



That Rascal Gustave

By

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FRONTISPIECE



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CHAPTER I. FEAR, FRIGHT, MISFORTUNE.

"Go on, Zephyr, go on, old fellow, only three miles more, and we shall be at home. Ah! there you go; that's a good job, you are smelling your stable already, I expect."

Thus it was that Daddy Lucas, as he was called, spoke to his horse, and endeavoured, on the road between Louvres and Ermenonville, by his words, which were often accompanied by expressive movements, to encourage Zephyr, who, however, did not trot any the faster for all that.

All of a sudden a fresh weight, which fell on his back, without the slightest warning, made the poor beast start, and then go off at full gallop, a thing which he did not do twice a year, but the violent shock seemed to have given him wings. Lucas tried to cry out, but he was encircled and pressed by two strong arms, so that he, wretched man, began to think that he had the devil on his crupper, and lost all power of speech, and, abandoning himself to his destiny, he gave the reins to his horse, and closed his eyes, so that he might not see who was his travelling companion.

Zephyr, however, had neither the power nor the inclination to gallop any distance, besides which the road was sandy, and tried his strength, so he very soon took to his former pace again, and, at the same time, the arms which had been round Lucas relaxed their hold, and enabled him to breathe again. He heard a burst of laughter behind him, and, recovering his senses, and regaining courage, it struck him that it would not be difficult, even without being an evil spirit, to jump on Zephyr's crupper, so he turned his head round a little, and, opening one eye, he saw, instead of Beelzebub or Asmodeus, a good-looking young man, who, in spite of his somewhat disordered attire, had nothing at all terrible in his appearance.

"Well, I declare, Monsieur, you gave me a nice fright."

"I believe I did, old fellow, and you rode nearly half a mile without moving, and I absolutely believe, without breathing."

"You may laugh, Monsieur, but I do not see why you should. I wonder what my wife would have said if she had seen me come back home, dead?"

"Oh! she would soon have consoled herself."

"That may be, but I should not have been so easily consoled, and then my daughter, my little Susan, who is so fond of Daddy Lucas! . . ."

"Never mind, Papa Lucas, you are not dead, and I hope your fears are calmed down, so we will not say any more about it. You see I am neither the devil nor a robber . . ."

"I am not so sure of that. A man who falls on to my horse behind me like . . ."

"I had been calling to you for several minutes, but you did not hear me, and so I took a run, and having had lessons of Franconi, I got on to your horse without stopping you."

"You are very active, that is quite certain, but you surely do not think that I am going to take you much further like this?"

"Well, I suppose you are going to take me as far as your house, at any rate"

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"As far as my house? And what for, I should like to know?"

"To put me up for the night."

"To put you up, a man who has fallen from the clouds?"

"What does it matter where I have fallen from as long as I pay you well? I say, Daddy Lucas, are you fond of money?"

"Of course I am, when I make it honestly."

"Very well, and as there can be no harm in giving a traveller some supper and a bed, you shall take me in to-night. Here are twenty francs on account beforehand, so now stick in your knees, clap your heels into Zephyr, and let us make haste and get back to Madame Lucas."

The young man's voice was so persuasive and decided, his manners were so frank and pleasant, that the peasant did not know what answer to give him to his proposal. Besides, Father Lucas was very fond of money, and in a village twenty francs is a large sum, so he urged on his horse and went on trotting, but on their road Lucas put more questions to his fellow-traveller.

"I suppose," he said, "that you belong to this neighbourhood, as you are out without your hat?"

"Well, upon my word, I had not got any time to look for it, and was lucky to be able to put on my coat."

"The deuce! I suppose you were bathing in some place where it was prohibited?"

"I was not bathing exactly, but I certainly was where I had no right to be."

"That is just like you young men, caring for nothing."

"But I say, Father Lucas, it seems to me that Zephyr is not getting on at all."

"Well, he is not in the habit of carrying two."

"I am terribly hungry; where do you live?"

"At Ermenonville."

"Is that the village, there?"

"No, that is Mortfontaine, we have about three miles further to go, and I do not like it, for it is getting late, and I am frightened of robbers and wolves."

"Don't be alarmed, I will take care of you."

Just as they had finished their conversation, they heard horses galloping behind them, and it was too dark to see at any distance. The noise came nearer and the riders seemed to be coming up with them rapidly. All at once Lucas's young companion seemed to be seized with a sudden terror.

"They are after me," he cried; "get on, my good fellow, we must escape them."

Without waiting for the peasant's consent, the young man urged on and kicked the unfortunate horse till he made him go at full gallop. It was no good for Lucas to complain, swear, or cry out that his steed would be killed, for his companion listened to nothing but the noise of the horses behind them, which seemed to be on the point of overtaking them, and thus they went through Mortfontaine. There was no holding Zephyr; not being used to such treatment, he gave way to a noble fury, reared, kicked,

plunged, and broke his bridle, carrying his riders towards a pond, where some dozen ducks were quietly feeding. Lucas cried out to his horse: "Stop! stop!" and behind them came the cries of "Stop! stop!" The young man laughed and swore in one breath, but finally Zephyr rushed into the pond, stuck in the mud, and fell on to his side, his riders tumbling off, rolled on to the ducks, crushing four of them, and there they were, wet, dirty, shouting, hardly knowing what they were about.

CHAPTER II. UNCLE AND NEPHEW.

"What do you mean, sir? more follies! Another bet of six hundred francs, which I have to pay for you!"

"It is a debt of honour, uncle."

"All debts are sacred obligations, but that is no reason for incurring them, when I am able to supply all your requirements. Do you know, nephew, that I think you are a bit of a scamp?"

"I, my dear uncle? I really do not see how I have deserved such an appellation."

"You do not see it? Very well, then I will just tell you how. Sit down there, Gustave, opposite to me, and keep quiet, if you can, and don't interrupt me."

"My dear uncle, I know far too well what I owe you."

"Hold your tongue. Your mother, my sister, Hortense Moranval, was a very good, amiable, quiet, economical woman —"

"She had every quality . . ."

"Will you be quiet? I know perfectly well what my sister was, but I know also that she was so minded by her love for her precious son, that she did not see that he was passionate, impatient of control, untruthful, a gambler. . ."

"Uncle!"

"Will you hold your tongue? Your father was a clever man, and his talents, his merit, and his amiable character made him welcome into whatever society he went. He would have made himself a name in his profession at the bar, which he adorned, but death took him suddenly from his wife and friends. You were too young at the time to feel your loss, and you cannot remember my dear St. Réal."

"At any rate, uncle, I can always cherish and reverence his memory."

"If you really revered it, you would not commit so many follies. But to return to our subject. I passed part of my life in the army, and when I went to see my sister in Paris at rare intervals, you used to take my sword and spit the meat with it; you gave my plume to the cat to play with, my cocked hat was knocked all out of shape; you played the mischief with my epaulettes and pistols, but all those were mere trifles. I found, however, that you were learning nothing, for you would not pay the slightest attention to your tutors; you played the fool with your Latin and history master, you let off crackers under the nose of your music master, and filled your drawing master's pockets with candle ends; in fact you acted like a young demon, and when I asked my sister to punish you, she seemed to think that you would grow wiser as you grew older. Poor woman, she thought you charming."

"But, my dear uncle, all the ladies thought with my mother."

"Well, and the reason for that was that you loved them all alike."

"That was from gratitude, uncle."

"And did you deceive them out of gratitude? Was that the reason that you seduced young girls, debauched respectable women, and ornamented their husbands with horns? Well, your mother is dead, and you were deeply grieved at her loss, for I

must say that you loved your mother sincerely, as was natural, and you only did your duty in grieving for her death. She entrusted you to me; I promised to watch over you, and God knows what a trouble you have been to me ever since. I put you to school when you were twelve, and for a year or two you behaved pretty well, and I was informed, to my great joy, that you were making rapid progress. At last I returned to Paris when you were about sixteen, and went to your school, looking forward to seeing my nephew, but when I asked for Gustave St. Real, they made long faces, looked very blank, and began to stammer out something. I got impatient, I got into a rage, I shouted out at last, they told me that my young gentleman had disappeared a week previously, as had also a girl of fifteen, who was the schoolboys' laundress, and lived opposite to the school."

"But, uncle, it was not my fault if love . . ."

"Devil take it, sir, an elopement at sixteen!"

"Lizzie was so pretty, so funny."

"And you a young libertine. However, I found my M. Gustave and his Dulcinea in a little room on the fourth floor in the Rue du Fauconnier. I took the young person back to her mother, though I cannot speak as to her condition, but that is the parents' look out, who do not pay sufficient attention to their children; but as for you, you have not given me a moment's peace since that time."

"My dear uncle, a few youthful follies . . ."

"If I leave you in town, you frequent the public balls, you become intimate with doubtful characters, and bring them to my house; you drink my best wine, ruin my horses, smash my cab, and, worst of all, make a lot of debts. If I tell you to stop at my country house, you make havoc of my garden, kill my rabbits, wound my pointers, fight with the peasants, and get their wives in the family way, and it is time to put a stop to this sort of thing. I can quite well understand that you do not wish to enter the army, for you have not the habit of obedience, so I shall not press the matter, for I should be afraid of hearing, in a short time, that you had been condemned to be shot for insolence to your superior officers, and as we are at peace now, it would not be good for you to pass all your youth in garrison towns. But you are twenty years of age, I am getting old, and the occupation which you impose upon me is too fatiguing, and so I wish to have a little rest, and as I intend to make you become different, I am going to get you married."

"Me, uncle, married!"

"Yes, Gustave, you married."

"To make me different?"

"Will you not be able to be satisfied with your wife?"

"That depends upon circumstances, for she must please me, in the first place, and then she must love me."

"Do you take me for a fool, nephew? Do you think that I have not considered all that? The young lady will please you, because a girl who has been well brought up always loves the man who is destined to become her husband, and besides that, you are a good-looking young fellow, and women, as a rule, rather prefer rakes, and then this marriage will cause me great pleasure, and I hope you reckon that as something."

"My dear uncle, my most ardent wish is to prove my attachment for you."

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"If that is so, Gustave, you will go to M. de Berly's country house, which is situated about eight leagues from here, between Louvres and Senlis, where you will see his niece, Aurelia, whom I have destined for your wife."

"But, uncle, I know neither M. de Berly nor his niece."

"You will soon get to know them, and de Berly is a very good sort of man, whom I knew formerly when he was an army contractor, and as he expects you, you will be very well received."

"And what about you, uncle?"

"You see I cannot move just now; this infernal gout keeps one in Paris, but as soon as I get rid of it I shall come and join you. Meanwhile you will be able to get on without me, and amuse yourself very well out shooting; for de Berly is mad on that."

"Very well uncle, I will go and see this Mlle. Aurelia, as you wish it."

"You will not repent it, you . . . you rogue, and as you have been reasonable, I will overlook your past follies, and here are a hundred louis to pay for your journey, and as pocket money whilst you are at de Berly's."

"How kind you are, uncle!"

"But mind, no nonsense, no elopements, no duels or disguises. You must break altogether with milliners and opera dancers, and above all, have nothing more to do with little Lizzie, the object of your first love, or I am sure that she is at the bottom of all your disobedience."

"I can assure you that she is not."

"At any rate, you must turn over a new leaf, or I can tell you I shall get seriously angry and take strong measures to make you alter your conduct."

"That is all over, uncle, and I am a different character."

"Take the grey; it is ten o'clock, and you will be at the château before dinner time. I have told Benoît to get your portmanteau ready, and he shall go with you as your valet, instead of that scamp Dubois whom I have just dismissed."

"What, uncle, Benoît, your porter's son? why he is as stupid as an owl."

"So much the better, for you will not be able to employ him to carry on any intrigues for you, so now be off and do as I tell you."

Gustave embraced his uncle, mounted the grey horse, and, followed by Benoît, started for M. de Berly's country-house.

CHAPTER III AUNT AND NIECE

On his way through La Villette, le Bourget and Vauderland, a road, by the way, which does not offer any great attractions to the traveller, Gustave was meditating, and he thought that, before marrying, people must know each other and find out that they are suitable to each other, and this was a very sensible reflection for such a hare-brained young fellow to make. He had quite made up his mind not to take Mlle. Aurelia unless she were pretty, amiable, gentle, modest, sensible and constant, in a word, such a woman as he had not yet met with; and at twenty Gustave had all the experience of a man of much maturer years, as he had begun his follies very young, which has its good and its bad side; its good side, because it gives a man the knowledge of the female heart; and its bad side, because a young man is apt to believe that he knows it thoroughly, and so is often deceived, when he thinks he cannot possibly be so.

Gustave had an inexhaustible fund of gaiety, and when in addition to that his purse was well lined, he saw everything in a rosy hue. In this happy frame of mind our hero passed through Louvres and went on towards Senlis, near which place de Berly's stable was situated. The nearer he got to it, however, the more curious he became to know M. de Berly and his niece, whom he did not remember to have seen at his uncle's, which was, indeed, nothing extraordinary, as he was nearly always from home, and in order to avoid Colonel Moranval's sermons he very scarcely went into society with him.

Remembering that Benoît, his new servant, who was the porter's son, sometimes helped to wait at table, he thought that he might know something about the people to whom he was going, and so he made up his mind to ask him.

Gustave's new footman was a young fellow of eighteen, as long as a hop-pole, fat as a Turk, fresh as a rose, ruddy as a cherry, awkward as a peasant wench, stupid, and just about as stubborn as a donkey usually is.

On looking at him, for he had forgotten all about him whilst they were on the road, Gustave burst out laughing, and certainly his whole appearance was enough to provoke it. Benoît had never been on horseback before, but he was afraid to tell Colonel Moranval this, for he was as frightened of him as fire, and so he had bravely made up his mind, and had got across the smallest horse, on which he sat as stiff as a pikestaff, and as serious as a beadle.

Gustave stopped his horse so that Benoît might overtake him, but as the latter had got his papa to give him a detailed lesson on the duties of a servant towards his master, and had vowed never to deviate from them, he remembered that he ought always to keep at a respectful distance from M. Gustave, and so, firm in his principles, he stopped as soon as he saw his master do so.

"Come on," Gustave cried out impatiently.

"No, sir, I am not so stupid."

"What do you mean by not so stupid? Come here, I say."

"I know my duty too well, sir, and shall do nothing of the sort."

"But, you idiot, when I order you to?"

"That makes no difference, sir; I know the respect due from a servant to his master, and I shall not come nearer."

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"You confounded idiot; so I suppose I must go and fetch you."

Gustave rides towards Benoît, and the latter's horse starting aside, throws his rider into the ditch. The long fellow picks himself up, crying, and very much dissatisfied at the results of his respect for his duty, and Gustave pulls his ears to make him mount his horse again, and forces him to stay by him.

"Well, Benoît, I hope you intend to listen to me now?"

"Yes, sir, yes, hi! hi! hi! . . ."

"Why, you great baby, you are actually crying."

"Well, sir, I think I have damaged myself."

"Where?"

"Well, sir, it is . . . it is . . ."

"Cannot you speak?"

"Well, sir, it is somewhere about the bottom of my back and the top of my thighs."

"You idiot! could you not say it was your stern?"

"Well, sir, I hope I know my duty . . ."

"You will make me swear with your continual duty. You can bathe the place when we get to the house to which we are going. But now just tell me if you know M. de Berly? Did you ever see him at my uncle's?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"Well, sir, he is a man, neither tall nor short, neither good-looking nor ugly."

"How old is he?"

"Neither old nor young, sir."

"I am very much the wiser, certainly; and his niece, how old is she, and what is she like?"

"Well, sir, as for that, I do not remember ever having seen her."

"Come along, you are not the least use. There is a house of some pretensions yonder, and it will be M. de Berly's, so let us go on."

They had arrived at the end of their journey, and on asking a villager, and finding that he was not mistaken, he went into a large courtyard, followed by Benoît, dismounted, and asked for M. de Berry. The lodge-keeper asked him to walk into the garden, where he would be sure of finding his master, unless he preferred to wait for him in the drawing-room, and Gustave, who was impatient to see his host, chose the former, and so leaving Benoît behind, and recommending him to the care of the lodge-keeper, he went across a terrace and into the garden.

He went through several walks of lilac and honeysuckle, admiring the way in which the garden was kept, and the taste with which it was laid out; thick shrubberies, the entrance to which was almost entirely hidden by roses, seemed to invite to repose or love; statues adorned the spot, and these were not the sorrowful Danaïdes, unhappy Tantalus or hideous Polyphemus or the Centaur, or revolting Philocetes, which

presented themselves to the eye, but they were Venus undoing her girdle, Cupid with his darts, and the Graces, and if Vulcan was to be seen at the bottom of the grotto, the figure of the poor lame god did not bring up any unhappy thoughts.

Gustave was admiring everything, and thinking that the master of the house must be a man of taste, when, at the turn of a walk, he saw a young lady sitting reading under a tree, and, not doubting that it was Aurelia, M. de Berly's niece, his destined bride, he stopped to look at her. Happy Gustave! With what pleasure did he admire a charming mouth, a fair complexion, a well-shaped nose, a good forehead, shaded by light brown locks, a slender waist, and curved and rounded outlines, a small foot, which scarcely seemed to touch the ground, and a bosom, every movement of which made our hero's heart beat violently. He could not see her eyes, as they were bent on to her book, but he could guess what they were like, and imagine beforehand their expressions of softness and of voluptuous languor. Not being able to resist his agitation any longer, Gustave went towards her, and on hearing him, the young lady looked up from her book and straight at him.

"I was sure of it," Gustave thought, "the most lovely eyes in the world."

"What do you want, Monsieur," said a voice that went straight to the young man's heart (whose heart, as you know, was of very inflammable material).

"I beg your pardon, mademoiselle . . . I wanted . . . I came . . . but really, I do not want anything now I have met you."

The young lady who had smiled at hearing herself addressed as mademoiselle, seemed flattered at the effect the sight of her had produced on the good-looking young fellow, who, in spite of his emotion, did not appear either awkward or shy. Whatever may be said, the heart, good qualities, and amiability are the chief thing, though good looks and a good carriage are not to be despised. Ask girls, and even married ladies, whether they are not in the first place attracted by that. I am quite aware, that if a man is possessed of nothing but physical advantages, he soon ceases to please, and it is only right that it should be so, and is a great compensation for nice people, who are not good-looking.

"May I ask, Monsieur," said the lady, after looking at Gustave, "whether you happen to be the young gentleman we are expecting, M. Gustave St. Réal?"

"That is my name, mademoiselle, and I take it that you are Mlle. Aurelia, M. de Berly's niece?"

"Oh! dear no, Monsieur, I am M. de Berly's wife."

"His wife! M. de Berly is married, and you are his wife."

"Yes, Monsieur."

Gustave could hardly get over it; he did not know that M. de Berly was married, and married to a woman who was not yet twenty years of age. So this pretty young person was Mlle. Aurelia's aunt, and no possible niece could have any attractions by the side of such an aunt as Madame de Berly. However, Gustave said to himself, "I will wait before deciding; this house seems to me to be the abode of the graces, and no doubt I shall see another miracle of beauty."

Madame de Berly now suggested that she should take Gustave to her husband, who was impatiently waiting for him. "He will be delighted to see you," she said, "and so will my niece, Aurelia."

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These latter words Madame de Berly said with a smile and an arch glance at Gustave, who, for his part also, tried to read the eyes of his charming guide, and thus they went on a little distance, preoccupied, exchanging looks, sighing, and silent. The words, "Here is my husband," at last roused Gustave from his thoughts. Let me have a look at the husband, the fortunate mortal who is the possessor of so many charms, he said to himself. He must indeed have many good qualities of mind and body, to have captivated such a charming woman.

On looking at him, however, he saw a little, fat, red-faced, pimply man of about fifty, with small, stupid eyes, and a mouth from ear to ear.

Another surprise! the young man said to himself, with difficulty suppressing the laughter which the sight of M. de Berly excited in him, and this latter surprise, though not so pleasant as the former, yet caused him an amount of secret pleasure, the reason for which the intelligent reader will easily guess.

"My dear," the young lady said, "allow me to introduce M. Gustave St. Réal to you."

"I am delighted to see you, young gentleman; I have been expecting you for the last fortnight. Your uncle, my old friend, has often spoken to me about you, and tells me that you are a sad dog. Well, never mind, I was the same myself, and when we are young our passions are strong, and so it is only natural. This is my wife, my young friend, and I flatter myself that she is as good as most of them, and I hope you will be good friends."

Meanwhile Gustave was having his hand shaken, was being embraced, and made much of, without a moment's time to reply to M. de Berry's civilities, for it was impossible to get in a word with him when once he began (and this is the case with many people) so Gustave seeing this, had to be satisfied with bowing and smiling, and looking at Madame, who smiled.

"My dear wife, has Aurelia been told that our young friend has arrived?"

"I do not know whether . . ."

"Never mind, all the better if she does not know anything about it, as we will surprise her, for she does not expect to see you to-day, and she will be very delighted. Upon my word, I am not at all surprised that you have had some nice little adventures in Paris; it is just like me, and I was very well off in that way. I was the darling of the ladies, but now I am very virtuous; you had better ask my wife. But are you fond of shooting? I am very fond of it myself, passionately, I might say. I pass whole days in the woods in tracking roe, deer, and hares, but, then, I am a very good shot; you had better ask my wife."

"Well, Monsieur, I only . . ."

"Oh! you do? That is all right, so we will have famous sport, and you shall see how full of game my preserves are, and I have some capital dogs and splendid guns. But I think it must be dinner-time, for my stomach never deceives me, so come along, and let us sit down, and we shall get better friends at dinner, and be able to have a good talk with a glass of wine in our hands, that's the best way. I can see that you are a clever young fellow, and I shall be very glad to have a long chat with you."

On reaching the house, whilst M. de Berly gave his orders to the servants, and, according to his custom, went to have a look into the kitchen, Gustave gave his arm to

Madame, and went with her into the drawing-room, where a young lady was sitting at the piano.

"This is Mademoiselle Aurelia," Madame de Berly said.

Good heavens! What a difference between the aunt and the niece, and Gustave's looks soon showed Madame de Berly what he thought, though she pretended not to notice his silent avowal, but he fancied he perceived that she did not seem at all displeased at his evident preference.

Mlle. Aurelia was tall, straight, and certainly weighed a good deal, and though she was not absolutely ugly, there was nothing very agreeable in her appearance; her eyes were large, but seemed starting out of her head; she had a thin mouth, a long aquiline nose, and her complexion was more yellow than white, and this, with a general air of prudery, gave to Mlle. Aurelia a certain appearance which was not calculated to inspire either love or friendship.

The young lady got up, when Madame de Berly spoke to her, bowed very stiffly to Gustave, and resumed her place at the piano.

"And this," Gustave said to himself, "is the woman that they want me to marry! Upon my word, my dear uncle is too kind; however, I am very glad to have come to this house, for I shall certainly not marry the niece, if the aunt is at all impressionable . . ."

Madame de Berly begged Gustave to consider himself quite at home in their house. "You see," she said, "that my husband does not make any ceremony, and so pray do the same, and I will try and make your abode here as little irksome to you as possible."

"Oh! Madame, to be near you must indeed be delightful," and saying this he seized her hand in a transport of pleasure, whilst the niece continued to run her hands up and down the keys of the piano, and though the aunt instantly withdrew her hand, yet the look she gave Gustave was anything but a severe one.

"Come, come, let us have dinner," M. de Berly exclaimed, coming into the drawing-room; "what on earth are you doing here instead of coming into the dining-room? Oh! I see how it was; you were looking at each other with tender glances and sighs, was not that so, my wife? they have already begun to sigh for each other?"

"Well, I cannot exactly . . ."

"Oh! that is all right, but you do not like to speak of such things, you are too cold and reticent, and cannot believe that people may be in love like that, quite suddenly. You do not know, Gustave, how strange my wife is! She only laughs and makes fun when I tell her of the passions I inspired in days gone by. But come, dinner is getting cold. Give your arm to Aurelia, my young friend, and my dear niece, do try and smile a little pleasantly. The fact is she is very shy,"—adding in a whisper to Gustave—"innocence itself, but the devil will not lose anything on that score."

At dinner Gustave was placed between Madame de Berly and Mlle. Aurelia and he thought to himself,— "At any rate if my left-hand neighbour bores me, my neighbour on my right will make it up to me."

During the first course M. de Berly, who was nearly as great an eater as he was sportsman, gave his listeners a little peace, so that his wife could talk with Gustave, who was delighted with her sense, her brightness, and her evident amiability, but when

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the niece, who spoke rarely, made an observation, she did so with an amount of deliberation and affectation, which evinced great pretension under the veil of false modesty.

"By-the-bye," said M. de Berly, who found time to speak whilst his wife was cutting up a magnificent fowl, "I suppose that tall young fellow I saw picking sorrel just inside the vegetable garden, was your servant?"

"Yes, I forgot to mention him to you, but I am very sorry he has taken the liberty . . ."

"Well, there is no harm in picking sorrel, and I hope he will make my servants give him all he wants."

"I am afraid, Monsieur, that he is sure to be guilty of some stupidity or other, for he is an awful fool, whom my uncle thinks a great deal of."

"Weil, never mind, he will soon rub off the rust here, and all my servants have all their wits about them, which is what I want, but then, as people say: *Like master, like man.*"

Gustave could not help laughing to himself at M. de Berly's awkwardness, who whilst intending to pay him a compliment did quite the reverse, but he had made up his mind to find all that his host might say or do quite perfect. Without saying a word, he had already begun to make himself understood on his right by putting out his knee and his foot, and though at first the knee and foot that he encountered had been withdrawn, at last the lady was obliged to yield to necessity, and though she did not look at Gustave any more, she seemed much agitated, and her heart beat violently, though there was nothing to express either indifference or anger.

He may be thought to have been very rashly enterprising at having already set to work with knees, feet and hands, but then these sad dogs da not lose much time, and they cannot be blamed for it, as it is just as well to find out as soon as possible whether one pleases the adored object and is likely to be loved by her. You may think that a woman's natural modesty will be alarmed, and no doubt you are right; modesty ought to be respected, but my dear reader, if you only could, some day or other, quietly, without being seen, get under the table where pretty women and nice men are sitting side by side, you would certainly notice some very funny things; but on coming up again you would see eyes cast down, and modest, calm, and ingenuous looks, so you may be sure that, very often, what is not seen does not alarm modesty.

At dessert M. de Berly was quite his talkative self again, and he gave a full and true account of the particularly skilful manner in which he had killed a roebuck, that he had wounded a week previously, and of the courage which he had shown in firing, almost point-blank, at a blind wolf that had been ravaging the neighbourhood for days past.

When they retired to the drawing-room, after dinner, some neighbours came in, and M. de Berly played backgammon, at which he fancied he was particularly good. Madame de Berly sang with great taste, and played her own accompaniments charmingly, and Aurelia hammered away on the piano like a horse on the pavement, whilst her uncle called out from his game, —

"Just listen to my niece, what nerves, what vigour! If she is not a first-class player, I do not know who is."

They separated for the night at an early hour, and as Madame de Berly had told Gustave exactly what the habits of the house were, they again begged him not to stand upon ceremony, but to make himself quite at home. On seeing her retiring with her husband, the young man could not suppress a sigh, thinking of Venus and Vulcan, and the recollection of the statues which ornamented the garden made him feel certain that Madame de Berly had selected the gods and goddesses, and so, inspired by hope, he made a low bow to the magnificent Aurelia and followed a footman, who showed him to his room, but on his way thither, he met Benoît limping.

"Here you are at last, you fool, why did you not come sooner?"

"Oh! dear, sir, I can hardly move, since using the specific of which cook told me."

"Did you happen to put sorrel on your posteriors."

"Yes, sir, for they told me in the kitchen that it was the very best in the world for broken skin, and so I went and picked some, and they chopped it up for me, and I made a poultice of it, but it stings me terribly, and I begin to think that they have been playing me a trick."

"My poor fellow, I see that M, de Berly's servants know a thing or two, but that is all the better, as your stay in this house will teach you something."

"Well, sir, if they often teach me in that way, I shall not get over it."

"Go to bed, you idiot, and try and not be taken in another time."

"Yes, sir; here is my room, and if you want me, you will only have to call me."

"You can go to sleep quite quietly, for I certainly will not disturb you to help me in any of my projects."

Whilst Gustave was undressing, he thought about the young lady with whom he felt very much in love, Benoît got into bed, anathematising the cook and her sorrel, and while the master was sighing with love and hope, the man was groaning and making faces. Our hero dreamt of Madame de Berly, who appeared to him more kind, beautiful, and seductive than ever; it seemed to him that he was in a rose and myrtle grove with her, and that, far from curious eyes, he had his arm round her slender waist and her voluptuous form, and from her lips he stole a kiss which filled him with the delirium and intoxication of bliss, whilst his servant only dreamt that he was bathing his unfortunate hide.

CHAPTER IV. A GAME OF BILLIARDS.

The next day Gustave was in the garden the first thing in the morning, and I do not know how it happened, but Madame de Berly also was there, and so, of course, they met.

"Up already, Madame!" he said.

"Yes, Monsieur, in the country I like to be up early."

"I am very glad to have met you."

"Well, I suppose it is very probable that whilst you are staying here we shall meet often."

"Oh! Madame, what would I not . . ."

"My husband has gone shooting, and wished to have you called to go with him; but I told him that he ought to let you rest to-day, at any rate; but perhaps, I have been the means of depriving you of a pleasure."

"Certainly not, Madame; I can find no pleasure in anything when you are not present."

"Really, M. St. Réal, you are too polite!"

"Not at all, I am only saying what I feel."

"You are very foolish, and I think you are making a mistake, and forgetting that you ought to devote all your attentions to my niece, as you are going to marry her."

"I certainly have no intention of marrying her, Madame, and though my uncle wishes it, I certainly shall never marry a woman whom I can never love."

"Who knows? Perhaps when you know Aurelia better, for at present you know nothing of her, your feelings may change, for I am sure she is very charming . . ."

"It seems to me, Madame, that you wish to force me to love her?"

"I ought to do so, Monsieur, as this marriage would please your uncle, who is so fond of you."

"So I suppose my own happiness counts for nothing?"

"Well, M. St. Réal, from all I hear, up to this time, your happiness has consisted only in inconstancy, and I believe that gallantry has been your chief amusement, and, though I know that nearly all men are changeable, and young men especially . . ."

"I have altered all that."

"You, when you are only twenty?"

"But, Madame, you who are pleading so prettily to me are even younger."

"But I am married, Monsieur."

"Alas! you are, Madame."

"And so you intend to leave us? For, of course, as you feel that you can never love Aurelia you will not care to stay here long?"

"Oh! Madame, I shall only leave you when you tell me to go."

"What an idea! We shall be delighted to have you here, and I am sure your stay here will be the cause of the greatest pleasure to . . . to all of us; and I hope that in seeing more of Aurelia . . ."

"Pray, Madame, do not speak any more about that subject."

"Very well, I will leave it alone for to-day, and will show you all over the grounds."

Gustave offered his arm, which she took, and they went through the grounds, which were about three acres in extent, in which there was a thick shrubbery, where the heat of the sun could not penetrate, and also a moss-covered grotto where Madame de Berly went nearly every day to read or work. They mounted a rock whence there was a fine view, and then passed some thick hedges.

"Madame," Gustave said, "what is that place which we have not been into?"

"Oh, that is a labyrinth."

"A labyrinth? Let us go and see it, for I am very fond of places where one might lose oneself."

"But, Monsieur, I do not know whether I ought, . . . however, if you wish to see it, we may as well go in."

She rightly thought that to refuse to enter the labyrinth would be an exhibition of fear, and that fear is a sign of weakness, and so, not wishing to let Gustave guess what she, perhaps, was afraid to acknowledge to herself, she yielded to his request. Besides this, the young man had really said nothing to her that is not said to all women, and certainly nothing to alarm her. His eyes certainly were very expressive, and constantly looking into hers; they were tender, ardent, eloquent, but perhaps M. de St. Réal's eyes were always like that, and then he had only come the day before and there could surely be nothing to fear yet, so certainly she ought to take him into the labyrinth.

You must not imagine, dear reader, that anything occurred that I dare not mention; no, they walked about in it, and that was all. Gustave, indeed, seized her hand and tried to kiss it, but she quickly withdrew it; he tried to lose his way, but she soon made him find it again, and so he was obliged to leave the labyrinth, as much in love as ever, but without having made any progress.

"By-the-bye," Madame de Berly said, "I had nearly forgotten to show you our billiard-room, and as we only spend the summer here, it is in the garden."

The billiard-room was close to the ground-floor drawing-room, and only separated from it by a few trees. Surrounded by hedges, honeysuckles and lilacs, it was lighted only from the top, and within there were handsome shrubs, whilst turf benches all around made it look like a natural grove.

"What a delightful spot!" Gustave observed.

"Do you play billiards, Monsieur?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Then I reckon on you kindly to teach me. My husband plays very little, for he cares for nothing but backgammon, and besides that, a husband so rarely has the patience to teach his wife anything."

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"Madame, I shall be delighted to teach you, and if you like we can begin at once."

"No, we have no time now, for breakfast will be waiting for us."

"Well, then, I shall remind you of your promise to-night."

They left the billiard-room and went into the house.

How pleasant it is to be with a pretty woman whose husband is fond of shooting, for one can be with her alone for the whole day. "My dear uncle," Gustave said to himself, "how very kind of you to have sent me to keep Madame de Berly company!"

In order to deceive Colonel Moranval the better, he wrote and told him that he was enjoying himself very much at the de Berlys', that they were all very kind to him, and that he meant to stay as long as they would keep him.

Although he had said nothing about Aurelia, the Colonel was delighted with his letter, as he did not suspect that he would not get to love the girl whom he had destined for him, and so, quite reassured on his account, as he seemed disposed to do all that his uncle wished, the Colonel wrote to M. de Berly telling him that all was going on as they hoped, and he also sent Gustave further supplies of money.

Meanwhile, however, the nephew was advancing his own matters. Julia (that was Madame de Berry's name) could not help liking Gustave. In the country one gets rid of the distant manners of the town, and intimacies are soon struck up, and so, in the course of conversation our young man discovered that Julia, whose stern parents had married her without, in the least, consulting her wishes, had never seen her intended husband till the marriage contract was signed. She did not indeed complain of M. de Berly, who was a complaisant husband, and let his wife do as she pleased, but love in such an unsuitable union was out of the question. He was more than twice his wife's age, stupid, and a silly chatterer, whilst she was clever and affectionate; he was ugly, she was charming; he called love nothing but the requirements of the senses, but Julia was made to appreciate all the refinements of the passion, so really the most she could do was to esteem her husband. Thus parents, who give their daughters to men whom they do not love, condemn them never to experience the sweetest feelings of nature. Poor women! they indeed require a large amount of virtue; they are the weaker sex, the constant object of our devotion and our seductive arts, whereas we ought to show more strength, more insensibility, more firmness. The whole matter is very badly arranged, and these gentlemen who drew up the civil code, ought rather to have consulted the code of nature.

That rascal Gustave had such thoughts as these when looking at Julia sitting at her embroidery frame, whilst Mlle. Aurelia was thumping the melody of Beniouski, which she sang with the vigour of a cathedral chorister, on the piano. After dinner they went into the billiard-room, where Gustave gave Julia lessons, and what a charming pleasure it was to have so charming a scholar! He would always put the balls on the middle of the table, so as to force Madame de Berly to stretch out into it a little, and then he could admire her lovely form, which a thin muslin dress covered without concealing. To guide his pupil's hand, he would put his arm round her slender waist, he sometimes almost touched her alabaster neck, and his eyes looked into a bosom which he longed to kiss. Julia, indeed, complained, sometimes that he made her do the same stroke over too many times, but Gustave was such a pleasant master that it was impossible to be vexed with him.

Mlle. Aurelia did not play billiards; she thought it beneath her dignity to learn such a masculine game. Her eyes expressed surprise, mingled with annoyance, every time that Julia and Gustave went into the garden, but she did not dare to make any observations on what she called* to herself her aunt's folly.

Every morning M. de Berly wished to take Gustave out shooting with him; but under the pretext of having hurt his knee, and of a slight limp, he had hitherto escaped going out in his host's company. Colonel Moranval's letter had pleased M. de Berly very much, for, as he knew nothing about love, he felt quite certain that Gustave adored his niece, and he even went so far as to attribute the young man's refusal to go after hares with him to his passion, and to his desire of remaining near Aurelia.

A certain M. Desjardins had arrived at M. de Berly's three days after Gustave. He was a tall, thin man, of about fifty, a great eater, a great player of backgammon and billiards, and a great liar. As he only had a small income, he managed not to touch it by habitually staying with other people, and he had all the requisite qualities for a parasite; he was complaisant, a flatterer, and, when his entertainers liked it, a backbiter. He could do a little of everything; he played the violin well enough to take his part in one of Pleyel's sonatas, he drew fairly well, and could make silhouette portraits, he danced when necessary, and could play nearly all games. Every evening M. de Berly and he played backgammon, and, whilst doing so, he found an opportunity of addressing compliments to Madame de Berly, of praising Mlle. Aurelia, of stroking the cat, and giving small cakes to the dog.

For a fortnight Gustave had been at the house, daily getting more in love, but obtaining no encouragement from Julia. He had declared his passion, and she had listened and made fun of him, for though she wished to please him, she did not intend to forget her duties as a wife; the billiard lessons continued, however, and were becoming very dangerous, as they were always alone whilst they were going on. The thick hedges which surrounded the room screened them from view on the outside; the master was tender, amiable, and enterprising, and the pupil, who was only too feeling, felt that her courage was failing, and so she refused at last to go on taking lessons.

"I can see," Gustave thought to himself, "that she does not love me,—she is a mere coquette who is amusing herself at my expense, and I am a fool to think about her, but it is all over, and I will not speak to her or even look at her again."

Having made this resolution, Gustave tried to make love to Aurelia, but the task was too painful.

The days no longer passed in the same pleasant manner; Madame de Berly remained at her embroidery frame and never left the drawing-room, and in the evening she watched the backgammon players or listened to the indefatigable Aurelia. She appeared sad and dreamy, but was always kind and agreeable towards her husband's friends, and did not seem to notice Gustave's ill-humour or his pretended preference for her tall niece, or his smart sayings about the coquetry of women. The young man got into a rage and did not know what to do; in despair he went out shooting with M. de Berly, and shot at the dogs instead of at the hares, and mistook magpies for woodcocks, and a great pig for a wild boar. In the evening he tried to play backgammon, but he got pegged time after time, and let the dice and dicebox fall; he tried to sing, and found he had no voice; he tried to play the violin, and his hand trembled so that he played all wrong and out of time; in fact he did not know what he was doing, so that M. de Berly

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joked him, M. Desjardins laughed at him, Aurelia opened her eyes wide, and Julia sighed.

"Well," M. de Berly thought, "the young fellow is madly in love with my niece, that is quite clear, I think."

The precious uncle spoke about the matter to Desjardins, who always agreed with him on principle, and with his wife, who merely said she hoped it was so.

"Just look, my dear wife, there is Gustave sitting alone in a corner; just see how melancholy and thoughtful he looks. Of course, love is the cause of all that, I know all about it. Just remember how different he was when he first came here; why, he did nothing but laugh, chatter, and sing, and now he does nothing but sigh and look up to the ceiling, and you know what terrible mistakes he makes out shooting; the whole thing is enough to make anybody die of laughter. Upon my word, he is hard hit, and so I intend to write to his uncle, the Colonel, to hurry matters on, for we must not let the poor fellow languish like this; don't you think so, Desjardins?"

"You are quite right, for . . ."

