-hand of Time put back; if it succeed--"

Maltravers paused.

"And if it succeed?" said Valerie.

"Why, then, man will have colonised Utopia!" replied Maltravers.

"But at least, in modern Europe," he continued, "there will be fair room for the experiment. For we have not that curse of slavery which, more than all else, vitiated every system of the ancients, and kept the rich and the poor alternately at war; and we have a press, which is not only the safety-valve of the passions of every party, but the great note-book of the experiments of every hour--the homely, the invaluable ledger of losses and of gains. No; the people who keep that tablet well, never can be bankrupt. And the society of those old Romans; their daily passions--occupations--humours!--why, the satire of Horace is the glass of our own follies! We may fancy his easy pages written in the Chaussee

d'Antin, or Mayfair; but there was one thing that will ever keep the ancient world dissimilar from the modern."

"And what is that?"

"The ancients knew not that delicacy in the affections which characterises the descendants of the Goths," said Maltravers, and his voice slightly trembled; "they gave up to the monopoly of the senses what ought to have had an equal share in the reason and the imagination. Their love was a beautiful and wanton butterfly; but not the butterfly which is the emblem of the soul."

Valerie sighed. She looked timidly into the face of the young philosopher, but his eyes were averted.

"Perhaps," she said, after a short pause, "we pass our lives more happily without love than with it. And in our modern social system" (she continued, thoughtfully, and with profound truth, though it is scarcely the conclusion to which a woman often arrives) "I think we have pampered Love to too great a preponderance over the other excitements of life. As children, we are taught to dream of it; in youth, our books, our conversation, our plays, are filled with it. We are trained to consider it the essential of life; and yet, the moment we come to actual experience, the moment we indulge this inculcated and stimulated craving, nine times out of ten we find ourselves wretched and undone. Ah, believe me, Mr. Maltravers, this is not a world in which we should preach up too far the philosophy of Love!"

"And does Madame de Ventadour speak from experience?" asked Maltravers, gazing earnestly upon the changing countenance of his companion.

"No; and I trust that I never may!" said Valerie, with great energy.

Ernest's lip curled slightly, for his pride was touched.

"I could give up many dreams of the future," said he, "to hear Madame de Ventadour revoke that sentiment."

"We have outridden our companions, Mr. Maltravers," said Valerie, coldly, and she reined in her horse. "Ah, Mr. Ferrers," she continued, as Lumley and the handsome German baron now joined her, "you are too gallant; I see you imply a delicate compliment to my horsemanship, when you wish me to believe you cannot keep up with me: Mr. Maltravers is not so polite."

"Nay," returned Ferrers, who rarely threw away a compliment without a satisfactory return, "Nay, you and Maltravers appeared lost among the old Romans; and our friend the baron took that opportunity to tell me of all the ladies who adored him."

"Ah, Monsieur Ferrare, /que vous etes malin!/" said Schomberg, looking very much confused.

"Malin! no; I spoke from no envy: /I/ never was adored, thank Heaven!
What a bore it must be!"

"I congratulate you on the sympathy between yourself and Ferrers,"
whispered Maltravers to Valerie.

Valerie laughed; but during the rest of the excursion she remained
thoughtful and absent, and for some days their rides were discontinued.
Madame de Ventadour was not well.

CHAPTER III.

"O Love, forsake me not;
Mine were a lone dark lot
Bereft of thee."
HEMANS, /Genius singing to Love/.

