A FASCINATING WOMAN

BY MADAM EDMOND ADAM

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MADAME EDMOND ADAM.

A FASCINATING WOMAN.

BY MADAME EDMOND ADAM.

(JULIETTE LAMBER.)

"A FASCINATING WOMAN," by the celebrated [illegible] Madame Adam, is a romance [illegible] originality and cleverness. [illegible] the defeats of the Ugly Woman's [illegible] intellectual qualities [illegible] her beauty through [illegible] reputation [illegible] "A FASCINATING WOMAN" [illegible] the most prominent woman in [illegible] of all the celebrities of the day. [illegible] John Stirling.

A FASCINATING WOMAN.

(LAIDE.)

BY MADAME EDMOND ADAM.

(JULIETTE LAMBER.)

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[Tr. by John Stirling, pseud.]
Mary Neal Sherwood

"A FASCINATING WOMAN," by the celebrated Parisian politician and writer, Madame Edmond Adam, is a romance that at the very first glance rivets attention by its wonderful originality and cleverness. It is a peculiar story, giving in a quiet but powerful way the details of an Ugly Woman's trials and tortures, which cut her to the soul, for she has intellectual qualities of a high order. Ultimately the Ugly Woman, who had lost her beauty through illness, regains it by the same means, and with it her husband's constancy; but the transformation is not accomplished until the heroine's salon has grown famous as a resort for painters and sculptors, and she herself has acquired a widespread reputation for eccentricity. It is said that Madame Adam founded this story on her own career, and this is quite likely, for Hélène's experiences in a measure coincide with those of the gifted editress of the Paris Nouvelle Revue. The novel is superbly written and the interest kept up without a break, though sensational methods are never resorted to. The character-sketching is remarkably vivid, and the descriptions are word-pictures of the most delightful kind. The interest in "A FASCINATING WOMAN" will be heightened by the fact that Madame Adam is now the most prominent woman in Europe, while her salon in Paris is the favored resort of all the celebrities of the day. The work has been excellently translated by John Stirling.

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DEDICATION.

NOTWITHSTANDING all her warm encouragement, I never dared dedicate any one of my books to my master, George Sand. I now venture to dedicate this one to her memory in testimony of the eternal gratitude I have vowed to the greatest and the tenderest of my feminine friendships.

MADAME EDMOND ADAM.
(JULIETTE LAMBER.)

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ONE of the most prominent women in France, if not in all Europe, at the present time, is Madame Edmond Adam (Juliette Lamber), the editress of the *Nouvelle Revue* and a shining light in the literary and political circles of Paris, where she reigns as a sort of intellectual queen.

Madame Adam was born at Verberie, l'Oise, in 1832. At an early age she had rare opportunities of learning all the various phases of French politics, for her grandfather was a vehement Bonapartist, her grandmother an enthusiastic Royalist, and her father a Socialist.

Her acquaintance with Edmond Adam, at one time an editor of the *Nationale*, began in 1858, and mutual love was soon the result. Certain obstacles, however, prevented their union for

ten years; these being removed the marriage ceremony was performed in 1868.

While the famous Franco-Prussian war was raging, Madame Adam's salon in Paris attracted great attention. It was frequented by all the leading men of the day, and speedily became a political bee-hive in which, after the fall of Napoleon the Third, governments and public ministers were made and overthrown. There, it is said, Marshal MacMahon was badgered until he relinquished the presidential office and withdrew to private life.

Monsieur Adam was delighted at the influence wielded by his gifted wife, and was pleased to see her regarded as a Republican Madonna. He sanctioned all her acts and accepted everything she did as right, placing his fortune unconditionally at her disposal. Madame Adam was not spiteful, but her bellicose temperament subjected her to unchivalrous attacks, and her gallant husband's pistol and sword were ever ready to defend her. Her chief enemy was M. Prudhon. She entered into a lively controversy with him, in

the course of which she wrote "Les Idées Anti-Prudhoniennes," one of her most remarkable literary productions.

Madame Adam was the Clorinda of the equal rights cause, and was then, as she is now, a paragon of grace and beauty. Her head had the charming outlines of an antique cameo. Her Greek nose was slightly retroussé, and her chameleon-like eyes were green and brown by turns, but there was always magic in their glance which fired the heart of every masculine observer. Her full mouth had a handsome, witty, and jovial expression; her face was oval, and her firm chin indicated strength of character. She had magnificent arms, well-moulded shoulders, and a beautiful neck; her hair was brown, and her form slender and tall. These personal characteristics she retains unimpaired at the age of fifty.

Madame Adam was an admirer of that daring agitator, Rochefort, and through her efforts her husband was prevailed upon to furnish him with the means to flee from New Caledonia, and also to make financial provision for the exile's children.

In 1875, Monsieur Adam was chosen a Life Senator; but he was not long permitted to enjoy his elevation to that dignity, for in 1877 he died. Such was the esteem in which he was held that it is said he left no enemies behind him. When his will was opened it was found that he had bequeathed his entire fortune, which was very large, to his widow. The will was contested, but Madame Adam triumphed over her adversaries and secured the estate. During the trial the opposing lawyer thus spoke of her: "She is a veritable power in the State that cannot be left out of any calculation; she has realized her daring ambition; she has a salon of her own; she perpetuates the tradition of Madame Récamier; she gives weekly banquets and monthly receptions; she is the Egeria of the Republic."

In the autumn of 1879, Madame Adam started the *Nouvelle Revue*, a periodical of strong anti-German sentiments, which has since become a formidable rival of the famous *Revue des Deux-Mondes*, and which she still owns and conducts. She has latterly contributed largely to the *Siècle*,

and has given the world a number of books, among them that charming, artistic, and peculiar novel, "Laide," the first American version of which follows this biographical sketch, under the name of "A Fascinating Woman." A play from her pen, called "Galactier," was brought out in December, 1880, at the Paris Théâtre des Nations.

Madame Adam's salon was originally exclusively political, and ladies were not invited to her receptions while her husband was alive. In the fall of 1880, Madame Adam caused the announcement to be made in the Paris journals that her guests would for the future abandon political conversation and talk only on literature and the fine arts. This rule of conduct has not, however, been strictly observed, for Madame Adam's salon is still as much a theatre of political gossip and intrigue as ever. All the public ministers, all the Republican generals and all the Republican journalists are to be seen at the receptions, which have made Madame Adam both famous and influential. The fair hostess is

particularly distinguished for her ardent admiration of Gambetta.

Her drawing-room is a real museum, like Mme. Tussaud's, a collection of men of all the world: ambassadors, politicians, artists, etc. It is the model salon with open doors into which any one enters, salutes, shakes hands, lounges for a time, and then departs. Now that conversation is a thing of the past, such receptions are in fashion, and the more numerous the throng of men of celebrity the more delightful is the mistress of the house. Formerly her duty consisted in directing the *causerie*, in guiding the course of it, stopping it when necessary, bringing out her most distinguished guests, and stimulating their wit. She selected her society and did not open her doors to all the doubtful wayfarers without merit or notoriety now to be met with in society. At present the task of the woman is much simplified, and she has only to say a friendly word to each, without mingling her guests one with the other. The former Mme. Juliette Lamber excels in receiving according to the present fashion, as she would

have succeeded in the old manner, for she is a charmer. No one is more successful than she in flattering vanity, in winning affection and in fathoming the heart. She is a consummate politician, and her only fault is that of believing in politics, that is to say in a governmental policy. She treats her friends as an ideal sovereign; she is always ready to oblige them and to use her great influence for them, for she has become the first *soliciteuse* in France. Exempt from all petty prejudices, she takes great pleasure in unmasking hypocrisy and in giving her opinion courageously before men of false principles, and her invincible graciousness and charming welcome to all probably conceal much contempt and disgust for some of the creatures who bow before her. On her reception days she goes smiling from room to room, passing between men who make way for her, as great as they are, parading amid the black coats the most splendid arms and beautiful shoulders in the world. The first salon usually contains the most important personages. The conversation is generally serious. A melancholy woman is some-

times seated amid them, while the husband, standing before her, is engaged in an earnest discussion. From time to time one of the stars, leaving the great drawing-room by one door to return by another, flits rapidly across this room, the point of attraction for all eyes. Here may be seen strings of decorations on all the breasts, consecrating the solemn dulness of high functionaries, French or foreign. And the march past of celebrities continues: they come and they go; the bony, the corpulent; some bearded, some smooth-faced; painters, savans, men of pleasure, and many who go everywhere because they have been more or less presented and possess a dress coat.

Though the dimensions of her salon are very large, the hostess has of late been compelled to remove all the furniture not absolutely required to make room for the ever-increasing throng of eager visitors.

Being so much sought after, Madame Adam is often under the necessity of working until three o'clock in the morning in order to meet the demands made upon her by the columns of the

Nouvelle Revue, and hence she may justly be regarded as one of the busiest women of the nineteenth century.

At breakfast only can she find time to inspect her beautiful toilets. Her method of inspection is peculiar. A dummy, the exact counterpart of her form, is wheeled before her, and upon it are displayed the various dresses to be worn during the day and evening, Madame Adam giving her maid such suggestions as may be needed in regard to them.

Madame Adam has a fine constitution and very methodical habits, which enable her to successfully bear the enormous drain upon both her mental and physical resources. When too greatly fatigued, she seeks absolute seclusion in her country residence, returning after a brief season refreshed in body and mind, and in every way ready to renew the accustomed routine of her life.

Madame Adam was recently attacked with great severity by the *North German Gazette* because of the pronounced anti-German opinions she always expresses, for this remarkable woman hates the

Germans as Joan of Arc hated the English in the olden time, and constantly makes open war on Germany both with tongue and pen. In attacking Madame Adam, the *Gazette* also attacked the Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, who is a friend and visitor of the editress of the *Nouvelle Revue*, and the Russian Embassy in Paris, because they have repeatedly championed her. The fierce broadside had a supplementary purpose, which was to warn the Austrian ambassador and frighten Continental diplomatists from Madame Adam's salon. The attack has, however, served only to enhance Madame Adam's vast popularity and strengthen her position. In January, 1882, the gifted lady was invited by the Russian Czarina to visit St. Petersburg, a mark of high favor accorded only to the most prominent personages of Europe.

With respect to "Laide," it may be remarked that the fascinating and entirely original romance is evidently founded upon its eminent authoress' life and career. It bears strong internal testimony to this view, the more so as the report runs that

Madame Adam was at one time threatened, by reason of a severe illness, with the loss of her wonderful personal charms. The story is a graphic picture of the terrible trials of an ugly but highly intellectual woman, who eventually regains her lost beauty through the same means by which she was deprived of it. It is altogether out of the beaten track, and the atmosphere of art surrounding it is simply delightful.

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A Fascinating Woman.

BY MADAME EDMOND ADAM.

CHAPTER I.

ARCHITECTURE AND ART.

THE sculptor Martial, and Romain, the painter, live at No. 17 Quai de Tournelles. They each have a dwelling of their own. The first Hôtel, built in the Renaissance style belongs to Romain. The Colonnade is Martial's work, he has ornamented it with branches, garlands and interwoven vines. On the mouldings of the frieze and over the ends ran arabesques, where draperies, fantastic animals, fruits and foliage, ribbons, braided and thrown across, were all mingled with infinite art and skill.

In the centre of the façade, the Gemini leaning against the wall, side by side, looked down on the Seine rolling below. Castor with his left hand held back an indomitable horse, while Pollux threatened with his right arm a fallen athlete vanquished by the pugilist.