"As for my niece, she does not say a word, but I am quite sure the little baggage does not think the less. If the Colonel only had not got his confounded gout, he would have been here a long time ago, and I long to let him see what a reformed character his nephew is."

"But, my dear, are you quite sure? . . ."

"Yes, my dear wife, I am quite certain that their marriage will be as happy as ours is; but, look here, why don't you play billiards as you used to do?"

"Why, because . . ."

"At any rate it used to amuse the unhappy lover, and we must try and liven him up a little, and he will find plenty of time for reflection after he is married. Gustave, my wife has been complaining that you will not give her any more billiard lessons . . ."

"But, my dear, I never said anything of the sort."

"Do hold your tongue, and let me do as I like."

"I shall be ready," Gustave replied, "to go on with them whenever Madame likes, and I am at her orders now," he continued, rising from his seat.

"That is a good job; don't be quite so mopish as you have been lately, young gentleman. I am going to have a game at backgammon with Desjardins, and so have the billiard-room lighted up; you will have plenty of time for several games before supper; and now, Julia, go with M. Gustave, for you see he is waiting for you."

She could not possibly refuse as M. de Berly wished it, and, when Gustave offered her his arm, she could feel that her hand trembled violently, at which he experienced a vague presentiment of pleasure and of hope.

The footman left the billiard-room as soon as he had lighted the Argand lamps, and they were left altogether alone. Madame was very silent, but she seemed much agitated, and Gustave seemed so unhappy, that she must indeed have been stonyhearted not to have pitied him.

"What has been the matter with you for the last few days, Monsieur?" Madame de Berly asked at length, in a weak voice; "you never even deign to speak to me."

"What is the matter with me, Madame? I surely need not tell you that I adore you, whilst you hate me."

"I detest you! How unjust you are, for if that were so, should I fear to listen to your words?"

But Julia had said too much. Gustave seized her hand and placed it on his heart.

"Leave me," Madame de Berly said, "you will be the cause of my unhappiness . . . Oh! Gustave, don't, don't take advantage of my weakness."

But a lover, who is told that his love is returned, pays no attention to anything but his own ardour. Julia, indeed, shed tears, but Gustave pressed her to his bosom and dried them away with his kisses.

"Wife! Wife! "M. de Berly cried, who, as the reader knows, was separated from the billiard-room only by a few trees and a hedge which, indeed, prevented anybody seeing from one room to the other, but were no obstacle to hearing; "my dear Julia, I say, I have just been gammoned twice following, which I never remember happening to me before; and how are you two getting on?"

"Oh! very well, Monsieur," Gustave replied "Your wife's progress this evening is very satisfactory."

"So much the better, and, at any rate, when I play with her she will play better, but be sure and try to teach her the double, for that is a capital stroke."

"I am just going to do it, Monsieur."

It must have been a very long game, for Gustave and Julia did not come back to the drawing-room till it was supper-time.

"Well," said M. de Berly, "have you had a good tussle? Who won most games?"

"Well, I think Madame has," Gustave replied.

"Of course you let her do so out of politeness, for she cannot possibly be as strong as you, who have such a capital stroke, and who can bring the balls into block almost as well as I can myself. I say, my dear wife, don't I block very nicely when I try?"

"Certainly you do, but not so well as M. Gustave. I think."

"Oh! you are flattering your billiard master, but you look very tired, and billiards are a very fatiguing game, for you are always on your legs at it."

"All I can say," Desjardins observed, "is that I once played for three days consecutively; we were mad about it, and they brought us our meals, and then when . . ."

"All right, Desjardins, you shall tell us the rest of the story at supper, and you know I am still very much vexed at your having gammoned me twice in succession. I once gave a man . . ."

But they were in the dining-room, and so M. de Berly had to put off his anecdote till another time.

During supper Madame de Berly did not speak, and kept her eyes constantly cast down, and Aurelia did nothing but look at Gustave and her aunt, for these prudes are very often wonderfully far-sighted. M. Desjardins did nothing but eat and agree

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with everything that anybody said, whilst M. de Berly related what a wonderful billiard player he was, and what wonderful strokes he could make. Gustave was very merry, and extremely polite towards M. de Berly, whom he extolled as a sportsman, whilst praising his gallantry towards ladies and his courage in dangers when he met a blind wolf.

The unfortunate husband was delighted with the young man, and when they got up from supper he shook him heartily by the hand, and assured him that his uncle should know how well he was going on.

Will anybody, after that, venture to affirm that there is any such a thing as presentiment?

CHAPTER V. THE CATASTROPHE.

Julia's tears soon dried up; a woman's love is augmented by the sacrifices which she makes for her lover, though it is not the same thing with men, as in their case the very continuance of their happiness bores them.

Love for Gustave had calmed Julia's fears, sighs, tears, and remorse. They played billiards every day, morning and evening. Certainly billiard playing is no crime, but when you want to make such pastime only an excuse, you ought to take proper precautions; and thus it happened one evening that r his game of backgammon being over sooner than usual, M. de Berly went into the garden to see his wife and Gustave playing at billiards, at which he expected to find them.

The happy husband went up to the little hedge, but was much surprised at not seeing the room lighted. "They must have changed their minds," he said to himself, "and I suppose they have gone into the music-room," and he was on the point of returning when he heard a voice, which he knew very well. The devil! it is my wife," and he went into the billiard-room.

How on earth can you manage to play in such a light, I should like to know? "he asked, and as he could not see well he caught his feet in some obstacle, fell over Gustave, who, for some reason or other was sitting on one of the benches of turf with his legs stretched out.

Is that you, Monsieur? I was just going to meet you; allow me to help you up."

"Why, is that you, my dear? "Madame de Berly said, quickly going away from the bank of turf.

"Of course it is I, and confound your idea of playing in the dark, for I believe I have given myself a bump on the forehead."

"But, Monsieur, it is only just dark, and we were going to have the lamps lighted."

"Well you must be very clever to be able to play like that, for you would not be able to find the pockets."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur."

"I should not have come in only I heard my wife's voice, uttering as it seemed to me an exclamation of delight."

"Oh! yes, she had just succeeded in a good shot."

"Very well, then, let us have the lamps lighted, and I will see how you both play, and play against you two."

The lamps are lighted, and M. de Berly played against the two as he wished; Gustave took care to play badly, and Julia was very excited, and so her husband won all the games, at which he was delighted, and that was, at any rate, some compensation.

Mlle. Aurelia, however, did not appear to share her uncle's pleasure, for the way that Gustave went on with Julia seemed to her far too familiar, and the young man's coldness whilst she was singing *Mon Coeur Soupire* seemed to her very extraordinary, and though she did not dare to say anything to her uncle, she began to watch the two, and without exactly knowing why, she wished to find out something or other.

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Benoît had recovered his loss of leather, but he had not got any sharper in other respects; however, in order that he might not fall off again, if he had to go with his master, he used to ride every morning, and began to stick on rather better.

M. de Berly had written a long letter to Colonel Moranval, in which he told him of his nephew's excellent conduct, of his virtuous love for Aurelia, his attentions towards his wife, and his friendship for himself, and the Colonel wrote in reply to express his satisfaction, and stating that, as his gout was rather better, he would come and hasten on the marriage, begging him, at the same time, not to mention it to his nephew, as he wished to surprise him by his unexpected arrival.

Matters were in that condition when one morning M. de Berly was told that it was thought that the marks of a wolf had been seen about three leagues off, near Montaigny, and this news immediately put him on the alert, for what a feather it would be in his cap to kill a brute that might devastate the neighbourhood,

On the whole, however, he did not seem inclined to measure himself with the wolf, but Gustave animated and excited him by calling him beforehand the liberator of the country, and, Desjardins saying that he had once killed four in one day, M. de Berly declared that he should go with him to show whether now he could kill even one.

Desjardins had gone too far to retract, but Gustave had fallen in the shrubbery the day before, and hurt his side, so he said, and so he could not go with them, and besides that, he was not enough of a sportsman to be able to cope with them.

"Well," said M. de Berly, "it is very possible that we shall not find out the whereabouts of the brute to-day, and I do not want to go for nothing, so we will go and sleep at a small farm which I have at Montaigny, so as to be on the spot at daybreak tomorrow morning, and I can assure you, my dear wife, that I shall not come back without bringing you something of the creature to show."

Madame de Berly fully approved of her husband's idea; Gustave looked upon it as a project full of noble and heroic devotion, and so it was agreed that M. de Berly would not come home at night, and everybody was satisfied.

After the sportsmen had gone, fully equipped for the expedition, Gustave and Julia, in their delight at being alone together, determined to make the most of their opportunity. Mdlie. Aurelia did not feel very well, and was confined to her room, and so they were all the more secure. Madame de Berly said that she also felt rather out of sorts, and went and shut herself up in her room, telling the servants to say to anybody who might call that she was not at home, and matters being arranged thus, at six o'clock in the evening Madame had retired to her bedroom, which was closed to all intruders. Most likely Gustave also did not feel very well, for he told Benoît not to come and disturb him.

It was in summer, when it does not get dark till about nine o'clock, and about eight a stranger arrived at M. de Berly's and was told that he could see nobody, for Madame was not well, and Monsieur had gone on a shooting expedition for two days.

"Well," Colonel Moranval exclaimed, for it was he, "I have not come in order to go away again directly, and if M. de Berly is not in, I will wait, and go indoors without ceremony."

As the Colonel spoke in a manner which allowed of no reply, the servants permitted him to go indoors, and he caught sight of Benoît.

"Oh! you have come, sir?"

"Yes, my lad; and I was not expected?"

"No, sir."

"Where is my nephew?"

"He told me this morning that he was not very well, and should keep his room, and I expect he is asleep, as he told me not to disturb him."

"And Madame de Berly?"

"She is not well either, and has given orders that no one is to go near her room."

"Well I suppose I shall be able to see Mlle. Aurelia, for I hope she is neither ill nor out shooting?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, she has a slight feverish attack, and has been in bed all day."

"Why, I declare the house is a regular hospital, so I must wait by myself, I presume."

Just as the Colonel said this a loud trampling of horses was heard, and on going to see what it was the servants saw M. de Berly and Desjardins, whose sport had already come to an end.

"Here you are," the Colonel said, shaking hands with his friend; "your servants told me that you would not be home for two days."

"I thought so, my dear Colonel, but fate decided otherwise, for when we got to the spot where the wolf's tracks had been seen, we found that the brute had just been killed, and I was very sorry, for I felt so bold, so excited. But have you seen your nephew?"

"No, I have only just come; but everybody seems to be ill in your house; your wife and my nephew are lying down . . ."

"That can be nothing, for they did not mention it this morning; but I am delighted with your nephew, he is a charming young fellow. Fancy your writing to me that I should find him a young scamp? He is a very quiet, orderly lad, and his only amusement seems to be in playing billiards with my wife, for he never leaves the house, and is kindness and attention itself."

"I am very glad to hear that, for certainly this part of the country must work wonders, and I am anxious to see him."

"Go to his room; he will be very surprised to see you as he does not expect you, for I did not mention the matter to him."

"Here, Benoît, show me the way to your master's room."

"But if you please, sir, he told me not to let anybody in."

"Well, you idiot, that cannot apply to me, so just show me where it is."

The Colonel followed Benoît, who went with him in fear and trembling, and, on his part, M. de Berly made up his mind to surprise his wife, who did not expect him till next day. He was told that she was in bed, not feeling very well, but nothing stopped him, and being sure he should cause her an agreeable surprise, he ran up as quickly as

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he could to the room. Her bedroom was on the first floor, and looked out on to the garden, and M. de Berly went into the ante-room, but could not get any further as the door was locked on the inside. M. de Berly, however, had a duplicate key, for he and his wife did not occupy the same room, so as to be able to come and share his wife's bed when he felt so inclined.

A duplicate key is a terrible thing, and the cause of many surprises. There certainly was a bolt to the door, but it had not been shot. Unfortunate carelessness!

M. de Berly went straight up to his wife's bed, drew aside the curtain, and he found himself standing face to face with Gustave. Medusa's head, the eyes of the basilisk, the teeth of Cerberus, the claws of Ashdroth, would have produced less effect on the unfortunate spouse than did Gustave's presence, He remained motionless, with his eyes fixed, his mouth open, and his arms stretched out. Julia rolled herself up in the bed-clothes, but Gustave, without losing his head, opened the window and jumped out into the garden, right on to his uncle's back, who, after looking for him in vain in his room, was just then hunting after him, with Benoît's assistance, in the garden.

The Colonel fell on his nose, and Gustave, on recognising his uncle, only ran away all the more quickly, and the uncle, in his turn, recognising his nephew, got up and ran after him. Benoît stood mute with astonishment at seeing his master running about as he was, and the latter, as soon as he got clear of the grounds, and had jumped over all obstacles, ran along till he overtook Lucas and Zephyr, as I had the pleasure of telling you at the beginning of this story.

CHAPTER VI. THE DEVIL AND THE BLACK COW.

"Why! Benoît, is that you?" Gustave said, as soon as he had got his head out of the pond, and could see who the rider was that had been after them for so long, and had just got up with them when Zephyr got stuck in the mud.

"Yes, sir, it is I, and I have been galloping after you with this other horse that I took from precaution. But it is very unpleasant yonder; your uncle is in a terrible rage, and swearing and making more noise than usual, and so when I found out that . . ."

"All right, you shall tell me that some other time, but just now help me to pick up this good man here, who, I hope, is not wounded." Father Lucas was more frightened than hurt, and Gustave had some difficulty in assuring him that he had no bones broken. They got him on to Zephyr again, whose ardour had quite abated; Gustave mounted the horse that Benoît had been leading, and they started off again.

Gustave could not help laughing at the fright that Benoît had caused him, whom he had taken for his uncle; but when he thought of what had happened, and of the critical position in which he had left Julia, he could not help becoming serious, and wondering what she had done. He felt sure that women, who have always plenty of presence of mind, can extricate themselves from the most difficult positions; but there were some cases in which even a woman's wit is of no avail, and Madame de Berly was exactly in one of these positions.

Our hero, however, was not one of those who take troubles seriously, and reflecting that no grief on his part could change the past, he left it to his good star to arrange matters.

At last they got to Ermenonville, and after crossing several small bridges, for there is a great deal of water about there, they got to a small farm-house, which indeed would be called a hut in Paris. Lucas regained his powers of speech when he saw his house, and Zephyr found his legs on getting near his stable.

"Here we are at last; for I had begun to think that I should never get back. And now, Daddy Lucas, we must wake them up indoors."

They got off their horses, and whilst Gustave and Benoît were knocking as loud as they could at the door, Lucas shouted out at the top of his voice,

"Marie-Jeanne! Susan! . . . Nicholas Toupet!"

"Are not you going to call your wife?" Gustave asked him.

"I am not so stupid as that," he replied, "she would be in a rage. I say there! Marie-Jeanne! Nicholas!"

At last a garret window was opened, and a gruff voice asked,

"Is that you?"

"Yes, Nicholas, come down and let us in, there is a good fellow, but take care not to wake up the wife."

After keeping them waiting for about ten minutes, for peasants never hurry themselves, Nicholas opened the yard gate, and seemed much surprised at seeing Gustave and Benoît.

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"They are two men from Paris, whom we must put up for to-night," Lucas said, taking the horses into the stable, "and you must give them the room where my cousin Pierre Ledru sleeps when he comes to see us, and to-morrow my wife will say whether that will do or not."

Nicholas was just going to do as he was told, when Gustave stopped him.

"I say, Father Lucas, you do not intend to send me to bed without any supper, I hope? I have had nothing to eat since three o'clock this afternoon, and I am so hungry by this time, that I tell you plainly that, unless you give me an omelette at the very least, I shall turn the whole house upside down."

Father Lucas was in a great state of embarrassment, for his wife had the keys of the sideboard and larder; but whilst he was considering what was to be done, the most infernal din was heard from a room on the first floor, and the good man recognising his wife's voice, hid himself behind some wine-casks, Nicholas took refuge in the stable, and Benoît, who felt very uncomfortable, ran into the cow-house, Gustave alone remained to brave the storm.

A little fat red-faced woman, her eyes flashing with anger, came running down the stairs.

"What is the meaning of all this noise in the middle of the night? Does that old Lucas imagine that I shall put up with this sort of thing? Why did he not stop at Louvres for the night? Drunken wretch! to come and wake me up when I was asleep! Of course, he has been up to some mischief again."

Just as Madame Lucas finished speaking, she saw Gustave, who was standing quietly in the middle of the yard, waiting till her anger had cooled down a little. Frightened at the sight of a man who did not belong to the place, and whose looks were decidedly very suspicious (for his clothes were covered with green slime from the pond, and his face was bleeding from the effects of his fall amongst the ducks), Madame Lucas had not the slightest doubt that thieves had got into the house, and so she uttered piercing yells, and threw a pitchfork, a spade, and a broom at Gustave's head, and whilst he jumped aside to avoid being struck, she ran down the village calling out, "*Thieves! Murder!*"

Peasants are very heavy sleepers, and so the inhabitants of Ermenonville took no notice of Madame Lucas's cries, till she began to throw stones at the windows, and shout out "*Fire!*" At that word, which must interest everybody, for a village is easily burnt down, the villagers woke up, and came running out, showing how true it is that we always hear what affects us personally, whilst for other people's troubles, . . . But I will not make any reflections on this circumstance, or leave Madame Lucas in her nightdress and sleeping-jacket in the village street.

"Where is the fire? . . . Where is the fire?" the villagers asked her.

"Well, I think it is even worse than that! I believe the Prussians are in the village." "The Prussians?"

"Yes, I am sure of it, for they have already attacked our house, and, perhaps, by this time my little Susan and Marie-Jeanne are already . . .

"We must go to their assistance!" all the women said, who did not at all fear such war risks, but the men were not nearly in such a hurry. They proposed that they should barricade themselves in their own houses, and await the enemy there, whilst one

of the sharpest of them observed that there was no talk of war just then, and that Madame Lucas could not possibly have seen any Prussians.

"Then, at any rate, they are thieves," she replied, "for they made a diabolical noise, and broke open the door. I thought it was my husband coming back from Louvres, and went down to give him a good dressing, when I found myself face to face with a great red and black man."

"Why, that must be the devil himself!" the women all exclaimed.

"Did you see his claws and his tail?" "I cannot say for certain about his tail, but I am quite sure that he had one, and his eyes were as bright as two live coals."

"We must go and look after him," the men said, who were not nearly so much afraid of the devil as they were of the Prussians, whilst the women thought that they ought to go and call the priest to get rid of the devil.

The villagers armed themselves with pitchforks, hoes, mattocks, anything they could find, and formed themselves into a very compact body. Madame Lucas went in the middle, the other women brought up the rear, and so they went to encounter the devil, who had disturbed the repose of the inhabitants of Ermenonville.

Meanwhile Gustave, after escaping Madame Lucas's broom, made up his mind to go indoors and to help himself to some supper, without taking any more notice of the good woman's cries or of her husband's fears, who did not dare to come from amongst the casks, Benoît remained in the cow-house, where he had seized a cow's udder and was helping himself, whilst the noise was going on all around. As for Nicholas, his mistress's cries had so terrified him that he also made sure that robbers were in the house, and so he lay down on his stomach by the side of Zephyr.

Our hero mounted the staircase; he went up two storeys, listened, and heard a noise; he opened a half-open door, when he heard a woman call out, and, walking in, he reached a bed, and, putting out his hands, he was assured that there was somebody in it, so, no doubt, it was some peasant girl. As she did not seem to object to his presence, Gustave thought to himself that he might as well try and appease her, as the means of obtaining an omelette; and so, forgetting Julia, who, no doubt, was unhappy and longing for him, he passed some time chatting with Marie-Jeanne! but that is just like men, and so much for their fidelity.

The peasants arrived in arms at the house just at the moment that old Lucas had made up his mind to leave his casks, and the poor man, terribly frightened at all the noise that he heard, rushed into the middle of the crowd.

"Here is one of them," Mother Lucas exclaimed; "go at him! look how red and black he is!"

In fact, Lucas, who was black with mud from the pond had then been rubbing himself against the freshly-emptied wine casks, which were still stained with wine lees, and so he was absolutely unrecognisable. They rushed at him to give him a thrashing, but he ran away, calling out at the top of his voice, and whilst some were pursuing him, his wife went into the yard followed by the bravest of the rest, calling out for their daughter Susan, as she was afraid that the devil had already carried her off.

The girl opened her window and asked what all the noise was about; she was told that the archfiend had got into her parents' house, and so she certainly had no intention of remaining alone in her room when she already fancied that Satan was under

her bed. As the windows were not high from the ground, she put out first one leg and then another, and began to let herself down, but the skirt of her nightgown caught in a nail, and poor Susan was left in a pretty plight.

"Mother! I am sure that the devil has got hold of the skirt of my nightdress, for the schoolmaster says that he always attacks girls in that way."

"Wait a moment, child, there is a ladder in the cow-house and I will undo you. Father Thomas, will you go and get it for me?"

He went to the cow-house door, which was ajar, but as soon as he opened it, a black cow rushed out, knocked Thomas down, and ran furiously through the villagers, bellowing loudly.

It must be remembered that Benoît had taken refuge there, and as he was fond of warm milk, he had been amusing himself with trying a cow's udder, which certainly could not contain much milk, as she had been milked, as usual, at night, and so she soon got tired of such treatment, and gave evident signs of her feelings, but as he did not know much about such matters, he still went on, and might have fallen a victim to his gluttony, when Thomas, by opening the door, changed the course of events.

The peasants, terribly frightened at seeing a furious cow in their midst, when they were hunting for the devil, did not the least doubt that the poor beast was possessed, for you may know it or not, but it is quite certain that evil spirits are very fond of black, though nowadays they, as well as sorcerers, have gone out of fashion.

The villagers hustled each other, upset one another, let their lights fall, whilst the cow kept on down the street, and Susan remained exposed on the window ledge, divided between her fears of the devil and of the black cow.

Their inability to see only augmented the peasants' terror, but Mother Lucas reassured them by telling them that the cow had gone, and that, no doubt, the devil had taken his departure inside the animal, and that now nothing remained to be done but to restore quiet to the house. But to do that they must see, and so, to get a light, they went to Marie-Jeanne's room, who had the tinder box; and Madame Lucas was one of the bolder ones, who ventured to go up to the garret.

On arriving outside her door, they heard conversation and suppressed murmurs. "There!" exclaimed Mother Lucas, "the devil has got hold of Marie-Jeanne," and the peasants did not venture to open the door, but remained all huddled up together.

"I say, Marie-Jeanne," the old woman asked, "has the devil been into your room?"

"Yes, yes; but leave me alone; "he is no devil at all."

The villagers, who expected to see Satan come out of the room, and make at them with his claws, rushed downstairs, and went into the yard in their fear, where another fright awaited them. The women, who had remained near the cow-house, being fully persuaded that the devil had taken his leave in the shape of a black cow, wished, so that they might be quite assured of the truth of the matter, to see whether the black cow had really gone. The day was beginning to break, but it was impossible to distinguish objects clearly, and so whilst some made a mistake, and went into the stable, others went into the cow-house, and going on, without looking down, they stumbled over Benoît and Nicholas, who were both asleep on the straw, and who yelled out when they felt themselves being trodden on.

The women rushed out, screaming out louder than ever, for they thought they had been walking on demons, and at that moment the men, frightened at what Marie-Jeanne had said, came rushing out of the house as fast as they could. "The house is full of witches," the women said. "The devil is in Marie-Jeanne's room," the men replied, "so we will not stop here, but run away at once."

Susan, on hearing this, put both her legs out of the window, and this time she reached the ground, but she stumbled against Thomas, who knocked up against Mother Lucas, who fell over the greengrocer, who fell over the grocer, and so on. Pushing each other along, they got as far as the château, and then they did not push each other any more, and it was just as well, as they might otherwise have fallen into the moat which surrounds it.

CHAPTER VII. ERMENONVILLE—MARIE-JEANNE—SUSAN.

If people would only reason before abandoning themselves to terror and panic; if they would listen before quarrelling, think before committing an act of folly; if they knew each other well before getting married, their children would no longer be frightened at hobgoblins, girls would not be frightened at having to go down into the cellar, villagers would pass the churchyard at night without shutting their eyes; there would be fewer wars, and men who had been dining together would not suddenly become game-cocks because politics were mentioned. A young man would not try to ruin a respectable girl whom he has no intention of marrying; a married man would not toy with courtesans in preference to his wife; and a man would not ruin himself with gambling; an old man would not marry a young girl, a jealous man a coquette, a sensible woman a drunkard, or a man of broad views a bigot; there would be many more happy households, and children would not so often bear such a striking resemblance to some friend of the family.

In fact, if Madame Lucas had gone downstairs quietly, her husband would not have hidden himself behind the wine casks, Benoît in the cow-shed, Nicholas in the stable, she would not have taken Gustave for a thief or the devil; and all the inhabitants of Ermenonville would have spent the night quietly in their beds.

When the peasants had left the room, Gustave went downstairs with Marie-Jeanne, who was not at all afraid of him. In the yard he found Benoît and Nicholas, who were coming out of their respective *bedrooms*, and they all talked the whole matter over. Stout Marie-Jeanne laughed very much at her mistress's fright; Gustave washed his face, whilst Benoît cleaned his clothes as well as he could, and Nicholas seemed very uneasy about his master and little Susan. Soon they heard loud cries in the street from the returning villagers, but as it was by that time broad daylight, and Marie-Jeanne assured Gustave that he was far too nice-looking to alarm the women, he quietly waited for the good folk whom he had so frightened.

The day restored their courage, and they had already made up their minds to go and search the house, which was certainly bewitched, when they saw a peasant leading a black cow.

"Why, there is the black beast!" the peasant women said.

"Why, there is my husband!" Madame Lucas added.

It was, indeed, Daddy Lucas, who, having washed himself in one of the castle ditches, so that he might not be taken for a thief again, was returning home with the black cow that he had found wandering about all by herself in the streets of Ermenonville.

As soon as they met they explained matters. Lucas complained of the blows that he had received, and told his wife how he had met the young gentleman, how they had tumbled into the pond, and got home in the middle of the night, and so they all began to see that the devil had nothing at all to do with the matter. Mother Lucas scolded her husband for bringing a young man home with him who began by upsetting everybody; but when she heard that he was rich, and had a footman and two horses, and was liberal and inclined to pay his entertainers well, her anger calmed down, and she got into a very good humour, even allowing her husband to kiss her to make up for the blows he had received.

When they got into the house, which was the theatre of the events of the preceding night, Gustave's voice, looks, and manners fully satisfied Madame Lucas. Luckily he had plenty of money, for Benoît had brought away some of his master's clothes, and in one of the waistcoats there luckily was the purse containing the two hundred napoleons which his uncle had sent him, and which he had not spent, and as he saw that it was necessary, above all things, to please Madame Lucas, he put one of them into her hand, to make her forget the fright he had involuntarily caused her.

Immediately the whole house was upset in the endeavours to treat the same man well whom they had, not long before, tried to do for with pitchforks and brooms. He had the best room given to him, breakfast was prepared for him, and Benoît was told that he might milk the cows himself, and drink the milk from morning till night, if he pleased.

There was only one thing that still rather troubled the peasant women, and even Madame Lucas herself, and that was what could Marie-Jeanne have meant by saying the devil was in her room. Something very extraordinary must have happened in the house, so she was sent for, and they asked her.

"I remember, now," she replied, "that I was dreaming, and had the nightmare, when you came upstairs and woke me so suddenly, and then, I suppose, that I just told you my dream."

The villagers laughed till their sides ached at their fright and at the dream of Marie-Jeanne, who laughed also at what she had said, and perhaps also at what she had done, and so calm was re-established, and they all returned to their daily occupations.

After having had a good breakfast, Gustave retired to his own room with Benoît, and ordered him to relate, as well as he could, all that had happened at M. de Berly's after his flight.

"Well, sir," Benoît replied, "I will tell you exactly what I saw and heard. At first your uncle, whom you had knocked down when you jumped upon him out of the window, was going to run after you, but you went so fast, that he soon saw he had not a chance of overtaking you, so he came up to me, and asked me how long it was since you had taken leave of your senses, for when he saw you jumping over hedges and ditches in sheer fright, he thought you had gone mad. At that moment M. de Berly came up in a terrible way, and shouted out to your uncle as soon as he saw him, 'Your nephew has cuckolded me; I have just this moment found him in my wife's bedroom.' 'I was sure of it,' the Colonel replied immediately; 'I would have made a bet that the rascal was making fools of you, of your niece, and of me.' And then he began to swear, like he can swear when he is in a rage, and M. de Berly kept saying something, in which he mixed up his wife, marriage, and the billiard-room. I was going back to the house when I met the cook, you remember, sir, she who advised me to put sorrel on my . . . on my graze, but she is a good woman at bottom, and likes you very much, and so she said to me, 'Well, you idiot, are you going to let your master run about the country without his hat? Go to his room at once, and take his things and his money, then go to the stable and mount your horse, and lead your master's, and gallop after him; you will easily find out which way he has gone, for a half dressed man running about the country is rather a remarkable object!' I did as the cook told me, sir, and you know where I overtook you."

"That will do, Benoît; and now leave me, but never venture, as long as we stay here, to milk the cows without my permission."

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"You may be quite sure of that, sir; I am too frightened, and would not even milk a sheep."

When Gustave was alone, he reflected on what he ought to do. There were no means by which he could correspond with Julia, who besides would be very closely watched, but he longed to tell her that he adored her as much as ever, for that assurance would be some consolation for her, now she had sacrificed her repose and her reputation for his sake.

"I must write to her," Gustave said to himself, "and perhaps by the kind cook's help I may manage to get the letter to her. But I cannot charge Benoît with this commission, he is too stupid, and would make some mistake, and peasants are not exactly fitted to carry on an intrigue. Well, I must go myself—go disguised—but I must wait a little, till the husband's watchfulness has abated, and then I shall succeed more easily. I must spend a week here, at Ermenonville . . . a whole week . . . poor Julia! it is a long time, but I must do it. By that time my uncle will have returned to Paris, and I shall not run the risk of meeting him."

As soon as he had settled this, he began to think what he could do with himself for a whole week in this village, but then the village was Ermenonville, and its name alone is full of touching recollections, whilst its situation would delight anybody, no matter how indifferent to the country. Joseph II dined in a cottage here. Gustave III was here, Jean-Jacques Rousseau spent the last days of his life here, and so M. de St. Réal can surely pass a few days there. And then there was Marie-Jeanne and little Susan, whose pretty face might distract his thoughts from his unfortunate love affair, so he need not be bored at Ermenonville, and he made up his mind to see what the country was like. He went to look for Madame Lucas, whom he found plucking some pigeons, whilst her husband was feeding the fowls.

"I should like, Madame Lucas, to have a look at the village, and see something of the country."

"Don't you know our neighbourhood, Monsieur?"

"No; but I have come on purpose to do so, and I would rather stop in a quiet private house than at an inn, where one is often very uncomfortable."

"You are quite right, Monsieur, and you can stay here as long as you like; it will not put us out at all, on the contrary."

"I am much obliged to you, Madame Lucas."

"You will be delighted with the country; you will see some beautiful sights."

"I have seen some already."

"You cannot have seen anything, as you came at night; but the park of the château is beautiful."

"Can I go in?"

"Yes, my daughter shall go with you, and just at present there is nobody there but the porter . . . Susan, Susan!"

"I will go with Monsieur," Marie-Jeanne said, coming forward.

"Oh! dear no, you must look after the butter and cheese."

Marie-Jeanne did not seem at all pleased at the preference which was shown to Susan, and she set to work at her cheese-making in a very bad temper.

The younger girl put on her pretty cap and her Sunday apron, and got ready very gladly to go with this fine gentleman, but the mother, thinking to please her guest by going with him, ordered her husband to pluck the pigeons and look after the dinner, and got ready to go with her daughter; the child, she thought, might not be safe with a young gentleman from town, and then what would Nicholas Toupet say, on his return from the fields, if he heard that Susan had been out for a walk by herself with a stranger, for you must know that Nicholas Toupet was Mlle. Lucas's intended, so they had to put up with the mother's company. Susan would have preferred to be alone with the young man, though she could hardly tell why, whilst Marie-Jeanne, on the contrary, was very well pleased with the new arrangement. As for Gustave, he looked at Susan, who was sixteen, had blue eyes, pretty teeth, a charming mouth, and beautiful black hair, and sighed when he saw Madame Lucas putting on her apron.

They started and went through part of the village, and as he went, Gustave noticed that all the inhabitants had good teeth, which he set down to the purity of the water.

They went into the park, which was a delightful spot; splendid shade, beautiful turf, brooks, cascades, lonely grottoes, meadows spangled with flowers, a lake which bathes the walls of the château and on the sides of which is an old tower covered with ivy and honeysuckle. From a rotunda in front of the tower, which is called the *Tower of Gabrielle*, there is a splendid view. In the rotunda is an old suit of armour, and everything recalls the knights of old, and the times of chivalry and tournaments. What a pity that such a monument of antiquity should be threatening to decay.

In that part which is called *the Desert* can be seen Jean-Jacques Rousseau's cottage, situated on an eminence, from which one can see the whole surrounding landscape; but this cottage, also, is going to ruin, though surely it ought to be preserved as a memento of a great man.

"If only Julia were with me," Gustave thought to himself, "I should send away Susan and her mother, and sit down on this mossy bank, where so many others have been happy, if one may judge from the inscriptions with which the stone is covered! Lovers are very indiscreet, and it surely cannot be requisite for strangers, and for all who come here, to be informed that M. and Madame came here to make love; it would certainly be more prudent to put only the Christian names."

On leaving the park they went on the other side of the château, and there is *Poplar Island*, where Jean-Jacques is laid. To get at that part of the lake, one must go through an old building that was formerly an old water-mill, but is now no longer habitable. There you are on a walk bordered by willows, and surrounded by water on all sides, and you will see a little boat which enables you to go and see the tomb of the *Man of Nature*, as he is called on the simple tomb which contains his ashes. An inscription on a stake requests those who visit Poplar Island not to write anything on Jean-Jacques' tomb, but this request has not been complied with, for the mania for inscribing one's name on interesting monuments is insatiable.

In Germany, England, and Switzerland there are books kept at the inns near remarkable spots, in which travellers can inscribe their thoughts in prose or verse, and these books last a very long time, for it is far easier to write your name than your thoughts.

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After rowing about a little, Gustave and his companions returned home, where a good dinner awaited them, and they sat down without ceremony or constraint, Susan, her parents, Gustave, Marie-Jeanne, and Nicholas Toupet, all at the same table. As for Benoît, who was always full of his duties, he wished to remain standing behind his master's chair, to wait upon him, and it was not without much difficulty that Gustave persuaded him to sit down at a corner of the table, where he had his dinner.

Mother Lucas, who was rather fond of scandals, told Gustave during the meal all that went on, and the history of all her neighbours, and never stopped, except to tell her husband to pour out the wine, or to tell Susan to sit upright, and, as the latter sat on Gustave's right, he continually looked at her and smiled, which made her blush, for people are not so used to that kind of thing in the country as they are in towns.

Madame Lucas was telling him the story of the carpenter's daughter, whose mother sent her to Paris to make a fine lady of her. "I must tell you," she said, filling up Gustave's plate, who was already unable to eat a morsel more, "that the girl thought she was cocksure of getting on in Paris . . . You are drinking nothing, Monsieur! Your good health, if I may take the liberty. Very well, then, but without anybody exactly knowing how it happened, she suddenly had a carriage and pair . . . Lucas, do give Monsieur something to drink, instead of sitting there, doing nothing. Susan, don't stoop so. Well, the funniest thing, to finish my story—you are eating nothing, Monsieur—is that she came out here in her carriage, and did not stop with her parents, and acted like a princess, and they were well laughed at for wishing to make a fine lady of their daughter. Your good health, Monsieur, and your mother's and father's, and that of all your friends and relations . . . And you will allow that these were right, for . . ."

Here she was interrupted by Nicholas Toupet, who called out and swore because someone had trodden on his bunion. Daddy Lucas, who was just pouring out some wine, let the bottle fall on to the table, and the wine all ran into a dish of rabbit stew; Marie-Jeanne bit her lips to prevent herself from laughing, and Benoît nearly choked himself by bolting a large morsel.

They got up from dinner, and Madame Lucas began to scold her husband for his awkwardness, whilst Gustave talked with Susan; but Marie-Jeanne did not lose sight of them, for a peasant girl's passions are as strong as a town lady's, and passions sometimes make foolish people clever, and clever people very foolish. In the afternoon Gustave went for a walk by himself in the woods, thinking of Julia, and of what means he could employ to get a letter to her. The sight of the shady groves and of the carpet of turf reminded him of the pretty billiard-room and the delightful lessons which his pupil was so fond of having, and, above all things, he cursed his imprudence. If he had only bolted the door.

On returning to the village he thought of Susan, of her timid airs and innocent manners. "Certainly," he said, "I was very wrong to touch her knees and tread on her foot, for she is modesty itself, and I shall be giving her ideas . . . for I have made her blush, and I am sorry for it. I am very fond of women, and that is only natural; I am inconstant, but that is not my fault; I cuckold husbands, but then if I did not do it somebody else would. I might almost say it was doing husbands a service to put their wives to the test, for she who only keeps straight because she has no chance of doing otherwise is not worth much; but I must not seduce an innocent girl, and risk ruining her life, and although I may be called a rake, I have no such faults to reproach myself with hitherto. As for girls who desire nothing better than being seduced, and who know,

when they leave school, in theory what they do not in practice, it is quite allowable to attack them, for they know what a lover wishes for, and what they have to do."

So Gustave returned to the Lucas's with the firm resolution not to make Susan blush any more, as it might offend Nicholas Toupet, and it was quite enough to have trodden on his toes.

They were waiting for supper, for villagers, during the week, know of nothing but of three things, and those are eating, drinking, and sleeping. Gustave ate his supper, as he had nothing else to do, and then he went up to his room, to recover from the fatigues of the preceding days by a good sound sleep. Marie-Jeanne looked at him as he was going upstairs, and tried to read his eyes, but the young man, who really required rest, paid no attention to the village girl's glances, but went in and locked his door.

Benoît was sent to a room under the roof, near where Nicholas slept, and all enjoyed that sleep which had been disturbed by the events of the preceding night.

Marie-Jeanne alone felt no inclination to do as they did; she got into bed, however, but could not sleep.

The poor girl, after tossing to and fro for hours, at last jumped out of bed. She was sorry and annoyed, and had become jealous; one idea gave rise to another. She remembered how Gustave had looked at Susan, and how attentive he had been to her; how she had blushed, and the kick that Nicholas Toupet had received under the table. "I am quite sure," she said, "that they have come to an understanding . . . But suppose she is with him now? I must find that out."

Marie-Jeanne having proceeded to Gustave's room, put her ear to the keyhole, and stooped down to look under the door; she persuaded herself that she heard them talking, moving, and sighing, and so at last, in order to make quite sure, she determined to go and knock at Susan's door, and if she did not answer, there would be no doubt that she was in the gentleman's room, and in that case Marie-Jeanne made up her mind that she would wake the whole house, and Toupet first of all, so that the girl should be punished for daring to go to a man's room, for such a thing is horrible, shocking, abominable.

She went, therefore, and knocked at Susan's door, and when she got no answer, she knocked again, and was going to make a disturbance, when a soft little voice asked, who was there? As Marie-Jeanne recognised Susan's voice, she saw she had made a mistake, and so she turned to go, when somebody gave her a tremendous smack, on which she screamed out and ran away.