I FEAR that as yet Ernest Maltravers had gained little from Experience, except a few current coins of worldly wisdom (and not very valuable those!) while he has lost much of that nobler wealth with which youthful enthusiasm sets out on the journey of life. Experience is an open giver, but a stealthy thief. There is, however, this to be said in her favour, that we retain her gifts; and if ever we demand restitution in earnest, 'tis ten to one but what we recover her thefts. Maltravers had lived in lands where public opinion is neither strong in its influence, nor rigid in its canons; and that does not make a man better. Moreover, thrown headlong amidst the temptations that make the first ordeal of youth, with ardent passions and intellectual superiority, he had been led by the one into many errors, from the consequences of which the other had delivered him; the necessity of roughing it through the world--of resisting fraud to-day, and violence to-morrow,--had hardened over the surface of his heart, though at bottom the springs were still fresh and living. He had lost much of his chivalrous veneration for women, for he had seen them less often deceived than deceiving. Again, too, the last few years had been spent without any high aims or fixed pursuits. Maltravers had been living on the capital of his faculties and affections in a wasteful, speculating spirit. It is a bad thing for a clever and ardent man not to have from the onset some paramount object of life.

All this considered, we can scarcely wonder that Maltravers should have fallen into an involuntary system of pursuing his own amusements and pursuits, without much forethought of the harm or the good they were to do to others or himself. The moment we lose forethought, we lose sight of duty; and though it seems like a paradox, we can seldom be careless without being selfish.

In seeking the society of Madame de Ventadour, Maltravers obeyed but the mechanical impulse that leads the idler towards the companionship which most pleases his leisure. He was interested and excited; and Valerie's manners, which to-day flattered, and to-morrow piqued him, enlisted his

vanity and pride on the side of his fancy. But although Monsieur de Ventadour, a frivolous and profligate Frenchman, seemed utterly indifferent as to what his wife chose to do--and in the society in which Valerie lived, almost every lady had her cavalier,--yet Maltravers would have started with incredulity or dismay had any one accused him of a systematic design on her affections. But he was living with the world, and the world affected him as it almost always does every one else. Still he had, at times, in his heart, the feeling that he was not fulfilling his proper destiny and duties; and when he stole from the brilliant resorts of an unworthy and heartless pleasure, he was ever and anon haunted by his old familiar aspirations for the Beautiful, the Virtuous, and the Great. However, hell is paved with good intentions; and so, in the meanwhile, Ernest Maltravers surrendered himself to the delicious presence of Valerie de Ventadour.

One evening, Maltravers, Ferrers, the French minister, a pretty Italian, and the Princess di -----, made the whole party collected at Madame de Ventadour's. The conversation fell upon one of the tales of scandal relative to English persons, so common on the Continent.

"Is it true, Monsieur," said the French minister, gravely, to Lumley, "that your countrymen are much more immoral than other people? It is very strange, but in every town I enter, there is always some story in which /les Anglais/ are the heroes. I hear nothing of French scandal--nothing of Italian--/toujours les Anglais/."

"Because we are shocked at these things, and make a noise about them, while you take them quietly. Vice is our episode--your epic."

"I suppose it is so," said the Frenchman, with affected seriousness. "If we cheat at play, or flirt with a fair lady, we do it with decorum, and our neighbours think it no business of theirs. But you treat every frailty you find in your countrymen as a public concern, to be discussed and talked over, and exclaimed against, and told to all the world."

"I like the system of scandal," said Madame de Ventadour, abruptly; "say what you will, the policy of fear keeps many of us virtuous. Sin might not be odious, if we did not tremble at the consequence even of appearances."

"Hein, hein," grunted Monsieur de Ventadour, shuffling into the room. "How are you?--how are you? Charmed to see you. Dull night--I suspect we shall have rain. Hein, hein. Aha, Monsieur Ferrers, /comment ca va-t-il/? Will you give me my revenge at /ecarte/? I have my suspicions that I am in luck to-night. Hein, hein."

"/Ecarte!--well, with pleasure," said Ferrers.

Ferrers played well.

The conversation ended in a moment. The little party gathered round the table--all, except Valerie and Maltravers. The chairs that were vacated left a kind of breach between them; but still they were next to each

other, and they felt embarrassed, for they felt alone.

"Do you never play?" asked Madame de Ventadour, after a pause.

"I /have/ played," said Maltravers, "and I know the temptation. I dare not play now. I love the excitement, but I have been humbled at the debasement: it is a moral drunkenness that is worse than the physical."