The faces of Jupiter's sons were calm. Knowing their strength and skill, the Twins are resting after violent exertion, satisfied with their victory.

Romain's habitation is an exact repetition and faithful copy of an apartment in the Château d'Arnet. Heavy, rich hangings, sombre in hue, superb furniture, carved by the master hand of Pierre Bontemps, wonderful glass designed by Jean Cousin, with beautiful luminous figures on a shadowy background, elegant frescoes, high chimney-pieces, displaying the marvellous caprices of Decorative Art, all, even to the artist's studio, recall the mannerisms of the Milanese school.

The artist and his Interior resemble each other very strongly. They both have an air of Mysticism, of rebellious melancholy, of sensual meditation. Behind the stained glass, which makes of this Sixteenth Century mansion a sort of church, there is an evident appreciation of sacred things, but at the same time a lingering recollection of all the beauties of the antique.

Martial's house stands within the court-yard of Romain's Hôtel, and is of Grecian Architecture, as destitute of ornaments as that of Romain's is overloaded with them. Here are only straight lines.

The interior arrangement is an exact copy of what might be the habitation of a Greek sculptor who was married. In the centre is a large room—the atélier. On one side is the banquet hall; on the other the chambers for the slaves. On the next floor a spacious salon, on the right and left of which are the women's rooms.

Martial, who has great talent, is excessively strict, and admits no innovation when it is a question of style. Although he has shown some indulgence towards Romain's Renaissance, he in reality, disdains it. Obstinate in the carrying out of his theories, this son of the Seine has furnished his house with the noble, cold grace which demands intense light.

This habitation curious and absurd as a paradox, has, nevertheless, one most beautiful apartment; this is a bath-room, the wood work of which is greenish white, like the surface of a running brook. The hot water pours from below a beautiful copy of a Pompeian fresco. An enormous basin, in which foams the cold water, is held up by three nymphs whose feet seem to move in a rhymic measure such as Diana of Arcadie, Goddess of running waters, likes to tread.

The green woodwork folds like shutters over the large mirrors wherein the wife of the sculptor, was in the habit of seeing her marvellous beauty reflected as she stepped from her bath.

To-day these panels conceal the mirrors now vailed in mourning for the beauty that has vanished, for Madame Martial is dead, leaving only one child, Hélène, who is as ugly as her mother was beautiful.

They receive and live in the atélier of the Greek house, and this room has become by degrees so filled with things necessary for every day life that its solemnity has disappeared under the accumulation of plaster casts and terra cotta busts and figures.

The primitive decoration of Martial's atélier had an

air of antique simplicity. The walls and the ceilings were white and perfectly plain—nothing upon them except the shadows cast by the columns of the portico.

Four marble groups, *chefs d'œuvre* of Martial, have been placed in the four corners of the room, where they attract and enchain attention. In the first of these groups, Dædalus striking his nephew Talus, proves by the crime that jealousy and pride may disturb even to madness the mind of an imitator and an artist.

Another group shows Phideas and Praxiteles, the friend of Pericles and the lover of Phryne, the one haughty and sombre, asking himself if he has not offended the gods by making the images of men; the other gay, laughing and happy, delighted to have given to Venus Urania the face of a courtesan. The third group also represented two antique sculptors. Polyclitus, vain and eager, seeks to conceive absolute harmony, and to express in his statue all human perfections.

His face beams with vanity and with folly. Scopas, with eager eyes and a face full of genius, is dreaming of giving to the Pharos marble the natural beauty which has led to his being called the Artist of Truth.

Martial said of his fourth group that he had made it to suit the Renaissance tastes of Romain, and that he intended to bequeath it to him. Jean Goupon was depicted standing erect in a costume trimmed with the richest guipure. He was moulding with his slender fingers the graceful figure of a water nymph,

while Michael Angelo, in a loose frieze jacket, his sleeves turned up to the elbows, the veins of his neck all swollen, was striking with all his strength on a block of marble, and, as he said of himself, was not creating, only exploring and digging out.

The day on which our tale opens was one when the soft, uncertain sunlight of an April day filled Martial's atélier with a most delicious light. The sculptor, motionless and uncertain, stood before a mass of gray clay. Balked for the first time in his life by the difficulties of form, he could not induce his fingers to create the image of his thought.

With an habitual gesture, one which his impatience rendered very frequent, Martial, with a ball of clay in one hand, his rough sketch in the other, shakes the curls of his long hair and sends them back from his forehead. The movement reminds one of a lion shaking his mane with rage when his prey escapes.

But before very long intense depression follows on this natural impatience, and Martial slowly removes the clay from his fingers, dips a large sponge into water and moistens the figure on which he has been at work, watches the effect of the water, and then, with a shrug of his shoulders, murmurs with some bitterness: "It is certainly ugly enough!"

He walks up and down the studio and rolls up a dozen or more cigarettes, which he does not smoke, and then wearily drops into an arm-chair with his head falling forward upon his breast.

To be incapable of repeating that which was

before him, that which he wanted to represent, to feel himself inspired by the ideas of form and yet to be unable to attain the real expression which arrests the idea, was to him more than a passing distress; it was a positive grief. At such moments an insurmountable disgust with life assails an artist. He doubts all he has hitherto done, belittles their merit, and is enraged at the indulgence of others.

"I have no more talent, and I have no more consolation," said Martial aloud in his despair. The sound of his voice caused him to start. He lifted his head. His eyes were fixed on the portrait of a woman which bore the signature of Romain. His contracted features softened, but a constrained smile expressed the sufferings of a regret unaccompanied by resignation.

He thought of this Past so filled with love, of his solitary, empty Present, which his worship of Art vainly sought to fill, and he said to himself that the day when he ceased to be an artist he should also cease to live. He recalled those blessed days when in this house built for her, Hélène, his wife, beautiful as an antique statue, breathed, loved, and lived!

Absorbed in these recollections which only seemed to make his present life more bitter and more intolerable, Martial did not hear Romain come in. The painter leaned on the back of the chair in which his friend sat, and looked down upon him with intense compassion.

They both remained in this position for some time—Martial, perhaps, seeing or guessing Romain's presence,

but accustomed to hiding nothing from him — found it very sweet to realize his friend's silent sympathy.

The face of the painter is as mobile as Martial's is resolute. His close cut hair, his blonde pointed beard, his high brow, the long, delicate oval of his face imparted to the artist precisely the characteristics of his pictures. He was the painter of the Sixteenth Century.

In the interminable discussions that Martial and he had had on the Renaissance, Romain said over and over again to his friend, "The grand style of your old Greeks is too grand and too fine for me."

Suddenly the painter spoke over the back of the chair :

"I must tell you my joy," he said.

"Ah! you are happy, are you?" answered Martial, in a depressed tone, without looking around. "Then let us talk of your happiness."

"I have just received a letter from Guy."

"Incomparable son! He deigns then, to write to his father! Ah! how worthy he is of praise. Let us bless him and chant a chorus in eulogy of our children. What city of Europe does this noble traveller now honor with his presence?"

"Milan."

"Where has he been so long?"

"In Florence."

"What is he doing?"

"Nothing, much. Nothing but making love to women."

"Heavens and earth! what have I brought down on my devoted head!" cried Martial, feigning the most abject terror. "Am I to hear for the twentieth time the recital of his last love affair? For pity's sake, Romain," he added, more seriously, "do me the favor to adjourn the account of this irresistible being until I am in another mood. I am too weary of myself to-day to permit me to think of other people. Guy's *bonnes fortunes* would be as oppressive to me to hear of to-day, as they would be to undergo."

"Reassure yourself. His letter is a long one, and I will omit all his adventures."

"What else is there?"

"A rather clever analysis of a celebrated picture."

"Ah! He is at Milan, you say? Then he is talking about the *Cena* of your famous Leonardo. I know perfectly well, you see, just what the two Romains, father and son, talk and write about."

"What has gone wrong with you, to-day, Martial? You seem to be in a wretched frame of mind."

"Which is most unfortunate, as you happen to be in such a good humor. You are right, I am in a beastly temper."

"I should prefer to talk to you of my happiness than to receive the hail storm of your present mood."

"I can't escape, I see it plainly," groaned Martial. "Go on, then, selfish creature that you are. What did Guy write about your great master?" added the sculptor, crossing one leg over the other and extending his hands over the arms of his chair, as if he were preparing to endure a long and wearisome narration.

Romain liked nothing better than to open his heart now and tell his story; and was not in the smallest degree repelled by these preparations.

"He spent an afternoon with the celebrated Dominicans," began the painter. "His enthusiasm, the growth of which he describes is worthy of the immortal Leonardo. Do you know that the Friars were obliged to send for officers to put Guy out of the convent. He would not leave the Refectory."

"He wished to be a monk, did he?" returned Martial. "Rather an unexpected conversion, it strikes me. A miracle of Art!"

"Listen, if you please," resumed the impatient father. "By dint of looking at, admiring and devouring this incomparable *Cena*, he seemed to see the faded colors glow once more under his eyes. And toward night when the fires of the setting sun came into the windows of the Refectory, the golden light heightened the glory of the aureole about the head of the Christ, and the expression in the faces of the Saints became more and more intense."

"Excuse me a moment," growled Martial. "I need a little instruction on this point. What is the expression on these faces?"

"That of ecstasy."

"And in what other terms would you describe the expression? What is ecstasy?"

"Beatitude, I suppose."

"Upon my word, Romain, you are too preposterous. I was in a frightful humor, but you amuse me in-

tensely. If any one had spoken of ecstasy to sculptors and Greek painters they would have inferred something higher than beatitude. It is your petty artists of the Renaissance who have invented the abstraction of the impalpable. The idea of the confused idea, the reflection of an indefinite sentiment of the indefinable."

And he laughed while Romain, in his turn, began to grow angry.

"You," continued the sculptor, "would beatify the beatified! You would imitate Leonardo's Virgins, oh! man of the sanctimonious Florentine School! Fortunately I compel you, by my criticisms, to choose from the works of your master, the only living, the only real, the only human thing he has ever done, the one that transcends all others in greatness; I have compelled you to receive from your teacher a lesson of Mona Lisa rather than that from his Saints. You paint Jocondas, thanks to me, and it is well for your fame that they are more wicked than saintly."

"My Virgins wicked!" cried Romain, in a rage. "What sacrilege! And do you mean to say that you call this mysterious, supernatural face of the Joconda human and real?"

"I do, indeed. And I bow down before your Master, O most artless disciple!"

"What do you see real and human, to use your own words, in her enigmatical, supernatural smile?"

"I have discovered insatiable desire."

"For Heaven's sake, Pagan, hold your peace."

"The smile on the full lips of Mona Lisa expresses neither a thought nor a sentiment, it is the smile of a mere woman, and the very contrary of beatitude. La Joconda is not a mystic; her smile is not one of heavenly rapture; it is of the earth, earthy. And it seems to me that in order to read aright the expression of those eyes under their full lids, and in those mobile nostrils, it is necessary to use the key of the word that breathes from this impassioned face. Again! Again! that is the word!"

"Joconda is cruel, not yielding!" cried Romain, indignantly. "And in order to hurt you as you hurt me, Martial, I feel that I must say in my turn, that the Minerva you admire so much by your dear Phidias, has the face of a courtesan."