Nicholas Toupet loved Susan, whom he was to marry, because he was a good workman, and was a rich uncle's heir. He had also got jealous, for the gentleman from Paris was very good-looking, and had very nice manners, and Susan blushed and looked at him shyly. All that made Nicholas feel very uncomfortable, and so, suspecting something, he could not sleep. He heard somebody walking on the stairs (for the stout girl made a noise even when she walked softly), so he went down and hid himself near Susan's door; he heard somebody coming, and then that somebody knocked at her door, and that must, of course, be a lover. Rage and jealousy acknowledge no difference of rank, so Toupet had slapped Marie-Jeanne as hard as he could, imagining that it was his rival. Running up her uneven staircase, Marie-Jeanne made a false step and fell; Nicholas followed her, and on reaching her, he at once found out his mistake.

"Why, is that you Nicholas?" said the girl, getting up.

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"Well, if it is not Marie-Jeanne! If I had known that, I should not have slapped so hard. I took you for a thief; but what were you doing at Mlle. Susan's door?"

"I went down because I thought I heard somebody calling; and you, Nicholas?"

"I heard a noise, and so I came out of my room to see what it was, but as it is nothing I will go to bed again. Good-night, Marie-Jeanne."

"Good-night, Nicholas."

They both went back to their rooms, quite tranquillised. Nicholas knew that Susan was in her room, and Marie-Jeanne had convinced herself that the good-looking gentleman was alone in his, and they both went to bed, very glad that they had been mistaken.

Susan, as you remember, woke up when Marie-Jeanne knocked the second time and asked who was there; she got no answer, but she heard somebody scream out, and recognised Marie-Jeanne's voice, so she got up anxious about what it might be, and fearing that one of her parents or the strange gentleman were ill.

Gustave, who had also woke up, found some difficulty in going to sleep again, and thought that it was rather unkind of him to let the poor girl who had come to him go away, for he had satisfied himself that it was Marie-Jeanne. She was not so pretty as Susan, but she was not so bad, and as he intended to pass a few days at the villager's, it was as well to humour her.

Our hero yielded to the temptation, to chance, to destiny, to anything you like, so he got up, opened his door, went a few steps along the passage, and found himself face to face with Susan, whom he took for Marie-Jeanne; he drew her towards his room, and she let him do it; he kissed her, and she allowed him to; she took so much pleasure in it that she could not speak . . .

Susan uttered an exclamation of pleasure, and Gustave one of surprise. "Good heavens! it is not Marie-Jeanne!" he said.

"No, it is I," Susan replied.

"Well, I am bound to commit stupid tricks continually," he thought, "but this time it is not my fault, for Heaven knows I did not wish to injure her."

Gustave sat down by the girl and asked for an explanation. "How did you come to be in the passage in the middle of the night?"

"Some one knocked at my door, and so I got up to see what it was, for I thought you might be ill."

"Poor little girl, so you were thinking of me?"

"Oh! yes, Monsieur."

"Are you vexed at what has happened?"

"Well, I am vexed, and yet pleased. But I see that you took me for Marie-Jeanne, and were not thinking of me."

"I was thinking of you very much, on the contrary, for I loved you, but did not venture to tell you so, for I respected your innocence."

"But do you really love me?"

"Yes; but what about Nicholas Toupet?"

"He will know nothing about it."

"Do you love him?"

"Not particularly, and now I do not love him at all."

"But you must marry him."

"Marry him! Oh, dear, no! I do not intend to marry anybody now."

"Why, my dear child?"

"Because I do not mean to deceive any one, and then because I could not love my husband as I love you."

"My dearest Susan, I love you with all my heart, but I cannot marry you."

"I know that, Monsieur."

"But why not Nicholas, as you said just now that he would know nothing of what you have told me?"

"But I should know it."

"What will your parents say if you refuse to marry him?"

"I don't know."

"You must be reasonable."

"Yes, Monsieur, but I shall never get married."

"Well," Gustave thought to himself, "she has great firmness of character, and I shall not be able to bring her to reason just now, but when I am gone, she will forget me, and marry that idiot Nicholas."

And Gustave, after having lectured the girl, who was crying because he did not kiss her any more, and wanted her to get married, took her into his arms, pressed her to his heart, and consoled her with all the eloquence that he was just then capable of.

Susan waited very impatiently downstairs for the young man to wake up next morning, for him who had said such nice things the previous night. A girlish heart of sixteen soon becomes attached, but this young girl was too sensitive to be happy.

Nicholas was quite cured of his suspicions, and did not spy after his intended any more. Marie-Jeanne, who felt ashamed when she was in Gustave's presence, ran away whenever she saw him, and, as the parents felt quite unsuspecting, they did not look after their daughter. Besides that, they all had quite enough to do with Benoît, who made himself very comfortable now that he had forgotten the fright which the cow had caused himself, and amused himself all day by riding the donkeys, setting the cocks to fight, going birds'-nesting and breaking the branches of the trees, eating the hen's eggs, milking the cows, and upsetting the cream in his attempts at churning; in chasing the fowls and shutting up the ducks in the pigeon cotes.

Whilst the others were repairing all the damage that Benoît did, Gustave met Susan in the woods, and in the evening as well, when she would constantly say: "I will never marry Nicholas!"

A fortnight passed thus, though Gustave was to have stayed only a week at Ermenonville, but Susan's rustic charms had made him forget his vows to Julia. At the end of that time, however, Gustave found, after further vain attempts to persuade her to

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marry Nicholas, that he should never cure her of her love as long as he remained with her. He reproached himself also for his neglect of Madame de Berly, and as he never put off doing anything that he had made up his mind to, he immediately bought some countryman's clothes, ordered Benoît to saddle the horses, paid Madame Lucas generously, kissed Susan tenderly, put a napoleon into Marie-Jeanne's hand, and announced his intention of starting for Paris without further delay.

Susan, who had no idea that he meant to go, for though she feared he would go, yet she hoped it would not be for a long time, as she felt as if she could not live without Gustave, gave a scream and fell down at her mother's feet. Our hero grew pale and trembled, uncertain whether he ought to stay any longer or not; but the peasants, who attributed their daughter's fainting fit to a mere indisposition, carried her out into the open air immediately, where she recovered, and looked at Gustave without saying, & word; but he, feeling his courage fail him, jumped on to his horse, and left the village without daring to turn round for fear of again meeting Susan's look.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEVER WOMAN CAN MAKE A MAN BELIEVE IN MIRACLES.

After riding about a league, Gustave went into a thicket and made Benoît keep a sharp look-out, lest he might be seen and taken for a man whom the gendarmes were after, disguising himself in the midst of a wood, for he had not chosen to put on his new clothes before leaving the village, as he did not wish to be questioned. He put on a pair of wide grey cotton trousers, a blue sleeve waistcoat, and a large round hat, and returned to Benoît, who nearly ran away as he did not know his master.

Gustave ordered him to go to Paris and wait for him there at his friend Olivier's, whom he could thoroughly trust, and with whom he could always find a bed as long as his uncle was angry with him. He thought the horses, which his uncle had given him, had better be sold, as he should be wanting money soon, and after telling Benoît to say to his uncle, if he should happen to meet him, that he was ill, and had gone to stay with a friend, whose name*, however, he had not told him, he dismissed him.

Whilst his servant started off to Paris, Gustave took the road that led to M. de Berly's, and on the way he wondered how he should get a letter delivered to Julia.

He wondered whether his disguise was thorough enough, and whether Julia was surrounded by spies, who might intercept any letters to her. He did not feel at all sure whether he ought to trust to a servant, who might indeed feel pity for a young man running away as he did, but who, in spite of that, might not feel inclined to be turned away by a good master. Then, again, might not that compromise Julia, as nobody was certain of her indiscretion except her husband, who had seen it, for she might perhaps have found means to justify herself in his eyes, which indeed seemed a difficult matter, but which was not impossible, for ladies have particular methods for making something, that is quite evident, appear doubtful, and so she might have persuaded her husband that there was nothing wrong.

After thinking for a long time as to what he ought to do, he made up his mind to leave the matter to chance, which had so often favoured him, and so he walked on without stopping till he saw the country house where he had spent such happy moments, and which he had left so unceremoniously, and then he stopped to breathe freer, and to calm the emotion which he felt.

At first he hid himself when he saw any villagers coming, for he thought that everybody looked at him attentively, and guessed that he was not what he wished to appear; but when he saw that they all went on without taking any notice of him, he got easier. He went towards the house, and through the iron garden gate he could see the spot where he had so often walked, and he looked for the billiard-room, but could not see it from where he was. All the windows of the house were closed, and the place looked like a desert, and he wondered wherever they had gone. Seeing nobody at the gate of the yard, he pulled his hat over his eyes, and went up to the porter whom he saw at the garden entrance. On his inquiring whether the family were at home, he was told in a gruff way that they were all in Paris, and that he must go to the Rue Sentier if he had any business with them, and with this the porter turned his back on him.

He would not talk, and was evidently a coarse, rough, obstinate fellow; certainly he would get nothing about Julia from him, and so he would have to return without having seen anything of her. He was just returning towards the gate when a woman

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came out of a room on the ground floor and towards him, and he was delighted to see that it was the cook who had spoken to Benoît; and just as he was wondering whether he dare venture to make himself known to her, she passed close to him, and said, in a low voice, "I recognised you, Monsieur, and have something to give you: please go and wait for me behind the acacias, the other side of the road."

She went on and hung up some linen in the yard, and Gustave went out and walked towards the acacias, thinking how much sharper women were than men, as she had not seen him nearly as often as the dolt of a porter, and yet recognised him without hearing him. When she joined him, she said,—

"I have been expecting you for a long time, Monsieur. I only remained here to see you, and had to pretend to be ill, so as not to be obliged to go to Paris with all the rest, as Madame told me she would trust no one but me with a letter for you."

"Give it to me at once."

"Madame thought you would have come for it much sooner, and I began to get very dull here by myself; but here it is."

"Will you take charge of this one for her?"

"Yes, Monsieur; she shall have it to-day."

"Here, Margaret, take these two napoleons to make up for your being detained here."

"Oh! Monsieur, I do not want any money for being fond of Madame, and wishing to help her, she is so kind."

"But I wish you to take it."

"Well, Monsieur, I will not disobey you."

"Good-bye, Margaret, and do not forget my letter."

"You need not be anxious, Monsieur, she shall have it this evening."

The good creature went away, and Gustave thought, "I should not have heard from Julia but for the cook, who is attached to her mistress, for I suppose the lady's maid, to whom Madame de Berly has shown many kindnesses, might have betrayed her, but I must read the letter: —

My Dear Friend,—I need not tell you what I am suffering far from you, and I like to believe that your heart shares my grief at our separation; but I must tell you what has happened since your departure.

Soon after you jumped out of the window, M. de Berly left the room and went into the garden, but he soon came up again; I was nearly fainting, but I wished to deceive him about my fault, not so much for my sake as for his, to restore him to happiness, by getting rid of an unpleasant thought out of his head. I do not care myself for having destroyed M. de Berly's happiness, and so just as he was going to give vent to his rage, I pretended to be terribly angry. I reproached him for not having taken vengeance on a man who had come into my room whilst I was asleep, and who, in spite of my resistance, was on the point of triumphing over my virtue if he had not come in suddenly and delivered me from his insolent attempts. M. de Berly did not know what to say or to believe; he looked at me, walked up and down the room, and did not know what to make of it all. Seeing his indecision, I began to weep bitterly, and I can declare

to you that my tears were not all feigned; and then, never having seen me weep before, M. de Berly did not doubt my innocence any longer, and begged my pardon for his hastiness, which I willingly gave him. He was grieved at having told the Colonel the facts differently to what they really were, and I told him to see him and get him not to mention the matter. M. de Berly swore that he would be revenged on you, but I do not fear that threat, as I know that he would never attack anything but game, so peace is re-established; but I shall never see you again. Ah! Gustave, this punishment is so cruel that it ought to be an expiation for my fault. My life must be spent in tears, and if people only knew how cruel it is to pass one's life with anybody whom it is impossible to love, a young girl's heart would be consulted before she was married. My parents sacrificed me, and M. de Berly never tried to please me, and how could he? Our ages, our tastes, our characters are too opposed to each other, and yet I am criminal for loving another.

Farewell, be happy, but sometimes think of

JULIA

"Dear Julia! I shall see you again, for we are sure to be favoured by chance," and Gustave kissed the letter of the woman whom he had already deceived. He could not help laughing at M. de Berly's credulity, who, after finding a man in his wife's room, still believed in her innocence. "Certainly," he said "the text of Scripture must have been written for them: *Oculos habent et non videbunt* (Eyes have they and see not).

CHAPTER IX. A WEDDING AT LA VILLETTE.

"I shall go back to Paris," Gustave said to himself, "for I have nothing to detain me here, and stop with Olivier, and there I will consider how I can best manage to see Julia again, without compromising her, if possible. I am certain to succeed, as they say that with perseverance one can do anything, though it is only half true, for I have tried a hundred times to become steady, and have not succeeded. How many people pass their lives without attaining the object they aim at, and I am afraid I shall be one of them in this respect."

Thinking thus, he walked on towards Paris, but he was only at Vauderland, and had still five leagues to go, and was already tired. As he wished, however, to get to Paris that evening, he looked out for some conveyance with a spare place; but this time chance did not favour him, for all the vehicles from Louvres, from Senlis, from Mortfontaine were full.

"Well," Gustave said, "I must go on foot, and get there rather later. This confounded dress is, of course, a hindrance, for I might see some private carriage in which room could be found for the well-dressed St. Réal, but into which a peasant would certainly not be taken up, and if I were to ask, I should only be laughed at. I must look a queer figure."

As Gustave was trying to console himself by walking faster, he heard the noise of a carriage of some sort, and looking round he saw a little two-wheeled trap, in which there sat a fat jolly-looking old fellow. "Upon my word," Gustave thought, "I may as well try, for I daresay he will not refuse to give me a lift, and if he only goes a league my way, I shall have saved that, so I will speak to him; but I must not forget that for the present I am a peasant," and so he called out to the driver, "I say, Monsieur!"

"What do you want, my friend?"

"I am very tired; I left Ermenonville too late, and so missed the public conveyance at Mortfontaine, and I must get to Paris to-day, and if I should not be putting you out, I should be much obliged if you would give me a lift."

"Of course I will, with pleasure; get in, there is plenty of room for two. There you are."

"Thank you very much; I was getting very tired."

Gustave sat down by the jolly-looking old gentleman, and they began to talk.

"You have come from Ermenonville, you say? I know some people there, a farmer named Lucas."

"I was living with him."

"I am glad of that, for you will be able to tell me something about them. Does Mother Lucas scold as much as ever?"

"More than ever, I should say."

"And I suppose little Susan is quite a young woman by this time?"

"She is, indeed, you might say she is quite formed."

"She promised to be pretty, but it is at least two years since I was at Ermenonville, and in two years a girl grows a great deal."

"She has indeed, and she has a pretty figure, and is a fresh, charming girl"

"I say, young man, you speak very ardently; do you happen to be her intended, that Nicholas Toupet whom Lucas mentioned to me, and whom he was expecting the last time I was at his house?"

"I am the very man, Monsieur, Nicholas Toupet, Mlle. Susan's future husband."

"I am delighted to meet you, M. Toupet. You must have heard of me from the Lucas's. I am their first cousin, Peter Ledru."

"What! You are M. Ledru? We spoke of you very often."

"Let us embrace, M. Toupet."

"With pleasure, M. Ledru."

Whereupon the two men embraced, and Gustave could hardly keep himself from laughing. There was no great harm in taking Nicholas Toupet's name for an hour or two, and as Gustave was fond of a bit of fun, he hoped that the stout cousin's mistake would give him some.

"I say, M. Toupet," Ledru said, after they had settled down quietly, "are you in a great hurry to get to Paris?"

"Well I suppose it would do if I got there tomorrow."

"Very well, then, I have a proposal to make you; I am going to La Viilette, to the wedding of a goddaughter of mine, who has to-day married a grocer in a large way of business in the neighbourhood. I ought to have been there this morning for the marriage ceremony, but was prevented by business, but I shall be in time for dinner, which is the chief thing; well, you must come as well. I will introduce you to the company, and they will be all delighted to see you."

"You are very kind, M. Ledru; but will any of Lucas's relations be there?"

"None besides me; but you may be quite easy. They are all substantial people who will be present—the tanner, the locksmith, the master-mason, the contractor for emptying the cesspools—all highly respectable people, and we shall enjoy ourselves very much. We will eat and drink, and dance and joke."

"Well, you look as if you enjoyed life."

"And let me tell you, also, that I am very fond of a joke."

"Yes, they told me of some of your tricks."

"Are not they good? And I intend to put the bridegroom in a rage by-and-by, and to have my share of the garter."

"Is the bride pretty?"

"My god-daughter? Yes, she is very nice. Her hair is, perhaps, rather reddish, and her nose rather big, but altogether she is a nice-looking blonde, and strong! She will hold up a man like she would a kite, and goes through the gun-drill like one of the National Guard. She is a woman! Her husband will have something to do to tame her."

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Whilst they were talking they got to La Villette, and Gustave felt sure that he should see something quite new to him. There were no friends of the Lucas' there, so nobody would suspect anything, and then at a wedding all the guests think of nothing but the festivities, and Gustave made up his mind to play his part well, and if he were not amused, to pick up his hat and go without being noticed. Besides that, he was not sorry, dressed as he was, to put off returning to Paris till night, as he would run much less risk of being seen and recognised by any of his acquaintances.

They got out at an inn whose sign was *The Flourishing Bushel*, with an announcement that the dining-room would hold a hundred persons, and hearing music, Ledru said, —

"They cannot have dined, for it is only three o'clock."

"No, Monsieur," a kitchen-maid replied, "they have not dined, but the company are dancing, as, dinner is not till four."

"That is all right, my dear; I began to be afraid that I had lost my dinner. Let us go upstairs, M. Toupet."

Upstairs they went, into the large room, and found themselves amongst the dancers; the gentlemen were in their shirt sleeves, so that they might be able to dance more gracefully; the wine was already going round, and the more they drank, the hotter and redder their faces became.

When Ledru entered, the dancing ceased, and they all came round to shake hands and to embrace him with noisy shouts of welcome.

"We were afraid you must have broken down on the way, godfather," a large, stout woman said, in rather a nice voice, and in whom, from M. Ledru's description, Gustave recognised the bride.

"Come and kiss me, Lolotte," he said, opening his arms to his god-daughter. "Ah! my dear little girl, so this is the great day! You are dancing this morning, you will dance this evening, and you will dance to-night."

"My godfather always will have his joke," the bride observed.

"M. Ledru," the bridegroom said to him, in rather a portentous voice, "we should really have been very sorry if you had played us false."

"I not come to your wedding, M. Detail? Why, rather than have missed it, I would have come on my donkey. But wait a moment, there is something else; I want to introduce someone to you."

Up till then nobody had paid any attention to Gustave, who was standing in a corner, carefully examining all the ladies present, and he was glad to see that, amongst the twenty women, there were three or four tolerably nice in their way; but he was interrupted by Ledru, who took him by the hand and introduced him to the bridegroom.

"M. Detail, let me introduce you to a friend; this is M. Nicholas Toupet, the intended of the daughter of my cousin Lucas, of Ermenonville. He is a very clever fellow, and I hope he will not be one too many here."

"That would be quite impossible, godfather, and I am sure, M. Toupet, you honour us very highly by coming."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, the honour is mine."

After this interchange of compliments, Gustave embraced the bride, her mother, her sister, her aunts, her cousins, all the ladies present, in fact; his polite manners pleased them all, and everybody thought M. Toupet charming.

The innkeeper just then came to say that dinner was on the table, so they all went upstairs, and after some little difficulty settled themselves. Gustave sat between a stout dark lady and a little fair one, and they were both prepossessing, so he thought that he should have his choice, if they were up to a little fun, and he made up his mind to act very vigorously to keep up his assumed character.

Soup, boiled beef, pig's fry, cutlets were handed round; at the second course, veal, pork, rabbits, *à la mode* beef, for there were no *kickshaws*; they ate meat, and then meat again.

"Upon my word," Gustave thought, "this is indeed an invigorating meal, and I suppose the bride herself ordered it."

During dinner three musicians, who were placed in one corner of the room, played some airs, which they considered appropriate to the occasion, with all their might, so that, in order to be heard, it was necessary to speak very loud, and the result was an infernal din. The wine soon took its usual effect, and coarse jokes were bandied about, and received with shouts of laughter, enough to break the windows. Cousin Ledru had stated his intention of having his joke, and he gave loose to a string of them which there was no misunderstanding, as everything was put out perfectly clear. Meanwhile Gustave tried to make the nearer acquaintance of his two neighbours, and addressed himself first of all to the dark stout lady, and she took his jokes very kindly, for she was fond of a laugh. The false Toupet was very attentive, and when he offered her wine, he was going to put some water to it, which she, however, refused, on the score of a slight inconvenience it caused her at night, to which her husband especially objected.

On being told this, Gustave turned to the little fair woman, as the other's confidential statement had not particularly pleased him.

In five minutes Gustave learnt that the little woman was a widow, cousin of the bridegroom; that she lived in the Rue aux Ours, and kept a draper's shop; that she was very fond of the play, and particularly melodramas; and that on Sundays she took part in private theatricals, in a small hall which was turned into a theatre, by permission of the Police Commissaire, and that they acted almost as well as at Doyen's.

"That is all right," he thought; "as she is a widow, I shall neither disturb the peace of a household, nor can I be accused of seduction, for a woman who takes her part in private theatricals every Sunday can hardly be looked upon as a novice in intrigue. I will talk a little nonsense to her, just to pass away the time; and a young man who wishes to gain instruction ought to go through a course of gallantry in all classes."

Madame Henri, that was the little widow's name, opened her eyes wide, and sometimes seemed surprised at Gustave's manners, for a woman who acts, even in private theatricals, must have some discernment, and occasionally Gustave St. Réal forgot that he was supposed to be Nicholas Toupet.

Just as Madame Ratel, the stout dark lady, who was put out by Gustave's neglect, as he now talked only with his other neighbour, was trying to join, in their conversation, she was interrupted by a scream from the bride; the great booby who had got under the table to take off her garter, had seized hold of it and pulled it vigorously, hoping to get

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it off at once, but Lolotte, who thought it might come off before the appointed time, had taken the precaution to tie it very tightly, and then, listening only to the compliments which were being paid her, she had forgotten to loosen it.

The best man tugged so hard, that Lolotte slipped from her chair with a scream; everybody jumped up and looked for the bride, and she was found under the table. M. Detail was not strong enough to pick his wife up, so her godfather helped him, and assured him that it was a capital joke on the part of the best man. The bridegroom did not seem to see it quite in the same light, but Ledru remarked that it must have been so dark under the table that the stupid fellow could not possibly have seen what he was doing, and this bright idea quite reassured him. "I don't mind at all," he said, "as long as my wife is not offended."

Lolotte resumed her place at table without appearing at all disconcerted, and the best man took his place by her side, red as a beetroot. The renowned garter was cut up into little pieces and distributed; the dessert, coffee and liqueurs, were brought in, and the mirth got so uproarious that one would not even have heard a cannon fired off on the floor below.

At last it was time for the ball, and going downstairs they pushed and squeezed till some fell down, amidst shouts of laughter. The ladies were wildly excited, and the gentlemen were at liberty to handle, to pinch, and to squeeze anything they happened to come upon, for at a wedding such things are allowable, and at La Villette certainly no one would object to such trifles as those.

For a long time a journeyman cabinet-maker, of the Faubourg St. Antoine, had been looking at Madame Henri, and casting angry glances at M. Toupet, but Gustave did not pay the slightest attention to them, and went on joking with the lady. He danced two country dances with her, and the cabinet-maker asked her for the next, but Gustave, somewhat excited by the noise and the heat, asked her to go into the garden with him, to which she agreed, and went down, quite forgetting her engagement with the other.

They walked about the garden arm-in-arm, talking, ogling, squeezing hands and sighing, and at last Gustave proposed that they should sit down in a dark shrubbery—for the gardens of a country inn are only lighted up on Sundays and Mondays—and the little widow agreed. He snatched a kiss, and she laughed; but when he attempted to take further liberties, she got angry, and would not allow him.

She was perfectly virtuous; she did not object to a little fun, but then—it must not go too far, and Gustave thought it strange that a little woman who kept a draper's shop should object, in an inn garden at La Villette, to what ladies in boudoirs in Paris offered no objection.

He promised to behave better, and so she forgave him, and sat down by his side again, and they spoke about love, marriage, faithfulness, and so on. Poor woman, she wanted a husband, and had tried to catch this one, so she must have forgotten that M. Nicholas is the intended of Mlle. Susan Lucas, of Ermenonville. But no; she was pretty, M. Nicholas sighed when he looked at her, and she hoped to supplant Susan, for where is the woman who does not reckon somewhat on the power of her charms?

Their conversation was very tender, and Gustave was trying to induce her not to be so rigorous, when suddenly the cabinet-maker made his appearance in a rage, with his eyes flashing like those of a cat which has just had its tail cut off, and he came up to Gustave with clenched fists and his head thrown back.

"M. Toupet, I do not call it polite to prevent a gentleman from dancing with a lady who has engaged herself to him, and this lady here would now be in the ball-room with me if you had not taken her into the garden, to do I don't know what?"

Gustave listened to his discourse quite calmly, and then, forgetting the part he was playing, he burst out laughing.

The journeyman, who saw that he was being made fun of, got all the more angry, and hit Gustave a blow on the nose, who jumped up in an instant and seized him by the collar, and so a regular fight began, and the little woman screamed, cried, and called for help.

The waiters came running immediately, then the master, then the maids, and at last the scullions, till the alarm reached the ball-room, and the dancing was interrupted. The bridegroom, who was dancing with his wife for the first time, thought it was his place to make peace between his guests, and so, letting Lolotte's hand go, he rushed into the garden, followed by the others, and on getting there they found Gustave holding the cabinet-maker on to the ground, and, with his knees on his stomach, he was clutching him by the throat with one hand, and pulling one of his ears with the other. The poor wretch was nearly being choked, and tried to beg for mercy, but Gustave, who was very angry at having been obliged to come to fisticuffs, could not contain himself; luckily, however, a number of dancers came up, who seized M. Nicholas, and picked up the half-dead cabinet-maker.

They tried to make it up between the antagonists, and Gustave was quite willing, for he could expect no satisfaction from people whom he hoped never to see again. One of his eyes was rather black, and he had lost a little skin off his nose; but he had wished to see a country wedding, and when one wants to see everything, one must expect occasionally to meet with slight unpleasantnesses.

The unfortunate cabinet-maker had had quite enough, and declared that he would never quarrel with M. Toupet again. The little draper cried, and reproached herself for having been the cause of the fight by her forgetfulness, whilst Madame Ratel made malicious remarks, and wanted to know why Madame Henri and Gustave had gone into the shrubbery, which was so far from the house, and Gustave, who had had quite enough of that sort of amusement, asked M. Detail where his hat was.

"What, M. Nicholas, you are going to leave us already?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I have business in Paris, and I want to go to bed soon, so as to be up early in the morning."

"But, at any rate, wait for supper."

"I am much obliged to you, but I have had such a good dinner that I could not eat anything more."

"Well, do have a glass of wine."

"Nothing whatever, thank you, M. Detail."

"Well, as you are determined, I will go and ask Lolotte where the hats are."

M. Detail went up into the ball-room, where he found only the musicians helping themselves to the refreshments which had been prepared for the company.

"I wonder where my wife is?" the husband said, looking into all the rooms.

That Rascal Gustave

"I wonder where the devil my hat is?" Gustave said, hunting in every corner; "hot as I am, I cannot go to Paris without my hat. It is bad enough to have a black eye and a damaged nose, without catching cold into the bargain."

Going through a passage they saw a little door, and a servant girl told them that all the coats and hats of the gentlemen had been put there, but there was no key in it.

"Wait a moment," the girl said, "my mistress has a key that opens all these doors."

She went down and returned with a bunch of keys. M. Detail opened the door and went in, with a candle in his hand, followed by Gustave and the servant. The husband uttered an exclamation, and recoiled; and Gustave, looking over his shoulder, saw Lolotte reclining on a mattress, and the best man toying with the bride.

At the first moment, the bridegroom could not believe his eyes, he went nearer with the candle—the great booby tried to creep under the mattress—and the servant girl opened her eyes in horror, whilst Gustave was curious to see how Lolotte would get out of the difficulty.

"It is really my wife!" M. Detail cried, and in his consternation he let his candle fall. It fell on the dress of his wife, and the inflammable substance caught fire. Lolotte jumped up, uttering loud yells, rushed out holding up her clothes, and sat down in a tub of water put in the supper-room to cool the wine. All the guests came running to see what was the matter; the best man ran away as fast as his legs could carry him; the servant related what she had seen; the men tried to console the husband, and M. Ledru tried to pass it off as a joke which had been raised to test his love for his wife. The ladies surrounded the tub and picked Lolotte out of it, who was in despair at having been found in the position she was by her husband; but Madame Ratel soothed her somewhat by promising to buy her another dress.

In the midst of all this confusion, Gustave picked up the first hat he could find, and left *The Flourishing Bushel*, vowing, though rather late in the day, that nobody should ever catch him there again.

CHAPTER X.
A MISTAKE—THE PATROL—THE LITTLE
LAUNDRESS.

"It is always the same thing," Gustave said to himself as he was going down the Faubourg St. Martin; "I always act without reflection, and so I am constantly doing something foolish. Had I thought a little, I should not have gone to this wedding, where I was very much out of place, and I should not have upset *The Flourishing Bushel*; Madame Ratel would not have told me that her husband has good reasons for not wishing her to drink water; the little widow would not have gone into the garden, and would have danced with anybody who asked her; I should not have had to fight with that idiot of a cabinet-maker, or had a black eye or a swollen nose; the bridegroom would not have gone into that little dark closet where his charming better-half was shut up with that booby, who would have had time to take off and put on her garters three or four times; and poor Lolotte would not have been obliged to sit down in a tub of water because the fire had caught the front of . . . her dress. What the devil was I doing in that galley? What would my uncle say if he were to see me in this dress, with my face all damaged?"

But it's nearly one o'clock in the morning. Can I go to Olivier's so late as this? I should not mind if I had only to put up with his making fun of me, but I should have to wake up that confounded porter, and perhaps other people besides, and to be seen in this state, and covered with dirt—for that brute of a cabinet-maker threw me three times—would never do; the hat I took in the dark has no shape whatever, and then just look at my nose and my eye! For what should I be taken? I shall have to spend the night in the streets. Devil take La Villette, the wedding, cabinet-makers, and little linen-drapers!"

He was at the Porte St. Martin, and there he stood uncertain whether to turn to the right or left, or to stop where he was, when suddenly an idea struck him, at which he smiled, and set off hastily towards the Rue Chariot.

The reader may or may not remember a little clear-starcher called Lizzie, of whom Colonel Moranval spoke at the beginning of this story, and with whom our hero ran away whilst at school, and went to live with her in a little room in the Rue du Fauconnier. His uncle found out young Hopeful, and took the girl back to her mother; but as one cannot keep a young man always locked up, and laundresses must take the linen to their customers, the two young people managed to meet, at first often and very lovingly, but afterwards less frequently and with less ardour, till at last Gustave altogether neglected little Lizzie, who, for her part, had very rightly consoled herself with somebody else.

However, a girl always retains a little kindly feeling for a young fellow, who, although he may be changeable, has yet many endearing qualities; and a man likes to meet a pretty woman who has made him taste all the sweets of love. It is certainly only a fleeting pleasure that we experience, but even that is something, and so Gustave and Lizzie always met with pleasure.

Four years had passed since he had carried off the girl, and many things had happened since then. Her mother had died, and she was working on her own account, having taken a room in another neighbourhood to that in which she was born, because her adventures with Gustave had made a good deal of noise in the Rue St. Antoine, and

That Rascal Gustave

the clerks at the *Petit Saint-Antoine* were rude enough to laugh whenever she passed by the shop. Thenceforward Lizzie was her own mistress; she wished to do as she pleased, but she did not wish to be exposed to evil tongues, and so she went and hired a room in the Rue Charlot. There she was near the minor theatres, and might hope for the custom of some of the actors at the Ambigu or of the Gaîté, and by that means she might perhaps get tickets (you see she was prudent); she was very quiet, and kept herself as respectable as any young girl can who earns twenty sous a day and wishes to wear a bonnet. Gustave remembered Lizzie, for she had given him her address the last time they met, and he knew that girls who live in a room by themselves never take it in a house where there is a porter.

He went along the Boulevards till he got to the Rue Chariot, when it suddenly struck him that he "had forgotten the number of her house. What was he to do? There was nothing for it but to knock at every entry, which would be so much the worse for those who would be disturbed in their sleep; so much the worse for those who were ill; so much the worse for those who were dreaming that they possessed what they really had not got, and for the author who dreamt that his book was a success; so much the worse for the coquette who fancied that she was reducing twenty lovers to despair, and for an old woman whose dream was that she had grown young again; but so much the better for the woman who was in the arms of the man whom she adored, or for him whose happiness was perfect, and whose future appeared to him in nothing but rosy colours. But, on the whole, there are many more cases of go much the worse than so much the better.

"Here is an entry, I will knock, and knock loudly."

"Who is there? What do you want?"

"Would you kindly tell me whether Mlle. Lizzie clear-starcher, lives about here."

"Confound you and your clear-starcher! Was there ever such a thing heard of as to wake up a whole house at one o'clock in the morning in order to ask for an address?"

"It is a very important matter."

"If the guard were to pass, I would have you taken into custody."

"And I will tell you what, if you don't hold your tongue, I will fling some stones through your windows."

The gentleman retired and closed his window heartily wishing Gustave at the devil.

Without being the least discouraged, he went on a few yards and knocked at another entry.

"This time," he said, "I must knock more softly, and try and wake up the inhabitants by degrees"

He knocked gently at a little green door, and immediately a window on the first floor was opened.

"This time the people are not all asleep," he thought, "or else some are very light sleepers."

"Is that you, my friend," a woman asked, in a soft gentle voice.'

"Another adventure; just let us see how it will turn out," and he replied with a low "Yes."

"It is very unkind of you to have kept me waiting so long, when you knew that my husband was on guard at the Château d'Eau, and that he could not leave his post to come and sleep with his wife. If you will wait a moment, I will throw you down the latch-key, as I cannot come down, for I am undressed."

The little woman went away from the window, and Gustave scratched his head, being very undecided what to do. The idea of a little woman with a soft voice, and who is waiting for you in the middle of the night, whilst her husband is on guard at the Château d'Eau, was very seductive; but then she was not waiting for Gustave, and when she saw her mistake, she would be confused and in despair; and then if the friend were to come, there would be another row, and another fight, upsetting the whole house. It would be very foolish, and certainly he would not take the latch-key.

Such was the result of Gustave's reflections, and I think it was very prudent conduct on the part of a young man of his character; but, between ourselves, I think a little self-love had something to do with this. A young fellow like Gustave would not care to show himself, for the first time, to a woman dressed in the way he was, and with a black eye and a damaged nose, for the first impression could hardly be an agreeable one; and when one is accustomed to conquer, one does not willingly expose oneself to being laughed at to one's face.

The little woman re-appeared at the window? and tying a handkerchief to the key was going to throw it to Gustave, when he said, in a distinct voice,

"I beg your pardon, Madame, but I think we are both of us mistaken."

"Good heavens, it is not he!"

"Pray, Madame, do not go away without listening to me."

"But, Monsieur, you will be thinking all sorts of things; but I was expecting my brother and as he has quarrelled with my husband, I chose this moment to talk to him."

"Madame, I do not the least doubt what you have told me, and you may rely on my discretion. You see that I am worthy of your confidence, as I would not take the latch-key which you would have thrown down to me if I had not made myself known."

"You are quite right, Monsieur."

"Will you, therefore, be kind enough to tell me whether you know a girl, a clear-starcher, in this street?"

"A little dark girl, slightly marked with smallpox?"

"That is she, Madame."

"That is Lizzie."

"That is the very girl I want; do you know her, Madame?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I am one of her customers . . . I mean . . . that is to say, she does not know me, but washes for one of my friends."

"All right," Gustave thought; "she is afraid lest I should find out her and her husband's name from Lizzie. Madame, could you tell me the number of her house? I want to see her, for there is something I very particularly wish to tell her."

That Rascal Gustave

"I do not know the number, but I can point out the house to you. There it is, Monsieur, the first house on the right after you have passed the Rue St. Foi. Oh gracious! there is a patrol, and my husband is sure to be with them."

Here the lady, who had been leaning out of the window to point out Lizzie's house to Gustave, precipitately drew in her head and quickly shut the window.

Gustave turned round and saw a patrol of the National Guard, which had just turned out of the Rue Boucherat, and was coming straight towards ton. One of the soldiers of the patrol was the little woman's husband, and he had persuaded his corporal to let the round pass through the Rue Chariot, because it would be so nice to be able to say to his neighbours next day, "I watched over you last night."

But in the distance the husband had seen his wife at the window talking to a suspicious-looking man, and so he left the ranks and ran after Gustave shouting, "Follow me, corporal."

Gustave had been watching the patrol, uncertain whether he should wait for it or not; but before he could make up his mind the husband got up to him, seized him by the collar, and ordered him to go with him to the guard-house. Our hero's reply was a blow on the nose, which knocked the unfortunate man into the gutter, and then he ran down the street; the corporal ordered his soldiers to pursue the fugitive, but Gustave ran a great deal quicker than men who had their musket, sword, and knapsack, and who were not used to carrying all this. As he was not at all desirous of passing the night in the guard-room, seeing the door of an entry which was not closed, he ran in, closed it behind him, and rushed, four steps at a time, up a winding staircase, that he would not have gone up in broad daylight without looking a dozen times to see where he was going to; but to escape from the patrol he would have scrambled on to the roofs and crawled along the gutters, for in hot blood one often does things that one would not think of in calmer moments.

At last Gustave stopped, for he had got up as far as the garrets, so he could not very well go any higher. But what was he to do now? Not having the slightest idea, he tried a door which he could just see in front of him; but as soon as it opened he went out again, for there are certain places which one recognises immediately even though one cannot see very clearly.

The patrol which was after Gustave had seen what house he had gone into, and so they knocked at the door, and called upon the inhabitants to give up the culprit. From the sixth floor Gustave plainly heard, the noise that was going on in the street, and so he went down to the fifth, making up his mind to go and parley at the door of the entry, when he heard a voice which he seemed to know.

"Good heavens! what a noise there is in the street to-night, there is no sleeping for it."

"Here she is," Gustave said. "Hurrah! I am all right now," and so he knocked at the door where the voice came from.

"Who is there?"

"It is I, Lizzie, Gustave; open the door as quick as you can."

"Gustave!"

The little laundress jumped out of bed at once, and ran to open the door, but screamed out when she saw a young man whom she did not recognise in the dress which

disguised him so completely. He, however, went in without any ceremony, threw himself upon the bed, and cried out, —

"Here I am, and I will defy all husbands, guardrooms, and patrols."

Lizzie took her night-light and looked at him.

"It really is he," she said.

"Of course it is I, though I know I am almost unrecognisable at first sight."

"Good gracious! I should think so. In what a state you are; a black eye, blood on your face, and then on your clothes! . . . What a sight for a young man like you!"

"If you only knew all that has happened to me! Just listen how they are knocking at the entrance door."

"Are they making all that noise about you?"

"Yes, my dear child. I have upset La Villette; have sown the seed of jealousy in the heart of a journeyman cabinet-maker, brought despair to the soul of a newly-married man, and been the cause of the front of his wife's dress catching fire."