"You speak warmly."

"Because I feel keenly. I once won of a man I respected, who was poor. His agony was a dreadful lesson to me. I went home, and was terrified to think I had felt so much pleasure in the pain of another. I have never played since that night."

"So young and so resolute!" said Valerie, with admiration in her voice and eyes; "you are a strange person. Others would have been cured by losing, you were cured by winning. It is a fine thing to have principle at your age, Mr. Maltravers."

"I fear it was rather pride than principle," said Maltravers. "Error is sometimes sweet; but there is no anguish like an error of which we feel ashamed. I cannot submit to blush for myself."

"Ah!" muttered Valerie; "this is the echo of my own heart!" She rose and went to the window. Maltravers paused a moment, and followed her. Perhaps he half thought there was an invitation in the movement.

There lay before them the still street, with its feeble and unfrequent lights; beyond, a few stars, struggling through an atmosphere unusually clouded, brought the murmuring ocean partially into sight. Valerie leaned against the wall, and the draperies of the window veiled her from all the guests, save Maltravers; and between her and himself was a large marble vase filled with flowers; and by that uncertain light Valerie's brilliant cheek looked pale, and soft, and thoughtful. Maltravers never before felt so much in love with the beautiful Frenchwoman.

"Ah, madam!" said he, softly; "there is one error, if it be so, that never can cost me shame."

"Indeed!" said Valerie with an unaffected start, for she was not aware he was so near her. As she spoke she began plucking (it is a common woman's trick) the flowers from the vase between her and Ernest. That small, delicate, almost transparent hand!--Maltravers gazed upon the hand, then on the countenance, then on the hand again. The scene swam before him, and, involuntarily and as by an irresistible impulse, the next moment that hand was in his own.

"Pardon me--pardon me," said he, falteringly; "but that error is in the feelings that I know for you."

Valerie lifted on him her large and radiant eyes, and made no answer.

Maltravers went on. "Chide me, scorn me, hate me if you will. Valerie, I love you."

Valerie drew away her hand, and still remained silent.

"Speak to me," said Ernest, leaning forward; "one word, I implore you--speak to me!"

He paused,--still no reply; he listened breathlessly--he heard her sob. Yes; that proud, that wise, that lofty woman of the world, in that moment, was as weak as the simplest girl that ever listened to a lover. But how different the feelings that made her weak!--what soft and what stern emotions were blent together!

"Mr. Maltravers," she said, recovering her voice, though it sounded hollow, yet almost unnaturally firm and clear"--the die is cast, and I have lost for ever the friend for whose happiness I cannot live, but for whose welfare I would have died; I should have foreseen this, but I was blind. No more--no more; see me to-morrow, and leave me now!"

"But, Valerie--"

"Ernest Maltravers," said she, laying her hand lightly on his own; "/there is no anguish, like an error of which we feel ashamed/!"

Before he could reply to this citation from his own aphorism, Valerie had glided away; and was already seated at the card-table, by the side of the Italian princess.

Maltravers also joined the group. He fixed his eyes on Madame de Ventadour, but her face was calm--not a trace of emotion was discernible. Her voice, her smile, her charming and courtly manner, all were as when he first beheld her.

"These women--what hypocrites they are!" muttered Maltravers to himself; and his lip writhed into a sneer, which had of late often forced away the serene and gracious expression of his earlier years, ere he knew what it was to despise. But Maltravers mistook the woman he dared to scorn.

He soon withdrew from the palazzo, and sought his hotel. There, while yet musing in his dressing-room, he was joined by Ferrers. The time had passed when Ferrers had exercised an influence over Maltravers; the boy had grown up to be the equal of the man, in the exercise of that two-edged sword--the reason. And Maltravers now felt, unalloyed, the calm consciousness of his superior genius. He could not confide to Ferrers what had passed between him and Valerie. Lumley was too /hard/ for a confidant in matters where the heart was at all concerned. In fact, in high spirits, and in the midst of frivolous adventures, Ferrers was charming. But in sadness, or in the moments of deep feeling, Ferrers was one whom you would wish out of the way.