"Here we are again," answered Martial, "and here speaks our superiority. We are the children of those sincere days when we sought in Nature the images of that we produced, and not in the visions of disturbed brains. We defy interpreters. The purity of lines and contours are indisputable, that of the physiognomy may be merely conventional. There is an expression which is called virginal which to me is absolutely sensual. You think you are painting mystic roses lost in ecstasy, to use the language of your school, and you succeed in depicting only an enticing woman. There is your son, too, whom you have so laboriously initiated into idealism, and who is now running over the world in search of adventures."

Romain avenged himself by replying:

"Alas! dear Martial, few of us can execute the work we premeditate. More than one of us who conceives the beautiful, produces the ugly!"

"Ah! That is meant for my daughter. It is for Hélène you say that, and all because I was audacious enough to criticise your son, for, with the exception of herself and your Michael Angelo, which I intend to bequeath to you," added the sculptor, "I have never, that I am aware of, given to the world anything that was ugly."

"And that, what have you to say about that?" asked Romain, pointing to the third group of statuary.

"Alas! I had forgotten. Yes, that is ugly, too," answered Martial, slowly, and after a brief silence he added: "Romain, forgive my irritability, forget that I have vexed you—I am unhappy."

Romain was no longer angry.

"What did you propose to do here, my poor friend?" said he, suddenly calmed by Martial's sadness.

"I wanted to mould a Hélène with the features, the nobility, and with the commanding beauty of her whom I have lost. My ambition was to snatch something of that which Death had stolen from me, and to add something to that which your portrait of my beloved wife has given me—"

"Yes—I see," answered the painter, "but oddly enough that face resembles—"

"Say it," exclaimed Martial, "it resembles my daughter! And this is my constant torture—this living ugliness rises perpetually between me and the

remembrance of my wife's dead beauty. Dear friend, I have done my best to conceal this wound in my heart, but it bleeds too fiercely and yawns too deeply to be longer concealed."

Romain seated himself with the sadness of a man who is already aware of a deplorable truth and to whom this confidence had taught nothing.

"Poor old Greek!" he said, "lover that you are of beauty in form and face, open your heart to me—say what you choose without fear; and when you have finished speaking of your daughter I will talk of my son with similar frankness. You shake your head, and why? Do not check the words as they rise to your lips; do not stop to choose them, but let them come hot from your heart. Hasten, I beg of you, for you are choking with grief now, and in a little while you will be unable to utter a syllable."

Martial, who was pacing the room, now came to his friend and took a seat at his side. He drew his breath in quick gasps—and his breast heaved as if it would burst under the weight of long restraint.

"You know, Romain," he said, "that I am nothing but an artist—my thoughts, my sensations, my desires, my opinions and my experiences—all my ideas, all my emotions, all my studies have but one aim: Art! My talents and my strength, my intuitions and my ardors are controlled only by my love of the Beautiful. How can I, made as I am, tolerate, admit or love the ugly? No, no; my whole nature abhors it and rises in rebellion against it. The sacrifices, Romain, made

in politics, war and science, are glorified. Those who sacrifice family to their ideal of their country by their sacrifices are made illustrious, why then has not Art the same claims? Are great artists smaller and less to be considered than great soldiers, statesmen or savants?"

"Now that you have defended yourself," answered Romain, "you had best try the other side and defend yourself."

"Yet," continued Martial, in a sad, depressed tone, "I have struggled for fifteen years against my intense aversion to my daughter's ugliness. You, at least a hundred times, have divined, understood and calmed me. I have gained much strength from you, and thanks to you, the sight of this portrait has kept my recollections fresh; but think of it, could there be a more atrocious trial than that of seeing each day in a child the grotesque likeness of the most beautiful and adored of mothers. Then, too, I am compelled to endure the additional trial of calling her by the same name. Hélène! Ah! Romain, it has sometimes seemed to me that I was in danger of hating her. Am I naturally a bad man, do you think?"

"No," answered the painter, "you are far from a bad man, and the noblest and best of women foresaw what must happen. When Hélène, her daughter, lost the incomparable beauty which you worshipped for eight years—when the poor little soul, after recovering from typhoid fever, was, in the opinion of the best physicians, pronounced to have lost her beauty forever,

her mother, speaking to me with as much bitterness as you have done to-day, predicted this very confidence from you, that you have just made. She foresaw that you would one day revolt against a duty which would be peculiarly difficult for you. More difficult than to almost any other person."

"And I do revolt. I refuse to suffer any more, and I need your help, Romain, to deliver me from my daughter!"

"Poor Hélène!" answered the painter. "She has her own sorrows which are equal to yours, if not much worse, for she loves you and you do not love her.

"What touching care she takes," continued Romain, "not to appear in your presence except in the evening, when in the semi light of the atélier and in her dark dresses, she can scarcely be seen.

"She lives up stairs almost the life of a Greek maiden, alone with her nurse," the sculptor answered.

"Yes, and I blame you for this seclusion which nothing justifies—"

"Except her plainness—"

"Ought I then to keep her with me?"

"You are her father."

"Romain, how strangely does Fate try us with our children! Guy is as handsome as an Apollo, and all your supplications cannot retain him near you. My daughter is excessively ugly, and yet I have not felt until now that I could leave her to her own devices."

"Yes, but I adore Guy as if he had never caused me the smallest disappointment. I adore him although he is

lacking in tenderness and in consideration. You ought to love your daughter, although she is ugly, for she is good and sweet."

"Hélène, too, was good," murmured Martial, with his eyes fixed on his wife's portrait now nearly undistinguishable in the gathering darkness.

"If you were not my best and oldest friend," said Romain, impatiently, "I could not endure your cold blooded fashion of reasoning. Your wife was very beautiful, and had, therefore, no great merit in being good, any more than a genius should be praised for being an enthusiast, but for an ugly woman to be amiable is as difficult as it is praiseworthy."

"Well, then, let me tell you," answered Martial, "that my daughter's very excellences aggravate me. She would interest me more and please me better were I to see her bitter and sarcastic. She would, at least, have a right to be that, and she could then play her own rôle, and make a place for herself in the world, and give to Fate the face and form it created. Ugliness if it be sufficiently strong in type is still Art, but Art of an inferior grade. If my daughter were rough in manners, insubmissive, coarse and commonplace, without grandeur of soul, I could be more generous toward her. I seem cruel in your eyes because I am more of an artist than a father. Is this my fault? Hélène is of a mediocre stamp of ugliness, timid and retreating. One may admire the dignity of misfortune, even I could admire a proud and haughty ugliness. These qualities, however, are rarely found except in a superb development."

"Why dwell on these explanations," said Romain, "since I understand and excuse you."

"Know then that I intend to separate myself from my daughter this very day. Each time that my eyes rest on her face, I am thrilled with a sensation perfectly incompatible with paternal affection, this has killed my love quite as thoroughly as incompatibility of temper kills domestic happiness, and destroys all love between husband and wife."

"Then," replied Romain sadly, "you are in earnest when you say you intend that she shall no longer share your home. Her humility which shocks you, her grandeur of soul which irritates you, seem to have done you good service. They will also prevent your victim from crying out or complaining of your injustice!"

Martial resumed:

"She is rich, having inherited her grandparents' fortune through her mother. This property has been increasing for the last seventeen years, by its natural growth, and also by additions which I have constantly made, for I was only too glad to serve my daughter in this way. I hoped, too, that such a fortune would aid her to make a good marriage or inspire her with a taste for an independent life. Do you know that she has an income of three hundred thousand livres? One of her hôtels, Avenue du Bois de Boulogne, is all ready to receive her. Her grandfather furnished it, and it is full of Japanese bronzes, of China, and of a thousand other things which make of the place a home much

better fitted for his grand-daughter than my Greek house. She is of age, you know. She is twenty-five."

"Why do you not have a business conversation with her? Begin with a little advice; don't be abrupt, nor harsh with her. Who can tell that Hélène's meek gentleness does not cover a breaking heart and deep despair? Suppose she should throw aside her usual composure, suppose she should say terrible things which neither you nor she could ever forget. Are you prepared for that? I am not, and the mere thought chills me to the heart. It seems to me that the girl is crushed to the earth, and that her dumb despair increases her plainness and is the cause of this lamentable thinness which amounts almost to emaciation. I am often tempted to believe that your daughter is horribly unhappy."

"You desert me then!" returned Martial angrily. "And yet you are responsible for a harshness on my part which you have augmented instead of soothing. I counted on you to obtain Hélène's consent to leave this house on perfectly good terms with her father. You refuse to aid me! Then let her destiny be accomplished. If you do not wish to look on at her execution, you had better go away." He rang.

"I will remain," said Romain, shrugging his shoulders, "and I will speak to Hélène."

Martial sent for his daughter, who presently entered the atélier.

She passed her father with eyes cast down. She did not dare speak to him, for his avoidance of her in the

last few days had been very marked. She went directly up to the painter and gave him both hands.

"Was it you who sent for me?" she said. "Have you heard from Guy? If not, I can give you the freshest possible news from him, for I have this moment received a letter from Verona."

"He wrote me day before yesterday from Milan," answered Romain.

"Then he has of course told you that he is in love with a beautiful Veronese. His admiration for this last goddess is simply fantastical, and surpasses any and all of his former experiences. Would you like me to read this hymn of praise to you?"

And as the painter did not reply, she looked more closely into his troubled face and exclaimed:

"Why did you send for me? Was it not that you might speak of Guy?"

"Yes—partly for that," he stammered.

The surgeon hesitated to begin the operation for which the patient was so entirely unprepared. Agitated and half conscience stricken, the friend of the cruel father tried to staunch in advance the wound he was about to open. He spoke of his own depression of spirits, of his sadness, and of the many trials of life. He envied those fathers who did not suffer in a separation from their children, who even desired it, and in these disconnected remarks made twenty most embarrassing allusions to Martial, almost unconsciously.

Hélène, greatly disturbed by the strange manner of her old friend, and still more by the unbroken silence

preserved by her father as well as by the piercing glances which he riveted upon her, began to understand that this discourse was intended for her and not for Guy, and that it was introductory to some resolution of her father's.

The old painter suddenly summoned all his courage, for he saw he was becoming more and more entangled, and exclaimed abruptly:

"Why don't you follow Guy's example, and claiming your mother's fortune enjoy your own independence?"

The sharp, thin face was quickly lifted, and this very ugly woman looked with a half dazed expression at her old friend, who felt that the whole scene was becoming intolerable.

"Why do you not answer in one way or another?" asked Martial, with some tenderness.

Hélène stood transfixed and dumb.

This silence was so painful that Romain spoke again. He said how greatly he approved the conduct of his son's chosen sister, in refusing to marry, and in suspecting the young men who wished to be devoted to her, of interested motives. But he added that in his opinion, Hélène was guilty of a great error in allowing her large fortune to accumulate in the hands of a Notary. And Romain dwelt largely on this fortune and on the beautiful Hôtel bequeathed her by her grandfather, and drew a rapid sketch of the life which Martial's daughter, with her intelligence, her taste, tact and cultivation, could lead. He told her, more-

over, that she had a charming career before her, if she pleased, as a patron of Art.

Then concluding with an oratorical effort, laboriously planned, he said:

"Living here, under the roof of your father, you have no right to order a statue nor a picture from poor artists because you would have the air of being the almoner of our charity. You would hurt the feelings of those whom you obliged. It would be said that we two, 'rich and famous' as we are called, distribute our alms through you; but if you should separate yourself from us, you prove your sincerity and are at liberty to do an immense amount of good."

All this reasoning was intolerably clear in spite of the confusion existing in the mind of the unhappy girl who listened. Martial nodded assent to each statement made by his friend, and when Romain had uttered his last phrase, the sculptor made a little gesture of approval which went like a dagger to the heart of his daughter.