"Dear, dear me, you are the same scamp as ever, and so I suppose you had a fight."

"And, as you see, although I came off victorious, I did not come off altogether unmarked."

"But what about those fellows who are knocking at the door? What do they want?"

"They want to take me into custody. It is one of the night rounds whom I altogether upset, because . . . by-the-bye, do you know a married lady in this street who lives about a couple of hundred yards from here, on the first floor of a house with a little green door?"

"Of course I do; it must be Madame Dubourg."

"Is she pretty?"

"Very pretty, a bright face, a knowing little nose . . ."

"I only wish I had known that rather sooner. And her husband?"

"Oh! he is a good sort of man, of about forty, and wears shirt frills."

"He wears something besides that, unless I am very much mistaken."

"How do you know Madame Dubourg, I should like to know?"

"I do not know her the least, and should not recognise her were I to meet her in the street. But, never mind that, are they knocking still? No; just as I thought, as nobody took any notice, they have gone away."

"What were they after you for?"

"I will tell you all about it by-and-by."

"Now I must bathe your eye and your nose, for you are in a terrible state."

"Of course you did not expect to see me, Lizzie, so I am fortunate to have found you alone."

That Rascal Gustave

"Why should you be? Don't I live by myself?"

"Yes, but that makes a difference, for you might have had a visitor who stayed late."

"I never receive such sort of visitors. Well, why do you look so surprised?"

"I suppose you are a very good girl now?"

"Haven't I always been a good girl?"

"Of course you have, but you might be very good, and yet have a friend . . ."

"Thank you; I would rather not have any more of those sort of friends, men are much too false and perfidious."

"You are quite right, my dear child . . . Take care, you are letting the brandy and water go all over my face."

"That will not hurt you, and you ought only to be too thankful to me for looking after you when other women have been the cause. Ah! Ah! You wicked fellow! Your uncle was quite right to find fault with you."

"Do you think so? Poor little Lizzie! So you do not love me at all now?"

"I only wish I did not, but I love you still, in spite of myself, for you do not deserve any one to take the slightest interest in you. Now leave off; leave me alone, do, or I shall throw all this in your face!"

"My face has had so much that it need not be afraid of a little drop more. You look so charming in your night-cap."

"There, that will do. Gustave, I shall get angry directly."

"Your eyes are brighter than usual."

"That is because I am so angry; but what are you going to do?"

"Well, I am undressing, as you see."

"What for, pray?"

"Well, to go to bed, I suppose."

"Oh! you are going to bed are you? Yow certainly are very cool!"

"You surely do not expect me to sit up all night? Tired as I am, I should be nearly dead by morning."

"Now, I declare, if he has not actually got into bed! And what am I to do, I should like to know?"

CHAPTER XI

GUSTAVE MAKES MADAME DUBOURG'S ACQUAINTANCE.

When Gustave woke up next morning, he saw that Lizzie was blowing the fire so as to get a cup of coffee.

"My dear child, what are you doing?"

"Well, you can see that I am making coffee for breakfast."

"I am much obliged to you, and I am very fond of coffee, but when one has had a fright and a long walk, had the patrol at one's heels, and a pretty woman for one's hostess, one requires something rather more reinvigorating than coffee. Just take the purse which you will find in that coarse blue waistcoat, and go to the butcher's, the grocer's, the pork shop, and get some chitterlings, pork sausages, mutton and veal cutlets, cheese, ham, and, above all things, some of the best wine that you can get."

"But, good heavens! what a breakfast! and whilst I am out, my linen will not be ironed, and I must take it to my customers this morning."

"So much the worse for your customers, they will have to wait a day longer, so just do as I tell you."

Whilst Lizzie was out Gustave thought over what he had done, and what he was going to do. In the first place, he quite made up his mind not to put on the cotton trousers and the blue waistcoat again, but then, how was he to get any other clothes? He must send Lizzie to Olivier's, and he would give her or Benoît all he wanted to enable him to show himself properly in the streets of Paris. Olivier was about his size and make, so that his clothes might fit him; but then came the question whether Olivier, who was not very steady, would have a spare suit of clothes! In any case, surely Benoît must have brought the things his master wore at Ermenonville to Paris with him, unless the idiot had lost them on the way, and, if worst came to the worst, he had still plenty of money, and in Paris anyone who knew how to manage it could get dressed perfectly in twenty minutes.

When Lizzie came back with a basketful of good things, Gustave got up, and putting on a pair of washing trousers (the first he happened to find) and a dressing-jacket, which belonged to some fat old woman, he set to work to help Lizzie get breakfast ready. They cooked it all as best they could, amidst much fun and laughter, and then proceeded to eat it and pronounced it to be excellent. Lizzie was amused at Gustave's appetite; and, even whilst they were eating, they could not help billing and cooing; first she slapped and then kissed him, was angry when Gustave was too bold, and put out when he forgot his rude manners too long.

"Well, now, my dear child," Gustave said, after having satisfied all his wants, "for the present we have enjoyed ourselves enough, and I want to talk to you sensibly, for I must find means of getting out of here."

"Well, there is no one to stop you from going whenever you like."

"I suppose you have quite forgotten that I came dressed as a peasant, which, by the way, did not turn out particularly well for me, and that I should not dress myself like that again for all the world."

That Rascal Gustave

"I did not think of that; of course you want some other clothes. Shall I go to your house to get them for you?"

"Well, I have not exactly a house to go to at this moment, as I live with my uncle, and he happens to be in a great rage with me just now. I want to give his anger time to cool down a little."

"Poor old Colonel, what a trouble you must be to him."

"I do it out of kindness to him, for a retired officer must want something to distract him; but now you must go to Olivier."

"He is a nice sort of fellow, who goes to public balls, frequents gambling-houses and cafes, and goes after girls."

"Do you think so? Really, my dearest Lizzie, you have become very moral all of a sudden. If my uncle were only to hear you, I am quite sure he would make it up with you, although he thought you a regular loose little wench."

"What! Your uncle thought that of me? Gouty old monkey, to speak evil of others! I'll scratch his eyes out when I see him."

"My dear Lizzie, show a little respect for my uncle."

"An old fox who has lost his tail! He never caught his rheumatism in the wars."

"I say, I say, Lizzie!"

"He called me a loose little wench, did he? I'll make him pay for it!"

"Look here, remember what you are saying."

"I will not allow anybody to make reflections on my conduct."

"Of course not, it would be terrible."

"I! Who am so quiet, and never go out and never see anybody here."

"Of course, everybody knows that you live just like a vestal."

"And to say that I am . . ."

"Well, now, I have had enough of all that; when once one touches a woman on her tender point, there is no end to it, so now go to Olivier's, please."

"Where is your nice friend Olivier living now, may I ask?"

"In the Rue des Petites-Ecuries, close to the Faubourg Poissoniere."

"And am I to ask him for some clothes for you?"

"Yes; tell him what has happened to me."

"You don't suppose that I am going to tell him that you spent the night here?"

"You had better say that I came this morning, or tell him whatever you like, only remember that I want coat, trousers, waistcoat, hat, and boots."

"And am I to carry all that?"

"Take a little commissionaire if you like, for I am afraid that my fellow Benoît might be recognised and followed."

"Then I will be off, but mind you do not open the door to anybody during my absence, for it would do me a great deal of harm if a young man, dressed in a pair of

trousers and dressing-jacket, both of which belong to customers of mine, were seen here."

"Pray don't distress yourself. I will not open the door to anybody; but what am I to do whilst you are away?"

"You will find a few books in that cupboard: *Faublas, Mon Oncle Thomas*, etc., etc., and they will amuse you."

"All right, I will look at them; and now, do make haste, like a good girl."

"Very well, very well; I will be as quick as I can, only don't be impatient."

Lizzie kissed Gustave, put the key in her pocket, and went to the Rue des Petites-Ecuries.

Left to himself, he looked at the novels, read a few pages of them, walked up and down the room, and went to the window to see whether the girl was coming back, but unfortunately it looked out on to the back. He soon began to get impatient, and found the time very long, forgetting that it was a good way from the Rue Chariot to the Rue des Petites-Ecuries, and that, besides, it would take some time to get all he required together.

Just then there was a gentle knock at the door, but Gustave, remembering what Lizzie had said, did not make the least sound, and the knock was repeated, and someone said, "Open the door, mademoiselle, I want to see you; I am Madame Dubourg."

"By George!" Gustave exclaimed, "Madame Dubourg. I must get to know her, and I certainly don't intend to let this chance slip," and so he ran to the door and let in the lady with whom he had had the nocturnal conversation, and whom he so much wished to see more closely.

Madame Dubourg was rather afraid of what might be the result of her overnight's adventure, and was curious to know who the gentleman might be who was so polite as to refuse a young woman's latch-key, and so original as to want the address of a laundress at one o'clock in the morning. It was only natural that she should go to the young woman whom he had asked for, to find out all she could about him, especially as she really was her laundress; women may say many things to each other of which the husband need know nothing, and so she hoped to get something out of Miss Lizzie, and then vow her to silence if the gentleman in question had spoken of his conversation with the lady on the first floor over the little green door.

Madame Dubourg seemed very much startled at seeing Gustave, whom she, however, naturally did not recognise, as she could not possibly have seen his features at night, and she could have no idea that the gentleman who wished to speak to Lizzie at one o'clock in the morning would be with her still at one o'clock in the afternoon. She really did not know whether to go into the room, for a woman thinks twice before trusting herself alone with a man in a woman's sleeping-jacket; but Gustave very politely, disguising his voice as well as he could, asked her to wait for a few minutes, as Lizzie was sure to be back very soon.

Madame Dubourg came in and sat down, and after looking at her quietly for some time, he resumed his natural voice, and asked her how her husband felt after tumbling into the gutter, and whether her brother had kept her waiting much longer. Madame Dubourg seemed uncomfortable, and got rather pale, looked at Gustave, and hid her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

That Rascal Gustave

"I am sure, Madame," Gustave said, "that I did not intend to hurt your feelings, for I stand too much in need of consideration myself to find fault with the actions of others. What must you think of a young man who knocks at every door in the middle of the night, and who hides himself in the morning at a little laundress's, and dressed like . . . Really, Madame, I must beg you to overlook my folly, and not to judge by appearances."

Madame Dubourg's uneasiness was allayed by these words; she took her handkerchief from her lace, and looked at Gustave with a smile. Although his face still bore evident traces of his fight the day before, she thought him very good-looking, and from his way of expressing himself, she could perceive that he was a man of education, who knew life, was used to love adventures, and attached no more importance to them than they deserved.

"I see, Monsieur," she said, "that we ought to be acquainted. I did not think, however, that I should meet you so soon, but I suppose you are here from some folly, which is excusable in a young man. I cannot possibly have a bad opinion of you, and I hope that you will believe that it really was my brother whom I was expecting last night."

"I am quite sure of it, Madame, and I think he is very lucky to have such a charming sister."

"I am very sorry that the patrol pursued you, but it was all my husband's fault; he takes everybody for a thief."

"All husbands are like that, I suppose."

"I think they will be coming here to-day to know whether any one has seen you."

"You need not be the least alarmed, for they will not find me."

"I told my husband that I had gone to the window to get a little fresh air as I did not feel very well, and that a man, whom I did not know, asked me his way. I hope that Lizzie does not know that . . ."

"No, Madame, she knows nothing about it."

"Then I need not wait, for to tell you plainly I came here only to mention the matter to her."

"I thought as much, Madame, and therefore I wished to reassure you altogether."

"Good morning, Monsieur, and if I can ever be of any use to you, please think of me."

"You may be sure, Madame, that I shall always think of you."

Madame Dubourg bowed politely, and was going out, when Lizzie came in with a marcel under her arm. She stopped short and looked at Gustave, who bit his lips, and at Madame Dubourg, who got red"

"What do you want, Madame? Whom do you wish to see?" the little laundress asked, with a mocking smile.

"I wanted to know whether my husband's shirt-frills were ironed."

"Your husband's shirt-frills! Why you know, Madame, that I never take them home before five o'clock."

"I know that, but he is going to dine out and has no clean ones, so I will take them if you have no time. Here they are, I think. Yes, that is right."

With this, Madame Dubourg seized three shirt-frills which she saw lying on the table, crumpled them up in her hand, and ran away with them as fast as she could without listening to Lizzie, who called out after her down the stairs that she had got hold of somebody else's instead of her husband's.

"Well," the girl said, when she came back, "I do not know what you were doing to that lady, but she seemed in a great flurry, and did not know what she was about."

"How can you have such ideas, Lizzie?"

"Well, it really would not be very extraordinary, but didn't I forbid you to open the door?"

"I thought I heard your voice."

"What a story! But I would bet that you knew Madame Dubourg."

"This is the first time I have ever seen her." "Do you think I have forgotten all that you told me last night? But I will go to her house at four o' clock, when her husband is at home, and I shall see if he is going to dine out, or whether she has been lying."

"Lizzie, you are always speaking ill of others, and spare nobody's reputation, and yet you object if anybody says a word about you; but I will just tell you, that if you do anything to annoy this lady whom I take to be highly respectable, I shall be very angry with you, and never speak to you again as long as I live."

"What a misfortune! Perhaps I might manage to exist without you, however. Why he actually expects to let me find him here making love to a little prude who is not worth twopence, and not to say a word! A pretty job that would be indeed! I know, of course, that you have mistresses of all shapes and sizes, but I do not choose them to come and show their love for you here in my room. The impudence of these married women! They think they may do just as they like, and they ought to blush and die of shame for deceiving their good louts of husbands as they do. At any rate, a girl is her own mistress and can walk with her head erect."

Whilst Lizzie was talking, Gustave was dressing himself, exclaiming all the time against Olivier's carelessness and Benoît's stupidity, as they had sent him a pair of evening trousers and top boots, and, besides that, a cloth waistcoat, and it was the middle of summer.

"Did Olivier pick out these things for me?" Gustave asked Lizzie at last.

"No, your friend was not at home, so I only saw your servant,—Benoît is his name, I think. How stupid he looks! He gave me the parcel; but you do look funny got up like that."

"Will you be kind enough to get me a cab?"

"Of course I will, and at the same time I shall see whether Madame Dubourg is waiting for you outside."

She went out, and soon came back with the cab.

"Good-bye, Lizzie," he said.

"Good-bye, you scamp; Well I do declare if he is not going away without kissing me!"

That Rascal Gustave

"I thought you were angry with me; good-bye, my dear child, come and see me at Olivier's. You know his address."

"Fancy going like that to young men's lodgings! Pretty things people would say. But at what time am I most likely to find you at home?"

"In the morning, of course; you know I never get up till late."

"All right, I will come and call on you some fine morning."

And so Gustave went down, got into the cab that was waiting for him, and was driven to Olivier's.

CHAPTER XII. A YOUNG MEN'S DINNER PARTY.

Olivier was a young man of about Gustave's age, and having lost his parents whilst he was very young, he was left his own master too soon. He was fond of play, wine, and women, and, though he was a clerk in a Government office, he generally only went there towards the end of the month, when his salary became due, and as soon as he had received it he decamped, and was not seen for the next ten days. His superiors often rebuked him, which had the effect of making him better for twenty-four hours, but as he worked well and quickly when he chose, they were indulgent towards him.

Olivier laughed at him about his dress. Benoît made his excuses for the mistake he had made in sending the clothes, and was told to go and order a good dinner for two, to be sent in from the nearest restaurant, whilst Olivier told him that he had sold the two horses fairly well, and would settle with him about them later on.

When they were alone, Gustave related a portion of his adventures to him, but did not say much about Madame de Berly, as he did not wish to compromise her reputation; he never boasted of his successes in love affairs, and, in such matters, it is well known that those who boast the most have often the least to boast about.

It was not long before Benoît returned, followed by a train of restaurant keepers' and wine merchants' men.

"Upon my word," Gustave said, "I suppose Benoît wished to make up for Madame Lucas's plain cookery; however, we may as well enjoy this excellent dinner, only another time we must take care to order exactly what we require."

During dinner Olivier told his friend that he had made the acquaintance of a girl living in the same house, who was an embroideress, and to whom he gave guitar lessons, and so after dinner he went to solace himself with the young lady, and Gustave went for a walk in the Rue Sentier. He asked which was M. de Berly's house, and on it being pointed out to him he walked up and down before it for some time, hoping to see Julia, but he did not succeed, and he did not dare to go in and ask for her, or to send her a letter.

Several days passed in the same way; Gustave did not go out till evening, and then only to the Rue Sentier; Olivier went most mornings to hang his hat up in his office for a few minutes, and then went, in a neighbourly fashion, to make love to his guitar pupil. They lived very well to make up for their good conduct, but though money went out very fast, none came in. Olivier only got a quarter of his salary, as his creditors took the other three-quarters, and Gustave saw that his purse was rapidly getting empty, but he reckoned on the money that Olivier had got for the horses. And then, the Colonel could not be angry with him always, and he had written him a very submissive, respectful letter, in which he said that his passion for Madame de Berly had carried him so far as to lead him to venture into her bedroom, although she by no means reciprocated his guilty feeling. Gustave certainly did not flatter himself that his uncle would be the dupe of this story; but he was bound to try and excuse Madame de Berly, and to bear out what she had said to her husband.

He was beginning to find the life that he was leading very monotonous, when one morning, after Olivier had gone out, there was a knock at the door, and Benoît let Lizzie in. She was dressed in her best, and nobody would have guessed, to look at her, that she was only a little laundress; but nothing is so deceptive as appearances in Paris.

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You may be sitting in the theatre between two men, dressed very much alike, and so you might think that they are in the same position in life, whereas one is perhaps the head of some department in a public office, whilst the other is a manservant who brushes the clothes in a lodging-house, and you will constantly find similar cases, and not till those who think that *fine feathers necessarily make fine birds* open their mouths to speak is the mistake discovered.

"Here I am, Monsieur; I promised to come and see you, and I have kept my word."

"My dear child, you could not have come at a better time, for I was feeling rather melancholy, and you will make me feel rather more cheerful, for I suppose you are going to spend the day here?"

"I shall be delighted."

"You must dine here—Olivier need not alarm you."

"I would rather have been alone with you, but as these are his rooms. . ."

"And this evening I will go home with you; that is settled, I suppose?"

"You know I will do whatever you wish."

"You are a dear little thing; give me a kiss."

"Do be quiet, your servant is looking at us; but before dinner I must go and see an aunt of mine who lives close here; and I will go now, so that I need not go out again."

"Mind and don't be long."

As soon as she had gone, Gustave called Benoît.

"We must have a first-rate, delicate little dinner, and above all order plenty of little dainties, for girls always like them, and I am very much of their way of thinking."

"But, please sir, I am not at all sure that you will get any dinner at all."

"What do you mean, you idiot?"

"Because five are already owing to the restaurant-keeper, and he refuses to send any more till he is paid."

"Five dinners are owing?"

"Yes, sir, without counting the breakfasts which were sent in from another place."

"Why did you not tell Olivier?—he must pay for them."

"M. Olivier always sends me to you when it is a question of money."

"I suppose he thinks my purse is inexhaustible; but he must have plenty of money, for we have not touched what he got by the sale of the horses; but here he comes down from his embroideress."

"You have come just in the nick of time; but what's the matter with you that you look so delighted and triumphant? Have you received your whole month's salary intact?"

"My month's salary? I have not seen anything' of it; but I have just come down from my neighbour's, and she is a lady who does not stand on much ceremony; you know what I mean?"

"Well, she is a *grisette*, and so I do not suppose she does!"

"I say just be quiet with your *grisettes*; her husband, who is dead, was captain of a ship."

"What else, I should like to know?"

"Well, her aunt, the old lady with whom she lives, has gone to spend the day at Belleville, and so I persuaded her to come and dine with us."

"That is first-rate, for Lizzie is coming also, so we shall be a party of four."

"I say, what fun we shall have!"

"Yes, but we must find means to give these young ladies a good dinner."

"Of course, a first-rate dinner, and that is the very reason why I came down to see you."

"And I was going to send after you to your office."

"What for?"

"For some money, of course. The restaurant keeper will not supply us any more till he is paid what we owe him, so just go and do that and order the dinner."

"How am I to pay him, I should like to know?"

"You surely have the money which you got by the sale of the horses."

"My poor Gustave, I have not ventured to tell you yet, but . . ."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"I put your horses on the red, and they are gone far enough by this time."

"You don't mean to tell me that you gambled away that money at roulette?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, the very day I sold them I had a tailor's bill to meet, and I wanted to double your money. I had invented a new martingale . . ."

"The devil take your martingale! You have done a nice thing! You are really incorrigible, to go and lose my money like that."

"You would not have complained if I had won."

"Here we are in a nice fix, my purse is empty . . ."

"And mine is never full . . . and this is the ninth, so another three weeks to wait before I get the wretched quarter of my salary which my creditors have left me."

"But what about these girls whom we have invited to dinner, and none to be got? Poor Lizzie! and I intended to give her a treat."

"And my neighbour! who confided to me that she was very fond of champagne."

"She will be very lucky if she gets the commonest vin ordinaire"

"My poor Gustave, I feel as if I should like to tear my hair out."

"Don't make a fool of yourself, but try and think of some way out of the difficulty. Benoît, do you happen to have any money by you?"

"Yes, sir, I have a little laid by."

"What a capital fellow you are. And how much is it about, Benoît?"

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"Well, sir, it may be about thirty sous."

"Idiot! and he calls that having money laid by! A nice dinner we should get with your thirty sous; but what can one do when one's servant is such a fool as you are!"

Olivier walked up and down the room, stamping and cursing his luck, and roulette; Gustave was cudgelling his brains to find out some means of getting a dinner, and Benoît stood quite motionless, waiting for any further orders that they might please to give him. Suddenly Gustave's face lightened up.

"My dear Oliver," he said, "we will have our dinner; I don't, indeed, quite see how it is to be paid for, but the chief thing is—the dinner. Six months ago whilst my uncle was in the country, I was in Paris by myself, and used to go and dine at a restaurant kept by a little charmer of about sixty, as broad as she was long, with an arm like Hercules. She was very fond of young men, and, whenever I went to the pay-desk, she used to tell me I could pay another time, but, as I had money then, I did not make use of her kind offer; now, however, we must put her to the test. I will go to her, and pretend that I have just come from the country, that I have some friends who have come to dine with me, and that I wish her to provide me with a first-rate dinner. She will be so delighted at my leaving the menu to her, that she will do her very best for us, and time enough to think about paying when we have eaten it."

"A capital idea! It really seems like an interposition of Providence; and I think I know a place where I can get some dessert on credit."

"That is all right, so let us make haste and go and order what we want, though I am running a great risk by going out like this in the middle of day, for, suppose my dear uncle should see me and recognise me?"

Just as they were going out, Benoît stopped him.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but I think you have forgotten something that is very important."

"What is that?"

"Why, you have not got any wine!"

"The idiot is quite right, we cannot possibly do without that; but how are we to get it? Olivier, do you happen to know any wine merchant's wife, or daughter, or niece?"

"My dear Gustave, I have always chosen my conquests in a higher station of life."

"Well, at this moment, an intrigue with some small shopkeeper would help us out of our difficulty, for a dinner without any wine would not be particularly jolly."

"The man over the way knows us, and might let us have some beer."

"A nice sort of drink to cheer us up."

"We could tell them that it was Lacryma Christi."

"They would not be taken in."

"We might even raise a bowl or two of punch."

"One does not generally drink punch at dinner."

"I say, Gustave, I have a sublime idea, and we shall have claret and champagne, if you will trust Benoît to me."

"Oh I you may have him, and do whatever you like with him."

Gustave went to the fat old dame who kept the restaurant, and Olivier stopped behind with Benoît, by whose means he hoped to get the wine. That long fellow looked at his master's friend in astonishment, as he put on a high neckcloth, a long coat, a short waistcoat, straightened his hair, put rouge on the tip of his nose, put on gaiters, a little hat, and, taking a riding-whip in his hand, he stood before the looking-glass, trying to get up a stupid and insolent look.

"Are you going to act, sir?" Benoît said at last

"Yes, something like that, and, now that I am dressed, it is your turn, Benoît."

"Am I to dress up also, sir f"

"Just do as you are told; put on these old buckskin breeches . . ."

"I shall never be able to get into them, sir."

"Oh, yes, you will, they will give. Now put on this red waistcoat, the nankeen jacket that I wear in the morning, and put on this cap."

"It is all too tight for me, sir."

"So much the better, and you will look all the more as if you had just come from the borders of the Thames. And now, listen to me. I am an English lord, and you are my footman."

"What is a lord, Monsieur?"

"An Englishman who comes to Paris to see the buildings, the theatres, and other sights, in order to gamble and to go after the girls. They are easily recognisable in the streets by their grotesque looks, at the theatre by their astonishment, at the gambling-table by their oaths, and, when they are with girls, by the way they fling their guineas about."

"Oh, yes, sir, I saw two the other day, who were almost crying for joy at seeing two cocks fighting in the street, because they said it made them think of their own country."

"Very well, Benoît, you must try and look like an Englishman. We will go to a wine merchant, and remember, if you are spoken to, never to answer anything but yes; you can easily remember that; nothing but yes."

"Yes; is that all, Monsieur, for that is easy enough to remember."

"Not quite; when I leave the shop, you must remain there till Gustave or I come and fetch you, and if you return here without our leave, you will get a good thrashing; do you heart"

"I will not come back, Monsieur."

"Do you remember all I have told you? You are not to mention our address, and only reply yes."

Olivier went out, followed by Benoît, who could scarcely walk in his buckskin breeches, and kept cramming his cap over his eyes, and repeating his lesson to himself; he felt very uncomfortable, and the threatened thrashing and the English manners troubled him extremely, so that Olivier could hardly keep from laughing, when he looked at his man's unhappy countenance.

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When they got to a cabstand, they got into a cab, and Olivier, speaking a mixture of French and English, ordered the driver to take him to one of the best wine merchants in Paris. On getting to the shop, Olivier descended and went in, still followed by Benoît, who walked awkwardly, with his eyes on the ground. The young scapegrace said a few words of English, and as tradesmen are very fond of having dealings with foreigners, the shopkeeper and his assistants were very attentive.

He gave them to understand that he wanted three bottles of claret, three of burgundy, and three of champagne, and did not object to the price, but saying that he had left his purse behind him, he asked the wine merchant to send a man with him to receive the sixty francs the bill amounted to. Amidst many thanks, and requests for future favours, he was bowed out of the shop and into the cab with Benoît and the shopman. After driving a little way, Olivier struck himself on the forehead, and told the man that he had forgotten half-a-dozen bottles of Spanish wine, and that the shopman and Benoît must return to the shop for it whilst he went on with the wine he had; that Benoît would show him the way to the milord's hotel.

Having the servant, no objection could be raised, so he got out of the cab, and went with Benoît in search of the Spanish wine.

Having got rid of the shopman, Olivier had himself driven to the Porte-Saint-Martin, got out, called a porter, to whom he gave his basket of wine, and went and joined Gustave, to whom he showed it triumphantly.

"How did you manage to get that? M Gustave asked; but when Olivier told him, he shook his head, and did not seem at all pleased at his trick, for he said it was not at all nice to buy wine for which he could not pay, and did not see the value of Benoît, who was left in pawn till such times as he could be redeemed.

"Well, but what about yourself?" Olivier asked him, to put an end to his rebukes; "you have not told me what you have done."

"Oh! we shall have a splendid dinner; fish, roast, made dishes, sweets, nothing will be wanting."

"But, my dear friend, it is not very nice to order a dinner for which you cannot pay."

"It is quite a different thing, for she gave me credit of her own accord, and offered to supply me against monthly payments."

"Why the fat old woman is a perfect treasure; we only want eleven more kind-hearted purveyors, and we are supplied for the whole year."

"A truce to your folly, and let us lay the cloth; the two girls will be here directly. How awkward you are, you cannot even put a plate down properly! What will our fair ladies think of there being no one to wait on us?"

"They will think that we have sent the servants away so that we may be more at our ease, and they will be much obliged to us for our thoughtfulness."

"You always look at things from the best side, but I am afraid that great lout Benoît will be doing something stupid; but there is somebody knocking; just look through the keyhole. Is it the dinner?"

"No, it is my little neighbour."

As soon as she came in she blamed herself for her thoughtlessness in going to dine with two young men; but they promised her to be very good, and reassured her by telling her that she would not be the only lady present, and in fact Lizzie appeared almost immediately afterwards, and though at first she made rather a wry face at seeing another woman, her ill-humour soon passed away when she saw that she had not come on Gustave's account.

At last the waiter from the restaurant arrived, loaded with fish, fricandeau, beefsteaks, and other good things: they soon helped him to set down the dishes that he had brought, the table was immediately covered with them, and they gave themselves up, without reserve, to their appetite and their flow of spirits.

We will leave them at dinner for a little while, and see what the unfortunate Benoît, who was for the time being metamorphosed into Benoîtson, an English footman, was doing.

Francois, the wine merchant's man, walked along with his companion, who took care not to utter a word, but who was inwardly cursing Olivier, the basket of wine, and the leather breeches.

Francois tried to talk with him, but could get nothing except yes to all he said, and so he gave it up. When they got to the shop, Benoît began to get into a terrible fright, as he feared the matter would turn out badly for him.

"Was not milord satisfied with the wine?" the wine merchant asked, when he saw Benoît.

"It is not that, sir' the man replied, "for he has not even tasted it, but he suddenly remembered that he wanted six bottles of Spanish wine, and so he sent us for it."

"Six bottles of Spanish wine? But what sort of Spanish wine? Do you know what sort your master wants? Is it Madeira, sherry, Malaga?"

"Yes, yes."

"Oh! I see, he wants Malaga. Here it is. Just take this basket, Francois, and you will have to receive ninety francs instead of sixty, Does milord live far from here?"

"He told me it was at the Milord's Hôtel" Francois replied; "so go on, friend Benoîtson, and I will follow you."

But Benoît, who did not know what to do next, as Olivier had forbidden him to give his address, or to return home under the penalty of a thrashing, did not reply, and stood stock still in the middle of the yard.

"He must have forgotten his way," the wine merchant at length said, getting impatient. "Where is the Milord's Hôtel, my friend," and getting no answer but yes, he lost his temper, and exclaimed—

"The devil take his *yes* continually; how are we to know where his master is staying; but I suppose it is at Meurice's, where they all go. Ah! thought so, and now, Francois, be as quick as you can."

They started off again, but Francois found some difficulty in getting Benoît along. When they arrived at Meurice's, the former made signs to him to find out whether he recognised the hotel, and on answering yes, Francois went in and asked for milord's apartments. The porter asked him what he meant, when Francois pushed Benoît forward, and said that he wanted the long fellow's master, and after looking at him the

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porter replied that he had never seen him before, and that certainly nobody who stayed at the hotel ever had their wine sent in from outside.

Francois got into a rage, and asked Benoît whether his master was staying there or in any other part of Paris, and as he gave no other answer than yes, the porter burst out laughing, and Francois, heartily sick of his useless walks, pushed Benoît in front of him, and did not lose sight of him on the way back to his master's.

He was very angry when he saw Francois return with the footman; he began to suspect that he had been duped, and to doubt milord's good faith. There are thieves in England as well as elsewhere, and this idea very much disturbed him, and so he pressed Benoît to explain himself, and say where Ms master lived. At last he hit upon a way to find out the truth; he remembered that there was a gentleman who spoke English living in the house, and thus they could get an answer out of the footman, and when the gentleman came he began to question him.

But in vain was he questioned in French and English; he stuck to his yes, and would say nothing about his master. The wine merchant saw that he had been taken in, and, determined to find a victim he made up his mind to give Benoît into custody, Francois had already got him by the collar, when an officer came into the shop, and as soon as he saw him Benoît recovered his speech, and crying, shouting, and struggling, he fell on his knees at Colonel Moranval's feet.

The Colonel was just going into the wine merchant's house to see an old comrade, when he heard Benoît's cries, and asked him where his nephew was. The wine merchant demanded his money, and related what had happened to him, and the Colonel, partly guessing the truth, paid the bill, became surety for Benoît, tipped Francois, and asked him not to mention the matter, and went away, taking Benoît with him, as he hoped by his means at last to hear something of Gustave.

CHAPTER XIII. ANOTHER FOOLISH TRICK.

Our two young friends had quite forgotten Benoît and their creditors, and gave themselves up to the pleasure they felt at being in the society of two young and pretty women. They laughed and sang and said whatever happened to come into their head, and now and then the young men would snatch a kiss, but nothing further, and the girls restrained their movements when they wished to be too loving, and they were quite right, for a feast ought never to degenerate into a debauch.

They were in the middle of dessert, and the champagne was sparkling in their glasses, when a loud knocking at the door interrupted Gustave in the middle of a Bacchanalian song.

The young men looked at each other in doubt as to whether they ought to open the door or not, and the girls looked at them, trying to find out what could be the reason for their uneasiness. Another knock.

"Pray, gentlemen," Lizzie said, "are you deaf?"

"Oh! we hear well enough," Gustave said, "but are not quite sure whether we ought to open the door; it might be some disagreeable visitor."

"Oh! I can guess, somebody to see these gentlemen, and they are afraid of her finding us here. Well, I will just go and open the door myself, for I should like to see this beauty whose anger they are so afraid of."

Lizzie, who never listened to anything that was said to her when she wanted to satisfy her curiosity, ran into the other room, and was just going to open the outer door, in spite of Gustave and Olivier's protestations, when they heard a tolerable amount of loud swearing on the landing, which quite altered her resolution, so that she came back to Gustave, pale and trembling.

"I declare it is that terrible old Colonel!"

"What! my uncle?"

"Yes, I recognised his voice."

"Good heavens! he must have seen me in the street this morning. What are we to do, Olivier?"

"Let him knock as much as ever he likes, we will not open the door for him.,

"Is your uncle very disagreeable?" Olivier's little neighbour asked."

"He is rather hasty, and is angry with me because I would not marry a prude whom he intended for me. Just listen how he is knocking! I think he is saying something."

"Confound you," they could hear the Colonel saying outside the door, "are you going to undo it, for if you do not I will smash it in."

"I do believe he will do as he says," Lizzie cried, hunting all over the room to find some place where she could hide out of the Colonel's sight, for she feared him like fire.

That Rascal Gustave

Gustave rubbed his head, and tried to think of some means of avoiding his uncle; the little neighbour was trembling all over, whilst the Colonel was storming outside, and Olivier drank several glasses of champagne to collect his thoughts.

"There is only one thing to be done," Gustave said, taking off his coat, waistcoat, and necktie.

"What are you going to do?" the ladies asked him.

"I am going to bed."

"Going to bed, before us! What a horror!"

"Ladies, in a case of necessity one does not stick at trifles, and, besides that, I will keep my trousers on, so there will be no danger of your experiencing what you are pleased to call a horror."

"Never mind talking, and tell me your plan."

"I am in bed, dangerously ill, since yesterday, and you are nursing me."

"Now I understand; but what about the young ladies!"

"They must hide themselves for a few moments."

"That is all very well, but where?"

"That is the question, for there is no press big enough."

"They must go into that little closet, which will hold two, and the Colonel is not likely to go hunting about."

"A nice sort of place to put us into," said the neighbour."

"It will only be for a very short time, I hope, ladies; but let us try and appease my dear uncle."

"Well, as we must, let us go in, but, at any rate, give us your bottle of eau de Cologne."

The two girls hid themselves in the little closet which was by Gustave's bed; Olivier cleared away the remains of the drink, knives, forks, plates, etc., as quickly as he could, whilst Gustave pulled a cotton night-cap over his eyes, and covered himself up with the bed-clothes, and as soon as that was done, he went with a pocket-handkerchief in his hand, and a melancholy look on his face, to open the door to Colonel Moranval.

The Colonel was getting extremely impatient, and was just going to carry out his threat, and break open the door, when Olivier appeared—

"So you have made up your mind to open the door to me at last, young man," he said. "Do you know that it is very rude to keep people knocking at the door for such a long time?"

"But, Monsieur, you were not obliged to wait,"

"I expect you hoped that I should go away again, but I said who I was, and you ought to have . . ."

"That is the very reason, Colonel, that I did not open it, as I did not want you to be shocked."

"Pray do not talk such nonsense; where is my nephew, for I insist upon seeing him?"

"You shall see him, Monsieur, if you will come into the other room with me, but please walk on tiptoe."

"I think you are making run of me, M. Olivier."

"I assure you, Monsieur, I am not the least inclined to joke; pray come and see how ill the poor fellow is."

So saying, Olivier led him to the bed where Grustave had been rubbing his face with dried figs whilst his friend had been keeping the Colonel entertained, so as to make his complexion look yellow, and his uncle looked at him in astonishment, whilst Olivier turned away his head, and could hardly restrain his laughter at Gustave's appearance.

"What is the matter with him?" the Colonel said at length, after looking at him rather incredulously.

"I think it is brain fever, which threatens to become putrid and malignant"

"Pray, since when has he had it?"

"Since—since yesterday."

"And, I suppose, in order to cure it, you went disguised like an Englishman, this morning, to swindle a wine merchant out of his liquors."

"Monsieur, that is rather a strong term to use, and my friend was not so very ill, then."

"Look here, sir, I don't believe any of your stories, for one does not usually cure an illness by champagne."

"I only bought it, Monsieur, to sustain myself whilst I was nursing your nephew."

"And was that the reason that you left his servant in pawn?"

"We had nothing else."

"Just fancy, exposing this poor fellow to the risk of being imprisoned!"

"Monsieur, Patroclus was killed instead of Achilles; Pollux died six months in the year for Castor; Orpheus went, down to the infernal regions to fetch his wife; St. Vincent de Paul went to the galleys for fellows who certainly were not worth it, so surely Benoît could not object to being locked up for a short time for his master's sake?"

"We are not talking of Orpheus nor of Pollux, but of my nephew, who is continually committing some folly or other, thanks to you, M. Olivier."

"Monsieur le Colonel, you flatter me."

"Is he insensible?"

"He is wandering at this moment, and what you see on his skin is the effects of the fever."

"Have you been for a medical man?"

"Not yet, for we had no money to pay for the medicine, which he would be sure to order."

That Rascal Gustave

"No money! why you have a situation; but I am determined to know whether my nephew is as ill as you make out, and in any case I shall not leave him here. And what a state your room is in; olothes on the floor, plates under the table!"

"That was done for the cat, Monsieur."

"Corks all about the place, and I suppose you put a woman's little hand-bag under the chair for your cat likewise?"

"Oh! I have found it at last, it is my housekeeper's work-bag, and she was hunting for it for a couple of hours this morning; poor Fanchette, and she thought she must have lost it in the street."

"Does your housekeeper really carry a morocco hand-bag with a steel lock!"

"Oh, yes, Colonel, all women have them now, they are very common."

"All right; all right, but now don't lose any more time, and I will stop with my nephew whilst you go for the doctor."

"It is hardly worthwhile, Monsieur; the porter's wife will come and look after him, and I think he is asleep."

"Will you do as you are told, Monsieur, or I will know the reason why!"

The Colonel was getting angry, and it was impossible to make him alter his determination."

"Upon my word," Olivier said to himself, M Gustave and the two girls must get out of it as best they can! I am off."

Gustave had not felt at all comfortable during the foregoing conversation, and he had nearly burst out laughing half-a-dozen times, but restrained himself in the hope that his uncle would not stay, When r however, he saw Olivier go out, and the Colonel remain sitting by his bed, he lost courage, and was on the point of kicking all the bed-clothes into the air; but then, besides, he was afraid that the girls might make a noise in the closet, so to draw off his uncle's attention he made up his mind to speak to him, and in order to begin the conversation he uttered a melancholy sigh.

"Ho! Ho!" said the Colonel, "so you are awake M. Gustave?"