"You are sullen to-eight, /mon cher/," said Lumley, yawning; "I suppose

you want to go to bed--some persons are so ill-bred, so selfish, they never think of their friends. Nobody asks me what I won at /ecarte/. Don't be late to-morrow--I hate breakfasting alone, and I am never later than a quarter before nine--I hate egotistical, ill-mannered people. Good night."

With this, Ferrers sought his own room; there, as he slowly undressed, he thus soliloquised: "I think I have put this man to all the use I can make of him. We don't pull well together any longer; perhaps I myself am a little tired of this sort of life. That is not right. I shall grow ambitious by and by; but I think it a bad calculation not to make the most of youth. At four or five-and-thirty it will be time enough to consider what one ought to be at fifty."

CHAPTER IV.

"Most dangerous

Is that temptation that does goad us on
To sin in loving virtue."--/Measure for Measure/.

"SEE her to-morrow!--that morrow is come!" thought Maltravers, as he rose the next day from a sleepless couch. Ere yet he had obeyed the impatient summons of Ferrers, who had thrice sent to say that "/he/ never kept people waiting," his servant entered with a packet from England, that had just arrived by one of those rare couriers who sometimes honour that Naples, which /might/ be so lucrative a mart to English commerce, if Neapolitan kings cared for trade, or English senators for "foreign politics." Letters from stewards and bankers were soon got through; and Maltravers reserved for the last an epistle from Cleveland. There was much in it that touched him home. After some dry details about the property to which Maltravers had now succeeded, and some trifling comments upon trifling remarks in Ernest's former letters, Cleveland went on thus:

"I confess, my dear Ernest, that I long to welcome you back to England. You have been abroad long enough to see other countries; do not stay long enough to prefer them to your own. You are at Naples, too--I tremble for you. I know well that delicious, dreaming, holiday-life of Italy, so sweet to men of learning and imagination--so sweet, too, to youth--so sweet to pleasure! But, Ernest, do you not feel already how it enervates?--how the luxurious /far niente/ unfits us for grave exertion? Men may become too refined and too fastidious for useful purposes; and nowhere can they become so more rapidly than in Italy. My dear Ernest, I know you well; you are not made to sink down into a virtuoso, with a cabinet full of cameos and a head full of pictures; still less are you made to be an indolent /cicisbeo/ to some fair Italian, with one passion and two ideas: and yet I have known men as clever as you, whom that bewitching Italy has sunk into one or other of these insignificant beings. Don't run away with the notion that you have plenty of time before you. You have no such thing. At your age, and with your fortune (I wish you were not so rich), the holiday of one

year becomes the custom of the next. In England, to be a useful or a distinguished man, you must labour. Now, labour itself is sweet, if we take to it early. We are a hard race, but we are a manly one; and our stage is the most exciting in Europe for an able and an honest ambition. Perhaps you will tell me you are not ambitious now; very possibly--but ambitious you will be; and, believe me, there is no unhappier wretch than a man who is ambitious but disappointed,--who has the desire for fame, but has lost the power to achieve it--who longs for the goal, but will not, and cannot, put away his slippers to walk to it. What I most fear for you is one of these two evils--an early marriage or a fatal /liaison/ with some married woman. The first evil is certainly the least, but for you it would still be a great one. With your sensitive romance, with your morbid cravings for the ideal, domestic happiness would soon grow trite and dull. You would demand new excitement, and become a restless and disgusted man. It is necessary for you to get rid of all the false fever of life, before you settle down to everlasting ties. You do not yet know your own mind; you would choose your partner from some visionary caprice, or momentary impulse, and not from the deep and accurate knowledge of those qualities which would most harmonize with your own character. People, to live happily with each other, must /fit in/, as it were--the proud be mated with the meek, the irritable with the gentle, and so forth. No, my dear Maltravers, do not think of marriage yet a while; and if there is any danger of it, come over to me immediately. But if I warn you against a lawful tie, how much more against an illicit one? You are precisely at the age, and of the disposition, which render the temptation so strong and so deadly. With you it might not be the sin of an hour, but the bondage of a life. I know your chivalric honour--your tender heart; I know how faithful you would be to one who had sacrificed for you. But that fidelity, Maltravers, to what a life of wasted talent and energies would it not compel you! Putting aside for the moment (for that needs no comment) the question of the grand immorality--what so fatal to a bold and proud temper, as to be at war with society at the first entrance into life? What so withering to manly aims and purposes, as the giving into the keeping of a woman, who has interest in your love, and interest against your career which might part you at once from her side--the control of your future destinies? I could say more, but I trust what I have said is superfluous; if so, pray assure me of it. Depend upon this, Ernest Maltravers, that if you do not fulfil what nature intended for your fate, you will be a morbid misanthrope, or an indolent voluptuary--wrenched and listless in manhood, repining and joyless in old age. But if you do fulfil your fate, you must enter soon into your apprenticeship. Let me see you labour and aspire--no matter what in--what to. Work, work--that is all I ask of you!