Hélène looked intently at Romain, who dropped his head, at her father, who lifted his, then she looked up, with eyes swimming in tears, at the portrait of her beautiful mother. A servant at this moment brought in lamps, and the sculptor caught the imploring expression in his daughter's face.

He rushed between Hélène and the picture as if to silence the poor supplicant, and close the ears of his wife.

"Do not invoke your mother, I forbid it!" cried the father, violently.

Great trials have a dignity of their own. Pride swelled Hélène's heart and relieved her of much of her sense of humiliation. She started back and waving Martial aside, who was angrily approaching her.

"I understand," she said, "it is long since I began to expect this sentence. I have retarded it as long as possible by many sacrifices—sacrifices which have been hard to make. You have been patient, father, as well as myself. We are both indebted to the same inspiration, which has come to us from my mother. In your magnanimity you have endured my presence most courageously. The sight of my repulsive face seems to you an insult to the marvellous beauty of my mother, whom you adored and still adore. And yet you have borne this insult for seventeen years. Your generosity, almost impossible in its achievement, has developed mine. I forgive you with my whole heart for the grief and pain you occasion me."

"She is magnificent!" said Romain, in a great state of excitement. "Do you hear me, Martial? She is perfectly superb! And in your place I should say, 'Stay here, you must not go!'"

"I need no pity," said Hélène, quickly, with dry eyes. "I, too, think with bitterness, of certain features in the character of my father which I find as obnoxious as he does those of my face. I have borne my wrongs in silence and in the saddest of solitudes—the silent presence of a beloved being. My father was always absent though often with me, for he always preferred the selfish pleasure of a conversation on any subject

with any one else than with his daughter. He has allowed me to feel utterly alone when with him, and has perpetually deserted me. Adieu, then, home of my childhood, within whose Greek walls I have learned to bear humiliation and to adore the beautiful! Adieu, then, Resignation!"

Then, choking down her sobs and determined to prevent her voice from faltering, she added, in a bitter tone:

"What have I ever done that I should have no womanly claim, and am exiled from my father's house, because I am so ugly to look upon?"

"Hélène, you are not exiled!" cried Romain; "stay, if you will."

"Can I stay?" asked Martial's daughter, turning to her father, who did not even lift an eyelid in reply.

She left the room with a slow, dignified step.

"It seems to me," said the painter, "that the girl's heart is broken! And it is your work. Yes, it is plain to me, now; beauty exists only in the reflection of interior passions. I had just now the clearest demonstration of this fact upon your two faces. Hélène was as beautiful just now as you were repulsive."

A few minutes later Hélène's nurse, the two sons and the niece of this woman entered the atélier.

"As you have driven away your daughter," cried the indignant nurse, "all your servants will leave you and follow her!"

"All of you?" asked Martial, in a weary tone.

"Yes, sir, all;" she replied, "and we leave your

house without regret, for it is as disagreeable, as cold and as Pagan as yourself!"

After this phrase, which had probably been arranged in advance, the servants filed out. Before closing the door, however, the nurse said, in a reproachful tone:

"My mistress ought to jump out of her frame to prevent such a dreadful thing as this!"

Martial started at these words.

"You see, your daughter is capable of inspiring affection," Romain ventured to say, "as all these people are going with her."

"Inferiors readily attach themselves to inferiority," said the sculptor, in a disdainful tone, "and as ugliness is a most apparent inferiority, it ought most naturally to inspire the most entire devotion in these narrow, uncultivated minds."

Romain turned away in utter exasperation.

The father was left alone, unmoved and unrepentant.

Martial thought that Love brought to Genius an amount of Poetry equal to the amount of strength he absorbed. "An artist," he said to himself, "from the mere instinct and wish to preserve his talents intact has a right to be avaricious, having nothing more to receive in exchange for what he gives he must keep all he possesses, in the way of sensibilities, and cultivate in himself supreme selfishness."

The sculptor admitted but one religion—Art; and Love came only to add another form of worship to his ideal, and he had chosen that which would harmonize with his visions. The death of his wife had made a

sectarian of Martial by taking away the priestess who humanized his fanaticism.

And now he is alone in the temple which the ugliness of his poor Hélène had so long profaned.

Alone! His daughter would never again interrupt him in the evening in a moment of inspiration, and by her presence put to flight all his dreams.

He heard a great deal of movement in the house. Carriages rolled out from the stables and horses trampled in the court-yard. Some one knocked on the door —it was Cæsar, his coachman, the son of the nurse, who had deserted his service in this summary manner and was now Hélène's servant. The man came in, placed a note on the table and vanished.

A moment later, he heard the carriages roll away. The great gateway of Romain's Hôtel opened, closed again, and all was silent.

Then Martial took the note and read it.

"FATHER: I wish it to be understood that I have claimed the rights of my majority. I demand that you give this explanation of my departure. Obtain from your friend Romain a promise that he shall relate to no one, not even to his son, your harshness and my humiliation. Neither you, nor I, nor my old friend, who accepted from you the sad task of inflicting on me the most painful blow of my life, will open our lips to confide in any one.

"Hasten to enjoy your tranquillity, my father, for I assure you, that it will not be of long duration.

Having done all you can to escape from my constant presence, you will find that it is not so easy to escape from the responsibilities of my future career.

"These responsibilities will be all the more unendurable to you, because no matter what I may elect to do in days to come, I forbid you to utter any remonstrance or offer any objection.

"When I have gained resolution enough to laugh at my own ugliness, to sneer at the comments of the world, and to make game of your cruelty, I will take possession of my old Hôtel and my new life. You may then hold yourself in readiness to assist at the baptism of an eccentric woman, for whose birth you are responsible.

HÉLÈNE."

The ironical, sarcastic tone of this letter astonished Martial, and by no means displeased him. His daughter's impertinence struck him as the highest philosophy. He did not see that this letter was written with blood from the wound he had so pitilessly opened in Hélène's heart.

CHAPTER II.

AN UNPARDONABLE WRONG.

HÉLÈNE had, with the exception of Romain's son, only such friends as were her father's. These she rarely visited, and they sought her but little. Hélène, driven from the Greek mansion, shut herself up in her Hôtel and abandoned herself to the unconstrained indulgence of her boundless grief.

For a week she surrendered herself in this way, making not the smallest effort to attain tranquillity, allowing her sorrow to uproot everything in her character which opposed itself to the ravages of the torrent.

There is a certain grim pleasure in suffering when one accepts one's despair and looks quietly on at the work of devastation. The temples throb, and there is a strange buzzing in one's ears which drown thought and all the protestations of instinct. The conflicting elements let loose make a deafening sound within one's breast, and tears fall for hours in an endless avalanche.

To eyes that are burned out with tears the softest daylight is like cutting and flashing spears. Friendly voices are almost intrusions, for the consolations they bring are either venalities or offences. If the sorrow one is enduring is justifiable it is apt to destroy in its tumultuous course the dykes and barriers built by

Reason, and the heart, the mind, and all the senses fall into a long lethargy, and remain in that condition for hours, days and weeks, without the sufferer realizing that time is passing.

But if this deep sorrow be caused by injustice it is finally struggled against. One morning the awakening comes. After the tempest and its ravages, calm returns. It is said that to defend one's self demands more virtue than to allow one's self to be crushed; that to bow before the blast belittles, while to stand firm and upright expands and developes the whole character.

Hélène rose then to her full height, and disdaining the evil that had been done to her, she took up life as it had been bequeathed to her, closed and locked her heart, and gave full liberty to her mind which, up to this time, had been a prisoner.

The Hôtel which her mother's parents had bequeathed to her was furnished in a bourgeois-like fashion, although it was full of riches. Hélène, in order not to have a moment's leisure in which her thoughts could wander toward the Past, refurnished this Hôtel, and changed all its interior arrangements in accordance with her lightest caprices.

Mistress of a large fortune, she resolved to surround herself with a magnificence which should compel her to lay aside her peaceful quiet and her former simple tastes.

This liberty, this large house, the authority now vested in her, transformed Hélène into a totally

different being within a very short time. She became exacting, imperious and fantastic, and bore with a certain dashing insolence an ugliness which at times must have been very oppressive.

She was to Guy Romain just what he had advised her to be to every one—a man, not a woman.

In her letters to him, whom she addressed as my dear comrade, and who loved her like a sister, she depicted herself, under the new aspects of her character, with such delightful humor that she received the warmest congratulations, and Guy, delighted at having converted her, conceived for her a deeper friendship than ever before.

She begged him to hasten home to assist at the inauguration of her Hôtel, saying that it was quite impossible to have her house-warming without him, her only friend and her master in the art of Independence.

Romain, the father, seemed now to be more attached to Hélène than ever. He insisted that she who had never addressed aught but the most timid requests to any one should now issue her orders. Hélène, who was now meekly obeyed by all her servants and tradespeople, made no resistance to Romain's wishes, and at once signified to her young friend that he, under penalty of her eternal displeasure, must honor with his presence the fête she proposed to give on the 15th of June.

Romain was more uneasy than ever at his son's prolonged absence. His last letter ended in these words:

"It would be an excellent thing for me, dear father,

if not for you, should you be attacked with some grave disease. I should then break with a supreme effort, in order to go to you, the toils in which I am now enveloped, and which will strangle me some fine day. She is beautiful, she is irresistible! She is a widow, and yet I am afraid to marry her!"

Hélène did not cease to fill her hours with innumerable occupations. She had felt amid all the confusion of her installation, the keen desire to prove both her originality and her good taste.

Her nurse and her servants having taken a most tragical view of her departure from the paternal mansion, and fearing lest the grief by which their young mistress was overwhelmed might end in affecting her mind, applauded all her plans; they thought her happy when they saw her busy.

The evening before she was to throw open her Hôtel to the public she, with Romain, made a tour through the house. She had displayed an originality of conception and execution in the furnishing and decoration which astonished the painter, although he knew her to be extremely artistic in her tastes.

On his return from his visit to Hélène, Romain, by his account of what he had seen, excited the curiosity of his old friend to such a degree that Martial desired to contemplate the wonders of his daughter's habitation before the public were admitted, and he sent the painter back to ask that an hour should be appointed for him to call upon her.

Notwithstanding all Romain's entreaties, Hélène

refused to receive her father's visit, and said that she could not see him again in that familiar way without pangs which would unfit her for her impending duties as hostess.

"My fête is for to-morrow," she added. "My father knows this, for I have written it to him. I begged him to be on the Jury at my Exposition. He promptly accepted, but this was all. If he thinks he is coming to his daughter, in coming here, you must undeceive him, Romain. She whom he treated as a stranger, will welcome him like a stranger."

The painter uttered an exclamation.

"Not another word!" resumed Hélène, "or I shall inflict on you the fate that you two have inflicted on me. I should drive you both from under my roof."

This Exposition to which Hélène had alluded to her old friend, and the idea of which originated with her, was a sort of competition between the pupils of the great Romain. This naturally gave to the fête an artistic interest on which Martial's daughter greatly relied.

"Has my son's picture arrived?" asked the painter, changing the conversation at a sign from Hélène.

"No, not yet. All the other pictures which I ordered have been received and hung; all are bought, and paid for. My gallery has only one empty space, and that is reserved for Guy. I am going to send again to-night to the railway station, and I shall at least learn by a dispatch, if he has sent a box by the night express from Verona."

"Will you permit me to come again about ten o'clock?" asked Guy's father, timidly.

"Yes, come by all means, but you must come alone!"