"Is that you, uncle?"

"Yes; you hardly expected me this evening, I fancy? And I confess, that if it had not been for Benoît I should not have come to look for you here."

"What! did Benoît tell you . . ."

"Yes, after I had given him a thrashing because he would not speak, and had promised him another if he did not tell me the truth."

"Poor Benoît, those are the only wages he has received since he has been in my service."

"You seem a great deal better, Gustave."

"I am just now, uncle, and I will come to your house tomorrow, if I am strong enough to walk."

"My dear boy, you will come this evening, either on foot or in a cab. You do not suppose, for a moment, that you have taken me in with your pretended illness . . . But what can that noise be that I hear close by?"

"It must be Olivier's cat, who feels ill because it has drunk too much milk."

"But it seems to come from close to the bed, and what a long time your friend is in coming back, so just get up and dress, Gustave, and go with me; but what a noise there is again, and I am sure it is no cat, for it comes from that little closet by your bed, and I shall go and see."

In his fear lest his uncle should do as he said, Gustave sat up in bed, and tried to stop him, quite forgetting that he was only half undressed, and the latter, seeing his trousers, felt more sure than ever that he had been taken in, and so he ran to open the door, in spite of his nephew's entreaties; but it was fastened on the inside.

"I see," Colonel Moranval said, "I suppose it is Olivier's housekeeper who is looking for her handbag in that closet. But I want to see that poor Fanchette, and she shall not come out without my doing so, even if I have to stop here all night."

This threat frightened the two girls terribly, as they were nearly suffocated by the atmosphere in which they were, and the embroideress had used all the eau de Cologne, and had several times declared that she would open the door, and was only kept back by Lizzie, who gave her a terrific description of the Colonel. Besides that, they would have been ashamed at being found in such a place; but knowing how uncomfortable they must be, Gustave sacrificed himself for them.

He got up, put on his coat, waistcoat and necktie, and going up to his uncle, said he was ready to go with him.

"Ah! my boy, you have got over your fever pretty quickly."

"My dear uncle, I am exposing myself to your anger, but I am doing it for the sake of two charming and innocent girls, who must be in a very unpleasant position where they are."

"I ought to give these two *charming little innocents* who hide themselves in a closet in two young scamps' rooms a good whipping before I leave, but I will let them off this once. Now make haste out, sir, for your sweethearts must be as yellow as lemons, and smoked like a couple of herrings."

Gustave took his hat and left the rooms with the Colonel, casting a last look at the closet in which the two girls had locked themselves up.

CHAPTER XIV. WHICH IS EITHER TOO LONG OR TOO SHORT.

When Gustave got back to his uncle's, he of course expected, as you, dear reader, will do, a long lecture, but he got nothing of the sort, for they went to their respective rooms without exchanging a word. Very likely the Colonel wished to avoid useless reproaches, but more likely still he was afraid, if he got into a greater rage than usual, that the gout might fly to his stomach.

Gustave did not know what to think of the Colonel's moderation, but he made up his mind to show himself worthy of it, and so he stopped at home for a week, behaved uncommonly well, never even left the house, worked hard for half the day, and went to bed early.

The Colonel never said a word to him, for he began to perceive that, with a young man of Gustave's character, he might be brought to reason by kindness and expostulation, but never by the exercise of authority, "Very well," the Colonel thought to himself, "I will not make any more fuss; he is very young, and, like I was at his age, fond of women, and I really believe that I should be fond of them still if my gout would only let me, and so I must try and remember what I was myself. All I want is for Gustave not to get into bad company, for that ruins young fellows, and then he shall find a wife as soon as possible, for marriage is the sepulchre of wildness, of love, and pleasure, Gustave will become a respectable member of society when his wife makes a scene, his servants quarrel, his children scream, which, taken all in all, will be quite enough to dispel all smiles and all love."

After these reflections, one evening the Colonel told Benoît, to whom, by the way, his master had given a slight licking, to teach him to play his part as a footman better, to call Gustave to him, and he went to his uncle with all that respectful manner that a young man shows to a rich bachelor uncle when he himself has not a penny in his pocket.

"Gustave," said his uncle, "I think you are getting much steadier, and you must surely be tired of the sort of life that you have been leading up to now, and so that you may become really what I wish you to be, I want you to get married."

"My dear uncle, surely not again! You cannot have another wife in view for me?"

"No, I want you to choose a wife for yourself, but not amongst the sort of girls whom you have met hitherto with Olivier. I mean you to come with me to houses where you will not only see pretty women, but ladies, any one of whom would be fit to be your wife."

"Very well, if it must be, it must be, but I do not like the idea at all."

He went out with his uncle regularly, but nothing would please him. The Colonel often thought that he was taken with some lady or other, but he found fault with all of them, till at last the former quite lost his temper, and said that nothing would suit him but to live like King Henry IV., in that age of lovers, poisoners, rebellions, fanatics and civil wars.

"After that good king, who loved his people, and yet was murdered," he continued, "where could I hope to find the golden age and perfection, that continual discreet conduct, which does not exist, and yet you look for it in a woman now."

"My dear uncle, you have forgotten Solomon the wise man."

"Yes, wisdom and conduct like his would just suit you; three hundred wives and seven hundred concubines. He was a nice sort of man! But from all I can see, you want a wife who is perfection^ and, if so, you will never get married."

"I beg your pardon, uncle, all I want is to be in love, for the woman a man loves always seems perfection to him."

"If you had only told me this sooner, you would have saved me from talking about Henry IV. and the age of gold and perfection. Do try and fall in love; you used to manage it very easily."

"It is easy enough to find a mistress, but a wife . . ."

"But a mistress is a woman, I suppose?"

" Why, of course, she is, but . . ."

"Don't you sleep with one as well as the^ other!"

"Of course, you do, but . . ."

"Don't you beget children with both?"

"Yes, I am afraid one does, but . . ."

"Confound your *buts*! I am afraid, my dear Gustave, that you have very little common sense! You young fellows, who have turned so many heads, deceived so many husbands, and caused the unhappiness of so many girls, are extremely difficult in the choice of a wife. My dear boy, although you may fancy yourself up to every trick of a woman, yet your wife, if she chooses, will deceive you as easily as she would a man who knew nothing at all about the matter."

"I never had the least doubt about that, my dear uncle."

"Well, if that is the case, let us go to bed."

CHAPTER XV. REAL LOVE.

One evening, when Gustave was coming back from the theatre by himself, he saw a woman sitting on a bench by the side of the gate of the Colonel's house. Gustave was going in without paying any attention to her; he had already got his hand on the knocker, when a tender voice stopped him.

"Is that you, M. Gustave, and you don't take any notice of me?"

"Good heavens, I know the voice! Can it be Susan!"

"It is indeed poor Susan."

"But what are you doing in Paris?"

"I came to see you, and have been waiting for you for the last two hours. They told me that you had gone out, but would be certain to be back to-night, and so I did not want to go far from the house."

"My dear little Susan—but I cannot understand. With whom did you come to Paris?"

"With nobody."

"But what about your parents?"

"I did not tell them I was going."

"Do you mean to say that you have left them?"

"They were always pressing me to marry Nicholas, and I could not agree, as I could think of nobody but you, and when they settled yesterday that the wedding was to take place next Sunday, I ran away this morning, so as not to be forced to marry him."

"But how came you to know my address!"

"Benoît gave it me, and I took care not to forget it. Are you sorry to see me?"

"Sorry to see you, poor little girl! I am much too fond of you for that; but what are we going to do?"

"I shall stay with you."

"If I were living alone it would be very easy, but I am living with my uncle, and so I am not my own master to do as I please."

"Ah! M. Gustave, I see that you do not love me any longer if you are going to drive me away from you; you still wish me to marry Nicholas Toupet."

"Don't cry, Susan, don't cry; I certainly shall not send you away. It was foolish of you to leave your mother and father, but as I am the chief cause of that, you may be quite sure that I shall not forsake you. But I do not wish my uncle to know anything of this: if I only knew where to hide you."

"I will do anything you wish, and shall be quite satisfied as long as I am with you."

"Look here, I will knock, and leave the door a little open, and whilst I am talking to the porter, you must manage to slip in and get into the courtyard, and then we must see whether the servants have gone to bed. You quite understand me?"

"Yes, perfectly."

Gustave feared lest the porter, who was Benoît's father, and as big a fool as he, should chatter, so he knocked, went and stood in front of the porter's window, who told him that a girl had been asking after him, and meanwhile Susan slipped into the courtyard, whereupon Gustave shut the door and joined her in the coach-house.

"Here you are inside," he said to Susan, "and now I must take you to my room. I only hope we may meet no one on the stairs," and so taking her by the hand, he went, as fast as he could, up the staircase that led to his rooms.

On getting in the vestibule, he stopped outside the door, for he saw a light in the anteroom, so he made Susan go up on to the next floor, and going in, found Benoît asleep in a chair, waiting for him. Of course he woke up when his master came in and asked him whether he wanted anything, and was then about to go to his bedroom, which was at the top of the house, but as he would be sure to meet Susan, it was absolutely necessary to make him go downstairs; Gustave, therefore, told him to go down to the kitchen and bring him up some supper.

Whilst he was gone, Gustave took Susan into his room, but just as Benoît was putting a fowl and some wine on to the table on his return, she, being quite in the dark upset a chair. Benoît grew pale, and let the fowl fall off the dish on to the floor in his fright, and Gustave did not know what to say.

"Did you hear that, Monsieur?" Benoît said, trembling all over.

"Yes, I think I heard something."

"There must be thieves in your room, and here I have been alone for a whole hour. Lord, if I had had the least idea of that . . ."

"What a fool you are, Benoît!"

"But, Monsieur, the noise cannot come of itself."

"It is my uncle's dog, no doubt."

"Fidele has been in bed for a long time. It's thieves, I know, and I will go and rouse the whole house."

"Just go to bed, and if you make a noise, I shall dismiss you to-morrow."

"But, Monsieur, do you want to be murdered?"

"I am not the least afraid. You are an idiot, as I have told you very often before, and so be quiet and go to bed."

"Very well, good-night, sir. I will go and load my carbine; you must call if you want me, and I will fire into the air, and that will rouse everybody."

"You will be good enough to leave your carbine alone, unless you wish my stick to make the acquaintance of your shoulders to-morrow. Go to bed and to sleep."

At last Benoît left him to himself and he was alone with Susan, and could look at her, talk to her, and kiss her as much as he liked, and he found that she had grown prettier and more womanly since he had left the village. She let him kiss her and caress her as much as he pleased; she had him again; he promised not to send her away, and so she felt perfectly happy, and desired nothing more.

That Rascal Gustave

Whilst they were having supper, Susan told him all about her journey; how she had come the eleven leagues, from Ermenonville to Paris, on foot, and almost without stopping, so eager was she to get to her lover, and so her feet were blistered and all her limbs ached, but she had not felt the fatigue on the road, as love gave her double courage and strength.

"Poor little girl," he said to himself, "she must be very much in love with me."

He did not venture to speak to her about the grief which she must be causing her parents; he felt how wrong she was to leave them for him, but how could he reproach her for such a proof of her love? He looked upon it as fate, and thinking that Susan was destined not to marry Nicholas Toupet, because he had been to Ermenonville, he made up his mind to enjoy the present without troubling himself as to the future.

Susan could not help thinking what he should do if his uncle found him out. The latter, however, would be terribly angry if he found the little peasant girl with his nephew, and if he were to discover that Gustave had ruined her, and that she had run away from her parents for his sake. But how was he to avoid it? He could not send her back to her father and mother, for they would, very probably, ill-treat her, and he could not make up his mind to that, sensitive and pretty as she was. Nobody, and certainly not a young man of twenty, would voluntarily give up such a treasure, so he determined to keep her by him, to hide her carefully and not excite his uncle's suspicions, trusting to Providence to get him out of the difficulty.

CHAPTER XVI. A DAY OF CONTRARIETIES.

It was late when Gustave woke up. He looked at the poor child who had left her parents, friends, and native village to follow him, and involuntarily his thoughts took a melancholy turn, for Susan's future disquieted him.

There was a knock at the door, and Gustave got up gently so as not to wake Susan, who was asleep still, and asked who was there.

"It is I, Monsieur," Benoît replied, "and as you generally get up at eight o'clock, and it is now ten, I began to be afraid that the thieves had killed you, and, then, your uncle is waiting breakfast for you."

"All right, I will be down very soon."

"Will you give me your clothes and your boots?"

"You shall have them by-and-by, but don't bother me now."

He did not know what to do; Susan was asleep still, and his uncle was waiting for him, so he must go, but what could he do with her? She could not sleep all day, and she would want her breakfast and dinner. And then, Benoît again, who did his master's room every day, it would be almost impossible to hide Susan from him. If he had not been such a fool he could have taken him into his confidence, and he might have been of some use to them, but, as it was, he was not the least good. He was not only stupid but very indiscreet, and a great talker; he would be sure to tell his father, and if once the porter knew it, it might as well be proclaimed from the house tops.

"Confound it!" Gustave said as he was dressing, "it is embarrassing, very embarrassing; the only thing will be to go to breakfast, lock my door, and forbid Benoît to mention it, and see what I can do with Susan later on."

As soon as he was dressed, he kissed the girl, who was still in a profound sleep, went out, double-locked the door of his bedroom, and put the key in his pocket. On the landing outside his anteroom he found Benoît waiting for him.

"Benoît, you are not to go into my room."

"What, sir?"

"I do not want you to put it into disorder, and I have bought two doves which I want to tame, and you will frighten them."

"Oh! dear no, Monsieur; I know all about birds."

"However, I will not have you go there."

"But what about your bed, Monsieur, are you going to teach the doves to make that?"

"I can make it myself, it will amuse me, and you are not to speak about this before my uncle or anyone else; for you know, Benoît, that your ears are long and easily pulled."

"Of course I shall not mention it, Monsieur, for you are quite at liberty to make you own bed if you like, and I shall have less to do, that is all, and if you like to brush your clothes and black your boots . . ."

"No, you can go into the anteroom, and I will leave them out for you there."

That Rascal Gustave

Gustave went to his uncle's apartments, who was waiting breakfast for him. He was elaborately got up, of which he did not take much notice at first, but, after breakfast, he was surprised to hear him ask whether the horse were put into his cab.

"You are going out, uncle?"

"Yes, and you are going with me."

"I?"

"Certainly, and I do not see why you should look so astonished."

"But, uncle, I wanted to work this morning."

"How extraordinarily fond of work you have got; but you will have plenty of time for that to-morrow."

"Really, if you do not mind, I would rather . . ."

"Well, I do mind, and I want you to go with me, and, as the horse is in, let us be off."

Gustave followed his uncle in rather a bad temper, but he hoped to get off with a few visits, and, during that time, Susan would have plenty of opportunity for resting, and, as she had had a very good supper the night before, she could easily wait for his return.

They got in, and the Colonel drove, and Gustave was very much vexed to see that they went through Paris without stopping, and that they were going towards the Barriere de L'Etoile.

"Where are you going to, uncle? You are surely not going out of Paris?"

"I know where I am going, my dear nephew. I am going to take you to a delightful house, where, I am sure, you will enjoy yourself very much."

"I don't suppose I shall."

"We shall see about that, and in any case, it is not much for you to sacrifice one day for me."

"What! a whole day?"

"You will thank me for it this evening."

"You are going to keep me till evening?"

"Possibly we may even spend the night at M. de Grancière's."

Gustave was half wild with vexation, impatience, and uneasiness; he felt inclined to jump out and leave his uncle, but on reflection he grew somewhat calmer. He could not openly disoblige the Colonel, and if he jumped out, he might hurt himself, and not get back to Paris any the sooner, so the only thing was to have patience, and to wait for a favourable opportunity of escaping from M. de Grancière's.

But what would poor little Susan think, and what would she do with herself all day? Of course, he must tell her exactly what had happened, and with his kisses, he thought he should easily make her forget all she had undergone during his absence.

Thus Gustave tried to console himself and to have patience. The Colonel told him about the exploits of M. de Grancière, his old companion in arms; but all M. de Moranval's eloquence, with which he described the battles, assaults, and skirmishes in

which he had been with his friend, was thrown away on Gustave, for he did not hear anything of all that he had been saying to him, and only thought of Susan, who would be obliged to go without her dinner.

"Shall we be at the end of our journey soon?" Gustave asked the Colonel, interrupting him in the middle of an animated account.

"Is that all the interest you take in my dangers, when I was telling you how I had been wounded in the head and was surrounded by enemies?"

"But, uncle, you are very well now, we are not on the field of battle, and we have already been through Courbevoie."

"What on earth is the matter with you to-day" I never saw you so impatient."

"My legs are cramped, and I am uncomfortable in this carriage."

"If you had been lying wounded, like I have, for a dozen hours on a battle-field, surrounded by dead and dying, you would not complain of cramp in the legs. But here we are; that handsome house on the right is M. de Grancière's."

Gustave reckoned that they were about two and a half leagues from Paris, but he could cover that distance in less than an hour with a good horse.

They stopped at a pretty country house, and the groom took the horse into the yard.

"Don't take the horse out," Gustave said.

"Of course you will take him out," the Colonel replied; "he will have plenty of time to rest."

Gustave bit his lips, and followed his uncle in a rage. They went into the drawing-room, and the Colonel introduced his nephew to his friend. M. de Grancière was a very agreeable man, and very polite to Gustave, but the latter only replied in an incoherent and distracted manner.

"My dear friend," the Colonel said, "I must ask you to excuse my nephew; some days he hardly seems to know what he is about, and, I suppose, this is one of his bad days."

This joke made Gustave feel very uncomfortable, and so he tried to moderate his impatience and not to show how uneasy he felt. Just then an elegantly dressed and charming-looking young lady came into the drawing-room.

"This is my daughter," M. de Grancière said.

"My dear Eugénie, let me introduce M. St. Réal to you."

The Colonel had to nudge Gustave, who was looking out into the garden, to make him reply to the lady's bow. He turned round, and found himself face to face with a young and pretty woman, and as he did not wish to appear silly or awkward to a lady of such attractions, he at once became polite and agreeable. The Colonel smiled, and went up to his nephew.

"Well," he said, "are you still put out at having come with me."

Gustave did not reply, for he was looking at Eugénie with admiration, but he turned round with a sigh, thinking of poor Susan.

That Rascal Gustave

Several neighbours came in, and Gustave noticed that they had bouquets, which they presented to Eugénie.

"What is it." he asked his uncle.

"It is Madame Fonbelle's birthday."

"Who is Madame Fonbelle?"

"M. de Grancière's daughter."

"Oh! she is married?"

"No, she is a widow, and has an income of fifteen thousand francs a year, and she is not only pretty, but good, kind, and talented. What do you say to all that, Gustave?"

"I say, uncle, that one ought to distrust the union of all these good qualities in one person, and I fancy you are making your picture rather too flattering."

"You will soon see that it is not up to the original."

"Then why, my dear uncle, did not you introduce me to Madame Fonbelle before this?"

"Because she has been touring in Touraine, and I did not want to send you there that you might behave as you did towards that poor Madame de Berly. I know quite well what you are capable of."

Before dinner, they all went into the garden, and Gustave tried to find some excuse for leaving, but without success. It would have been a breach of all good manners to have left a house in which he was for the first time, without ceremony, and so he saw that it was absolutely necessary for him to dine there, but he thought that afterwards he could pretend that he did not feel well, or that he had an engagement, or he might be able to get away without being seen, and without saying anything. Madame Fonbelle would think him rude, and a man who did not know the usages of good society; but to think of poor little Susan without breakfast or dinner, and with nothing but the remains of yesterday's fowl, which was indeed only the skeleton; no, he really must go.

Thinking thus, he went along one of the garden walks, when he saw Madame Fonbelle, and went up to her, for he hoped that the time would not appear so long to him while talking to this lady, of whom his uncle gave such a flattering portrait. He also wished to be polite and agreeable, and to leave some regrets behind him, as he was going to leave so unceremoniously in the evening; there is always a certain amount of vanity in such matters.

M. de Grancière's daughter was charming, and Gustave gave her to understand how delighted he should be to cultivate her nearer acquaintance, and she told him they should always be glad to see him either in the country or in Paris; she accepted his compliments with a smile, but would not hear of his excuses for leaving very early.

"No, Monsieur," she said, "we shall not let you go like that; no doubt you will miss some very pleasant appointment for this evening, but I am sure you will make this sacrifice for us, and I shall be much obliged to you for doing so."

What can you say to a woman who tries to detain you so pleasantly, and for whom you already feel . . . What! Love? What would you have, dear reader? That rascal Gustave's heart was very inflammable, and Madame Fonbelle was very charming. But poor little Susan, who had left everything for him? He loved Susan still, he had not

forgotten Julia, and was quite ready to have a little fun with Lizzie; and pray do not believe that our hero is a purely imaginary being—men are nearly all like that. We are no longer in that period (if it ever existed) when men only loved one woman; we have made great progress in gallantry, and love the fair sex in general. Long live the French for love-making! Let Germans sigh in silence for their mistresses, or Englishmen blow out their brains or hang themselves with theirs; let Dutchmen smoke under the ladies' noses, and blow a cloud by way of a compliment, and Turks keep the little darlings locked up under the care of horrible eunuchs, always ready with the dagger or the bowstring; let Spaniards spend half their lives in strumming the guitar, serenading, and Russians make love by means of the stick; let Scotchmen sell their wives at market, and Hindoos take one at ten years old; let Hottentots paint themselves to charm their ladies, and Malays flatten their foreheads and lengthen their ears; let the Italians bring down the fire which burnt Sodom and Gomorrah, and which now, instead of coming down from heaven, descends down the sides of Vesuvius on to their delightful country.

Let—let us leave all that, you will say, and return to Gustave, whom we left with Eugénie, and let us see what he was doing.

When dinner was announced, he gave his arm to Madame Fonbelle, and went, with the rest of the company, to a tent on the lawn, where they were to dine. Either by accident or design, he was put next to Eugénie, and dinner did not appear at all long to him, though it lasted nearly three hours, and it was nearly dark when they went into the drawing-room. Gustave looked at a clock, and was horrified to see that it was eight, and thinking how long it would take him to get back to Paris, he thought how miserable poor little Susan would be. He turned to go, but Eugénie was close to him, and insisted on his singing. "I know you sing very well," she said, "and are fond of music; would you mind trying a very pretty nocturne with me?"

He could not possibly refuse, so he went with her to the piano, and they sang the nocturne, another duet, and another, amidst general applause. The Colonel seemed very pleased, and Madame Fonbelle thanked Gustave, with a certain amount of tenderness in her eyes—eyes that a man might well spend his life in admiring. But the clock struck ten. "Ten o'clock," he said to himself, "and the poor child has been waiting for me since morning."

He got to the drawing-room door, rushed into the yard, and asked for the Colonel's cab, but, of course, the horse was still in the stable, so Gustave took him, clapped the first bridle he happened to find into his mouth, and got on his back, without a saddle, and galloped off to Paris as fast as he could go.

In less than three-quarters of an hour he arrived at his uncle's house, and in the yard the horse fell against the porter's lodge; old Benoît shouted out, his son jumped on one side, while Gustave got free of the horse; he was not hurt, so, leaving him to the servants, he pushed Benoît towards the domestic offices.

"The poor horse," Benoît said, with a sigh, "he will never get over it."

"Benoît, bring me up a pie, some poultry, jam, wine, at once."

"What, Monsieur V*"

"Didn't you hear what I said? How slow you are!"

Benoît could not make out why his master should be so hungry, so he took up a fowl on a dish, quite at his leisure, and found Gustave waiting for him outside his door.

That Rascal Gustave

"Is that all you have brought?"

"Well, Monsieur, as I did not want to break anything, I thought it best only to bring up one thing at a time."

"You donkey, come along with you."

Gustave put down the fowl on the ground, and went with Benoît to the larder, where he took everything he could find, and made his man carry something as well. Benoît looked at him in surprise.

"You seem to be very hungry, Monsieur."

"I don't think that is any business of yours. Go on, you drone."

"Take care, Monsieur, you will make me break something."

As they were going upstairs, a dog rushed down past them with a fowl in his mouth; it was Fiddle, who had smelt it when Gustave had left the dish outside his door. Gustave was furious, he shouted out to the dog, and aimed a kick at him, and the brute, in his fright, ran between Benoît's legs, who fell down on the landing with all his dishes, and bedaubed his face with cream cheese.

Gustave was beside himself, and hardly knew what he was doing, but at last he left Benoît and the capon, and, taking only the pie and some fruit, he went into his rooms, closed the door of the anteroom and bolted it, and then went into his bedroom.

The poor little peasant girl was sitting near the bed, with her pocket-handkerchief on her knees, and her eyes red and swollen with crying; as soon as she saw Gustave, she uttered a cry and rushed into his arms.

"Here I am, Susan."

"Ah! I thought you were never coming back."

"Why, you have been crying."

"Nearly all the day; but I assure you that I did not make any noise."

"Poor little darling! And you have had no dinner?"

"Dinner! I don't want any now; I was hungry this morning, but my appetite is all gone."

"I suppose you began to think that I did not love you any more."

"What could I think when you did not come back?—and you have been away so long."

"It was not my fault; my uncle would make me go with him; but if you only knew how long the day seemed to me!"

Perhaps this was not exactly the truth, but there are circumstances in which a white lie is necessary and even praiseworthy. It would have been cruel to say to Susan, "I have seen a charming woman, with whom I sang, and who quite made me forget how time went." That was the truth, however; but then you know it is not well always to speak the exact truth."

Gustave put the pie, wine, and fruit on the table before Susan, and pressed her to eat; she smiled at him, for she could see by his eagerness and his regrets that he loved

her still, and so she forgot all about the wretched day she had spent, and ate to please him.

But all that time Gustave kept thinking, and he said to himself, "What has happened to-day may happen often again, and prove very unpleasant and inconvenient; it will never do to let Susan pass all her life in one room, without daring to speak loud, and hardly to move for fear of being heard; and if she never goes out she will get ill, for nobody can change their whole manner of life with impunity. A girl of her age, who has been used to be about in the country, to get up at sunrise, to take a large amount of exercise, could never endure the heavy and unwholesome atmosphere of Paris, condensed into a space of twenty square feet, which she cannot renew herself without being seen by the servants in the mansion, And then, of course, Benoît would suspect something from his master's extraordinary conduct, and would speak about it, and so it might come to the Colonel's ears, and if he were to find poor little Susan I . . . She certainly could not remain where she was; he must take a little room and furnish it nicely, where she could sing, talk, enjoy the fresh air, and eat whenever she pleased, and Gustave could go and see her every morning and evening."

"My dear child," he said to her, "I have found a way by which we can meet without any danger; to-morrow I will rent a pretty little room for you on one of the Boulevards, and you shall go and live there."

Susan let her knife and fork fall out of her hands; she listened to Gustave attentively when he told her how nice it would be in her new abode, and when he had finished, she did not speak, but she burst into tears, and threw herself at Gustave's knees with a supplicating look.

He was very much surprised at this, and begged her to tell him what was the matter, and tried to raise her up, but she persisted in kneeling, and cried out, sobbing,

"Pray do not send me away, M. Gustave. I promise you not to make any noise or to cry again; you can go out as much as you like, but don't drive me away."

"What are you thinking, dearest; I am not going to drive you away, I only want to make you happier. You can go out with me . . ."

"I would rather remain in your room."

"I will come and see you every day."

"But when you had gone, I should be so dreadfully afraid that I should never see you again; and here, at all events, you must come back to sleep."

"But if my uncle finds you?"

"It will be time enough to send me away then, but in this Paris! . . . I should be quite lost if I did not remain with you."

Gustave could find no means of quieting the girl but by promising that she should remain in his room.

"If you wish it," he said, "you can remain here, but I only hope that we shall not, both of us, have cause to repent of this decision some day."

This promise made Susan quite happy and merry again; she kissed Gustave, ran about the room? jumped and did all sorts of foolish things, for she thought that her happiness was now altogether assured. Gustave by no means thought so, but he did not

That Rascal Gustave

wish to interfere with her joy, and so he went to sleep in her arms, regretting, perhaps for the first time, that reason had not triumphed over love.

CHAPTER XVII. THE MYSTERIOUS CHAMBER.

Before eight o'clock the next morning Benoît knocked at his master's door, and so Gustave got up, and, without opening, asked him what he wanted.

"Monsieur le Colonel wants to see you," he replied. Gustave was sure of getting a good scolding, so he dressed himself, locked his bedroom door, and went to his uncle. Benoît was very curious to know why his master had locked his door, as he had done the day before, but he did not dare to ask any more questions.

"Well, sir," the Colonel said, as soon as he saw his nephew, "I should very much like to know what possessed you last night? You rushed out of a pleasant house, where you had been very kindly received, without even wishing the mistress of it good-bye, and at the very moment you were going to sing with her again; you ran off as if the devil himself were at your heels, and got on a horse that had never been ridden, a horse that cost me a thousand francs, and which you have nearly done for, so that I shall have to buy a new one; you dashed into the yard like a shot out of a forty-eight pounder, smashed the glass of the porter's lodge, terrifying everybody; you frightened my porter nearly out of his wits, when, God knows, he has none to spare, and for nothing else than to clear out the larder. A pretty reason for upsetting everything; and yet I fancy you ate a pretty good dinner."

"The fact is, I got most terribly hungry all of a sudden."

"Confound it all, eat as much as you like, but there is no reason, because you happen to be ravenous, to ruin my horses, and turn my house upside down."

"I say, uncle, was Madame Fonbelle angry at my leaving like I did?"

"She is much too kind; she was the first to try and appease me; but you certainly owe her an excuse."

"I will go and call on her, and make my excuses."

"I told you I should have to buy another horse. I thought, naturally, that it was another love affair, and that you had left us like that to go and pay your court to some little impudent-faced girl, so I really was surprised to hear that you came here, full gallop, only for the sake of supper. Bless me I what an appetite you must have; but please, for the future, put something or other to eat into your pocket, so that you need not play any more such tricks."

On leaving his uncle and going back to his own room Gustave boxed Benoît's ears, to teach him to tell his uncle what he had done another time, and Benoît howled, and declared that Fidèle alone was to blame, as he had jumped up on to the Colonel with part of the fowl which he had stolen still in his mouth.

After kissing Susan, Gustave took a cab, and went to M. de Grancière's, and made his excuses to Eugénie for his unceremonious departure, and, though she accepted them kindly, she joked him about the appointment he had been so anxious to keep. He fancied that he could see that she was vexed, and he felt a secret pleasure in it, for he already flattered himself that he was not indifferent to her; but, in spite of the pleasure that he took in talking to her, he cut his visit short, and was back before four o'clock.

That Rascal Gustave

He did not leave Susan again during the whole day, and had dinner brought upstairs. He had punished Benoît enough to prevent him chattering again, and besides that, he never went beyond the anteroom.

Thus several days passed; Gustave never went out except to call on Madame Fonbelle, who had returned to Paris with her father, as the summer was over, and, besides that, he never left Susan, unless it were to breakfast and dine with his uncle, when the latter did not, as often happened, take his meals in his own room.

The Colonel was very much astonished at Gustave's steady conduct, and would sometimes even joke him on his inordinate love of study.

"My dear boy," he said to him one day, "you must not go to extremes; you used to be a madcap, never at home, and playing the fool every day, and now you lock yourself up in your room, and never stir out. You are working too hard, and will get ill, and the proof of this is that, in spite of your regular life and excellent behaviour, your face looks pale and long, and your eyes are hollow, with black rims round them, and, to look at you, one might think that you were spending all your nights at balls and in love-making."

"But, uncle, studying hard is very fatiguing and trying."

"Then, by George, don't do so much, as I have just been trying to make you understand. Come out with me sometimes, and don't keep yourself shut up in your room to get dried up and withered over books and papers."

Time was more efficacious than all the Colonel's advice; Gustave was still very often with Susan, but in order to pass away those hours which could not always be spent in love-making, much as women may like it, he began to teach the girl to read and write, for she had only had a few lessons from the village schoolmaster, who himself did not know much, and she, to please Gustave, worked hard whenever she was alone. And these solitary moments became longer every day, for though she was very sweet, tender, and loving, Gustave could see her whenever he wished, and was almost overwhelmed with her caresses, and so, when with her, he would often look at his watch and invent some pretext to be able to leave her. Then he used to go to Madame Fonbelle's, where the time appeared very short to him; but Eugénie took all his attentions with a smile and a joke, used to change the conversation when he spoke of his sentiments, and made fun of him when he appeared unhappy and silent. But through all this Gustave noticed at times that she was evidently not indifferent to him, and though she tried to hide her feelings, such a matter is not easily concealed from a lover's eye.

Susan never reproached Gustave for being away from her so much; she was unhappy when he went away, and cried when he was long without coming back, but as soon as she heard him in the outer room she quickly dried her eyes and tried to show him only a cheerful, happy face.

Of course the Colonel knew that his nephew often went to M. de Grancière's, and he was glad to see Gustave's rising love for Eugénie, for he had no doubt that this passion was the cause of the happy change that had taken place in his nephew's conduct. He had mentioned his wishes and hopes to his friend, and M. de Grancière replied that his daughter was entirely mistress of her own actions, and could marry again whenever she pleased.

"If that is the case," the Colonel said, "matters are sure to turn out as I wish, for Eugénie cannot help liking Gustave, as he is such a thoroughly nice fellow, and she will

marry him, as she is far too virtuous to give herself up to him without being his wife, and it must be very tiresome constantly to refuse what, after all, one would really like oneself."

At Gustave's expressed wish Susan had written to her parents, saying how sorry she was for the grief her flight must have caused them, and said the reason of it was her dislike for Nicholas; she added that she had a situation in Paris, but she gave no address, as she was afraid they would come and forcibly separate her from Gustave.

One morning, when the Colonel was in the yard, which was a very unusual circumstance with him, examining a horse he had just bought, he thought he heard his nephew's name pronounced in the coach-house. Going close up to it, without being seen, he heard the following conversation between Benoît and his father, who was cleaning the Colonel's cab.

"Do you mean to say that M. Gustave has not let you go into his room for a long time?"

"No; he has absolutely forbidden me to go in."

"Who makes his bed and does his room?"

"I don't know, but he told me he had bought two doves and was going to tame them, and I suppose he is amusing himself with those birds all day long, whilst his uncle thinks he is working."

"Nonsense; a young man like he is would not amuse himself with a pair of doves! I know what it is, Benoît; I sometimes see something passing by the curtain when he has gone out."

"I wonder what it can be, for those birds must have wonderful appetites, and drink wine, for M. Gustave consumes a great deal more food than he used to do—pies, poultry, fruit, cakes, all sorts of things."

"I expect, Benoît, that it is a monkey which he is educating in secret as a present for the Colonel at New Year."

"That is very likely; yes, it must be a monkey or two, for sometimes I hear a noise in the room, and you remember when I told you I thought there were thieves? Of course no birds could have made such a noise. I should like to know what it really is."

"And so should I."

"I will find out, that is quite certain," the Colonel said to himself as he walked quietly away from the coach-house. "Funny sort of monkeys that want wine and poultry! There is something beneath all that, and then Gustave's extraordinary love for work all of a sudden? I wonder if he has been taking me in again?"

He was not at all the sort of man to put off clearing up anything that he thought strange or suspicious, and so he went upstairs to Gustave's room and found the door locked, and seeing that Benoît had spoken the truth, he made up his mind to see what it was that Gustave wished to keep concealed from everybody, so he went downstairs and sent for his nephew's servant.

"Benoît, where is your master?"

"He is not at home, Monsieur."

"Have you the key of his room? I want to go and get something out of it."

That Rascal Gustave

"I, Monsieur? No, Monsieur, I have not got it."

Benoît got hot, and felt very uncomfortable. "Don't be frightened," Colonel Moranval said; "I know you have nothing to do with any of my nephew's follies, for he knows you are much too stupid for him to take into his confidence."

"You are quite right, M. le Colonel"

"Go and get me a pair of pincers and a screwdriver."

"Had not I better get a locksmith, Monsieur."

"No, I can do without one, so do as you are told, and hold your tongue."

Benoît soon brought the implements, and followed M. de Moranval up to his nephew's apartments, but when they got to the anteroom the Colonel turned round and ordered Benoît to go downstairs, which he did very unwillingly, for he was very curious to see what was in his master's bedroom.

It was a much easier matter for the Colonel to burst open the door than to pick a lock. However he managed to undo the screws, the bolt gave way, and he was in the mysterious chamber.

But in vain he looked round for birds or monkeys, though certainly there were some clothes that could not possibly belong to Gustave, hanging at the end of the bed.

"Of course there is a woman here," the Colonel said, "but where on earth can she be got to?"

Just then his eyes fell on a recess beside the fireplace, where Susan was cowering behind a chair, and as soon as he saw her, he stood motionless before her, and she, for her part, did not dare to lift up her eyes.

"Whatever are you doing here, my child?" the Colonel said at last, recovering his power of speech; but Susan shut her eyes and did not say a word, so he moved the chair and took her, trembling like a leaf, by the hand.

"There, come, you need not be frightened, for I shall not eat you. Answer my questions, and, above all, speak the truth. What are you doing in my nephew's room?"

"I am living with him."

"Oh! you are living with him. But I only see one bed in the room."

"I sleep with him, Monsieur."

"That is very nice, upon my word! and pray how long has this charming state of affairs been going on?"

"About six weeks, Monsieur."

"What! you have been in this room for six weeks, and never go out?"

"No, never, Monsieur; I should be too much frightened of being seen."

"What do you do all day long?"

"When he is here, I look at him, talk to him, kiss him; and when he is out, I practise reading and writing."

"But you must be alone pretty often, for he has been out very frequently of late, and you must get very tired of this sort of life."

"No, Monsieur; I am always thinking of him, and expecting him, and I am sure that he will come by-and-by."

The Colonel looked at Susan attentively; her grace and innocence disarmed his anger, and so he began to question her again.

"Where did you make my nephew's acquaintance?"

"At Ermenonville, Monsieur; he was staying at our house."

"Oh I he was staying with your parents, and as the price of their hospitality, he seduced and carried off their daughter?"

"He neither seduced me, nor carried me off, Monsieur, it came quite of itself; I happened to go into his room, and we fell in love with each other at once."

"Well it appears to me that these matters are managed just as easily at Ermenonville as in Paris. But why did you leave your village and your parents?"

"Because they wished me to marry Nicholas Toupet, whom I did not love the least. I was very unhappy; I was thinking of M. Gustave all the day long, and almost dying of grief because I could not see him."

"And suppose your mother were to die of grief because her daughter has left her? Suppose your conduct were to kill her?"

"Pray, Monsieur, do not say that."

Thereupon she began to sob, and the poor Colonel was much affected; he walked up and down the room, stamped, looked at Susan, stopped short, began to swear at Gustave, and in a minute or two he went up to the girl and took her by the hand.

"Be quiet, my dear," he said; "don't cry, and listen to me. I am not going to reproach you for what you have done, for you yourself do not see how inconsistent you have been; you were guided by heart, and although people say one should always do that, certainly in your case it has led to nothing but folly. You cannot stop here, for you have been here far too long already; but for Heaven's sake don't cry like that, or I shall get angry; of course you must leave this house."

"Oh! Monsieur, take me as a servant; I will; serve you well, and work . . ."

"No, by George, a servant like you would turn the whole house upside down; and then you do not suppose that Gustave would like to see you mixing with my servants? No, my child, you must leave this house, that is quite certain; but the question is, would you rather remain in Paris or return to your parents?"

"Oh, Monsieur, do not send me back to the village, for they would make me many Nicholas Toupet as a punishment!"