"I wish you would see your old country-house; it has a venerable and picturesque look, and during your minority they have let the ivy cover three sides of it. Montaigne might have lived there.

"Adieu, dearest Ernest,

"Your anxious and affectionate guardian,

"FREDERICK CLEVELAND.

"P. S.--I am writing a book--it shall last me ten years--it occupies me, but does not fatigue. Write a book yourself."

* * * * *

Maltravers had just finished this letter when Ferrers entered impatiently. "Will you ride out?" said he. "I have sent the breakfast away; I saw that breakfast was a vain hope to-day--indeed, my appetite is gone."

"Pshaw!" said Maltravers.

"Pshaw! Humph! for my part I like well-bred people."

"I have had a letter from Cleveland."

"And what the deuce has that got to do with the chocolate?"

"Oh, Lumley, you are insufferable; you think of nothing but yourself, and self with you means nothing that is not animal."

"Why, yes; I believe I have some sense," replied Ferrers, complacently.

"I know the philosophy of life. All unfledged bipeds are animals, I suppose. If Providence had made me graminivorous, I should have eaten grass; if ruminating, I should have chewed the cud; but as it has made me a carnivorous, culinary, and cachinnatory animal, I eat a cutlet, scold about the sauce, and laugh at you; and this is what you call being selfish!"

It was late at noon when Maltravers found himself at the palazzo of Madame de Ventadour. He was surprised, but agreeably so, that he was admitted, for the first time, into that private sanctum which bears the hackneyed title of boudoir. But there was little enough of the fine lady's boudoir in the simple morning-room of Madame de Ventadour. It was a lofty apartment, stored with books, and furnished, not without claim to grace, but with very small attention to luxury.

Valerie was not there, and Maltravers, left alone, after a hasty glance around the chamber, leaned abstractedly against the wall, and forgot, alas! all the admonitions of Cleveland. In a few moments the door opened, and Valerie entered. She was unusually pale, and Maltravers thought her eyelids betrayed the traces of tears. He was touched, and his heart smote him.

"I have kept you waiting, I fear," said Valerie, motioning him to a seat at a little distance from that on which she placed herself; "but you will forgive me," she added, with a slight smile. Then, observing he was about to speak, she went on rapidly; "Hear me, Mr. Maltravers--before you speak, hear me! You uttered words last night that ought never to have been addressed to me. You professed to--love me."

"Professed!"

"Answer me," said Valerie, with abrupt energy, "not as man to woman, but as one human creature to another. From the bottom of your heart, from the core of your conscience, I call on you to speak the honest and the simple truth. Do you love me as your heart, your genius, must be capable of loving?"