"I will obey you."

Hélène, returning with her friend, passed through an enormous conservatory almost like a garden, where beautiful statues protected from the ravages of the weather gleamed among foliage abundant and fresh as if it had been Paradise. These divine forms were those of Goddesses, Nymphs and Graces.

"Since you have so many beautiful marble creatures here," said Romain, "why do you receive only men to-night?"

"When a woman invites women," she replied, laughing, "she has no right to exclude those who are ugly, of whom I have the greatest possible horror, beginning with myself. I tolerate myself only when I am not looked at. You shake your head, Sir Painter; you think my reasons very insufficient, and you believe them to be insincere. You want to say that beautiful women are more unacceptable to me than ugly ones. No—if I were beautiful I should love beautiful women just the same, but in any case I should always hate ugly ones!"

Romain did not speak, but he said to himself that as Hélène became malicious and cruel she also became more natural. In the opinion of Hélène's father, ugliness should carry with it a long train of faults of heart, mind and manner. "After all," thought Romain, "the cruel father may be right!"

After passing through the conservatory and admiring the statues they entered a sombre hall, where men in armor held aloft lamps in their gauntleted hands. A wide, straight staircase, built without a rail, like those in the palaces of the Doges at Venice, ascended to the next floor, between two high walls painted in fresco by Romain. On these walls were depicted well known scenes in French history, most of them diplomatic receptions in the reign of Francis I. Leonardo da Vinci was seen there, and the noble face of the guest at Amboise bore a striking resemblance to that of Romain himself.

The dining-room opens into the hall by wide, sliding doors, and into the conservatory by four long glass windows. The room is hung with green silk; baskets of Saxe porcelain, unornamented, elegant in form but simple in their milky whiteness, were filled with green leaves and white roses, and suspended above the buffets.

A boudoir communicating with the dining-room is furnished in an Oriental manner with rugs and divans rare and rich in color. Scattered about in picturesque disorder were ostrich eggs, Arab instruments of music, Turkish baskets and vases of rare porcelain. The boudoir had a round front swelling out over the court-yard. Its ceiling was a cupola which could be lifted to permit tobacco smoke to pass out. The grand salon is red, of that peculiar tint best calculated to bring out Romain's pictures and Martial's statues, which Hélène had purchased wherever she could find them. With these she has nearly filled this salon, leaving in it beside, only

two cabinets, in which the porcelain and small bronzes collected by her grandfather were displayed, and on several tables were albums containing the sketches and first conceptions of the most celebrated works of both the sculptor and the painter.

Then came the further end of the Hôtel, which consisted of a charming room all gilt like the frame of a picture, while white satin arranged with extreme care divided the walls into panels. The furniture, in the style of Louis XIV., was all trimmed with gold fringe.

From this room opened the picture gallery, corresponding with the conservatory in the opposite wing.

Hélène's fête began therefore, with an Exhibition, or one might rather say, a contest among the young artists, who had each accepted the subject proposed by Romain. The landscape artists were to paint "A bit of Nature;" the historical painters "A Beautiful Woman." Guy, who had been his father's pupil, after several letters exchanged with Hélène, had decided to enter the lists, but only on condition that he should be allowed to exhibit the portrait of the woman he loved.

"Do you suppose, then," answered Hélène, by return mail, "that your comrades will take for their models the women whom other men love?"

Guy's picture, in regard to the arrival of which Hélène had become quite discouraged, was received by her very late the evening before the entertainment, and preceded by a very few hours Guy himself, who was expected by his father in the last train from Italy.

Hélène and Romain ordered the box unpacked and

proceeded to hang in the gallery the portrait painted by the most gallant of artists. It was a *chef d'œuvre*, and both father and friend at once decided that it must take the prize. But instead of rejoicing at his son's talent, Romain looked at this picture, signed with the name of the young artist, with a sombre and jealous air.

Hélène, who was very curious, interrogated Romain and asked him if he was jealous of Guy, and if he intended to assassinate him as Dædalus assassinated his nephew in Martial's marble group.

He disdained Hélène's suspicions and continued to interrogate the face of the woman beloved by his son, whose strange physiognomy and imperious air appeared to him most threatening. Her pose was like that of the *Vestale au Cirque*, with her hand upraised in the attitude of command. Her air was noble and her figure very beautiful. In rose colored draperies, with her head shrouded in white gauze, she stood in the centre of the ruins of an arena under a flood of burning sunshine.

Her brown hair was dressed smoothly and close to her head. Her black eyes had a certain hardness in their brilliancy. Her complexion was bright and animated, her red lips a little compressed, indicating more pride than tenderness.

As of course an explanation was necessary of this modern costume and this antique pose amid the ruins, Guy had engraved under the picture these words:

"A Story to Tell."

Romain, who was evidently greatly depressed, took leave of Hélène under the pretext of going to meet his son, although he could not arrive until very late in the night. Hélène begged him to come early the next day with Guy, that she might be strengthened by the knowledge that they were close at hand to support her amid the whirl of emotions she would naturally feel at her *débût* in society.

Romain hastily gave this promise and departed. After her old friend had gone, Hélène, remained alone in the gallery. She went from portrait to portrait, endeavoring to re-create the inspiration of the young artists who had tried to paint and fix the ideal of the women they loved. She recognized many mysteries, many confidences, many contradictions and much boasting. Here was the work of one man, poor and unknown, exhibiting the woman he was to marry, in the sumptuous robes of a queen. Another who worshipped a courtesan, showed her in the simplest possible costume. Another, endowed with a grand and noble air, a woman who was known to have neither quality, while his neighbor concealed under an aspect of cruelty the too facile characteristics of a pretty face.

Beauty glowed in all these flesh tints, and these fair faces lived and breathed under the searching eyes of the ugly woman who gazed upon them.

For ten years Hélène had been in the habit of seeing at Romain's and at her father's all the young painters who were now represented at this exhibition. They had always treated her more like a comrade and one of

themselves, than as a woman or a young girl, and were in the habit of telling all the gossip of the artistic world and their own histories, in her presence, without the smallest hesitation. She was consequently enabled to discover under these faces and under these signatures, either faded hopes, encouragement, conceit and vanity, jealousy, or complete happiness. And what did La Belle, sent by Guy, say? She was surely some *grande dame.* No Italian bourgeoise had that carriage of the head, that air and gesture. Everything in the pose of this marvellous creature breathed disdain and haughty pride.

Guy, who was a trifle blasé, probably took great pleasure in conquering so much pride. Had he not written as much to his father? And was he not in danger of being entangled with one of those women whose pride is stronger than their love?

French women, be they blondes or brunettes, pale before the glow of Italian beauties. Hélène thought Guy's picture was that of a woman fairer than any other before her. She understood Romain's sadness. With a face like that at which she now gazed, a woman would not only eclipse all other women and close a man's heart to their charms, but she would also render him utterly oblivious of filial duties and filial affections.

"It is not of this picture that my old friend is jealous, it is of the Reality."

CHAPTER III.

A GREAT SUCCESS.

THE next day, June 15th, the weather was delicious, fresh and breezy, and the whole house was thrown wide open that the air and the sunshine might come in at their own sweet will.

A Parisian sun is brighter than elsewhere on a fête day, and adds immensely to the gayety of the scene.

Hélène issued her last orders at an early hour, made her final preparations and then read the newspapers, which had each something to say of this Tournament of Art, and complimented very highly the taste and originality of the daughter of the great painter, Martial.

About one o'clock, she went to her room to dress. Her "*tailleur*," a man of considerable importance, had called at her Hôtel sometime before and inquired into all the details of the reception. He then begged her to allow him to choose her dress, both in color and form, "being fully aware," he said, "that his success as an artist would be recognized by all artistic Paris."

"Come! come! you have no time to lose," said the old nurse, who held in her hands a skirt of white muslin covered with lace, "there is no one now but you, my Hélène, to make beautiful in the house."

"Nurse, you must never use that word in connection with me," answered Hélène with some severity.

"Forgive me, I can never become accustomed to the change. You are always to your old Josephine, the fairest of the fair, the pretty creature whom I nursed with such pride and used to take to walk in the Luxembourg every sunny day. But for that wretched fever, you would be to-day the freshest, plumpest little creature, the prettiest—"

Hélène interrupted her.

"You think you are comforting me, nurse, with your regrets. But do you feel certain that a blind man who saw perfectly well for seven years, is any happier than one who is blind from birth?"

"Yes, if he has preserved the hope that he will see the light again—some day."

"But you must know as well as I—"

"I know—I know that your features are just what they ought to be. And I know, too, that they are precisely like your mother's.'

"Yes—a caricature of my mother's," said Hélène, with some bitterness.

"Your waxen skin, your hair that is, I admit, without lustre—your pale lips which make your teeth look yellow—and more especially your excessive and almost alarming thinness, may yet all change. Your old doctor has said so over and over again."

"But they have been the same for fifteen years, you know, my dear nurse."

"That is perfectly true, Hélène, but if you only lived in the country! The sun and the air would, perhaps, give you a little color. You are not deformed,

far from it. If you were not so thin your figure would be fine and you would be less—you would be more—"

"Ah! you hurt me!" cried Hélène. "Why are you so determined to talk of the Past—to torment me by recalling incessantly just that which I most desire to forget? You must make up your mind to love me just as I am, in spite of my ugliness, which time will never ameliorate."

"Ah! we adore you, all of us!" answered Josephine, tenderly. "My children think there never was any one like you. But how will it be with all these people who are coming here to-day—these people for whom you have taken all this trouble, and who have often made you suffer by their neglect and indifference when they used to be at your father's? Do you think they will be any more courteous, now that you are in your own house?"

"I have done what I have done, and made all these arrangements for the sole purpose that they shall no longer have any reason to pity me," answered her mistress, "for this was precisely the sentiment which I have always found most intolerable. Besides, I needed something to occupy me, and it is your first duty, nurse, to keep up my courage. Blow, then, as hard as you please, but let it be underneath to kindle the fire, not on top to put it out!"

"I ask nothing better, dear," answered Josephine, "only I am afraid of fires of straw—they quickly burn out and leave only ashes. It is brilliant enough at first, but—"

"No buts! Rejoice in my new existence and hope that its novelties, if not its pleasures may be durable."

"Alas! I am afraid that as in these two last months tears will extinguish all these pretty leaping flames."

"Let us say no more, nurse," Héléne exclaimed, impatiently. "Shut up all these fears within your own heart. Do not weaken my resolutions, for you must remember that if they were to evaporate, you would be the first to complain."

The "tailor's" head workwoman was now announced. This person was a young and handsome woman, dressed in the best possible taste, and of excellent manners.

"What have you for me, Madame Claire?" said Hélène, in an indifferent sort of way. "A simple little robe?"

"Oh, Mademoiselle! what are you thinking of? A simple little robe would not do for you. The Master wanted something entirely unique and original. That alone would be suitable for you. You are too much of an artist not to see this."

"And too ugly to affect simplicity? You are quite right," added Hélène, with a smile.

"Mademoiselle," replied the woman, who was far too clever to pay a commonplace compliment and was shrewd enough to appreciate the situation, "spiritual ugliness is infinitely superior to mere animal beauty. And, as the Master says, it has a character of its own when one makes up one's mind not to dissimulate it but to make it serve a purpose. A certain stylish eccentricity, richness in drapery and materials—mag-

nificent laces and soft tints, and above all a certain expression which only a cultivated mind ever gives to a face, impart an air of distinction which is an exceedingly rare gift, and which you have, Mademoiselle, in a stronger degree than it was ever my lot to see in any one else."