"You seem to hate this Nicholas, and yet if you were like our Parisian women, that would not at all prevent you from . . . but that is not the question. I will consent to your not returning home, but I will find you a respectable home somewhere else, and you must write to your mother and let her know where you are; but then the question is—where on earth can I find such a place?"

"It will be all the same to me, Monsieur, for I can never be happy again as long as I am away from him."

"Tut! tut! that is mere childish talk. Love flies away, my dear child, and if you had a little more experience, you would feel that Gustave's . . . Well, you cannot live

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upon love, and we must think of your future. My nephew is a young madcap, who would have let your youth moulder away in his room, whilst he . . . Upon my word, don't deserve the tears that you women shed for them."

The Colonel did not know what to decide upon; he could not make up his mind what to do with Susan, whom he could and would not keep in his house, but whom he was determined to look after, for he could plainly see that this little village girl, although she had been living with a young man, had really less experience than many girls who live at home with their parents. Susan said nothing more, but looked timidly at M. Moranval, and waited till he should have decided her fate; and the Colonel left the bedroom, and opened the door of the anteroom to call Benoît; but he might have saved himself the trouble, for the porter and his son were on the staircase waiting to see what strange animals he would bring out of his nephew's room.

He looked at them very angrily, and asked what they were doing there.

"Monsieur," the porter stammered, "we . . . we were waiting to see whether you wanted anything."

"You had better say that you were waiting for me to go out to go in yourselves and look at that monkey which my nephew is keeping there."

"It is a monkey, Monsieur?"

"Go down to your lodge; I do not like curious people."

The Colonel gave the porter a push, who pushed his son, and they both went downstairs, ashamed at having been caught, and vexed at not having found anything out.

M. Moranval then went to see Madame Duval, a woman who looked after all the linen of the mansion, and who was neither curious nor a chatterbox, and so she had been in the Colonel's service for ten years, and had a room to herself.

"Madame Duval," he said, going into the old work-woman's room, "I want to find a sort of a place for a young girl, so can you tell me of any shop where the business will not oblige her to be constantly running about the streets of Paris, and where she will not be exposed to the doubtful jokes of the customers!"

"I only know Madame Henri, who keeps a linen-draper's shop in the Rue aux Ours, Monsieur," she replied, after thinking for a moment; "she supplies me with all we require here, and happened to ask me the other day whether I knew of any one to suit her."

"Is your Madame Henri a respectable woman?" the Colonel asked.

"Yes, Monsieur; she is a widow, and young, and always in good spirits; she goes to the theatre every Sunday, but she is highly respectable, and has no improper acquaintances."

"That is the very thing, for I do not wish to put this girl either into a convent or with some ill-tempered prude; I want her to be occupied and amused at the same time, for that is just as it should be. Madame Duval, would you be kind enough to fetch me a fiacre, and get ready to go with me to Madame Henri's?"

"But, Monsieur, at least you ought to let her know . . ."

"That is not necessary. You say she knows you, and she certainly ought to know my name, as she supplies my house with linen, and that will surely be enough. Go on,

Madame, make the cab drive into the yard, and tell the driver to draw up close to the middle staircase."

As soon as Madame Duval was gone, the Colonel went up to Susan again,—

"Now, my dear child, put everything that belongs to you into a parcel, and get ready to go with me."

"What, Monsieur, to-day?"

"Immediately."

"But I must say good-bye to him."

"Not at all; that would never do j you must go before he comes back."

"But what will he say when he finds that I have left?"

"I shall tell him that I took you away."

"He will be very sorry . . ."

"He will feel that I was right."

"He will be dreadfully angry."

"By George, I should like to see him!"

Poor Susan wept, and was in despair, and begged to be allowed to wait till he came back, but the Colonel was inexorable.

"But, at any rate, Monsieur," she said, sobbing, "he will come and see me. Shall you tell him where I am?"

"Yes, my dear child," the Colonel replied, as he did not wish to reduce her to despair altogether, "yes, you shall see him if you are a sensible girl, and behave yourself well."

This promise somewhat soothed Susan's grief; she wiped her eyes, made all that Gustave had bought for her since she had been living with him into a parcel, and waited for M. de Moranval's orders.

A carriage drove into the yard, and drew up close to the staircase, so the Colonel took Susan's hand; she gave one more look round that room, which was the whole world to her, her bosom heaved and her knees trembled, but she kept back her tears, for fear of irritating him.

As soon as they had got downstairs he made her get in, and sat down beside her, making Madame Duval sit on the other side, and pulling up the windows, he ordered the driver to go to the Rue aux Ours. As the cab drove out of the gate, Benoît and his father were standing in the street opposite to it, craning their necks to see what was in the fiacre, but Susan was hidden by Madame Duval and the Colonel, and so they got nothing except a splashing for their trouble.

When they arrived at Madame Henri's, the linen-drapeer was very much surprised to see Colonel Moranval and Madame Duval come in, followed by a girl, with red eyes, and who could hardly keep on her feet.

"Madame," the Colonel said to her, "you asked Madame Duval if she knew of a shop-girl, and I have brought you one now. She is, as you see, very unhappy, but she will tell you all about her little troubles, and you will be very sorry for her, and give her

That Rascal Gustave

good advice, I am sure, and so in time all will come right. Let me recommend Mlle. Susan, in whom I take great interest, to your kind care, and as she knows nothing at all, at present, and you will have a good deal of trouble in teaching her, allow me to give you five hundred francs for her first year's board and lodging. Will you be good enough to tell me, Madame, whether you agree to my terms?"

"Monsieur," Madame Henri said, rather astonished at the Colonel's rapid way of settling matters, "certainly your recommendation and that of Madame Duval are quite enough to induce me to take this young lady into my establishment, provided she agrees to come, and will remain with me."

"Yes, Madame," Susan said, with a sigh, "I will do anything I am told."

"So that is settled," the Colonel replied; "allow me again to recommend this poor child to your kindness, for her only fault is that she is too sensitive. Good-bye, my dear; Madame Henri will often let me hear about you, and you may be sure that I shall always take care of you as long as you behave well. Good-bye again, and to-morrow your parents shall know that you are in a situation of which you need not be ashamed."

With this the Colonel took his leave, and Susan remained with Madame Henri. We shall meet the little peasant girl again later on, but now we must see what Gustave was doing whilst his sweetheart was being taken from him.

He had spent part of the day at Madame Fonbelle's, and on his return to his uncle's, Benoît and his father were eagerly examining his room. When they saw the cab drive off with the Colonel, they calculated that they would have plenty of time to go up to M. Gustave's apartments, and as they found the door of the mysterious chamber open, they rummaged in every corner, in the hopes of finding out what he had kept hidden there.

When Gustave went upstairs he was surprised to find the door of his room open, and thought he must have forgotten to lock it, but on going in he found, instead of Susan, the porter carefully searching a large clothes press, and Benoît, on his knees, looking under the bed.

"What are you doing here? How did you get in? Are you going to answer me, you blackguards?"

The porter and his son had no excuse to make, so Gustave took Benoît by one of his ears and pulled it vigorously.

"Will you tell me, you fool, where she is?"

"Where she is, Monsieur?"

"Yes; what has become of her?"

"What has become of what, Monsieur? We have seen nothing of your doves."

"I was only looking for them, Monsieur," the porter said, shaking all over.

"I want to know who opened this door."

"Your uncle, Monsieur, but he went into the room by himself, and then he sent for & fiacre."

"So I suppose he took her away!"

"I suppose he took something away; in fact, I am sure he did, but we could not see what it was."

"Get out of the room, you . . ."

But the father and son were only too glad to go, and did not wait for the end of the sentence. Gustave looked about to see whether Susan had left a note of any kind for him, but he could find nothing; so it was all over, and she was lost to him! But you will say that he did not love her any more, and that he even felt bored in her company, and left her for Eugénie. Certainly, when he was with Susan, he no longer felt those transports which are so characteristic of love, and he neglected her for part of the day, and as soon as he got back to her, he wished to leave her again; but now, that she was no longer there, now that she had been taken away from him, he felt all his love revive, and he longed to see her, to speak to her, and to take her into his arms. That is just the contrariness of the human heart, and, as the song says, very aptly, —

"Man wishes to have what he has not,
Whilst what he has no longer pleases."

CHAPTER XVIII. HOW A MARRIED COUPLE PASSED THE NIGHT.

In despair at having lost Susan, with whom he was in love again now, Gustave went out, and set to work to run all over the town to find the girl whom the barbarous Colonel (for anyone who crosses us in our desires is always barbarous) had hidden.

But Paris is a large place, and when one has not the least idea in which direction to go, no doubt a great deal of useless trouble will be taken. Gustave had not gone a hundred yards before he looked about him, and wondered where on earth he was going to, and as he could not answer that question satisfactorily to himself, he stood in the middle of the street in a state of perplexity, jostled by the passers-by, who had an objection to a tall young fellow standing motionless on the pavement. If he had stood there much longer, no doubt he would have had a crowd round him, for in Paris most people are curious, and seem to have nothing to do, so that two dogs fighting, a man whose nose happens to be bleeding, a lady who shows her garters when she pulls up her dress too high in crossing the street, a drunken man who falls down, or a squalling child, are each of them quite sufficient to attract a crowd of a couple of hundred people.

Suddenly Gustave was recalled to himself by hearing his name pronounced, and the voice came from a yellow cab which was going as fast as could be expected when drawn by two old horses and driven by a cabman engaged by the hour.

"That is it," Gustave said; "a cab, and I fancy Benoît said it was a yellow one; someone calling me by name, and I think I recognise the voice; it must be Susan, whom my uncle is taking away, so I will follow the cab. If it were night, I would get up behind, but I cannot do that in broad daylight, but, never mind, I will not lose sight of it, only I must not go too near the windows, for fear the Colonel should recognise me."

The fiacre went through the Faubourg du Temple and up the main street of Belleville, and turning to the left, went into a street leading into the country, and stopped in front of a pretty house. Gustave also stopped about fifty yards off, and got into a gateway, so that he might see without being seen.

Two ladies and a young man got out and went into the house. He could not see their faces, but he began to think that he had made a mistake, for neither of them was dressed like Susan, but still it was possible that the Colonel might have made her change hers so as to disguise her; the Colonel, however, was not in the cab, and who could the young man be? He certainly could not be in charge of the girl, so decidedly Susan could not be in the fiacre, and our hero began to think that he had had a useless walk from the Rue Montmartre to the Pres-Saint-Genais.

Gustave felt very vexed at having lost his time like that. The two ladies and the gentleman had gone into the house, the cab had returned to Paris, and Gustave stood still in the middle of the Rue des Champs, not being able to make up his mind what to do.

"I certainly heard somebody call out my name, so one of those two ladies must know me, though there is nothing surprising in that, as I know so many of them, if I have forgotten one of them amongst so many; but I should like to know, all the same, who those people are who have just gone into that house."

Saying this to himself, Gustave went up to it and looked at the house, trying to see any one he knew, when he suddenly heard a window open and his name pronounced

in a soft voice. It was the same that he had heard a short time previously, and now he was quite sure that one of the ladies must know him, and he certainly did not intend to return to Paris without seeing her. He was on the point of going and knocking at the gate of the courtyard, without, however, having the least idea whom he should ask for, when the same voice stopped him.

"Don't knock, but follow the wall and turn the corner on the left, and wait for me at the little garden door."

"A mystery," he said to himself; "a wall, a little side door, why it is like the scene in a melodrama!"

However, he went down the street, turned to the left, and soon found the little side door, where he stopped. He looked at the top of the wall, which extended a good way, but saw nothing but the tops of some fruit trees and lilac bushes; so he presumed it was the garden belonging to the house; he leant therefore against the door, and waited impatiently to be let into the garden. At last he heard a woman's footsteps, and could hear the rustling of a dress, and his heart began to beat violently, though he could not explain to himself why he should feel such emotion. She might be old and ugly, but then, again, she might be young and pretty, and then the voice and the mystery set his imagination going. In the most important circumstances of life events only affect us in proportion to the situation in which they find us; our fancies' dreams dispose our souls to love, to joy, to grief; there are moments in which we feel disposed only to shed tears, and others in which we see everything in a rosy hue, and since, at a masked ball, one often gets excited over a woman in a domino whose features one cannot distinguish, surely it was allowable for Gustave's heart to beat for the woman whose light feet he heard on the gravel coming near the gate.

At last it was opened, Gustave went into the garden, and took into his arms, not Susan, but—Madame de Berly.

Love was their first impulse, but after remaining in a close embrace for some time they began to ask each other a hundred questions. Gustave could not get over his surprise at seeing Julia, and she said with a sigh,

"Ah! Gustave, and so you really did not recognise my voice? Well, it is a long time since you have seen me, and so I suppose you have forgotten me. It is very ungrateful of you, and when I was thinking of you every moment during the day, you were thinking of some other woman and making love whilst I was sighing. Are these the vows which ought to be so sacred? But what right have I to reckon on yours?"

Of course she shed tears, and Gustave did not know what excuse to make, for he felt that he was in the wrong, and yet the sight of Julia rekindled those feelings in his heart with which she had formerly inspired him. But it is easy to console a woman who loves us, and Madame de Berly was the first to make it up.

"Forgive me for reproaching you," she said; "I know I am unreasonable for doing so, for how could I hope that you could not love again when you were far from me! But you have nothing to say to me, so I suppose you had really quite forgotten me."

"No, but I feel I have been wrong and neglectful . . ."

"Do you love me still, Gustave?"

"More than ever."

That Rascal Gustave

"Then don't let us say any more about your having been wrong, for self-reproach has much more effect than the reproaches of others."

"My dear Julia, how good you are!"

"You owe me no thanks for that; if I love you, it is in spite of myself, for I have tried to overcome the feeling, but love is like fortune,—often those who deserve it the least are its spoilt children."

Gustave took Julia into his arms, and was about to smother her with ardent kisses, when Julia stopped him.

"What are you thinking about!" she said; "remember to what you are exposing me."

"Are you not alone?"

"Did you not recognise the young lady who was with me? It was Aurelia, my husband's niece, who married six weeks ago that tall young man who was in the cab with us, and I am staying with them; this house belongs to them, and I come, out of good nature, to stay a few days occasionally, for it makes no difference to me where I am when I am away from you. But I am afraid that Madame Fremont or her husband will notice my absence, and if I were to be seen with you, I should be lost, for Aurelia is very malicious."

"What are we to do, for I cannot make up my mind to leave you like this? Is M. de Berly coming here to-night?"

"No, he is going to stay in Paris till Sunday. My room is in that building in the garden; I will give you the key, and you can go in and wait for me there; but if Aurelia or her husband . . ."

"You do not love me as much as you used to do, Julia!"

"How cruel of you! Here is the key, but take care that nobody sees you, and I will return to the drawing-room and leave them as soon as possible, under pretence of a headache."

She went towards the house, and Gustave went to the cottage which she had pointed out to him. It stood quite by itself in the middle of the garden, and consisted of a ground-floor and one storey, with a perfectly flat roof, on which there was a telescope fixed on a swivel, so that it could be brought to bear on any part of the surrounding country.

When he reached it, he found he had no need to use the key, for the door was open, and he found himself in a little entrance-hall, with a staircase that led to the upper floor and the roof facing the entrance, whilst a door on the left opened into the ground-floor room.

"I wonder if her room is downstairs or upstairs?" Gustave said to himself; "but it does not much matter, and I can wait for her, as I suppose she is the only occupant of the place, since she has the key, so I will go in here and see whether the room is ready for her."

The key was in the door, and Gustave went in, and found himself in a handsomely furnished and newly-decorated room, and felt certain that it was Madame de Berly's, which had been fitted up for her reception. Nothing was wanting in the apartment; an elegant bed, couch, looking-glasses, lounging-chairs, double curtains at

the windows; nothing had been neglected to make it a most charming abode. Gustave examined everything, and was surprised to see a large mirror in the recess at the foot of the bed.

"By George," he thought, "this is indeed luxury and refinement. Julia used not to have anything of all this formerly; but a boudoir, as this might almost be called, is the very place for a pretty woman. Certainly Madame Fremont's room will be nothing at all like it. A prude like Aurelia, who never looked at a man, and who took offence at the slightest joke, must be very amusing as a married woman! She will be sure to banish everything from her room that can in the least appeal to the senses or shock her modesty. Nothing so dull as a prude, in company at least, but I should like to know what sort of a wife she makes."

After admiring the room, Gustave closed the door and threw himself into a lounge to wait for Julia, and thought how strange it was that whilst he had come out to look for Susan, he should now be waiting for Madame de Berly. Not that he had by any means forgotten the former, for he was determined to try and find out where the Colonel had hidden her, but a day or two was of no great consequence, and, in fact, might make matters easier, for if Gustave was not observed to be looking after her, nobody would keep a very close watch upon the girl, and thus she might manage to let him hear from her, so at least he thought whilst he was sitting waiting for Madame de Berly.

It had been dark for some time, and Gustave was almost tired of waiting, when he at last saw a light in the garden, and he heard a confused noise of voices, which made him jump up and listen attentively.

He heard the voices of Aurelia and of a man, who were talking with Madame de Berly; most likely, he thought, the newly-married couple were accompanying her as far as the garden pavilion; but, then, suppose they were so polite as to come as far as her room with her! It was quite possible, and he did not dare to run any risk, so, seeing no other hiding place, Gustave crept under the bed, hoping that he would not have to stay there very long.

They soon came near enough for him to hear what they were saying.

"My dear Aurelia, you do not mean to say that you're going to sleep in this garden house?"

"Yes, aunt; I had it fitted up on purpose last week."

"How foolish you are, when you were so comfortable in that room that looks on to the street."

"My wife has funny ideas sometimes, and she did not take the trouble to consult me on the matter."

"Well, I suppose I can sleep where I please!"

"Of course you can, my dear wife, but . . ."

"But, but; I tell you we shall be much more comfortable here."

"Don't you think, Aurelia, that this pavilion is rather damp?"

"But, aunt, you have no objection to sleeping here."

"Yes, I know, but then I do not sleep on the ground-floor."

That Rascal Gustave

"I am not afraid of the damp, and just come and see how beautifully I have had the room fitted up."

Without waiting for an answer, Aurelia opened the door, and went in. Julia followed her, trembling all over, as she was afraid lest Gustave, whom she had forgotten to tell that she was living on the upper-floor, might be waiting for her down below, but she was reassured as soon as she looked in.

"Well, you had better stop here, as you like the place, and I shall go to bed, for I have a bad headache, and I shall not get up early, I know."

With this Madame de Berly left Aurelia and her husband to themselves, and went upstairs to her room, where she hoped to find Gustave waiting for her. He, however, poor fellow, was most uncomfortable under the bed where he was hidden, more especially as he found that he was in M. and Madame Fremont's room. They fastened the door, and prepared to retire, so there were no means of escape for him, and he would be only too lucky if he were not discovered, as he could not even be taken for a thief since Aurelia knew him, and thus Julia must be compromised; he made up his mind, therefore, to stay under the bed, happy if no one should turn him out of his hiding place. He lay on his back, hoping that Providence would not allow either Monsieur or Madame to look under the bed, as timorous souls so frequently do, waiting in perfect silence, without daring to move, and hardly to breathe, trusting that love or chance would enable him to escape.

Madame Fremont put her hair into curl-papers and her husband began to undress himself.

The talk of husband and wife, however, was not particularly tender,—

"Just unlace my stays. Make haste; how awkward you are!"

"But, my dear wife, there is a knot . . ."

"Cannot you cut it? Well, at last! I thought you would never have done. You are never going to put on a cotton night-cap! What a fright you look in it!"

"It will keep my head warm, and I do not want to catch cold in this damp room."

"You are just like an old man, and I only wonder that you do not put on a flannel waistcoat!"

"That is just what I am going to do, for it is a great preservative of health."

"I hope you will do nothing of the sort, for I do not want to sleep with a bundle of flannel to irritate my skin."

"But I shall not be covered with it all over, my dear." J

Madame Fremont got into bed, and Gustave said to himself: "By Jove, what a woman! It is very strange for a prude to object to a flannel waistcoat! Just fancy a girl like that, who would never even raise her eyes when a man spoke to her; so much for appearances!"

"I wonder how much longer you are going to walk about before coming to bed!"

"I shall come directly; I was only looking to see whether the shutters were closed."

"You don't mean to say that you are afraid of thieves."

"No, but I am of draughts, and it is very easy to get a stiff neck or lumbago."

"Good heavens! If you had only told me before we were married that you were afraid of draughts and lumbago, that you wore flannel waistcoats and cotton night-caps, I should have thought twice before marrying you. How deceived I was, when you used to pretend that you had been a *roué* and boast of your gallantries, and now look at you! But do come to bed."

Fremont blew out the candle and got in by the side of his wife.

"What have you blown the candle out for!"

"Well, I don't, as a rule, care to go to sleep with a light burning."

"To go to sleep! You are quite right, you don't as a rule . . ."

"But, my dear wife, are you angry with me."

"How utterly stupid you are! I wonder what was the good of my having a looking-glass put at the foot of the bed?"

"I really do not know, for you surely cannot want to use it at night."

"I certainly see that it is of no use with you."

M. Fremont, however, as has been said, was in bed by this time, and Gustave could hardly restrain his laughter at this conjugal dialogue. For about five minutes the silence was not broken, but they did not go to sleep.

"Do you mean to go to sleep already?" said Aurelia.

"Well, my dear, there would be nothing very extraordinary if I were to go to sleep. I have been running about Paris nearly all day, and I am very tired."

"And that is all you have to say to me! I have not been running about all day, and I am not the least tired."

"But, my dear wife, you must remember that yesterday I . . ."

"Yesterday! That is a lot to be proud of!"

"I really am surprised at your language, and I never could have believed it of you when I married you. You, who were always so reserved, so particular as to modesty and morals, and who sent away two maids because they were rather too full-figured, you now find fault with me because I am tired and want to go to sleep . . ."

"Of course I like modesty and decency in public; but the Bible tells us that when we are married we must mutually meet each other's desires, and even forestall them, and it allows us to enjoy the pleasures of marriage by begetting children in our own likeness."

"Do not be angry, my dear wife; you know how dearly I love you."

"Yes, you say so."

"But I have proved it to you so often! Give me a kiss, darling, and let us make it up."

"Upon my word, I am too kind to you."

Gustave could not hear the rest of the conversation, but what he had already heard opened his eyes as to the real character of the "prude" he had first met at the residence of M. de Berly.

That Rascal Gustave

CHAPTER XIX. JULIA LOSES HER BEAUTY AND GUSTAVE HIS TROUSERS.

The conversation of husband and wife having come to an end, and as nobody was moving in the bed, Gustave thought they were both asleep; he resolved, therefore, to profit by that moment to make his escape, for if he were to wait for daylight, it would be harder for him to escape the eyes of the servants.

He crept very softly on his hands and knees from underneath the bed, and so reached the middle of the room, when he got up and walked towards the door, feeling his way before him; but just as he was close to it, he knocked against a low stool on which there was a basin, and sent it flying into the middle of the room, and the noise woke up M. and Madame Fremont.

"Who is there?" the former cried, and Gustave, finding that it was no good to go on feeling his way, thought it best to make his escape, so he rushed out of the room, whilst Aurelia screamed out "Thieves! Help!" at the top of her voice, and Fremont ran to get his gun.

Gustave gained the first-floor, knocked at the door of the room, and softly called out Julia's name, but there was no answer, and M. Fremont would be coming upstairs directly, and very likely have a shot at him, so the only thing for him to do was to go up higher on to the terraced roof, and close the door behind him. Thus he was in safety, for the time being, at any rate; but Fremont knew that he had gone on to the top of the house, and ran to call his servants, whilst Aurelia made her escape into the garden in her night-dress.

Now the reason that Julia had not opened her bedroom door to Gustave was that she was not in the room. On going upstairs, she thought she should be sure to find him there, and was very much surprised, on searching everywhere, even in the bed, not to find any one. She wondered where he was, and went up to look whether he were on the terrace, but he was not there; she had been in to her niece's room, so he certainly could not be there, so she could not understand the matter at all. She opened the window, looked out into the garden, and coughed loudly, but nobody appeared.

"I suppose," she thought, "he has got tired of waiting, and has gone away; but yet he would hardly do that, and very likely he was afraid of being seen in the pavilion, and has gone to wait for me in the garden, for he must be somewhere or other, so I will go and see."

She took a lamp, and going downstairs very gently, so as not to wake up M. and Madame Fremont, she began to search all the garden carefully, calling out "Gustave" in a low tone, whilst he was all the time hidden under Aurelia's bed.

The garden was a very large one, and she had not searched it more than half through, when Aurelia's and her husband's cries reached her ears, and she stopped, trembling all over, for she thought that he had been discovered, and that they were lost, and, hastening back to the pavilion, she ran against Aurelia at a turn in the garden walk.

"My dear aunt, we must run away, for there is a thief in the house."

"A thief!"

"Yes; did you not hear us calling out?"

That Rascal Gustave

"Of course I did, and that was the reason why I came downstairs."

"It is very lucky you did not meet him, for he went on the terrace at the top of the house now."

"Are you quite certain?"

"Yes, quite; he was hidden under the bed, and, good heavens I—oh, dear! if I had known that he was there. But, aunt, don't go near the pavilion, for he might fire at us."

Madame de Berly did not listen to Aurelia, but went on, ran upstairs, opened the door, uttered a cry on seeing a black man in the middle of her room, but her fears were soon dispelled on recognising Gustave, whose only means of escape from the terrace had been to go down her chimney.

"My poor Gustave, is that you? And what a state you are in! You are lucky to have escaped as it is, but what will they think at not finding you on the terrace?"

"Think!—why, that I have jumped into the garden."

"I hear them coming, but I know what you must do."

Madame de Berly opened her window, and saw Fremont coming, followed by the footman and gardener, and three or four neighbours, whom he had roused to help him catch the thief, and who now came armed with torches and guns. She stopped them just as they were going up on to the terrace.

"The thief has escaped," she said; "I saw him jump from the terrace into the garden, and climb over the wall."

"Are you quite sure, aunt, for the wall is very high?"

"Men like that are so active."

"Never mind," Aurelia said; "examine the pavilion and the terrace carefully nevertheless."

"By Jove!" Gustave said, "they will not look for me here, especially in your bed."

Saying this, he undressed and got in, and Julia—was just going to do the same thing, when someone came quickly down the stairs, and knocked violently at her door.

"Open your door, aunt, open the door," M. Fremont cried.

"What is the matter?"

"The thief must be in your room, or up the chimney, for we are certain that he went down it, as the chimney-pot is broken."

"There is no one in my room, or I should certainly see him."

"He has hidden himself somewhere, so do make haste and open the door."

"But I am nearly naked, so you must wait a moment."

She was undressing herself as fast as she could; she stuffed Gustave's clothes between the mattresses, and then went to the door.

"I am just going to open it," she said, "but don't come at once; please give me time to get into bed first."

As soon as she had opened the door, she went and laid herself down by the side of Gustave, who made himself as small as possible, and got to a place where nobody would certainly ever look for the thief.

Fremont, the servants, and the neighbours came, examined the room, looked up the chimney, and fired two shots up it.

"You see he is not here," Madame de Berly said.

"But suppose," Aurelia, who had remained close to the door, observed, "that he should be hidden under the bed."

They looked under the bed, but there was no one there, and so Julia said, —

"I told you I saw him scramble over the wall,

"But, aunt, there might have been several of them."

"At any rate, he is not here, so I hope that at last you will all go, and let me go to sleep."

"To sleep, aunt, when we are surrounded by thieves."

"As I am quite sure they are not in the house, I am not at all afraid."

"Well, gentlemen," Fremont said to his neighbours, "let us go and search the gardens."

Just as they were going out, Aurelia stopped them,

"Well, gentlemen, are you going to leave me by myself? I do not feel at all inclined to stop on the ground-floor alone, for they would only have to force open the shutters . . ."

"You had better come with us, Madame."

"Go out like this? Good heavens! I will remain with my aunt, who is very brave, and I shall not be frightened as long as I am with her. Aunt, will you let me sleep with you I"

"What nonsense!"

"Please let me, aunt. Now, gentlemen, you had better go, but leave the gardener with us; he can stop downstairs as a sentry."

They went, and left the gardener as requested, giving him orders to fire on the first alarm, and leaving Aurelia in Madame de Berly's room. Gustave was in a most unpleasant position, and Julia's was even more painful than his. She looked at Aurelia in consternation, whilst she wrapped up her head in a handkerchief and prepared to share her aunt's bed; another moment and Madame Fremont would discover everything, for, as the bed was close up against the wall, Gustave could not get out on the other side, so what could she do? She must resort to desperate means to save herself, so she got out of bed just as Aurelia was going to get in, and took the candle which Aurelia had put down.

"What are you going to do, aunt?"

"I thought I heard a noise, and I think they did not look in that large hanging cupboard."

That Rascal Gustave

"Oh! how you do terrify me; don't go near it; just suppose there were anybody inside!

"Well, the best way is to make sure."

"Wait a moment, and I will go and call the gardener."

She opened the door to do so, and whilst her back was turned, Julia set fire to some paper that was at the back of the cupboard. The gardener came quite prepared to fire at the thief, when Madame Berly said, —

"I have not seen anything, and no doubt made a mistake."

"Never mind, aunt, let him search carefully everywhere."

As soon as he came into the room he noticed thick clouds of smoke coming out of the press, and of course, thought it was the thief s doing.

"Monsieur," Julia said, "I am afraid I must have done it; no doubt a spark fell amongst the papers whilst I was looking into the cupboard."

The smoke was filling the room, Aurelia rushed downstairs uttering loud cries, the gardener left his gun and ran to get some water, and, as soon as they had gone, Gustave jumped out of bed and took her into his arms.

"You must go away immediately, you have not a moment to spare. Good heavens I what a night this has been."

"Dearest Julia, it is my fault."

"Make haste, or we shall be stifled."

"I must, at any rate, take my clothes, for I cannot go away like this."

"Make haste down; here is the key of the little side gate."

She pushed him out of the room, which was already half-filled with smoke, but just at that moment the gardener came upstairs with two buckets of water, and seeing a young man trying to escape with a bundle under his arm, he made sure that it was the thief they were in search of, and so, having no other weapons, he put down one of his buckets, and dashed the contents of the other one right over Gustave, and, wet to the skin, the latter rushed at him; the man lost his balance and fell on to the stairs, and Gustave, jumping over him, rushed out of the unfortunate pavilion. Luckily Aurelia had left it already, so he took the path to the little gate, opened it, and found himself in the open country, and for the second time, almost in a state of nudity, he went over hedges and ditches, and again it was for Julia's sake that he was in that unpleasant predicament.

"That is the last of it," he muttered, shivering; "I will not expose myself to another such adventure; that woman is too dear at the price."

At a short distance from M. Fremont's house he stopped and prepared to dress himself, but here was another misadventure, for instead of a pair of trousers he had a pair of stays, a petticoat instead of a waistcoat, and a frock instead of his coat, and a little lace cap. He had taken Julia's clothes instead of his own, a not unnatural mistake, as she had put his things under the mattress, and put her own on the chair, and, half-blinded by the smoke, Gustave had taken them without noticing the change.

"They say there is a god to look after lovers," Gustave said, fastening on the petticoat and dress as well as he could, "but it seems to me to-night that the devil himself has taken charge of our affairs; however, I must make the best of it, but when one is

wet through, a thin petticoat and dress are not quite so useful as thick men's clothes would be. What is the good of all these strings, I wonder? Why on earth did I follow that cab? What a night! . . . If my dear uncle were to see me like this, and Madame Fonbelle! Devil take all these laces and tapes, but I must make haste to get to Paris before it is broad day, for if I were seen like this, I should be taken to the police station."

During this time Madame de Berly was exposed to great dangers on his account. She was just behind him when the gardener soused him with water, and she saw him knock down his opponent, and run into the garden. She was delighted to think that he had escaped, but a moment's reflection moderated her joy; his clothes were under the mattress, and so, unfortunately, he might have made a mistake and taken her things instead of his, and, wet as he was, he would be sure to catch a severe cold if he could not clothe himself warmly soon. She immediately took a bold resolution, for women never think of the danger when they want to save the object of their affection, and Madame de Berly felt quite sure that Gustave would die if he had nothing on but a dress and a petticoat.

She went upstairs again, and found that the flames had already seized on a portion of the room, though they had not yet reached the bed, so, shutting her eyes, and holding her breath, she rushed in, lifted up the mattress, and, seizing the clothes, she made for the door, but the smoke was stifling her, and a sudden burst of flame caught her hair, which was hanging about in disorder, and would naturally catch fire very easily, and she fell on the staircase, exclaiming, "Poor Gustave?"

She would have perished if the gardener, picking himself up, and recovering from the shock of his fall, had not gone to her assistance. He ran upstairs with his remaining bucketful of water, and seeing Madame de Berly on the ground, he took her up in his arms, carried her out in the garden, and threw the water over her head to put out her burning hair. Just then assistance came from all sides; Aurelia had called her husband, Fremont and his servants had roused their neighbours, and all came running with water, and gained the mastery over the flames; but all the furniture in the room on the first-floor was burnt, and, with it, Gustave's clothes.

Madame de Berry recovered consciousness, but she was in terrible pain; her face was burnt all over, and she would be scarred for life. Aurelia screamed out when she saw her aunt, but the latter was resigned.

"I shall be ugly," she thought, "and he will not love me any longer, but my heart will always be the same, and he will not run any more risks for my sake, and I shall not, for the future, think of breaking my marriage vows."

She indeed lost all her beauty, and was punished by the means of that beauty which had caused her to sin: a just retribution here below.

CHAPTER XX. A SCENE AT LA COURTILLE.

Gustave, with the little lace cap on his head, the stays put on like a waistcoat, and laced in front, the petticoat all on one side, and the dress dragging in the mud, walked through the Grande Rue de Belleville with long strides. The day was beginning to break; in such feminine disguise he must avoid all adventures, especially in La Courtille quarter, which was a great place for drunkards and bad characters of all sorts, and he was glad when he had passed the Île d'Amour, so he quickened his pace, holding up the petticoat with one hand as best he could, and the dress with the other, though he was frequently obliged to let one or the other hang down, in order to hold on the little cap, which the wind threatened to blow off.

As Gustave's ill-luck would have it, M. Favori, the savage from a neighbouring *café chantant*, well known in that part for his various accomplishments, had had a slight difference with Jean-Jean Courtepointe, a drummer in the neighbouring barracks, on the subject of Mlle. Nanon, who sold coloured eggs outside the *Café Grand St. Morin*, who, by the brightness of her eyes, set the hearts of all M. Desnoyer's customers in a flame, but who rode a very high horse as to morals, and who was as firm in her virtue as she was in her sabots.

M. Favori always used very fine language, and being a great hand at cajoling the girls, found many means of captivating those little innocent beauties whom he thought worthy of his homage. He sang the ballad of the *Pied de Mouton*, and that plaintive song, *The Sacrifice of Abraham*, with much seductive grace, and in a fine counter-tenor voice; he excelled on the big drum, and every week he went to the *Funambules* to study pantomime, and occasionally to the *Café des Aveugles* to pick up opera airs.

Nanon was fond of the fine arts, and especially of music, and would beat time with her foot on her foot—warmer when Favori was humming a romantic tune, and would join in when he was playing the overture of *La Caravane* on the big drum. Favori took care to foster her inclinations; he would go and talk to her during the *entr'actes*, sit by her stall and teach her *O pexator del ond' infideli*, till the melody almost turned her head, and she would sing *pexator* whilst she was peeling her hard-boiled eggs or broiling a herring.

M. Jean-Jean Courtepointe also cast his eyes favourably on the fair stall-keeper; he certainly neither sang *pexator*, nor the ballads of the Boulevards, but he marched very elegantly whilst carrying his drum, and his hands whirled the drumsticks with wonderful agility. When they were marching down La Courtille he would make the little fifers strike up, and would often halt opposite the hard-boiled red egg stall to play the retreat.

Nanon was strictly virtuous, as I have already told you, but then she was by no means insensible to delicate attentions, and was rather proud of having inspired two such men with love for her. She smiled at the soldier, and kept eggs for him, which she coloured yellow on purpose (which shows all Nanon's candour and innocence). She would stop whatever she was doing when he went by with his drum, which was a fine opportunity for him to show his skill with his sticks. Besides that, the young drummer was as good a dancer as Favori was a singer. Courtepointe had learnt the *Allemande* from a clown in a circus, and on Sundays and Mondays he danced it with such grace in the large hall of M. Desnoyer's *café* that people flocked to see him do his steps, and the

very beadies were obliged to acknowledge his talents. Now Mlle. Nanon was very fond of the *Allemande*, for her innocent soul could not guess the dangers of that graceful dance. M. Courtepointe had offered to give her lessons, and she had accepted, and they practised together either at Desnoyer's or at Calot's every evening till they might venture to dance it at the Île d'Amour.

Naturally Favori was not at all pleased at Courtepointe's assiduous attentions. He used to look at his rival with furious eyes, and often felt a strong inclination to kick him; he longed to break his drumsticks over his head; but Nanon could check the impetuosity of her savage with a majestic look, and by a word calm the fury of his transports of jealousy.

"Favori," she would say, putting her arms akimbo, "be kind enough not to throw any doubt on my virtue, or I will break off all connection with you, whether it be in talking or singing; a girl like me can certainly dance the *Allemande* without going wrong."

And then Favori would look down, take Nanon's hand and kiss it, and sometimes kiss her cheeks as well, though he occasionally got his face slapped for his boldness, and then he would leave, with a feeling of relief at his heart.

Jean-Jean also wished occasionally to take liberties whilst he was going through his steps, but Nanon had, so to speak, beak and claws, and one day she scratched Courtepointe's nose so badly that after that he kept within the bounds of respect. This state of things, however, could not go on; the rivals never met without giving each other threatening looks, and sometimes even they would use language towards one another which was the reverse of polite, and Nanon had much trouble to restrain them; in vain she reminded them of her virtue and her strict morals; these gentlemen were by no means satisfied, for each knew that the other was a terrible rake, who had overcome the virtue of several girls who had till then been thought quite insensible to love, so they did not put much trust in Nanon's protestations, for the woman of the strictest virtue may have a moment of weakness, and all a man has to do is to seize that moment.

One evening whilst Favori, in his dress as the savage, was entertaining the assembled company in the large room at Calot's with a representation called, *The Grief of a Carib, far from his Paternal Roof*, Jean-Jean proposed to Nanon that they should go and practise the *Allemande* in a room at M. Desnoyer's.

Nanon agreed immediately; she was getting on very well, and hoped that she should be able to show her graceful steps on the next Sunday before a brilliant and select company. They went into a room on the first floor, and, faithful to her virtuous principles, she opened all the doors and windows, so that Jean-Jean might not attempt any liberties with her.

The drummer ordered up a bottle of white wine, and Nanon, of course, took a glass, whilst Jean-Jean had one at every new figure.

Now whether it was the effects of the wine, or whether the drummer's passion had reached its height, it is quite certain that he was burning with irresistible ardour; he invented charming figures, danced them with infinite grace, and cast amorous glances at his charmer, till Nanon, heated by wine, electrified by her partner's talents, and, wishing to do him honour, surpassed herself, and spun round like a teetotum in the arms of her drummer.