"I love you truly--passionately!" said Maltravers, surprised and confused, but still with enthusiasm in his musical voice and earnest eyes. Valerie gazed upon him as if she sought to penetrate into his soul. Maltravers went on. "Yes, Valerie, when we first met, you aroused a long dormant and delicious sentiment. But, since then, what deep emotions has that sentiment called forth? Your graceful intellect--your lovely thoughts, wise yet womanly--have completed the conquest your face and voice began. Valerie, I love you. And you--you, Valerie--ah! I do not deceive myself--you also--"

"Love!" interrupted Valerie, deeply blushing, but in a calm voice.

"Ernest Maltravers, I do not deny it; honestly and frankly I confess the fault. I have examined my heart during the whole of the last sleepless night, and I confess that I love you. Now, then, understand me--we meet no more."

"What!" said Maltravers, falling involuntarily at her feet, and seeking to detain her hand, which he seized. "What! now, when you have given life a new charm, will you as suddenly blast it? No, Valerie; no, I will not listen to you."

Madame de Ventadour rose and said, with a cold dignity: "Hear me calmly, or I quit the room; and all I would now say rests for ever unspoken."

Maltravers rose also, folded his arms haughtily, bit his lips, and stood erect, and confronting Valerie rather in the attitude of an accuser than a suppliant.

"Madame," said he, gravely, "I will offend no more; I will trust to your manner, since I may not believe your words."

"You are cruel," said Valerie, smiling mournfully; "but so are all men. Now let me make myself understood. I was betrothed to Monsieur de Ventadour in my childhood. I did not see him till a month before we married. I had no choice. French girls have none. We were wed. I had formed no other attachment. I was proud and vain: wealth, ambition, and social rank for a time satisfied my faculties and my heart. At length I grew restless and unhappy. I felt that something of life was wanting. Monsieur de Ventadour's sister was the first to recommend me to the common resource of our sex--at least, in France--a lover. I was shocked and startled, for I belong to a family in which women are chaste and men brave. I began, however, to look around me, and examine the truth of the philosophy of vice. I found that no woman, who loved honestly and deeply an illicit lover was happy. I found, too, the hideous profundity of Rochefoucauld's maxim that a woman--I speak of French women--may live without a lover; but, a lover once admitted, she never goes through life with only one. She is deserted; she cannot bear the anguish and the

solitude; she fills up the void with a second idol. For her there is no longer a fall from virtue: it is a gliding and involuntary descent from sin to sin, till old age comes on and leaves her without love and without respect. I reasoned calmly, for my passions did not blind my reason. I could not love the egotists around me. I resolved upon my career; and now, in temptation, I will adhere to it. Virtue is my lover, my pride, my comfort, my life of life. Do you love me, and will you rob me of this treasure? I saw you, and for the first time I felt a vague and intoxicating interest in another; but I did not dream of danger. As our acquaintance advanced I formed to myself a romantic and delightful vision. I would be your firmest, your truest friend; your confidant, your adviser--perhaps, in some epochs of life, your inspiration and your guide. I repeat that I foresaw no danger in your society. I felt myself a nobler and a better being. I felt more benevolent, more tolerant, more exalted. I saw life through the medium of purifying admiration for a gifted nature, and a profound and generous soul. I fancied we might be ever thus--each to each;--one strengthened, assured, supported by the other. Nay, I even contemplated with pleasure the prospect of your future marriage with another--of loving your wife--of contributing with her to your happiness--my imagination made me forget that we are made of clay. Suddenly all these visions were dispelled--the fairy palace was overthrown, and I found myself awake, and on the brink of the abyss--you loved me, and in the moment of that fatal confession, the mask dropped from my soul, and I felt that you had become too dear to me. be silent still, I implore you. I do not tell you of the emotions, of the struggles, through which I have passed the last few hours--the crisis of a life. I tell you only of the resolution I formed. I thought it due to you, nor unworthy to myself, to speak the truth. Perhaps it might be more womanly to conceal it; but my heart has something masculine in its nature. I have a great faith in your nobleness. I believe you can sympathise with whatever is best in human weakness. I tell you that I love you--I throw myself upon your generosity. I beseech you to assist my own sense of right--to think well of me, to honour me--and to leave me!"