"Let me see my dress?"

Madame Claire spread upon the bed a white dress covered with wonderful old lace.

Hélène looked from the dress to Madame Claire.

"I shall look thinner than ever in that," she said.

"Mademoiselle knows the principles of our house," said the woman, with quiet dignity. "After repeated and conclusive experiments, our master has determined never to abandon his theories of Art, but at the same time to draw his inspiration from Nature; he adopts a suggestion furnished by her and never the opposite, that is to say, we, to place the principle of the house in a single phrase, accentuate the type!"

"Your lesson is probably better than the dress, which will probably be very unbecoming," answered Hélène, laughing in spite of herself.

"I have a silver wreath and ornaments of silver also, these you will notice are, of course, paler than your hair. The silk and the lace are of a peculiar white, intended to make you seem less pale."

With the assistance of the nurse, the robe, with all its ingenious complications, was soon in its proper folds around Hélène's slender figure.

She stood looking at herself in the mirror.

"Well?" asked Josephine and Madame Claire, simultaneously.

"It could not be better," answered Hélène.

"The master's composition is worthy of exhibition to-day among the works of the greatest artists in Paris even in a Hôtel like this," said Madame Claire, speaking of the "tailor" as an enthusiastic pupil speaks of a celebrated painter.

Romain and his son came early, in order to pay their respects to Hélène, and also to assist her in receiving her guests.

No one having yet arrived, Guy begged his friend to show him the various preparations for the fête.

The young man was as passionately fond of luxury, as are all artists who have roamed about the world a great deal and have been more in wine-shops than in palaces. He first admired Hélène's toilette with that discrimination which men who have seen much of women early acquire.

"It is a rare virtue, that of dressing well," he said, "and in Italy an impossible one. One of my greatest privations is, that I never see abroad those whom I like, dressed with the taste, the art and careless richness which I see here."

"No Italian, were she a *grande dame* to the tips of her fingers, could wear that robe with Hélène's elegance," Romain replied.

"The fact is, it suits Hélène absolutely and entirely," cried the young man, "and I am charmed with the new ways of my old comrade."

Guy, on entering the reception room, was perfectly delighted to find himself in the presence of his father's pictures and Martial's statues, all of which recalled to him the dearest recollections of his childhood.

"Hélène," he said, gayly, "your house pleases me far more than does either of our illustrious fathers'. You did well to throw over their styles and live in that of our day, which is quite good enough for us, I think. If you have no objection I will live here when I am in Paris. Old people with old ideas should live together, and young men with their comrades."

Hélène turned her head away quickly, in order to hide an almost imperceptible blush. Nothing more cruel had yet been said to her. Was she then so little of a woman that the most compromising man she knew in the world thought it impossible that their names could be coupled together by gossiping tongues, in a way that could do her harm.

Romain realized that she was hurt and saw Hélène's movement, and felt sure she was trying to conceal the wound she had experienced.

"Guy, take care," he murmured, in his son's ear. "She is a woman after all."

"No. Nothing of the kind," answered the young man, who had long since come to believe that Hélène had a dislike to her sex and wished that she had been born a man. Then, turning to her, he said, quickly:

"It offends you, comrade, does it not, to be treated like a young girl?"

"Indeed, it does," she replied.

And as Romain shrugged his shoulders, Guy continued:

"There is nothing changed between us, Hélène, nor in you, is there, because you have become the master of a house?"

"I think, on the contrary, that I am more of a boy than when you left," she answered, with a frank laugh.

"And this is why I love you so faithfully and fraternally, my good friend," continued the young man, "for, but for that—"

"But for that, what?" asked Hélène, seeing that he hesitated.

"But for that, I could not endure you!"

"Upon my word! You, certainly, have not changed! You were always very hard on ugly women."

"The others, then, revenge the wrongs of their sisters."

"I doubt it!" she exclaimed, with a laugh.

"Do not laugh, Hélène, I am very unhappy."

"At being too happy, poor Guy?"

"No; at not being sufficiently so."

"You fill me with astonishment, my dear brother."

"Alas!"

"Pshaw!"

"But I assure you—"

"Ah! there is a story to tell, then, is there?"

"Yes; a long story."

Guests appearing, Romain drew Guy away.

"This will never do," he said to his son, "you have been spoiled in foreign lands, there is a mixture of

recklessness and melancholy in your speech that I find eminently unsatisfactory."

The new arrivals were in ecstasies over the conservatory. Martial, who was among the first, was by no means lukewarm in his expressions of admiration. He kissed his daughter with apparent affection; in fact, she really pleased him, amid all this luxury and her calm, assured air.

Hélène was surprised at herself, surprised that she felt not the smallest embarrassment in receiving him, and said to herself that it was as easy to change her character as it had been to refurnish her house.

Never, perhaps, had she been more absolutely ugly than amid all these flowers, these statues, and these lights. Excessively thin, and so pale that she was absolutely livid, she reminded one of the witticism uttered by a Parisian *gamin* in regard to the Princess B——: "She was so mean that she wouldn't be buried!"

Hélène's eyes were out of proportion with her face; her lashes looked almost white against the blackness of her pupils, her mouth looked too small, the oval of her face was unnaturally elongated, her nose was transparent, and her whole face the color of old wax. All this made a *tout ensemble* which was most disagreeable, without there being any one feature that was ugly or imperfect. Illness alone had marred a face which Nature had intended to be lovely.

Nevertheless, these luxurious surroundings, the hospitality with which every one was received, the mag-

nificent and singular toilette, and the entire bearing of Martial's daughter charmed her guests, who were all men of taste.

The half mocking way in which Hélène cut short all compliments, the tact and promptitude with which she elicited and displayed to the best advantage the cleverness and cultivation of her guests, the elevation of her ideas on Art, were all understood, appreciated and proclaimed instantaneously by this crowd of the élite, and had an immediate success.

Hélène was at once accepted as the mistress of a house. Every one felt at home on crossing her threshold. Every one exerted himself and did his best to amuse and interest his neighbor. Everybody did as he pleased—wandered about by himself, or formed into groups, friends seeking their friends.

In short, every one was at ease, and therefore content.

"Gentlemen," said a celebrated writer, "the thing is of importance, and yet I detect no especial enthusiasm for a case so rare."

"What case? Of what are you speaking?" asked several persons.

"We are each one of us to-day doing more than one great work, for Genius is often powerless to realize that which we realize. Gentlemen, we are creating! The various qualities of our different minds find a common meeting ground under this roof. Do you not all feel unusually light-hearted here? I call on you, ye artists, writers, and men of genius to answer me this. Friends, we are founding a salon."

"Yes, yes," responded the guests in chorus.

Founding a salon! The ugly hostess had not thought of this, but the ambitious idea struck a responsive chord in her heart and carried her away with it. She exerted herself still more to please her guests, saying to herself that they would return to her all the more gladly, when she invited them again.

It was, nevertheless, a singular success, for at the close of this *réunion* she was congratulated by every one on her decisive triumph. Hélène, to whom the joy of gratified vanity had been hitherto unknown, accepted this with her whole heart. It was a grateful stimulant to her whole nature, it encouraged her to give her natural wit full play, and she allowed herself all the joy of receiving as well as giving pleasure. The former recluse was all at once charmed by that which is best in the superficial relations of society, by the cordiality with which she was treated.

Hélène said a hundred clever and brilliant things which were repeated and remembered, and so while each one of the persons to whom she had said them could also add what he had replied, this young mistress of a house, novice as she was, soon acquired the reputation of an ability to elicit responsive wit.

She was obliged to make very great exertions to interest the artists whom she begged to be very patient as the Judges had not yet left the gallery, and were apparently in no haste to render their decision.

Hélène launched her young friends into hot disputes in regard to painting—exciting them by contradictions

until they became so interested that they forgot the famous discussion going on in the picture gallery.

They uttered the most impassioned statements in regard to their art, and expressed opinions which more than one retracted later, on learning his defeat.

Hélène, in order that no one should receive an unexpected blow, spoke of her great admiration for Guy's picture. All the young man's former comrades adored him and each felt when Hélène spoke, that if the prize was awarded to him, their own vanity would not suffer.

His talent was fully admitted, but he was known to be indolent; he was clever but restless, and always on the wing, and as he had never before interfered with them, no one was now prepared to be jealous.

"Guy will have the prize," said one young painter, "and that is why the Judges are so long in bringing in their verdict. I would wager my life that our Master is unwilling that the prize should be awarded to his son. Guy!" he called aloud, "you know your fate. You are to be recognized as a great painter, and you will be obliged to return to us and to Paris!"

"Not I," he answered; "I would never yield up my divine liberty, and careless life for any success. I fly from your society, O my friends, I fly from your glory! Romain's talent will suffer as well as his virtue for the honor of our family. I am my father's son, but I have nevertheless the right to be unfaithful to the French School of Art and faithful to my foreign loves."

"Then it is a great pity for Art!" said Hélène, laughing.

"And a great pity for the pretty Parisians," added some of Guy's friends.

Guy struck an attitude and began to make a speech, which was drowned in the gay applause of his companions.

He was a very handsome fellow, tall and well made, with bright chestnut colored hair so exquisitely fine that the slightest movement of his head caused each hair to separate and catch the light, giving almost an effect of a halo about his head. His frank blue eyes were bordered by long silky lashes, the full and chiseled lids were often half dropped over his eyes. His handsome, firm mouth, his broad forehead and his large nose gave to his face a certain masculine character which his gay, laughing glances softened at times, until his face was almost feminine in its sweetness.

"Such as you see me," he began, "I am—"

He was interrupted.

"You are conceit, itself!" cried one of his friends.

"You are a man foredoomed!" said another.

"Better than that! He is a victor!" added Hélène, who came toward Guy at that moment, bringing to him the prize, a silver flagon, offered by Romain.

"I am not conceited, I am not foredoomed, and I refuse to be a victor!" cried the young man, rushing to the gallery.

His comrades hurried after him, eager to see the picture that had obtained the prize. Guy, preceding every one else, placed himself in front of his picture.

"I shall not accept the prize," he said.

"And why not?" asked the judges.

"Because, gentlemen of the jury, I have had too many advantages over my competitors. I was at Verona, under the light of Italian skies; I had an incomparable model, while my comrades painted here in the fog, and had only the pale beauty of your Parisians to study. I am willing to be the second, but I must positively and distinctly decline to be the first, for there is no justice in it."

No one answered, but everybody looked at each other. Every one felt obliged to submit, and yet each, without exception, experienced the impression that true artists experience in the face of a finished piece of work. They all murmured:

"It is admirable, he alone deserves the prize!"

Romain, the father, however, said with his son:

"No, there is no justice in it."

Guy, under the avalanche of congratulations, protested gayly, and tried to destroy the effect of his picture in the most vigorous manner.

"I assure you," he said, "I am but a dauber; I do not presume to call myself an artist. It is only an accident that I have made a comparative success on this occasion and in this picture which you are pleased to call a *chef d'œuvre*. This image is a copy from nature—inspiration, choice and talent have had no part in it."

Every one was pleased with the young man's modesty, and felt no doubt of his sincerity. But all claimed an explanation and demanded an immediate

recital of "A Story to Tell!" He promised to tell it at the table, and then obtained permission and liberty to look at his friends' pictures.

The Exhibitors and the members of the Jury were to dine at Hélène's. The table was laid for forty, but the dining-room was enormous, and could, if necessary, have its sliding doors thrown open into the Conservatory.