That Rascal Gustave

But the Tarpeian rock is near the Capitol, and the large room at Calot's was opposite Desnoyer's! Favori, tormented by love and jealousy, even on the scene of his triumph, saw Nanon and his rival through the open window. At this sight he got furious, and, upsetting three stools which were supposed to represent the hut of a Caribbean, and a broomstick with a bunch of feathers on the top, which did duty as a palm tree, he jumped over his big drum, with his club in his hand, scrambled over the benches and tables, smashing the glass, upsetting an army pensioner who was drinking a glass of beer, and two Auvergnats who were eating bread and garlic, and anything and anybody else whom he met on his road, and rushed down the steps two at a time. He bounded across the street and tore into Desnoyer's like a madman; his false beard fell off, but he did not notice it, and his linen drawers, part of his costume as a savage, got a tear in an awkward place, but nothing stopped him, for he had made up his mind to take vengeance on his hated rival. Upstairs and into the room he dashed, and threw himself between Nanon and Courtepointe, just as the latter was showing her a figure in which they had to kiss; but the drummer only kissed Favori's chin, who raised his redoubtable club and rolled his eyes like the tyrant in a melodrama.

"Wretch! what are you going to do!" Nanon said, in a pathetic voice, seizing the savage, who was about to strike his opponent, by the arm.

"You have been hopping about long enough with this miserable drum-tapper. It must stop, and he shall feel the weight of my club."

Courtepointe was plucky enough; he cocked his forage cap over his left ear, put his right hand on the hilt of his little sword, retired a couple of yards, and, standing on tip-toe, so as to bring himself more on a level with his adversary, he exclaimed, —

"Whom are you calling drum-tapper, you miserable savage of the Rue Coquenard! Do you think to frighten me with your sham Indian get-up? Did I ever interrupt you in your singing lessons. I tell you I shall dance with the lady as long as she pleases."

"You shall not dance with her."

"I shall; so there now!"

Already the club was raised, and the sword drawn; blood would be shed, and Nanon began to cry and to scream, but they did not pay any attention to her; she tore her hair, but they let her do it; she fell into a chair in a faint, and they took no notice; the chair slipped, Nanon fell, and they stopped spontaneously.

"We must not settle our quarrel here," Courtepointe said; "before it is light to-morrow I will be on the exterior Boulevard, outside the barrier."

"All right," Favori replied.

Then they went and picked up Nanon, and put her on a bench, threw some vinegar in her face, and left the room as soon as she had recovered consciousness.

Now, whether she had not really altogether done so, or whether she guessed her two admirers' intentions, at any rate she appeared at their place of meeting, just as they, each armed with a cudgel, were about to begin the attack.

"Just listen to me," she said, going up to them, "and afterwards you can fight if you absolutely wish to. I am the cause of your quarrel, and my innocence led me to act inconsistently, for I ought neither to have jumped about with a drummer nor sung with a savage. I know you are both of you brave, and nobody doubts your reputation; I mean

to regain mine, which I have compromised, and I agree to marry one of you, if you will lay down your weapons!"

"Oh! Choose between us!" they both cried out at the same moment, throwing away their cudgels, and placing themselves at her feet.

"Wait a moment, gentlemen," she said, "and first of all get up, for if you were seen like that, people might draw improper conclusions. You are both good-looking, amiable, and attractive, and I cannot decide between you; chance, therefore, must do so for me. Here is a franc piece, take it and toss heads or tails; the winner shall be rewarded with my hand, and the loser, I know, will not bear me any ill-will."

Favori seized the coin, and his rival called "*Heads!* it is a hundred to a sou I shall win." The money spun up into the air; they both threw themselves on to the ground, and looked eagerly at it. "It is *heads!*" Courtepointe exclaimed, and threw himself at Nanon's feet, whilst the other was in despair, but he took his cue, went up to the loving couple, and himself joined their hands.

After mutual embraces, they went to the Grand St. Martin to devote the morning to pleasure and a good breakfast. It was barely daylight, but the eating-houses of La Courtille are open at all hours, and Courtepointe, who was going to stand treat, ordered rabbits, pigeons, and wine. They gave themselves up to enjoyment, and the future couple began a little amorous dalliance.

Favori was determined to be true to his promise not to bear ill-will, but yet he had a heart, and the sight of their endearments, and of the kisses which Jean-Jean lavished on the fair Nanon, made his resolutions grow weaker and weaker. To divert his thoughts and drown his sorrow, he drank many bumpers, but the wine did not quench his jealousy, but, on the contrary, increased and doubled his ardour. At last it got so intolerable that he determined not to look at the happy lovers any more, so he left the room, lighted his pipe in the kitchen, and went to get a little fresh air in the streets.

Just then he saw a woman coming down very fast from Belleville; her somewhat masculine walk, her cap on one side, and her clothes pulled up to her garters, struck the admiration of the savage, who, as you know, happened to be in a very excited frame of mind. He saw a leg which was rather big, perhaps, but well-shaped; the woman was robustly built, and her eyes certainly betrayed no timidity, and the fumes of wine made him think everything very attractive. "That is the very thing," the savage said, and going up to Gustave (for you will have guessed that it was he), he said to him, —

"Will you have a glass of wine and a chat?"

"Just get on and leave me alone, will you."

"You are far too charming to walk by yourself."

"Will you go and leave me in peace; you are bothering me."

"I have a crown which I can spend with you."

"Go to the devil!"

But Favori was not so easily shaken off; he walked by Gustave's side, and gave him a pinch behind, to which he replied by turning round and giving him a smack in the face.

That Rascal Gustave

"Ha! ha! "Favori said," you are uncommonly strong, but that makes no difference, for I will have you; I have set my mind upon it, and I do not intend to toss heads and tails for you, and have it said that I have lost another woman this morning, so nothing remains for me but to carry you off."

Gustave tried to defend himself, but Favori, who was a regular Hercules, could have taken up three men of our hero's size, so he took up Gustave under the arms and ran off with him. Gustave called for help, but the streets were still deserted, and then, besides that, in the La Courtille quarter, people are so used to hearing cries that they never take any notice of them. The savage, therefore, continued running off with Gustave, without paying any attention to his protestations that he was making a mistake, and he was just going to turn into a narrow lane, at the bottom of which he lived, when two peasant women, riding on their donkeys, that were loaded with eggs and milk for Paris, turned out of the lane into which Favori was about to go. As he did not see them in time, he stumbled heavily against the first donkey, knocked the peasant woman off, and sent all her milk-pails flying into the gutter. This accident enabled Gustave to escape out of the savage's arms for a moment, so he got up and tried to run away, but the other donkey was in the way, so, with Favori after him, he took a spring, hoping to be able to clear the baskets easily enough, but his dress got between his legs, and he fell heavily on to the eggs, which were destined for the inhabitants of the city. The donkey fell on his knees in his fright, and the woman rolled over with Gustave in a puddle of milk and broken eggs.

You must remember that he had lost his trousers in the pavilion, so whilst he was rolling about Favori clearly saw that he had made a mistake, so his ardour immediately cooled, and all he thought about was to escape, so as to avoid paying for the damage.

At last the peasant women picked themselves up and began screaming: "*Help! Thieves!*" But the savage was a long way off by this time, and so they had only Gustave to look to for payment; but Gustave had also got up, and, wrapping his petticoats round him, he rushed towards the barrier, whilst the women, leaving donkeys, baskets, eggs and milk rushed after him; but he had the start of them, and running through the barrier, he went down the faubourg, whilst the peasants shouted, "Stop thief! She owes us for our eggs and milk."

The people began to congregate, looked at Gustave, laughed, and did not stop him. The street boys ran along with the two women, it was broad daylight; the number of his pursuers increased, and they were in Paris itself. Gustave, fearing to be stopped by the low and brutal populace, and subjected to universal ridicule and indignities, gathered together all his courage and ran wonderfully quick. He left the peasants and the idlers behind him, and took a turning at a venture; down the Rue du Temple he went to the right, and made several detours, till at last he stopped, utterly tired; a young woman Was just opening her shop, so he rushed in and threw himself into the first chair he found, before the astonished shopkeeper had time to ask him a question.

CHAPTER XXI

A MISTAKE—DISAPPEARANCE OF SUSAN.

Be kind enough to assist me, Madame, and hide me from all those ragamuffins."

"But, Madame . . . Monsieur . . . I really don't know what to call you I . . ."

"I am a fool, Madame, but nothing worse than that, and you can safely take me in."

"Good heavens! Why, I know the voice and the face. Well I declare if it is not you, M. Toupet!"

"Why it is really Madame Henri, the pretty linen-draper of the Rue aux Ours I"

"It is really I, Monsieur. What a strange meeting. Poor little girl, I must tell her immediately."

Madame Henri left Gustave in the shop and went upstairs, where she slept with the girl who had been confided to her keeping. Susan had only been at Madame Henri's for a week, but two loving hearts soon became intimate. The linen-draper was young and pretty enough to inspire love, and so she was sure to be indulgent to the faults which love inspires. Susan had not indeed thought all this, but after M. de Moranval and the housekeeper had left, she had looked at Madame Henri, and then she had begun to cry, and the little linen-draper had consoled her by asking what her troubles were. Her gentle voice inspired Susan with confidence; when a girl is away from her lover it is a consolation to speak about him, and so she ingenuously told her all her adventures.

Of course Madame Henri pitied her, but could not repress an exclamation of surprise at hearing her say that she had refused to marry M. Nicholas Toupet.

"Why, I know him; I met him at a wedding in La Villette."

"Did you really! And is not he ugly, awkward, and stupid?"

"Not the least; on the contrary, I thought him a good-looking, pleasant, clever fellow, and he dances beautifully."

"Nicholas? Why, he never could keep step, and is too heavy for dancing."

"You must be joking, for he was the best dancer at the wedding."

"And he is as timid as a hare."

"Timid! He thrashed a journeyman cabinetmaker, who picked a quarrel with him, and he would have thrashed the whole lot, if he could have had his own way."

"He must have changed very much; but are you quite sure that it was really Nicholas that you saw?"

"Certainly; Nicholas Toupet, of Ermenonville, who was to marry the daughter of M. Lucas."

"That certainly was he, but he shall never marry me, for I would rather die than be his wife."

"Well, I do not at all agree with you, and if he loved me I would marry him directly."

"Ah, Madame, if you only knew M. Gustave, the nephew of Colonel Moranval, you would see what a difference there is between him and that horrid Nicholas!"

That Rascal Gustave

"But I have never seen the Colonel's nephew. I daresay he is very nice, but I will never allow that Nicholas is a horrid fellow."

Their opinions differed, though, as a matter of fact, they really agreed, but then they were not up to Gustave's tricks. Susan, who was rather calmer now that she had related all that had happened to her, had promised Madame Henri to follow her advice, and to be good and obedient. Susan tried to gain courage to endure her position by thinking of the Colonel's promise that she should see Gustave, but she cried nearly the whole time. How slowly the time passed when she was away from her lover!

Next morning Madame Henri, who had heard Susan's sobs, got up very quietly, so as not to wake the girl, who had at last fallen asleep, from sheer fatigue, and went down by herself to open the shop, into which Gustave burst so unceremoniously. Of course she thought she ought to tell her that Nicholas Toupet, as she thought, was there, so she went upstairs and told her that the man she so disliked was downstairs.

"Oh! I beseech you, Madame, do not tell him I am with you, for, no doubt, he has come after me."

"I do not know yet, what he has come for, but he is disguised as a woman."

"As a woman! no doubt that he might not frighten me."

"Don't be alarmed, I will not tell him you are here, and I only told you in order that you might not come downstairs, so just stay where you are, and there is no need to tremble like that, when I have told you that he shall know nothing at all about it."

Madame Henri went down to Gustave again, but Susan was by no means reassured. Nicholas's arrival was a sure sign, she thought, that he still wished to marry her, and so she got up and dressed, imagining every moment that she heard Nicholas coming upstairs, and her terror increased. Hastily making her things up into a bundle, she opened the door very gently, went down a backstairs, which led into a narrow lane opening out into the street, and slipping off into an opposite direction to the shop, she ran away with her little bundle under her arm; she did not know where she was going, all she thought about was to escape from Nicholas.

Gustave was resting in the shop, without, or course, having the least suspicion that Susan was so near, and was glad to perceive that the crowd had lost all trace of him. When Madame Henri came back, he said,—

"Madame, I must beg you to do me a great favour, and that is to give me some men's clothes, for I cannot remain as I am now."

"I would do so gladly," she replied, "but I am a young woman, and must be careful of my reputation. I wonder what would be said in the neighbourhood if I were to buy or try to borrow men's clothes, and, besides that, you could not change your things here."

"Have you not a room behind the shop?"

"But you could be seen, so it would hardly be decent, as customers might come in at any moment."

"You have some other rooms in which you sleep, surely?"

"You could not possibly go there, for I have some very disagreeable neighbours on my landing, and what would they say if they saw you?"

"Do you really expect me to go out in this extraordinary costume, Madame, for all the blackguard street boys to run after, and perhaps be arrested?"

"Well, I might ask you, why did you disguise yourself like that?"

"Ah, Madame, we are the slaves of circumstances! A man goes out to dinner, and finds that the friend who invited him is dead, and finds a funeral instead of a dinner party; another one is going to a ball, when a tile from the roof falls on to his head; he is carried home, where he has to keep his bed; or perhaps he is splashed from head to foot by a passing carriage when on his way to spend the evening with some male friends, and has to return home to change his clothes; he finds his wife, who naturally did not expect him, playing *écarté* with a cousin, and the husband, who does not care for *écarté*, and dislikes the cousin, is put out, and shows a great amount of bad temper; the cousin takes his leave, and the wife makes a scene—calls her husband a monster, a tyrant, reproaches him with being jealous, and finally has a fit of hysterics, and the poor husband has to rush to the nearest chemist, and get ether and orange flower water, and pass the evening in attending to his wife, when he hoped to spend it in playing *vingt-et-un* and drinking punch. As for me, Madame, I can assure you that when I left home yesterday I did not the least expect to come back dressed up as a woman; but my clothes were burnt, and although I do not look particularly well in these, I thought it better to put on a frock than to go without anything on, and so I sacrificed my vanity to my sense of decency, and there you have the reason for my looking as if it were a carnival."

"But you have never come from Ermenonville like that!"

"Ermenonville! What on earth should I be doing there?"

"Don't you live with M. Lucas any more?"

"With M. Lucas? Oh! I see your error, and must clear it up. You will be angry with me, I daresay, but I must tell you that I am not Nicholas Toupet."

"What! Monsieur, you are not . . ."

"No, Madame, I only took his name because I did not wish my own to be known at the wedding to which M. Ledru took me."

"You surely are not . . . I mean poor little Susan declared that Nicholas was . . ."

"Susan, Susan, do you know her, my dear Madame Henri?"

"Yes, Monsieur, I know her."

"Small, with a good figure, pretty, and with a fair, fresh complexion? Oh! Madame Henri, where is she? Have you seen her? Do you know where she is?"

"What a string of questions, and how eager you are! But I should like to know who you really are, if you are not Nicholas Toupet?"

"I am the man for whom she sacrificed everything,—for whom she left her parents, her friends, and her home—Gustave, Colonel Moranval's nephew."

"You Gustave? Well, I ought to have guessed it."

"Is she with you? I am sure she is—I can see it by your embarrassment. You need not be frightened that my uncle will find fault with you if you let me speak to her, for he will never know it. Only let me see her for five minutes, and I will take my leave."

That Rascal Gustave

"Well, I suppose I must allow it, or you will be doing something else foolish, so wait a moment, and I will tell her to come down."

Madame Henri went upstairs, and was very much surprised at not finding the girl there. She hunted all over the house, and asked the neighbours whether they had seen her, but it was all to no purpose, for she was a long way off by that time. The little linen-draper returned to Gustave in despair.

"Good heavens! Here is a pretty thing; Susan has run away."

"Run away! Since I have been here?"

"I guess why she has done it; I went upstairs to tell her that Nicholas Toupet, as I believed you to be, was here, and she, thinking that he had come to look for her, ran away, so as not to be obliged to return to a man whom she hates."

"Poor Susan, I am again the cause of your misfortunes! Where can she be? What can become of her in a town of which she knows nothing, without any money or any other resources?"

"Do not distress yourself, M. Gustave. I hope and expect she will return to me, and I will let you know as soon as she does."

"I only hope you may be right; but will you be kind enough to get me a cab, and I will return home?"

"What will your uncle say when he sees you dressed like that?"

"He will be very angry, shout, and make a great noise, and end by being pacified. As soon as I have changed my clothes, I will set to work to hunt for Susan, and all the cabs in Paris will not make me change my plans to follow them."

CHAPTER XXII MARRIAGE PROJECTS.

Madame Henri went and fetched a cab; Gustave hid himself on the back seat as well as he could, and after thanking the compassionate linen-draper, he had himself driven to the Colonel's house, got out in the yard, ordered the porter to pay the cabman, and ran up to his room.

Benoît and his father stood thunderstruck at seeing Gustave, of whom nothing had been heard since the previous day, return dressed as a woman. Here was a new subject for conjecture on the servants' part, and whilst the porter was paying the driver, Benoît made haste to go to the Colonel's room, to tell him that his nephew had returned in a muddy petticoat, a torn dress, and a lace cap, covered with the yolk of eggs.

The Colonel had not seen Gustave since he had had his interview with Susan, and did not doubt that he had spent the night in looking for the girl, and so he had prepared a very severe lecture for him, hoping to bring him back to reason; but he could not the least understand why he should return dressed up as a woman. He went up to Gustave's room fully intending to scold him roundly for his profligate conduct, but he found him in bed. He had intended to devote the day to looking for Susan, but fate decided on preventing him. The gardener's bucket of water, his flight across country in his shirt, then having nothing on but a dress and petticoat, and his enforced race from the barrier of Belleville to the Rue aux Ours, had altogether upset him, so that our hero was a very unheroic hero, and had no strength to defend himself.

Gustave listened to his uncle's sermon without once interrupting him, for he was very feverish and that made him low-spirited, as is frequently the case in illness; but the Colonel, seeing his nephew's state, did not lecture him long, and, forgetting his anger, sent for the doctor. He arrived in about an hour's time, and examined Gustave, sounded him, looked at his tongue, and at last said very gravely that perhaps the next day he would be able to say what the illness was, and he told him then that it was inflammation of the chest. The Colonel was in despair, for he loved his nephew, although he had to find fault with him so often, and he told the medical man that if Gustave died he should certainly shoot himself. The doctor bowed politely to the Colonel, and did not come to visit his patient again, as he was afraid of causing a suicide.

M. de Moranval called in other doctors, consulted half the medical faculty, and at length, at the end of six weeks, Gustave was pronounced out of danger, but his convalescence was very slow. When he was strong enough to remember all that had happened, he looked round the room and thought of Susan, and so he told Benoît to beg his uncle, from him, to come and see him, and the Colonel at once went upstairs.

"Well, you are out of danger at last," he said, embracing him.

"Yes, but where is she? What has become of her?"

"Whom do you mean by *she*?"

"Susan, uncle, the poor little girl whom I kept in this room, and whom you took away to Madame Henri's, from whom she ran away, as she took me for Nicholas Toupet, What can have become of her in an immense place like this?"

"I have not the least idea; the girl's disappearance has caused me a great deal of trouble, but it is not my fault. Are you still in love with this little country girl?"

That Rascal Gustave

"Yes, uncle, more than ever."

"And what about Eugénie, Madame Fonbelle?"

"Oh! she is very amiable, but she is not in love with me. Has she sent to ask after me during my illness?"

"Yes, very often."

"Has she really? Well, if Susan had known, she would have come to nurse me."

"Come, come, you must try and forget Susan, who has no doubt quite forgotten you by this time, and think of Eugénie."

"Susan not think of me! There you are indeed mistaken, uncle; she could not possibly be fickle."

"You have said yourself that absence kills love."

"Yes, when it is only slight, and women here are so inconstant; but Susan is not a Parisian."

"Did you dress up as a woman to try and find her?"

"With six weeks in bed, uncle, I have had plenty of time for reflection, and I have compared all the women I have known with each other, and certainly Susan has the advantage over them all."

"Nevertheless, even if you were married to Susan, you would be unfaithful to her in a month."

"I do not think so, uncle."

"Well, I am sure of it; but make haste and get well, and then, if you are really a sensible fellow you will give up all your former follies and get married, so that you may not be tempted to commit any more . . ."

"Uncle, what a terrible man you are to get me married!"

Gustave got better, only very slowly, and every day Madame Fonbelle sent to know how he was. Gustave seemed to feel this attention very much, and, by degrees, Eugénie's image replaced Susan's.

As soon as he was strong enough to go out, he went to Madame Henri's.

"Have you seen anything of Susan?" he asked her as soon as he got into the shop.

"How changed you are, M. Gustave!"

"Do tell me, Madame Henri, whether you know what has become of Susan!"

"No, Monsieur, I have not seen her since the day you came into my shop dressed like a woman."

"Poor child, where can she be?"

"At her parents', I hope."

"So do I; but what did my uncle say to you?"

"He was very angry, and scolded me, but I told him the whole truth, and he saw it was not my fault."

Gustave felt very unhappy when he left Madame Henri's, and went to call on Madame Fonbelle, who let him see how pleased she was to see him again, and was so charming towards him that he went home, thinking seriously about his uncle's favourite project.

As he got out of the cab, he saw the porter having a dispute with a little Savoyard of about fourteen or fifteen, who had put his stool close to the gate of the mansion.

"What has this lad been doing?" Gustave asked.

"If you please, Monsieur, he will put himself here, with his shoeblick's box, close to my gate, and it makes the pavement all dirty, and he looks as if, besides cleaning boots, he swept chimneys, he is so black."

The boy hung down his head, and did not answer a word, and so Gustave felt sorry for him.

"Look here, there is not the least necessity for driving him away from here if he can gain his livelihood where he is; the street is free to everybody, and I do not mean to have him interfered with."

"But, Monsieur . . ."

"Hold your tongue, and here, my boy, is something for you, and I hope it may bring you good luck," and saying this, Gustave threw him a crown piece and went in, leaving the Savoyard very happy and the porter looking like a fool.

As he got better he regained his vivacity and ardour with his strength. He fancied that he was in love with Eugénie, and spent nearly all his time with her, and she certainly responded to his love, but she would not grant him a single favour, and got very angry if he became in the slightest degree enterprising. Besides that, to please her, he had to break off with his old friends and acquaintances. No more of Lizzie or Olivier, no more women or folly, and though her conditions might appear very natural to anybody else, Gustave thought them extremely hard. However, as he was getting more and more in love, he swore that he would keep his promises, and Eugénie had promised to marry Gustave.

"She is rather exacting," he said to himself one day. "She was out of temper with me this evening because I was talking to another lady whilst she was playing, and I certainly do not mean to be taken for a fool or a pedant because I do not talk. She is jealous, there is no doubt about it; but it is a sign of love, and so I must forgive her."

The Colonel was delighted at the idea of his nephew's marriage; the day was fixed, everybody knew about it, and Gustave was seen with Madame Fonbelle wherever she went, but whenever he came in he was sure to find the little Savoyard at the gate, who would always take off his cap to him, but who never left his place till he had seen him come home. Gustave and Eugénie were to be married in three weeks, and the Colonel and M. de Grancière were already forming all sorts of plans for the happiness of the young couple; Eugénie was buying her trousseau, and Gustave was thinking how slowly the time passed. Three weeks more! but then, what a number of things can happen in three weeks!

CHAPTER XXIII.
A WOMAN'S INTRIGUES—JEALOUSY—AN
UNFORTUNATE MEETING.

"I hope you will go with me to Madame St. Clair this evening." Eugénie said to Gustave one morning; "she has a musical party, and has often expressed a wish to hear you sing at her house."

"I don't like that Madame St. Clair, for she overdoes all her protestations of friendship and affection, and overwhelms one with compliments. You do not really believe that she means what she says?"

"Of course I look upon Madame St. Clair as a mere acquaintance, and I take such things for what they are worth, but her parties are very pleasant, and not at all stiff and formal, so please come, as your uncle and my father wish it."

"I will do whatever you wish, my dear Eugénie."

"Yes, I know you will, as long as we are lovers, but when once we are married . . . I am afraid then I shall have always to do as you wish! Do you know that, when I consider how marriage changes men's behaviour towards their wives, I am really frightened; I almost think we ought not to get married."

"You are very foolish; you know how I love you, and yet you think I might be fickle."

"I have not the least doubt of it, and I am so happy now that I think it would be best for us to remain as we are."

"Certainly not, unless you will accord me all a husband's rights."

"You surely do not mean what you say! and often those very rights, which a husband can enjoy whenever he pleases, are the cause of the diminution of love and of pleasure, whereas if a husband had no more rights than a lover, married life would always preserve all the charms of the first day."

"My dear Eugénie, you will never convert me, and must be either my wife or my mistress."

"Sometimes a man loves neither, and keeps one from habit and the other from necessity; but a woman with whom a man is on a footing of Platonic friendship he always meets with pleasure. I wish it were so with us; but then, I am sorry to say, I love you in a very different manner."

"Between two people of opposite sexes, what you are thinking about is quite impossible, unless it is brought about by long continuance of more intimate relations."

"Very well, Gustave, I will marry you, but, remember, I am jealous, and I do not want your love soon to become mere friendship. I am afraid I shall make you unhappy, for, as the time draws near, I feel that I am becoming more exacting and uneasy, and fear at times that I shall love you too much, and that in the eyes of some husbands is a great fault."

As he was going home, Gustave did not feel quite comfortable; he was going to take a very important step; he, who had so often made fun of matrimony, and husbands especially, was about to make one of the noble army of martyrs, and it really seemed like the old *lex talonis*, an eye for an eye, and he might be served as he had so often

served other husbands. Thinking thus, he got to his uncle's house, and there he saw his little Savoyard, with his pocket-handkerchief to his eyes, and apparently in great trouble, and when Gustave asked him what was the matter, he only answered by sobs.

"Monsieur," Benoît said, coming up to his master, "I will tell you exactly how it happened. Just now father and I were talking about your approaching marriage, about your wife, the children you might have, what trousers you would wear for the occasion, and so on, when this Savoyard came up to us, and asked us what wedding we were talking about, and when we told him, he began to cry, and has gone on snivelling ever since, and I expect he is afraid that the future Madame St. Réal will think him so ugly that she will not allow him to remain outside the house.

"That is what you have been talking about, is it? Perhaps you will be good enough to go in and to mind your own business."

Benoît went off, wishing the little Savoyard at Jericho, as he got part of his perquisites, for Gustave would often send him on an errand, which the lad performed much better than Benoît did, for he never made a mistake, though he received both his orders and his payment without ever raising his eyes from the ground.

"What is the matter with you, my man?," Gustave asked him; "you need not be the least afraid of being sent away, and when I am settled, you shall come to me as a page; will that suit you?"

The boy did not answer, but only seized Gustave's hand and kissed it several times, and then went away, and though Gustave could not in the least understand the Savoyard's grief, or his attachment for himself, soon the thoughts of Eugénie, and of his marriage, drove everything else out of his head.

In the evening he went with Eugénie and his father to Madame St. Clair's; the Colonel could not go as he had a slight attack of gout. It was a tolerably large party, and Gustave thought that he noticed a certain look of malicious pleasure in his hostess's eyes which made him fear her resentment; she was not pretty, but yet had some pretensions to good looks, and having made unmistakable advances to Gustave, to which he had not responded, she hated him accordingly. It was a large party, and Gustave only hoped he might meet no lady whom he knew sufficiently well to rouse Eugénie's jealousy, and seeing none, whilst she was at the piano, he went and sat down between an old dowager and a lady who wore a peculiar sort of head-dress that prevented her face being seen. Eugénie looked round, and when she saw where he was sitting she gave him a loving smile, whereupon he thought, of course, that the lady with the head-dress must naturally be ugly.

Whilst Eugénie was singing, he spoke to his neighbour in that meaningless sort of way as is natural under such circumstances, but he could get no answer, which struck him as rather peculiar, as one usually expects a reply, so he thought she must either be deaf or another old dowager; but on stooping forward a little he saw that she was a young woman, but not pretty, as her face was seamed and marked all over. He made up his mind that the best thing for him to do was not to try and talk to his silent neighbour any more, when a sweet voice, which he knew very well, said,—

"Is it possible, Gustave, that you don't know me again? But take care not to exclaim, for I am sure people will be looking at us."

"My dear Julia, then I am not mistaken, and it is you?"

"Yes, it is I, although I am hardly recognisable."

That Rascal Gustave

"How grieved I am! But how did it happen? Was it an illness or an accident?"

"You remember the night that you were in the pavilion, and you know what means I used to enable you to escape; but seeing that you had not your own clothes, I went back to get them, and, stifled by the smoke, I lost consciousness, my hair caught fire, and though I was saved, you see how terribly I am altered. But now I want to be as happy as may be; my husband may come at any moment, and he has never met you since that terrible evening . . . Pray go away before he comes. Madame St. Clair knows M. Desjardins, and is quite aware that you were staying with us, and so she has laid a trap for me."

"No doubt she wants to get up a scene, so I will go, and I only hope that we may soon meet again, and be able to speak more freely together," and with these words he pressed her hand tenderly, and went towards the drawing-room door.

Madame St. Clair had been watching all his movements, and she was beforehand with him.

"Why, Monsieur," she said, loud enough to be heard by Eugénie, "you surely do not mean to leave us already?"

"No, Madame," Gustave replied, managing to conceal his anger; "I was just going out to get a mouthful of fresh air."

"Oh! I am not going to let you go out at all."

During this colloquy, Eugénie, who felt much upset, was playing and singing all at sixes and sevens, for she was altogether taken up with Gustave. He was trying to get away from Madame St. Clair, when two new arrivals stopped his way, much to the mutual surprise and embarrassment of both parties, for the newcomers were M. de Berly and M. Desjardins. Gustave stood stock-still, M. de Berly uttered an exclamation which made everybody look in his direction, Desjardins opened his eyes wide in astonishment, whilst Madame St. Clair enjoyed Gustave's particularly uncomfortable position and Eugénie's wretchedness.

Julia had seen her husband come in before Gustave could get out of the room, and fearing an explanation, she fainted, falling against her neighbour, the old dowager, who uttered piercing screams. Everyone rushed to her assistance; only M. de Berly was not quite decided whether he should pay attention to Gustave or his wife; but the former, feeling that now his presence was more dangerous than ever, went up to M. de Berly and said,—

"If you wish to speak to me, Monsieur, I am at your service; here is my address."

With these words he gave him his card, and left the room without giving him time to reply.

"That young man is still rather mad," M. de Berly exclaimed, going up to his wife, who was recovering consciousness.

"What do you mean by *mad*?" Madame St.—Clair asked. "He has never been anything of the sort."

"I beg your pardon, Madame, he has been quite mad; I know all about it, and so does my wife. Poor little wife! I am sure she fainted because she feared that our meeting would cause a scene. You know, Desjardins, I wanted to fight a duel with St. Réal, and

I told you I should have killed him, but I am not going to fight with a fool; it is not worthwhile, and my wife would not hear of it."

"But, Monsieur, I am quite sure you are wrong. My dear Eugénie, don't you think that M. Gustave has all his wits about him?"

But she could hardly speak. Gustave's sudden departure, Julia's fainting fit, and M. de Berry's words had upset her very much, and so she looked at Julia very uneasily, and could not understand what it all meant, and, besides this, Madame St. Clair kept asking her questions, and tried to increase her suspicions by her perfidious sympathy.

The next day Gustave went to Madame Fonbelle's rather early, and she did not reproach him, though he fully expected it. But she was cold and reserved, and hardly answered Gustave, who could not understand why she should be so changed, and when he demanded an explanation, she maintained a sullen silence.

On getting up to go, which he did very soon, she asked him to go with her to the Theatre Francaise that evening, to which he assented.

After dinner he went to Madame Fonbelle's, who was waiting for him, but whilst driving to the theatre, she was silent and preoccupied, and Gustave being very much vexed at her behaviour, did not even try to start a conversation.

The box was not full, but soon Madame St. Clair and another lady, whom Gustave fancied he had seen before, came in. She seemed surprised at seeing him, and they could not help smiling when they recognised each other, for the lady was no other than Madame Dubourg, the lady who had expected her brother whilst her husband was on guard.

Eugénie was busy talking to Madame St. Clair, so Gustave thought he might venture to bow, and Madame Dubourg, who did not seem to know that Gustave was in Eugénie's company, was addressing a few words to him, when a gentleman came into the box. By his manner of speaking to her, Gustave recognised Madame Dubourg's husband, the gentleman who always wore shirt frills, and whom he had knocked into the gutter to escape from the patrol.

M. Dubourg was a tall man, who evidently thought a good deal of himself; he looked at the ladies, and ostentatiously displayed a diamond ring on his little finger, and expressed his opinions about the play, the actors, and the audience in a loud voice. Soon he and Gustave got into conversation; Madame Dubourg did not look at the latter any more, Eugénie was still very serious, and Madame St. Clair listened, and smiled at everything that was said.

You will, perhaps, wonder how Madame St. Clair, who was apparently trying to foment a quarrel between Eugénie and Gustave, should know that Madame Dubourg was acquainted with Gustave, but the matter was quite simple; it was through Lizzie, the little clear-starcher of the Rue Chariot.

Now Lizzie was not exactly malicious, but she was fond of chattering, and so Madame St. Clair had discovered that she was on very intimate terms with M. St. Réal, and she easily induced her to talk about the good-looking young fellow who was a bit of a rascal, for girls of her class are rather proud of their connection with young men of higher rank.

That Rascal Gustave

She had therefore heard all about the adventures of that night from Lizzie; Gustave's escape from the patrol, and Madame Dubourg's morning visit to the clear-starcher's.

From the knowledge thus gained, she directed her batteries against Gustave, who had disdained her love, and Eugénie whom she hated. She wrote anonymous letters to the latter, telling her that Susan had been living with Gustave, which fact she had guessed from what she heard from Benoît's father, although he was not quite sure about it, and thus she destroyed Eugénie's peace of mind, and gave rise to suspicions in a heart which was already much too inclined to jealousy.

On the present occasion she made up her mind to get up a violent scene, and so she began to talk to Gustave on indifferent subjects at first, but she soon drifted into another topic.

"M. St. Réal," she said, looking maliciously at Madame Dubourg, "I hope that when you are married you will not make the patrol run after you any more; oh yes! I was told about one of your tricks the other day, which, whilst it was quite excusable in a young unmarried man . . . well, it certainly made me laugh."

"What was it?" Eugénie asked.

"A very amusing adventure. M. Gustave had a midnight assignation with a lady in the Rue Chariot, I believe."

"But, Madame, this affair has nothing to do with anyone but myself."

"You really need not get angry, M. St. Réal, for you are at perfect liberty to do as you please. Well, whilst this young gentleman was talking to the lady, who lived, I believe, on the first floor, a patrol came past, and the husband, who was in the National Guard, seeing a young man talking to his wife, ran after him . . ."

"That will do, Madame. I do not know what your object is in bringing this story up, but I declare it is altogether false."

"False! Why, I will appeal to M. Dubourg, who lives in the Rue Chariot, whether he does not remember the noise you made that night by knocking at all the doors."

M. Dubourg had not said a word since Madame St. Clair began her anecdote, but he listened very attentively, and seemed very much disturbed. He had the greatest objection to appearing foolish or ridiculous, and he thought Madame St. Clair and Gustave were trying to mystify him, so he vowed to avenge himself for the affront, and after giving his wife a furious look, he touched Gustave's arm, and asked him to come outside.

Madame Dubourg cried and wrung her hands in her grief when she saw her husband and Gustave go out together; Madame St. Clair pretended to be very much astonished, and wanted to know what it all meant, whilst Eugénie did not say a word, though it was quite plain that she was suffering agonies of mind which she was trying to conceal.

As soon as Gustave and M. Dubourg got outside the theatre, the former said, —

"May I ask, Monsieur, what you want to say to me, and why you have brought me out here."

"You know perfectly well, Monsieur, that you have done me the greatest injury it is possible to do a man. I need not explain matters to you which you know perfectly

well yourself, but I will teach you that you cannot make fun of me to my face with impunity. It is bad enough to give a husband a pair of horns, but when he does not know it he cannot be put to shame by the fact, but to tell him of it before other people . . . Good God! Monsieur, that is too much, and I cannot put up with it."

"Monsieur, allow me to draw your attention to the fact that I did not mention the matter; in the first place, because it is not true, and then even if it were so, I should not be such a cur as to compromise your wife. Surely I can knock at your door at eight without any intention of going in, and certainly a favoured lover would not make noise enough to wake up a whole street."

"So you acknowledge that it was you?"

"Of course I do, but I did not even know your wife."

"You may tell that to whom you like; I shall certainly never believe it. You have cuckolded me, Monsieur, that is quite evident, and you shall give me satisfaction for it."

"Good heavens, Monsieur, you surely are not going to believe a woman who is only trying to disturb your domestic happiness."

"Madame St. Clare is a highly respectable lady, and quite incapable of saying anything that is not true. You may be quite sure that if she had known I was the husband in the patrol whom she was speaking about, she would never have mentioned your adventure in my presence; but all your denials will never convince me. I have been deceived by my wife; it is very unfortunate, but it has happened to as good men as myself . . ."

"But, Monsieur . . ."

"Monsieur, I am a cuckold, that is as clear as the day . . ."

"I do not deny that by any means, and you may be so as much and as often as you please, but that is no affair of mine."

"Monsieur, you are adding insult to injury, and you must meet me."

"Very well; anything to make an end of this."

Gustave and M. Dubourg settled their meeting for the next morning, and the husband went back to the theatre, whilst Gustave remained in the street, uncertain whether to return to Eugénie or not. He thought that if he were to go back he should increase Madame Dubourg's embarrassment and Madame St. Clair's malicious pleasure, but it would be a gross breach of what was due to her if he did not go and call for Eugénie, who had come to the theatre with him by herself.

"I must go back," he said to himself. "Poor Madame Dubourg! Her husband is very funny, and will insist upon being a cuckold, and will have it that I am the man. I certainly am very unfortunate. I have deceived many men who have known nothing at all about it, and a man, whose wife I scarcely know by sight, forces me to fight a duel with him. Ah! my dear Madame Dubourg, if ever I get the chance, I will try and prove that your husband is not a liar."

He returned to the box, but nobody was there except Madame St. Clair, who turned round to look at Gustave with a malicious smile, which was very expressive of her feelings. Gustave was strongly inclined to rave and storm, but he restrained his anger, as he thought the sight of it would only increase that hollow woman's enjoyment,

That Rascal Gustave

and so lie went out again without giving way to his indignation, remembering that he must respect her sex, utterly despicable though she herself might be.

CHAPTER XXIV. THE DUEL—THE LITTLE SAVOYARD.

On leaving the theatre, Gustave at once went to Madame Fonbelle's, in the hope of appeasing her and justifying himself; but he was told she was not at home to any one, not even to him, and he could not help thinking that she was carrying matters rather far in making a quarrel out of what had taken place before they were engaged. He did not, however, mention what had happened to his uncle, and got up the next morning at daybreak to keep his appointment with M. Dubourg.

He would not take Benoît with him, as he could not be trusted not to chatter; but, in case anything should happen to him, he made up his mind to engage his little outside errand boy, who had always served him so well, so taking his pistols he left his room.

Everybody was still asleep in the mansion, and, of course, the outside gate was closed, so Gustave went and knocked at the window of the porter's lodge, and asked to be let out.

Instead of merely pulling the string that lifted the latch, the porter got up in his shirt and looked out of his window to see who was going out at that hour of the morning.

"Why, is that you, M. Gustave?"

"Yes; so please open the gate for me at once."

"You are going out very early, Monsieur. Is the Colonel ill? Has he had another attack of gout? Has . . ."

"I hope my uncle is sound asleep, and I don't want your questions, so make haste and let me out."

"But you have not got Benoît with you; Benoît! Benoît!"