During the last part of this strange and frank avowal, Valerie's voice had grown inexpressibly touching: her tenderness forced itself into her manner; and when she ceased, her lip quivered; her tears, repressed by a violent effort, trembled in her eyes--her hands were clasped--her attitude was that of humility, not pride.

Maltravers stood perfectly spell-bound. At length he advanced; dropped on one knee, kissed her hand with an aspect and air of reverential homage, and turned to quit the room in silence; for he would not dare to trust himself to speak.

Valerie gazed at him in anxious alarm. "O no, no!" she exclaimed, "do not leave me yet; this is our last meeting our last. Tell me, at least, that you understand me; that you see, if I am no weak fool, I am also no heartless coquette; tell me that you see I am not as hard as I have seemed; that I have not knowingly trifled with your happiness; that even now I am not selfish. Your love,--I ask it no more! But your esteem--your good opinion. Oh, speak--speak, I implore you!"

"Valerie," said Maltravers, "if I was silent, it was because my heart was too full for words. You have raised all womanhood in my eyes. I did love you--I now venerate and adore. Your noble frankness, so unlike the irresolute frailty, the miserable wiles of your sex, has touched a chord in my heart that has been mute for years. I leave you to think better of human nature. Oh!" he continued, "hasten to forget all of me that can cost you a pang. Let me still, in absence and in sadness, think that I retain in your friendship--let it be friendship only--the inspiration, the guide of which you spoke; and if, hereafter, men shall name me with praise and honour, feel, Valerie, feel that I have comforted myself for the loss of your love by becoming worthy of your confidence--your esteem. Oh, that we had met earlier, when no barrier was between us!"

"Go, go, /now/," faltered Valerie, almost choked with her emotions; "may Heaven bless you! Go!"

Maltravers muttered a few inaudible and incoherent words, and quitted the apartment.

CHAPTER V.

"The men of sense, those idols of the shallow, are very inferior to the men of Passions. It is the strong passions which, rescuing us from sloth, can alone impart to us that continuous and earnest attention necessary to great intellectual efforts."--HELVETIUS.

WHEN Ferrers returned that day from his customary ride, he was surprised to see the lobbies and hall of the apartment which he occupied in common with Maltravers, littered with bags and /malles/, boxes and books, and Ernest's Swiss valet directing porters and waiters in a mosaic of French, English, and Italian.

"Well!" said Lumley, "and what is all this?"

"Il signore va partir, sare, ah! mon Dieu!--/tout/ of a sudden."

"O-h! and where is he now!"

"In his room, sare."

Over the chaos strode Ferrers, and opening the door of his friend's dressing-room without ceremony, he saw Maltravers buried in a fauteuil, with his hands drooping on his knees, his head bent over his breast, and his whole attitude expressive of dejection and exhaustion.

"What is the matter, my dear Ernest? You have not killed a man in a duel?"

"No."

"What then? Why are you going away, and whither?"

"No matter; leave me in peace."

"Friendly!" said Ferrers; "very friendly! And what is to become of me--what companion am I to have in this cursed resort of antiquarians and lazzaroni? You have no feeling, Mr. Maltravers!"

"Will you come with me, then?" said Maltravers, in vain endeavouring to rouse himself.

"But where are you going?"

"Anywhere; to Paris--to London."

"No; I have arranged my plans for the summer. I am not so rich as some people. I hate change: it is so expensive."

"But, my dear fellow--"

"Is this fair dealing with me?" continued Lumley, who, for once in his life, was really angry. "If I were an old coat you had worn for five years you could not throw me off with more nonchalance."

"Ferrers, forgive me. My honour is concerned. I must leave this place. I trust you will remain my guest here, though in the absence of your host. You know that I have engaged the apartment for the next three months."

"Humph!" said Ferrers, "as that is the case I may as well stay here. But why so secret? Have you seduced Madame de Ventadour, or has her wise husband his suspicions? Hein, hein!"