Each portrait had its merit and was appreciated and discussed by the young artists as it had been previously by the Judges. They seemed to consider themselves alone with each other, in spite of Hélène's presence, and more than one ideal was reduced to human proportions.

One young man said:

"Wouldn't you know those shoulders anywhere? Aren't they those of Paul's wife?"

And another exclaimed:

"That forearm belongs to Pierre's mistress."

Jests and repartees flew on winged shafts up and down the room.

When painters are in a joyous mood their gayety communicates itself to all about them. They seem to become school-boys again. Even the most ambitious among them—those who are most engrossed in their Art, are rejoiced to shake off the weight of their ambition sometimes, and resume something of their old boyish gayety.

Most of these young men had studied under the same master and remembered their camaraderie on

fête days and postponed their revelries for the time being.

Martial, going up to his daughter, drew her hand through his arm, and said to her:

"You are a fairy, Hélene!"

"The fairy Caribosse, then, father!"

"What does that matter?"

Romain, seeing his old friend with Hélene, glided between them and separated them.

"You cannot say sweet things to each other without me," he said. "I was present at the quarrel, I must assist at the reconciliation."

"I thank you, most cordially," answered Martial. "You have aided Hélène with your advice; you have encouraged her in all her daring enterprises. Permit me to offer you in her presence these few words of gratitude, and also to tell you that my paternal pride is deeply gratified to-night."

A disdainful smile quivered on Hélène's lips.

"You are, indeed, an artist, my father!" she said, slowly. "You have more *amour propre* than love for others."

After having crowned Guy with laurels, the Judges proclaimed the name of the first prize taken for landscapes. "One bit of Nature" was preferred to all others by unanimous consent. Martial offered a beautiful golden flagon which equalled in richness the silver one given by Romain as the prize for the finest picture.

The bit of nature represented a sunset on the sea

shore of Provence—the sky and the sea met in the distant horizon and melted away in an indistinct line—an occasional sail looked as if in a frightful hurry; a lighthouse with adjacent buildings behind it suggested a *grande dame* wearing a train and a star on her brow like the fair Ferronière. Several dark rocks massed together in the foreground resembled a large winged ant preparing for flight. An arm of the sea wound gracefully about these rocks. Olive trees were reflected in water so limpid that their pale shadows were confounded with the pale branches of the tree itself. A vessel was slowly making its way into port; its sails, without wind to fill them, fell limp like the folds of a flag when it is carried back into the fort. On the horizon the sky is deep in tint, silvery in the foreground and of a rich rose in the centre. Eucalyptus with its white flowers and gray leaves were in huge clusters. One island rising from the sea looked as if it were an offering of a basket of verdure to the gods of Heaven.

Guy recognized one of the Sérin islands and called it by name, Santa Marguerite. At this moment Hélène ran to the piano in the Salon next the gallery, and played a march which she improvised.

The victors were lifted on the shoulders of their comrades and carried through the salons.

Hélène's march was vociferously applauded and she improvised another, the melody of which was easy to catch. She sang it, beside, and her young friends repeated it in chorus.

The landscape painter cried out for mercy. Guy threw himself into all the follies of his comrades. He made a droll speech and then suddenly began to speak in rhyme. He was answered in Alexandrenes, and then came a shower of classical allusions, the sense of which was greatly perverted to suit the whims of these madmen, both young and old.

One young artist sang a little ballad, the refrain of which was:

"Will you tell us now, Guy, now or later!"

To which he replied:

"Later, boys, later!"

Hélène continued to play the accompaniment on the piano.

Finally Guy was deposited on a table by his bearers, who made in prose the plaintive request that he should then and there tell the story of his picture.

He drew out his watch.

"I shall not utter one word," he said, "until there has been five minutes of profound silence."

But in vain did the most anxious among the young artists try to enforce silence. Some of them pretended to dispute and attacked others who had not spoken. Just when quiet seemed to have been established came a yawn or a cough, or some absurdity which induced an explosion of laughter.

"Pray be quiet," said the hostess impatiently.

"No, no, dear Hélène," exclaimed Guy, who had become very grave, "do not insist, I beg of you. If

any one should be amused with my story, and it is quite impossible under the circumstances that I should be taken *au serieux*, I am sure I should do harm to the rash creature."

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! I object to a tragedy," cried the landscape artist, in his Provençal accent, and with an affectation of cowardice that was intensely droll, and provoked new bursts of laughter. The hour for dinner had now arrived, a servant announced it. Those persons who had simply been invited to the fête and lingered too long, now hurried away.

Guy leaped from his table to the ground, threw his laurel wreath on the floor, and offered his arm to the mistress of the house, who gave her left hand to the landscape painter.

They all sang Hélène's march again. Two by two the exhibitors, preceded by Martial and Romain, who themselves followed the members of the Jury, all took their way toward the dining-room.

The tables were laid in the form of a horse shoe, the centre portion being slightly raised, so that Hélène and the victors, as well as Martial and Romain, sat opposite their children, while they saw all the guests.

"We are like Tintoretto's *Cena, in the Chiesa Santa Maria della Salute*, at Venice," began Guy, who was all the time haunted by his Italian.

"I allow no Latin here!" said Hélène, laughing.

"And no foreign allusions!" cried Martial.

Conversation during the first two courses was disconnected, consisting mostly of interjections and short

sentences. But at dessert they began to sing the refrain again.

"Will you tell us now, Guy, now or later?"

"Suddenly and unexpectedly the young man replied to the same air:

"'I will tell you now boys, now or never!'"

"Heaven grant that a profound silence may reign during this recital," groaned the landscape painter. "Friends, we must all remember the threats made by this hero."

"Hush! Hush! What outrageous jealousy!" exclaimed the guests.

"Permit me to say a few words," began Guy. "You are all aware that my profession in life is gallantry, that my aim in life is love, and that Fate compels me to gather together the many virtues divided among many women."

"Metaphysical to the last!" grumbled Romain.

"The more faithless I am supposed to be, the more faithful I am in reality, for I seek, O, my father, *the* woman in all women. Each time that I seem to be chilled, it is because I have become more enamored of new discoveries. I change my love, only to amass a large stock of that wealth, which the feminine creature dispenses to man, and my numerous inconstancies are simply the proof of my fidelity to my ideal."

"It is possible, I suppose," answered Martial, "to find *the* woman in one woman. If you believe the con-

trary, Sir scholar, and proceed to sustain that belief, I am here to prove the other side."

"Let us touch lightly on theories since you are so easily disturbed by them, Master," answered the young man, "and let us confine ourselves to facts. One day then, I went to Verona, the cradle of love ever since Juliet first met Romeo's eyes. My friends, do you not agree with me in thinking that rapid victories are much more glorious, and bring more booty to the conqueror than slow conquests? The privileges of love are worth more than all other privileges, even those of celebrity, as you who are artists will admit. Question yourselves and see if I am not right.

"Already, the fugitive pleasure of my success has passed away, and I can hardly recall the sensation which it caused me, but I have not the smallest difficulty in remembering the delicious trouble of my last love affair. Answer! which among us prefers ambition to love—it matters not in what form ambition is offered to him—and whether he be free or a slave, does he not esteem more highly woman than glory, whether it be a face he knows, or one of which he dreams?"

"The love of even a dead woman is worth more than living glory," answered Martial. "There you are right, Guy."

"Paternal love is also love," added Romain, "and I prefer it to the most brilliant success."

Each of the guests in turn gave his answer to Guy's question.

Hélène, however, was silent.

"I cannot even allude to my filial love," she thought.

Guy continued his narration:

"One morning I entered the grand and calm arena of Verona. I called up the shadows of the gentle and loving dames who sang the lines of Italian poets in Scaliger's Court, dames who, timid and curious, very possibly adored Love more than they adored their lovers.

"Kneeling on the topmost pile of stones, which had formerly been the wall of the circus, I looked down upon the town and allowed myself to be carried away by the visions with which my father charmed my boyhood. The lovely Italians of the Renaissance opened wide their palace doors and displayed all their luxury in my honor. All the women painted by Romain breathed again under the Italian skies, wandered through the gardens and in the streets, which Time has not changed, leaned from those windows, or conversed in their Courts of Love, of poetry and sentiment. I beg your pardon, my dear father, but as the Renaissance is seen only among the Italians, I am forced, out of respect for the peculiar character of your Art, to remain there, far from you, remembering that it is where you fain would be."

"Go on," answered Romain, in an abrupt tone.

"There is still a French Renaissance without counting that which we ourselves have begun," added Martial. "To-day we recognize the old Greeks as the only true and real Masters, and the difference between Plato and Homer is appreciated. It is no longer the former that is imitated, but the latter, and it is not the

most specious and the most artificial of the ancients by whom I am inspired, but by the simplest and the grandest."

"Bravo!" cried the Greek school among the young painters.

Romain shrugged his shoulders.

"Suddenly," continued the narrator, "I started up and then stood still, rooted to the ground in an ecstasy of admiration. My heart beat quickly, my brain turned dizzy.

"In front of me, directly in the centre of the circus, stood the woman I have painted, but more radiant and more dazzling under the glowing sunlight. She wore that same rose-colored drapery, and stood on those white stones under that blue sky; the harmony imparted by the Italian light to all these brilliant colors pervaded the whole scene.

"She entered the *loge* of the Vestals, and looked as she did so, like an inspired Priestess, who had come to arrest the combat in the arena. She was now nearer to me; I could hear her rich, full voice, and even her words reached my ear distinctly.

"Speaking to the two men who were with her, she said:

"I come of a German race, of a Protestant stock, of a Ghibelline family, and am therefore thrice the enemy of Rome, and when I enter this arena I can only remember that fact. Here crowded the subjects of the Cæsars. Cæsar himself, cruel and thirsting for blood, rises before him as he stood in his *loge*. It was

here that my brothers, condemned to contest in the arena, came to seek that death which should liberate them.

"Can you picture to yourselves the scene—the applause which followed the blows given by the victors to the vanquished, the ghastly pleasure felt at the sight of the wound inflicted by one slave on another, and can you realize the impotent hatred, the thirst for vengeance which devours and tortures the heart of the expiring gladiator? Can you picture all these to yourselves, I ask. Well, I experience it all now. After centuries and centuries, I curse that Cæsar in his bloody robes. It may be," she added with a smile, "that I may some day be tempted to avenge these gladiators on you, dear Prince, who are so direct a descendant of the odious Emperors of ancient Rome. You are, moreover, an enthusiastic Catholic and a Guelph. Never could there be a better opportunity for me to be cruel."

"But your ancestors renounced heresy and Germany. You know that, dear Marquise," returned the Prince.

"I am the grandchild of those, however, who made no such renunciation," she replied, "and I am a singular combination of the heretic and the convert."

"She was a strange creature," continued Romain's son. "The Marchesa, even on this first glimpse of her, struck me as entirely different from any one I had ever seen. I fell in love then and there. At the risk of breaking every bone in my body, I leaped down into

the imperial *loge* while she slowly crossed the arena. I will spare you the details of the steps I took to be received by the Marchesa, for the tale would take me until to-morrow. I had never before in Italy experienced such difficulties, although I had met with many obstacles on different occasions, for I beg you to understand that I disdain *bonnes fortunes*, which are too easily won. The Marchesa was quite as tyrannical as the wise dames of the Renaissance, and permitted herself, in addition, to feel all the contempt which Italian women of the eighteenth century profess to feel for Italian men.