"By Jove! If I had wanted your son I could have called him myself. Open the gate, will you! I am tired of all your chatter."

Gustave's manner admitted of no reply, so the porter opened the gate with many excuses. Gustave thought, before getting outside, that the young Savoyard might not have arrived yet; but he was already at his post, eating a morsel of dry bread, and crying at the same time. Gustave went up to him gently, and touched him on the shoulder, and the boy, who seemed upset at the sight of Gustave, quickly dried his eyes.

"What are you always crying about, my lad? I wish you would tell me what is the matter with you. If you are unhappy, and your parents are poor, here is some money for you, for Heaven knows I have so often wasted it on my own follies that I need not grudge it now to relieve misery."

"I do not want anything," the little Savoyard said, refusing Gustave's proffered gift.

Gustave had an indescribable feeling when he heard the lad speak; his voice was as soft as a woman's, and Gustave tried to remember when a very similar voice had made his heart palpitate with emotion.

But time was getting on, and he must not keep M. Dubourg. "Come with me," Gustave said to him; "I may want you."

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The boy got up immediately, and followed him towards the Allée des Veuves in the Champs Elysées, where he was to meet M. Dubourg. Gustave soon saw him, and ordered his young companion to wait for him about a hundred yards off, till he should come to him, or send for him, and then he went to meet M. Dubourg.

"I am very sorry, Monsieur, to have kept you waiting."

"It is not of the least consequence, Monsieur, I have only just come. Have you your pistols with you?"

"Yes; but would you mind going a little further off? For I do not want that lad who has followed me to see what we are about."

"As you please, Monsieur."

They went a little further, when Gustave stopped, and they went a short distance from each other.

"Shoot first, Monsieur," Gustave said; "you look upon yourself as the offended party, and so you ought to begin." *

M. Dubourg did not wait to be asked twice, but taking a steady aim, he fired, and hit Gustave in the right side; he fell, and M. Dubourg ran up to him.

"Well, Monsieur, will you now acknowledge that you have cuckolded me."

"No, Monsieur, certainly not; I should certainly not; I should certainly never acknowledge what is not true, and now that I may be dying, I assure you that you are labouring under a mistake."

"If that is so, Monsieur, I am extremely sorry for what has happened, and I will go and send you a cab and your little attendant."

M. Dubourg left him, and found the young Savoyard in a state of great anxiety. He had heard the report of the pistol, and he was going as fast as he could to look for Gustave, when M. Dubourg came and told him that his master was wounded. The poor lad ran immediately to the spot where Gustave was lying, and seeing him there, bleeding from his side, he tried to assist him, but he was not strong enough, and he fell down fainting by the side of the wounded man.

"By George!" Gustave muttered, "it was a bright idea of mine to bring this child with me, who feels ill at the mere sight of a wound. If I could only do anything for him; but I have no restorative of any kind about me. I know I cannot walk, and there is nobody near. It is very early still, and if M. Dubourg does not happen to find a cab, we are likely to wait here for a long time without any assistance."

Gustave shouted out, but no one came; he tried to get up and go for help but his strength failed him, and he fell fainting by the side of the little Savoyard.

It was a good thing for him, in this case, that the porter at his uncle's house was as curious as he was fond of chattering. After opening the gate he at once called his son, Benoît, who got up and dressed at once.

"What is the matter, father!" he said.

"There is something very mysterious in M. Gustave's behaviour; he has just rushed out, almost without speaking to me, and there he is now talking to that little errand boy; and, just look! They are going off together, so you must follow your master at a distance; don't lose sight of him, and tell me by-and-by what you have found out."

Benoît of course followed Gustave and the young Savoyard; he stood still when his master told the latter to wait, and hearing the pistol-shot, and seeing M. Dubourg hastening off, he asked him whether his master was wounded, and on receiving an answer in the affirmative, he ran for a cab, and arrived on the scene a few minutes after Gustave had lost consciousness.

With the cabman's assistance, he put Gustave into the cab, and took his place beside him, driving off without paying the least attention to the poor little man. Benoît was rather vindictive, and was glad of this opportunity of taking his revenge, as is very usual with people of his class and character.

By the time they got to the house, Gustave had recovered his consciousness, and was met by his uncle, who was hobbling up and down his room, cursing the gout, which would not let him go out, and swearing at the porter, who had made the most of the events of the morning to him.

Luckily Gustave's wound was only slight, and there was no need for anxiety, and, when he was quite satisfied on that point, the Colonel gave his nephew a very serious talking to. The latter was just relating to him all that had happened, when a letter from Madame Fonbelle was brought to him, which Gustave handed to his uncle as soon as he had read it.

"Have you made your quarrel up?" the Colonel asked him.

"You had better read the letter for yourself," he replied, "and you will see that everything is over between us."

"I do not wish to cause either your unhappiness or my own by marrying you, Gustave, for I feel that I love you too much to be happy with you. Your flighty and fickle character would be a constant source of torment to me; and within the last two days I have acquired such proofs of your inconstancy that the past makes me tremble for the future. Farewell! With your Julias and Madame Dubourgs, and your Lizzies and little village girls, you will easily console yourself for the loss of Eugénie."

"The devil take all women, lovers, intrigues, and marriages!" the Colonel exclaimed, throwing the letter on to the ground; "but it is all your fault, for you are constantly doing something or other foolish."

"My dear uncle, allow me to draw your attention to the fact that I am in no way to blame in this case, for that vile woman, Madame St. Clair, got up all the scenes that have taken place, and she has succeeded in estranging Eugénie and me. But if Madame Fonbelle is so ready to believe all that she hears against me before we are married, I have no reason to regret her loss, for if a husband and wife wish to live happily together, they should have no secrets from one another, and not pay attention to those who wish to disturb their happiness."

"If you were really in love with Eugénie, you would not speak in that cold, deliberate manner; but I suppose that it is your fate to live and die unmarried."

"Oh, no! I will marry; I promise you that satisfaction, and as soon as my wound is healed, I will take a long journey and try if I cannot find a woman who will have me in some other country. Surely in Switzerland, in England, or in some other quarter of the globe, I shall find what I want,—a woman who is not afraid to marry a bit of a rake. But, by-the-by, Benoît, you found me unconscious in the Champs Elysees, and where was the little errand-boy?"

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"Do you mean the little Savoyard at the corner?"

"Of course I do; what have you done with him?"

"I, Monsieur! Nothing, Monsieur, for he ran away as soon as he saw me."

"Why he fainted when he saw that I was wounded."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur; when I came back with the cab, he was singing."

"Benoît, you are telling lies, and if the lad does not come back to-day, I shall discharge you."

Benoît was trying to exculpate himself as best as he could, when they heard a noise in the yard, and a footman came in to say that the little Savoyard had just come to the house, and insisted on seeing Gustave.

As soon as he was admitted, he ran up to him, and, falling down by his bedside, he seized his hands, which he covered with tears and kisses.

"Oh, the little humbug!" Benoît said aside, "how he is trying to wheedle himself into my master's service;" but Gustave soon told the lad that he was going on very well, and then questioned him to find out whether Benoît had been telling lies or not.

Whilst this was going on, and that great lout was trying to find some excuse to get out of his master's room, the Colonel was looking at the boy very closely, and seemed sunk in thought; and after Benoît had been duly reprimanded, the Savoyard was rewarded for his attachment to Gustave, and the invalid was left to his repose.

In about a fortnight Gustave's wound was pretty well healed, and, meanwhile, the Colonel had ascertained that Madame Fonbelle had gone into the country, which robbed him of all hope of renewing the engagement between her and Gustave; for he was not at all the sort of man to run after a woman who seemed to wish to avoid him.

As soon as Gustave had thoroughly recovered, he determined to leave France for a while, as he had nothing to keep him there. In order to please Madame Fonbelle, he had broken with all his old acquaintances; Julia had given up all thoughts of intrigue; opera dancers had no more attractions for him; little Lizzie had just married a hatter, and was satisfied with making him proverbially mad; Susan had disappeared; Olivier had lost his appointment because of his bad conduct, and, as Gustave always respected himself, he could not keep on intimate terms with a man who did nothing but run after women and frequent houses of bad repute, and so he made up his mind to travel, a resolution which the Colonel highly approved of, as he hoped change of scene and habits might strengthen his character.

When all was settled, Gustave agreed to take Benoît with him, to prove to his uncle that he had no intention of having any fresh intrigues, for the fellow was too great a fool to assist his master in any such things, and was only good for waiting at table and grooming a horse. He was delighted at the idea of going with Gustave, for he had been alarmed at first at the idea that his master might take the little shoe-black with him; in his way he did nothing but talk to his father about his approaching journey and he dinned it into the lad's ears because he saw that it distressed him. That was M. Benoît all over.

At last the day came on which they were to set out, and, as the Colonel intended to accompany his nephew as far as St. Germain, he ordered his cabriolet, whilst Benoît

was sent on with two horses, for Gustave had determined to travel on horseback, which is by far the best way, if one wants to see the country thoroughly.

As they were getting into the carriage, Gustave looked out for the little Savoyard, wishing to say good-bye to him, and to leave him some substantial mark of his kindness, but nothing was to be seen of him, which vexed Gustave very much, for he was sorry to leave without seeing him again.

A drive of about two hours brought them to St. Germain, and the Colonel was driving to the inn, where he had ordered Benoît to meet them, when another vehicle, coming along at a furious pace, dashed into them before M. de Moranval could get out of the way, upset the light carriage, and the driver, whipping up his horses, made off as fast as he could, to avoid the Colonel's anger.

Of course, Gustave and his uncle were thrown out; the latter was unhurt, and got up swearing, but the former had sprained his foot; and plaintive cries were heard behind them. A crowd immediately surrounded the cabriolet, and the Colonel was about to ask whether anybody had been injured by the accident, when he perceived a little Savoyard, whom they were picking up and carrying into the inn. Gustave uttered an exclamation of astonishment, for he had recognised his young errand-boy and was told by the bystanders that he was sitting up behind the gig when it was upset.

Gustave begged his uncle to see to the boy, whilst he himself went to have his foot attended to, and the Colonel went to look after the lad, whilst his nephew, whose foot was causing him great pain, was shown into a room, and Benoît soon brought a surgeon to him, who assured him that the sprain would be all right in a couple of days.

As Gustave was forced to remain in his room without moving, he was very anxious to see his uncle, and to hear about the young Savoyard, and he was just going to send Benoît after him, when the Colonel came in, looking so pale and agitated, that Gustave was quite frightened.

"What has happened, uncle?" he asked. "Is the boy much hurt?"

"No, the injury is only very slight, hardly anything, in fact."

"Then, why do you seem so agitated?"

"Well, I think to be thrown out of a carriage, as we were, is enough to upset anybody's nerves."

"But you were not like this before you went to look after the boy, and I am sure you are keeping something from me; do tell me what it is."

"I am keeping nothing from you. What do you want me to tell you? The boy is hardly hurt at all, but he fainted from the fright, and to-morrow will be all right again."

"But why did he get up behind us?"

"Because he had followed us."

"But what should he want to follow us for?"

"Confound it all, why, to have a ride, of course. Don't you know that young scamps like that are very fond of getting up behind carriages?"

"But, uncle . . ."

"There, we have had enough of this child; I tell you there is hardly anything the matter with him, and I have given him some money, so you may be quite easy about

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him. A sprain is nothing dangerous, so to-morrow you will be able to start. Goodbye; I am going back to Paris."

"Why, you do not mean to say that you are going to leave me here alone in this inn? You can surely be in no hurry, and might just as well return to Paris to-morrow."

"I tell you I must go back immediately; you will allow me to have my own reasons for returning home, and I suppose you can manage to exist for a single day at an inn without society, for, as you are going to travel over a good part of Europe, the chances are that it will happen to you occasionally. Good-bye, Gustave; you have money and letters of introduction, and you can draw on me; I will honour your bills as long as you behave yourself. Try not to commit any more acts of folly, and, if you meet with a good, gentle, and loving woman, bring her back as your wife, but remember that I insist upon those three qualities."

The Colonel embraced his nephew and left him, and a few minutes later Gustave heard his uncle's carriage drive out of the inn yard.

He could not help thinking his conduct very extraordinary, for his evident emotion on returning to speak to him, and his sudden resolution to go back to Paris immediately when nothing absolutely called him there, seemed, to say the least of it, somewhat mysterious. He racked his brains in vain to discover the reason for this sudden departure, and could only hope that he might be more fortunate next day when he could question the shoeblack.

In the course of the afternoon he told Benoît to go and ask how the boy was getting on, and he very soon returned to his master and told him that he must be all right, as he had gone away.

"Gone away! The boy who was hurt this morning gone away! It is not possible."

"Well, Monsieur, I can only tell you what has been told me, and I was very much astonished; but the strangest part of it all is that the servant girl assured me that he had gone away with your uncle."

"My uncle taken the Savoyard away!"

"Yes, Monsieur; he took the greatest care of him, and would not allow anybody but himself to help him into the carriage, and I really think that the little black beggar must have bewitched M. de Moranval for him to take so much notice of him."

Gustave was certainly much surprised at his uncle's behaviour, but he attributed this last act on his part to his natural kindness, for under his rough exterior he concealed a kind and feeling heart.

The next day but one our hero was well enough to get on horseback, and he left St. Germain to begin his travels.

CHAPTER XXV. COMPRISING A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS.

Instead of going straight on he turned aside and went towards Ermenonville, and Benoît, who did not know the road, was very curious as to where his master was going. He was not quite so timid as he had been on his first journey, but though he rode quite close to him, he did not dare to ask him any questions.

When they arrived at the village, Benoît recognised the château, the little bridge, and Daddy Lucas's house, before which Gustave stopped, and then his curiosity to know what they were going to do there overcame every other feeling, so riding up to his master, he said,—

"Monsieur, are we going to stop here again?"

"You will see by-and-by."

"But, Monsieur, are you going to turn the whole house upside down again, make the cows run away, and all the old women yell like mad?"

"I will tell you what, Benoît; I mean to do just as I please, and if you dare to ask me any more questions, I shall send you back to Paris."

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, I will not speak again."

Gustave rode into the courtyard, and a peasant girl who was there uttered an exclamation at seeing the young man; it was Marie-Jeanne, who had recognised Gustave immediately, and he was very glad of the chance of finding out from her, before seeing M. or Madame Lucas, how he would be received, so he beckoned to her to come and speak to him.

"Is that you, Monsieur? I never expected to see you again; why, it is nearly a year since you were here, at any rate it was about the time when we were picking the plums, and that is nine months ago.

"Just tell me how they all are, Marie-Jeanne; are they all as happy and well as ever?"

"Oh! Monsieur, there has been a great change; but of course you have not heard of it; Mlle. Susan has gone away; but go in, Monsieur, and my mistress will tell you all about it."

From what the girl said, Gustave perceived plainly that nobody suspected him of being the cause of Susan's flight, and so he went indoors, where he found Father and Mother Lucas, who received him very kindly. The old man did not, perhaps, talk quite so much as formerly, but his wife was as voluble as ever, and told him all about Susan's disappearance. She shed tears whilst speaking about her, and these tears went to Gustave's heart, for he knew that he was the cause of them, as if he had never been in that house the girl would have remained in the village. Perfectly happy and peaceful in her home, she would never have thought of anything else, above all, of leaving them; but Gustave's presence had changed everything, though Mother Lucas never guessed that she was talking to the very man who had turned her little daughter's head. He was very much surprised to hear that for the last two months she had written to them frequently, though without giving them her address in Paris, as she was afraid they might still be anxious to make her marry Nicholas Toupet.

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"The dear child is quite wrong," Madame Lucas said, "for Nicholas is married, and has quite forgotten her. I was very grieved and very angry at first when she left us, but now that she writes us such nice letters, and begs our pardon so sweetly for what she has done, we are quite ready to forgive her, and only hope that she will come back soon."

"She is still in Paris," Gustave said to himself, "and she has never once tried to see me since she ran away from Madame Henri's. She does not care for me any more, and has done like so many others—listened to the flattery of some libertine, so I shall think no more about her. I was a great fool to think that such a pretty girl would remain faithful to me, so I must try and forget her, and only hope that she may be happy."

He left the cottage, after giving Marie-Jeanne substantial tokens of his liberality, and took his leave of Ermenonville, though he fully made up his mind to return there when he came back from his travels, to ascertain whether Susan had at last gone back to her parents.

He travelled straight to Italy without any adventures on the road, and arrived in the city of the Caesars; he visited the Capitol, the Basilica of St. Peter's, the tombs of the popes, and found the remains of the ancient Roman grandeur even amongst the ruins of its temples and palaces; but in vain did he seek for traces of the proud and warlike people whom he had imagined there; and its squalor and beggars, its monks and macaroni, made him leave it almost without regret, and after travelling through the greater part of Italy, he went to Spain and Portugal, and then to Germany, Poland, and England.

He found adventures wherever he went, but the recital of his good fortunes, which so much resemble each other, would not interest the reader, and become monotonous when the heart plays no part in them. Gustave found that there was hardly any necessity to make a declaration to an Italian woman, for the ladies saved him the trouble of doing so; and whatever may be said of the gallantry and coquetry of Frenchwomen, and the looseness of the morals of Parisian women especially, they cannot be compared to the facility with which an Italian woman enters into an intrigue.

However, Gustave was lucky or unlucky enough to inspire some violent passions, and he took away with him the marks of several blows with the stiletto as souvenirs, whilst Benoît carried off with him many proposals and declarations, which he made up his mind to ask his dear papa to explain to him on his return home.

In Spain he twanged the light guitar, and made love through Venetian blinds; he went to church to admire the ladies, and to make eyes at them; at the door he offered them holy water; and old hags who are called *duennas* in Spain, but who would be called by a very different name elsewhere, used to follow him to his lodgings, and bring him love-letters, and he found more luxury and more beggary than even in Italy, for extremes nearly always meet.

Benoît, who did not know that in that country beggary is a profession, and beggars people who expect to be answered respectfully, was unfortunate enough one day to repulse a senor who was begging and asking for *caritade* rather roughly, and in a moment a crowd of beggars surrounded him, and he was beaten, rolled in the mud, and otherwise ill-used. Gustave seeing his man at fisticuffs with a pack of ragamuffins, rushed at them, hitting out right and left with his stick, but the affair then immediately assumed a very serious aspect. To thrash a beggar was a direct attack on Spanish customs, usages, and privileges, and they are not the sort of people to put up with

anything that wounds their pride, so the alguazils arrived on the scene, and Gustave, Benoît and the beggars were all taken before the corregidor. He naturally decided that the proud pack of beggars were quite in the right; thought it extremely wrong that one of them should have received a thrashing, and took no notice of the loss of two of Benoît's front teeth, nor of the fact that one of his ears was half pulled off. Gustave got into a terrible rage, and began to swear, and the magistrate was just going to sentence him and his valet to be imprisoned, when fortunately his wife's duenna arrived, who recognised Gustave as the good-looking young fellow to whom she had rendered many a little service. She therefore spoke for him and got him off, and he left Spain, disgusted with the country, its magistrates, and its beggars.

He found the German women very lovable, and their husbands great smokers. He lodged in the house of a handsome German lady, who was passionately fond of waltzing, and who never got tired of it; she was even worse than Jean-Jean Courtepointe. Whilst she danced her husband played, and Benoît took lessons on the flute from the cook, a great fat girl who could play on any instrument, and take her part in a quartet.

But Gustave got tired of waltzing, and Benoît grew thin from playing the flute too much, and so he left Germany quite convinced that the women were capital dancers, and Benoît very pleased at having learnt to play the flute so well.

"It is a very nice country," the latter said to his master; "the women understand you at once, even though you do not know German, and you have only to say Haydn or Mozart to the men, and they will go on talking to you for a couple of hours without giving you the chance of answering them."

"Who told you that?"

"The fat girl who taught me to play the flute. They are the only German words I learnt, and I have not the least idea what they mean; but when you were waltzing with our hostess, the girl who could play the flute so well would say, 'Haydn, Mozart,' to the husband, and he would seize his violin and play without stopping, except now and then to have a drink. He was a terrible man for music."

On going to England, Benoît insisted on being tied to a plank, so that he might keep afloat in case of shipwreck; but they arrived without any disaster, and Benoît got off with being violently sick for several days till he declared his tongue had grown two inches longer.

Nobody can care for England who does not find his chief pleasure in horse-riding, cock-fighting, betting, punch, and plum-pudding, and it strikes a Frenchman as very strange to see all the ladies leave the room soon after the dessert is put on the table, whilst the gentlemen remain for such mirth as may be inspired by drinking burnt brandy, without regretting the departure of the fair sex the least, as it is the signal for giving themselves up to folly (if it can be called folly to drink till you fall under the table).

The young traveller thought their choice of walks also very singular, for they generally went into the cemeteries for recreation and to get fresh air; but their cemeteries are beautifully laid out, and there are often very touching and original inscriptions on the tomb-stones. Nobody but an Englishman, however, could walk in such a spot without feeling profoundly melancholy, and though it may be occasionally a pleasant sensation, it is dangerous to give way to it too often.

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Besides this, Gustave noticed what attention that reflective nation paid to minute details of behaviour and conformity with the general usages of society.

At a brilliant reception he was laughed at because he drank his hot tea out of the saucer, and did not put his spoon into his cup when he did not want any more.

"If great geniuses are remarkable for small matters," Gustave thought, "then certainly the English are a very profound race."

Benoît soon accustomed himself to English manners; he had five meals a day, drank tea all day, and punch all night, and he was very sorry, seeing now stout he was getting, when his master told him that he intended to leave a country where people lived so well.

But Gustave had been away from France for three years, and as his uncle evidently wished to see him again, he would not put off his return any longer, and he was tired of moving about from place to place, and though he had had many love affairs, yet he was quieting down, and was no longer that rascal Gustave who jumped out of windows, roused a whole street, and fought with the patrol; and though he still loved pleasure and the fair sex, he felt it was time to choose his acquaintances better, and so began to look forward to the delights of wedded love and the pure pleasures of esteem and friendship.

"We will return to France," he said to Benoît, "and though I shall go back to my uncle without bringing a wife with me, I must confess that I have not taken much trouble to find one. I certainly prefer Frenchwomen to all others: the Italians are too fiery, the Spanish too jealous, the Germans too fond of waltzing, the Polish too cold, and the English too sentimental."

"You are quite right, Monsieur, and I must acknowledge that, except flutes, marionnettes, and plum-pudding, we have not seen anything very wonderful in our travels."

They bade farewell to the banks of the Thames, and taking the steamer, soon arrived at Calais. Gustave felt very happy at once more setting foot on his native soil, and was eager to see his uncle and old friends again; and Benoît was very impatient to tell his father all that he had heard, seen, and admired, and, most probably, something in addition.

CHAPTER XXVI. SHOULD YOU HAVE GUESSED IT?

Gustave had told his uncle that he was about to return, and on disembarking at Calais he saw a tall, nice-looking fellow in postilion's dress holding a letter in his hand,—

"I beg your pardon, Monsieur, but are you M. Gustave St. Réal?"

"Yes, what do you want?"

"I was on the look-out for your arrival, Monsieur, for your uncle, Colonel Moranval, sent me, but, first of all, I must give you this letter."

Gustave took it and read as follows: —

"My Dear Gustave,—

You must be very tired from your journey, and impatient to be in Paris, and so that you may come all the quicker I send you Germain, my new groom, with a comfortable post-chaise. He will drive you, and I hope to embrace you soon.—

Your affectionate uncle,
"Colonel Moranval."

"It is really very kind of my uncle," Gustave said, "and I am sick of riding, and as my horse died in Germany, I shall make my entry into Paris like a lord. So, Germain, you have a post-chaise with you?"

"Yes, Monsieur, and it is quite ready."

"Very well, we will start as soon as we have dined."

He went to the inn where the post-chaise was, and after a good dinner he got into the carriage with Benoît, and ordered Germain to go at a good pace.

"Upon my word, Monsieur" Benoît said, sitting down opposite his master, "it is very thoughtful of your uncle to send us such a nice carriage and a driver, and, at any rate, we shall get back to Paris without any fatigue."

Gustave did not reply, for he was buried in thought; calling to mind all whom he had left in France, and wondering what changes three years might have produced in the situation.

The first day they only stopped for meals, and to change horses, and Gustave was very satisfied with Germain, who drove very fast; and towards the end of the second day, when it was already nearly dark, Gustave began to think that they must be getting near Paris, but on putting his head out of the carriage window, he fancied that they had left the high-road.

"Germain, where are we?"

"About six leagues from Paris, Monsieur, close to Montmorency."

"Are you sure that you have taken the right road?"

"Yes, Monsieur; I have taken a short cut which saves us a long distance."

"Suppose he should make us lose our way, Monsieur," Benoît said anxiously.

"Why, you idiot, are you frightened?"

That Rascal Gustave

"Well, Monsieur, it is dark, and I do not see any houses."

"Do you continually see houses by the roadside?"

"But you said we were off the high-road."

"Hold your tongue, and go to sleep."

"I am much too frightened to go to sleep, Monsieur."

Germain drove slower, and soon stopped altogether, to speak to his master.

"I think you are right, Monsieur, I have lost my way, and don't know where I am."

"I felt sure of it," Gustave answered.

"Oh, Lord!" Benoît screamed out, "are we going: to spend the night in the open air?"

"Go on, Germain, and ask your way at the first house we get to."

"The devil is in it, Monsieur; one of my horses has lost a shoe and can hardly trot, and it would injure him to gallop."

"By George!" Benoît grumbled to himself, "what a fool he must be to let a horse lose one of his shoes. We are in a nice fix."

Gustave did not know what to do, and Germain proposed to go on a voyage of discovery, for he fancied he had seen a light at a little distance off on the left, and he would go and ask his way there.

"If it is a house where they will take us in, we will spend the night there, in case you cannot get your horse shod," Gustave said.

Germain went away, and soon came back to say that it was a very nice-looking house, and that they would willingly take the travellers in for the night.

"Well," Gustave replied, "I must go and ask for hospitality, but you, Germain, must try and get as far as the nearest village, to see whether you cannot get the horse shod, for I have not yet given up all hopes of reaching Paris to-night."

Gustave and Benoît got out of the carriage, and went towards the hospitable dwelling where they were going to be kind enough to take them in; which proved to be a handsome house, belonging, no doubt, to wealthy people, so he knocked, and a middle-aged woman opened the door.

"I have been told," Gustave said, "that the owner of this house has offered to be kind enough to allow me to stay here for a short time till one of my horses can be shod."

"Please to come in, Monsieur; I will show you the way"

She took Gustave and Benoît upstairs to the first floor, and opened the door of an elegantly furnished drawing-room, which, however, was without any occupants, and, asking Gustave to sit down, and placing a lamp on the table, she went out.

"Monsieur," Benoît said, examining the furniture very carefully, "I think this house must belong to people of distinction."

"I hope," Gustave replied, "we shall see the owner soon, as I want to thank him;" and when the servant returned with refreshments, he said to her,—

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing your master %"

"A lady and her servants live here, Monsieur, and she is very glad to take you in, but she never sees any one."

"But surely she will give me an opportunity of thanking her?"

"There is no necessity for that, Monsieur."

"There is some mystery in all this, Monsieur," Benoît said to his master in a whisper.

Gustave was just going to ask some more questions, when he heard a great noise outside; Benoît started, and the servant went downstairs to see what it was, and soon reappeared with Germain, who seemed rather frightened.

"What is the matter, Germain?" Gustave said.

Oh I Monsieur, you will be very angry with me, I know, and I am very awkward, but luckily it did not happen whilst you were inside, and, after all, it was not my fault."

"Whatever are you talking about?"

"There was a confounded elm tree by the side of the road, which I did not see; I was leading one of the horses, when suddenly—crash, the carriage was upset, with a wheel smashed and a spring broken."

"Well, we are in a pretty mess," Benoît said, stamping with rage, whilst Gustave burst out laughing.

"I am glad to see that you can laugh at it, Monsieur."

"I was laughing at my uncle's lucky idea of sending me a post-chaise so that I might get to Paris the sooner, and at the fortunate way it has turned out; but now the question is, where shall I spend the night?"

"Here, Monsieur," the old servant said; "your carriage must be repaired, and you cannot continue your journey at present; but you will want for nothing here, and will not put my mistress out in the least, for she has asked me to tell you that you can stay here as long as you please."

"Upon my word, your mistress is really too kind, but as she wishes it, I will accept her kind hospitality for to-night."

"I will get rooms ready for you and your servants, and supper will be served very soon."

She left the room, and Germain went after her to put his horses up, for it was too late to go to the nearest village to look for workmen.

"I think, Benoît," Gustave said, throwing himself into an easy-chair, "that the lady of the house must be very kind."

"I think, Monsieur, that we are very fortunate in finding any one so obliging, but I think there is something mysterious about it."

"Yes, I must say I am rather curious, and I should very much like to see this lady who receives strangers into her house and will not see them. I think there is something very romantic in it, and were I in Italy still, I should expect that it would turn out to be a love adventure. How strange we are! we long to see anything that is kept concealed from us, and I am most desirous to see this mysterious lady."

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"Wait a moment, Monsieur, somebody is coming upstairs, I can see—oh! it is beautiful!"

"What do you mean? A pretty woman?"

"No, Monsieur, the supper which has just been served in the dining-room."

"Confound your gluttony, with your supper."

The servant came in to tell Gustave that supper was ready, and he went into the dining-room, and sat down at a table that was very handsomely set out, and during the meal he put several more questions to the woman who, however, did not seem at all inclined to talk, and all that he could get out of her was that her mistress was young, and had a child.

When it was over, she showed Gustave into a very pretty bedroom, and told him that his servants were sleeping just underneath him, and that he could easily call them if he happened to want them.

After spending two days in a post-chaise, it might have been thought that he would be glad to rest, but he felt no inclination to sleep. It was a beautiful evening, so he opened the window, and as the moon was shining brightly, he could distinguish every object near him; and from his window he could see part of the garden, and on the right, a wing of the house in which lights were still burning, where, no doubt, the apartments of the lady were who would not even be thanked for her kind hospitality. Whilst looking at the windows that were lighted up, he wished that he could see the interior of the rooms, but he soon felt ashamed of his curiosity.

"Bah!" he said, "I get excited because a lady does not wish to see a stranger, and immediately picture her to myself as a marvel of beauty, when most likely she is a very ordinary kind of woman who likes to do a kindness, but does not choose to mix with the people whom chance brings to her house. There is nothing very mysterious about that, and certainly, for a man who has been half over Europe, I am easily astonished, so I will go to bed, which will be much better than looking at the moon and this lady's apartments."

Gustave had just closed his window, when he heard the sound of a harp, and so, naturally, curiosity gained the upper hand, he went to the window again and listened attentively. The lady, for it was one presumably, played with much taste and expression, and soon she began a ballad, to which Gustave listened to with much pleasure. Who could it be but the lady of the house, as the servant had said that she was living there by herself? The voice ceased too soon; it and the harp both became mute, but Gustave listened still; he wished to hear more, for never had music given rise to such pleasant sensations in him.

After listening in vain for an hour, in the hope of hearing her pleasing notes again, Gustave at last went to bed, but he was quite determined to make every attempt to get to know the person who sang so well, and he went to sleep thinking of his mysterious hostess.

The next morning Gustave got up early, and on going downstairs he met the servant and asked her whether he might go into the garden.

"Oh! yes, Monsieur," she replied; "you can go wherever you like."

"Is my carriage being repaired?"

"Yes, Monsieur, but it will not be ready to-day."

"But I really cannot stop here any longer."

"Why not, Monsieur? My mistress has told me to say to you that she hopes you will stay here till your carriage is thoroughly in order, and I know she will be only too glad if you will do so; and now I will go and see about your breakfast."

"This is a strange sort of house," Gustave said to himself, as he went into the garden; "the mistress of it entertains me most hospitably, but refuses to see me. Well, I may as well stay a day longer, and I may happen to meet the lady."

Walking on a terrace with beds of beautiful flowers, he saw a very pretty little girl hardly three years old, who was running about alone, picking flowers which she made up into a nose-

"What are you doing, my dear little girl?"—Gustave said, giving her a kiss.

"I am picking flowers for mamma," the child replied, with a smile.

"Where is your mamma?"

"Indoors."

"Do you love her very much?"

"Yes, and papa also."

"And her father also!" Confound it, here was something that altogether upset Gustave's calculations; her father was alive, so why was he not with his wife? Perhaps her husband's absence was the reason why the wife would see nobody, so Gustave tried to make the little girl tell him more, but she was too young to express herself clearly, and she struggled out of his arms, and ran into the house, and he also went in to breakfast.

Whilst eating it he thought a great deal about the child, whose features brought back confused recollections to his mind, and then he wondered why the mother's voice should have made such an impression on him, and he became thoughtful and almost sad, and hardly touched the dainty meal. Benoît tried in vain to distract him and make him talk, but, as he could not succeed, he made up his mind to eat for two, which he managed very easily, for he had brought back the habit of eating all day long from England.

"How can I manage to see her," Gustave exclaimed, leaving the table.

"To see whom, Monsieur?" Benoît asked.

"Why, of course, the lady of the house."

"Oh! I have seen her, Monsieur."

"You saw her, you scoundrel, and never told me of it?"

"Well, when I say I saw her, I mean I saw her back in the hall, and heard her telling the servant to take her harp into the little garden pavilion."

Gustave had seen a pavilion at the bottom of the garden, consisting of only a ground-floor, and through the outside Venetian blinds he ought to be able to see the inside, so he went into the garden immediately, and going up to the pavilion he listened, but nobody was there yet, and, in order not to frighten the young lady, he went to a little distance and sat down behind a thick hedge.

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He soon heard footsteps, and saw a lady holding a little girl by the hand, but her face was turned from him, and she went in without his being able to distinguish her features.

However, he went up to the pavilion, but it would have been impertinent to go in, as she did not wish to see any one, but Gustave thought it quite allowable to listen, and he did so.

After a rather melancholy prelude, she began a ballad descriptive of the sufferings of the heart when far from the object of its affections, and Gustave listened attentively, trying to remember where he had already heard the voice that was charming him. He walked round the garden-house? and tried to look through the Venetians, but the windows all had curtains; now the song ceased, however, and one of the windows was opened^ Gustave went gently up, and, pushing aside one of the blinds, he could see into the room, but he did not gain much, for the lady's back was towards him, and he could only see her figure.

The little girl was on her mother's knees, playing with her hair.

"Mamma," she said, "you are not singing any more, and I know you are unhappy, for you are continually crying."

The mother's only answer was to cover the little girl's face with kisses, and put her handkerchief to her eyes, whilst Gustave hardly breathed, for it seemed to him that he was the cause of the young lady's tears.

The little girl jumped off her mother's lap, and said, "Wait a moment; you know how I can always stop you from crying."

The child went and took a large picture, almost as big as herself, and which she could scarcely carry, that Gustave had not noticed before, off a chair; however, she managed to put it in front of her mother, and blew kisses to it. The mother took her little girl into her arms, made her kneel down before the portrait, and said, "Pray to Heaven that your father may still love me, and that some day he may return to us."

Gustave could no longer master his emotion; he knew that voice, and got on to the window to look at the portrait, and on seeing his own likeness he could hardly restrain his tears. Who could this woman and this child be? He went into the parlour and could scarcely believe his eyes, for Susan was before him, and, throwing herself into his arms, she gave him his child, whilst he, overwhelmed with emotion, threw himself on to the chair on which she had been sitting.

At that moment the door of a small adjoining room was opened, and Colonel Moranval appeared.

"My dear Gustave," he said, going up to him, "I am very glad that you have returned alone, for I have been keeping your wife and child for you here."

Gustave could not speak; he was holding Susan and his daughter in his arms, and covering them with kisses.

"There, calm yourself," the Colonel said, with a smile; "you must be very anxious to know how your little peasant girl, whom you lost in Paris, should have turned into this well-educated lady, who has all the manners of good society. I can tell you in a few words. The young Savoyard who had taken up his post outside my house, was—Susan."

"Susan!" Gustave exclaimed, "and I did not recognise you!"

"Oh! I so disguised myself, and stained my face, that you could not recognise me, and I took care to speak very little in your presence."

"But why disguise yourself?"

"So that I might see you every day, and be near you constantly. On running away from Madame Henri's I made up my mind to do so, and so I sold all the few things I had, and bought that Savoyard's dress. Unfortunately I was pregnant, and bore in my bosom the fruit of our love, and when you came close to me, I was very much inclined to throw myself into your arms and tell you all, but the fear of being separated from you prevented me from doing so.

"The poor child was frightened of me," the Colonel said; "but I am not so bad as I seem. Susan had followed us when we left Paris, and, getting up behind the cabriolet, she was thrown off at St. Germain. You will remember, Gustave, that I yielded to your wishes, and went to see how the poor Savoyard was, and you may guess my surprise—when I recognised in the child that young girl in whom I had taken such an interest. I calmed Susan's grief, for she declared that she should die, now that you had gone away and left her, but I consoled her with the hope of seeing you again, and promising never to abandon her, though I took care not to tell you what had happened, and I returned to Paris, taking the Savoyard with me.

"I must confess that Susan's devotion, the force and sincerity of her love, her open character and her youth, all made me really attached to her, so I took her to my house and watched over her education. She learnt wonderfully quickly, and found her only pleasure in sometimes talking to me about you. When she gave birth to this little girl, I soon got to love her as much as I did her mother, for she showed the same beauty and gentleness of character. Susan, however, hearing that her mother was ill, left everything to fly to her mother's bedside, and I could not but approve of her conduct, and Madame Lucas died soon afterwards, having pardoned her daughter for the fault that love had caused her to be guilty of. Susan still remained at Ermenonville, as she did not wish to leave her father, who had nothing but her to comfort him; and she spent eight months in the village, at the end of which time a fever carried off Father Lucas. I went immediately to Ermenonville, and forced Susan to return with me, though I had some difficulty in doing so, for she did not wish to leave her native place and her parents' tomb, but I spoke to her of you, and love carried the day.

"Every day, my dear Gustave, I learnt to appreciate her virtues and amiable qualities more and more, and in a most dangerous illness that I had, I believe I should have died without Susan's care and attention, who nursed me day and night. I was much touched at her devotion; and I began to hope that you might not be entirely captivated by any woman during your travels, and you may imagine Susan's joy when I told her what my views for her were. She begged me, however, not to mention her to you, as she wished to leave you full master of your own heart, and not to prevent you from forming other ties should you wish to do so, but she used to listen anxiously to all your letters, as she feared to hear that your choice was made.

"At last you announced your return, and I sent Germain to meet you, having given him instructions to bring you here. I wished to excite your curiosity, for though I knew your heart, I wished to move it violently, so that you might appreciate the happiness I had in store for you all the more. I hope you may be happy, for I give you a charming child and an adorable wife, and I think that, with them, you will not find the

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time long, for as she possesses all the qualities to make your home happy, and is highly cultivated, you can talk with her about other things than love. No doubt it is a delightful subject of conversation, but to be able constantly to say something about the matter, you must not exhaust it at once, as you used to do when Susan first stayed with you at my house."

"My dear uncle," Gustave said, throwing his arms round his uncle's neck, "for the future I shall be quite satisfied, for with Susan, you, and my child. I shall find that happiness which I sought in vain in the storms of intrigues and folly."

"My dear boy, that is the way of young men, and now that you have sown your wild oats, I feel confident about your future."

"Ah! Gustave," Susan said, taking his hand, "I never thought that I could be so happy, and who would have said, when you came to our village, that I should be your wife?"

"My dear child," the Colonel observed, joining their hands together, "you have proved that virtue, gentleness, talent, and beauty can well replace birth and wealth."

THE END

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