Maltravers smothered his disgust at this coarseness; and, perhaps, there is no greater trial of temper than in a friend's gross remarks upon the connection of the heart.

"Ferrers," said he, "if you care for me, breathe not a word disrespectful to Madame de Ventadour: she is an angel!"

"But why leave Naples?"

"Trouble me no more."

"Good day, sir," said Ferrers, highly offended, and he stalked out of the chamber; nor did Ernest see him again before his departure.

It was late that evening when Maltravers found himself alone in his carriage, pursuing by starlight the ancient and melancholy road to Mola di Gaeta.

His solitude was a luxury to Maltravers; he felt an inexpressible sense

of relief to be freed from Ferrers. The hard sense, the unpliant, though humorous imperiousness, the animal sensuality of his companion would have been torture to him in his present state of mind.

The next morning, when he rose, the orange blossoms of Mola di Gaeta were sweet beneath the window of the inn where he rested. It was now the early spring, and the freshness of the odour, the breathing health of earth and air, it is impossible to describe. Italy itself boasts few spots more lovely than that same Mola di Gaeta--nor does that halcyon sea wear, even at Naples or Sorrento, a more bland and enchanting smile.

So, after a hasty and scarcely-tasted breakfast, Maltravers strolled through the orange groves, and gained the beach; and there, stretched at idle length by the murmuring waves, he resigned himself to thought, and endeavoured, for the first time since his parting with Valerie, to collect and examine the state of his mind and feelings. Maltravers, to his own surprise, did not find himself so unhappy as he had expected. On the contrary, a soft and almost delicious sentiment, which he could not well define, floated over all his memories of the beautiful Frenchwoman. Perhaps the secret was, that while his pride was not mortified, his conscience was not galled--perhaps, also, he had not loved Valerie so deeply as he had imagined. The confession and the separation had happily come before her presence had grown--/the want of a life/. As it was, he felt as if, by some holy and mystic sacrifice, he had been made reconciled to himself and mankind. He woke to a juster and higher appreciation of human nature, and of woman's nature in especial. He had found honesty and truth where he might least have expected it--in a woman of a court--in a woman surrounded by vicious and frivolous circles--in a woman who had nothing in the opinion of her friends, her country, her own husband, the social system in which she moved, to keep her from the concessions of frailty--in a woman of the world--a woman of Paris!--yes, it was his very disappointment that drove away the fogs and vapours that, arising from the marshes of the great world, had gradually settled round his soul. Valerie de Ventadour had taught him not to despise her sex, not to judge by appearances, not to sicken of a low and a hypocritical world. He looked in his heart for the love of Valerie, and he found there the love of virtue. Thus, as he turned his eyes inward, did he gradually awaken to a sense of the true impressions engraved there. And he felt the bitterest drop of the fountains was not sorrow for himself, but for her. What pangs must that high spirit have endured ere it could have submitted to the avowal it had made! Yet, even in this affliction he found at last a solace. A mind so strong could support and heal the weakness of the heart. He felt that Valerie de Ventadour was not a woman to pine away in the unresisted indulgence of morbid and unholy emotions. He could not flatter himself that she would not seek to eradicate a love she repented; and he sighed with a natural selfishness, when he owned also that sooner or later she would succeed. "But be it so," said he, half aloud--"I will prepare my heart to rejoice when I learn that she remembers me only as a friend. Next to the bliss of her love is the pride of her esteem."

Such was the sentiment with which his reveries closed--and with every

league that bore him further from the south, the sentiment grew strengthened and confirmed.

Ernest Maltravers felt there is in the affections themselves so much to purify and exalt, that even an erring love, conceived without a cold design, and (when its nature is fairly understood) wrestled against with a noble spirit, leaves the heart more tolerant and tender, and the mind more settled and enlarged. The philosophy limited to the reason puts into motion the automata of the closet--but to those who have the world for a stage, and who find their hearts are the great actors, experience and wisdom must be wrought from the Philosophy of the Passions.

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