"She was a widow, and her circle of friends were as much slaves as the Roman gladiators and obeyed her without a murmur. She allowed, however, no stranger to enter her gates. I learned that she was connected with the oldest families in Milan, and consequently endowed with all aristocratic prejudices. Her arms had upon them the Scaliger ladder as well as the coronet of a celebrated Marquisate, an Imperial investiture. This was why she liked to call herself a Ghibelline."

"Do you mean to marry her?" asked Romain, in terror.

"Alas, my dear father, whatever may be the form of my misfortune, or of my happiness," answered the young man, "I owe it to you! Learn then, that the fair Marchesa, like a true *grande dame* of Italy, adores the Renaissance. I made the discovery that she recognizes but one painter in our times—a Frenchman—

Romain, in short. Except for the obstacles thrown in her path by cherished friends, she would have come to Paris long before this to have her portrait painted by you — by him whom she calls, 'The Master of our Century.'

"When I heard this, I wrote to the Marchesa, and asked, in the name of the painter, Romain, whose son and humble pupil I declared myself to be, the honor and glory of painting her fair face, my father having sent me to Verona in search of the type of women of Scaliger's day.

"The next morning I received an invitation. The Marchesa treated me as she would have treated Romain himself, and from sketch to sketch I soon proceeded to work on the portrait of which you have done me the honor to approve, and which she herself greatly admired."

"And which she will never see again," said Romain, "for it belongs to Hélène."

"The Marchesa is the most exacting of models," answered Guy, quickly, "and I have sworn that she shall have it again."

"These pictures all belong to me," said Hélène, with quiet decision. "This was an agreement accepted by all your friends, and in which even you, victor as you are, must acquiesce."

Guy looked very angry, and was about to reply when one of his comrades cried out:

"If you marry her, you will have ample leisure to paint another portrait."

"Marry a Marchesa and abjure her caste!" replied Romain, impetuously. "No; that is impossible!"

"*Ce serait adjouter le parjure à l'outrage*," said a young painter, quoting from Iphigenia.

"If he marries her he would cease to be a champion, a Don Quixote, and I should withdraw my friendship from him," cried Hélène.

"Whose champion is he?" asked Martial, "and how is he Don Quixote?"

"He is the champion and the Don Quixote of ugly women, dear father. He is their avenger, and that is why I have been his confidante for the last ten years, and this is why I, more than any one else, have the right to praise and bless him."

"I beg your pardon," said the young man, in whom curiosity had taken the place of irritation, "do you mean that I accomplish your wishes, and execute your vengeance?"

"That is precisely what I mean," answered Hélène, with some bitterness. "It is time that you should know me as I know myself."

And finding the occasion favorable, she took it.

"Do you think, then," she said, "that I had given you gratuitously all my friendly cares, and my sisterly tenderness; that I loved you for yourself more than I loved my own father or yours? I cherish you, brother, out of hatred for the fair women whom you cause to suffer and of whom I am the jealous enemy. The fairer they are the more jealous I am. Go on, my friend. Pursue your self-appointed task, but do not

falter nor flag on your way. Never lay down your arms, and never mortify me by capitulating. I implore you never thus to pain her who for ten years has watched, glorified and approved your course. Again, I say, spare her the spectacle of your defection."

The young painters, who had each brought into this house the portrait of the fairest woman each knew, looked at their hostess in surprise, wondering at her having the courage to paint herself in these terms.

"What, my friends," continued Hélène, "shall it be, that the fortunate woman of the earth, women who possess the wonderful gift of beauty which neither will nor determination, patience nor toil—neither riches nor passion, nor grandeur of soul, nor heroism, nor yet genius can acquire—can it be, I say, that they are to have everything their own way in this world? No! no! there are Don Juans, Lovelaces, unbelievers and rovers, I am rejoiced to say, who act as a check upon them."

She continued to talk in this way to these artists who were intelligent enough to understand her, and whom she wished to fascinate by her originality, since she could not command their admiration in any other way. Hélène, in these clear, decisive words, gave them all to understand just where she stood. After this declaration no one would have dreamed of requesting her to admit pretty women to her Salon, and of course they would not have cared to ask her to receive ugly ones.

Her rich contralto voice ceased and a long silence

followed her words. Her sincerity had made friends. More than one of the artists had been struck by her singular remarks, and vowed to himself that he would watch her development with abiding interest.

Guy asked himself with some astonishment what could be the meaning of Hélène's public confidences. He could hardly credit her. He had always believed her to be very indulgent to a man's darling sins, and he now beheld her utterly pitiless toward the favorites of her friends. He had supposed himself winning absolution with difficulty, and was now greeted with the most enthusiastic approbation. He was thrilled with a new sensation toward Hélène, and his fraternal love seemed to have received a fillip.

The mistress of the house rose from the table and led the way into the Turkish *salon* for coffee. The ceiling was lifted and the guests were bidden to smoke, if they pleased. The youthful painters having discussed Beauty for some time, now began to talk of Art. The portrait of the Marchesa was now analysed as a work of art, and Martial reproved Guy for an indolence which he said was only to be excused by a deficiency of talent; he had proved that this was not the case, and why had he not done more?

The young man proceeded to develop a most singular theory.

"All the sons of celebrated men," he said, "are naturally affected in more or less degree by the excessive labors of the authors of their days. The poor children, disinherited, so to speak, before their birth,

weaned before having been nursed, weary before they have worked, enervated before doing, have all the uneasy susceptibilities of their fathers—and neither their power, their will or their lassitudes. They are indolent, it is true, but they are resting from the labors of their parents, who have arrived at celebrity. The destiny of the son of an illustrious man is always mediocre, unless he discovers in himself some quality which differs from those of his glorious ancestor. If I were not a rover in search of adventures," added Guy, "I should be a nobody, and thank my father with all my heart for having by his virtues, prepared for me a long career as a dissipated scamp. These last are my father's words, comrades," concluded the young man gayly.

The youthful circle thus encouraged by Guy, began to tease their great Master, who replied more amiably than might have been expected:

"My children," said the old painter, when silence was to some degree restored, "you have not the faculty of work, whatever your fathers may have had. Perhaps, too, you are spared too much solicitude in regard to many trifling situations. Your masters are far less mysterious, less exacting than were ours. They are not afraid of initiating you in the very beginning of your studies in the details of their method. Perhaps they are right, for Art is above all, dexterity of manipulation, but there are many persons who consider themselves artists merely because they can paint, and thus add quantity not quality to our legion.

"More than one among those I see before me would have done better had he waited rather than contented himself with a first inspiration, and given himself the benefit of a slower gestation. He would not have been in such haste had he learned less easily to draw and to paint. I am afraid this new way of educating our pupils will rather repress than cultivate artistic faculties, and that we shall end in diffusing Art rather than in concentrating it in a few great works.

"The Greeks, as a nation, were painters and sculptors—they had innumerable atéliers, countless schools," said Martial. "In Greece everybody knew more or less of Art, and the more a nation appreciates the beautiful the more likely it is to produce men of talent and celebrity. In those countries where there is no artistic instruction, there are few artists and those few are commonplace. Genius like all beautiful natural productions is born only amid favorable surroundings. Friend, do not doubt the Present, for all is ready for a superb artistic bloom. The signs appear on every side. It will be, at least, equal to anything we have known in the Past, because all the elements of Art have been born again in the human mind. Yes, I look forward to the Future without the smallest discouragement. Shall I tell you, my children, what I see in the Future?"

"We are attentive, Master," answered the young men, crowding around Martial as the antique chorus gathered around their hero when he began his recital.

"It seems to me that what I call the home School,

the Interior Domestic School will entirely disappear. The Dutch and the English, our landscape artists, the painters who depict a bit of Nature, and an Interior will be seen no more. I beg pardon of all who have exhibited here to-day!

"The painters of manners and customs existing in the period between the Renaissance and that which I see in the Future, have all had their day. Enough shadowy Interiors, enough clouds and cold Northern skies have been painted within the last three centuries.

"The young School, all that which is to affect the Future, turns toward the East, toward the land of warm colors and sunlight. Our Renaissance like the other, will be born in a land where the sun has created form and light.

"You are listening, my children, and I thank you for your attention, for it is a proof of your own value. For twenty years, I could not speak to a living being of my Greeks without being laughed at. To-day, however, I am understood, I am approved of, and applauded.

"The first Renaissance began by the awakening of admiration for the Greeks, then came a time of imitation and final inspiration. Guy has just uttered a great truth in the form of a paradox. The people are like the sons of celebrated men: they are weary with all their forefathers have done, and they seek to find some faculty unexpressed by their predecessors. They find in different aptitudes preservatives from complete annihilation.

"Superficial observers see in this, only violent reaction, and not the repose which prepares for future awakening of the faculties. I cite the example of my old Greeks, for it is to them that we must constantly return. When they reached the complete realization of the beauties of form, their weary minds lapsed indolently into dreams of idealism.

"In the same way, in an inverse sense, in the fifteenth century, the intelligence of men after bearing scholastic weight, after submitting to Sophists, and examined into the mystic Utopias of Savonarola turned suddenly with passion toward the worship of Pagan Art. Since then, spiritualism has again conquered the love of form, but this is changing, and your philosophers overthrow Metaphysics to place Art, face to face, with its greatest moving spirit, Nature."

Although he was but sixty, Martial, whose reputation was immense, was venerated as if he had been an ancient sage, by artists who were really quite as old as himself, and at the same time he was looked upon by the younger men as a prophet.

After talking together and discussing all that the master had said, some of the boldest among the guests resolved to go to Hélène, and ask that they might be received each Saturday.

She smilingly assented, and bade them come the following Saturday.

"It is not only as conversationalists that we should come together," said Martial to his young friends. "Let us have one common thought and aim. Let us

seek a motive for forming an alliance, for uniting ourselves in one group. Will you found a league among yourselves for the propagation of faith in the second Renaissance?"

"I shall not join it!" cried Romain.

"We will admit the profane," said Martial, "but each heretic must agree to read Homer, at least, once each year."

This proposition met with the most complete success, and the party did not separate until Martial was nominated President of the League. Hélène's salon was then pronounced in existence, and it was born of the singular union of an ugly woman and of artists who adored the Beautiful.

On leaving Hélène, Guy asked her to invite him to dinner the next day.

"Will you come alone, or with your father?" she said.

"I shall come alone, for I wish to talk to you on important subjects."

"On business?"

"No."

"On feelings?"

"Not in the least."

"What then?"

"Of certain plans for you and for me."

Hélène, when the last sound of the evening's entertainment had ceased, went up to her bed-room, and slowly undressed. Her nurse was in a state of ecstasy over the success of the evening, over the gayety and

evident enjoyment of the guests. She declared that the dinner was the most superb she had ever seen. She extolled Guy's talents, and Hélène's wit. She had seen and heard everything, and had questioned each servant in turn. Although respectful, she was in the habit of giving her advice with frankness, having been always regarded by Hélène as a companion rather than as a servant. The young girl took pleasure in developing the woman's intelligence and making her a friend.

The nurse was especially pleased that her dear child was to receive each week and amuse herself as much a she had done that night. She had heard a dozen persons say, as they went out:

"Thank Heaven! We have at last an artistic salon."

This was, of course, an immense victory to Hélène.

"So many women, it seems," added the boastful nurse, "have tried to receive, but it is not only a great fortune that is needed, nor grace, nor a fine house to make every guest on leaving a salon, desire to go back again! Even talent is not enough, for I have heard both the illustrious Martial and the equally illustrious Romain complain of not being able to bring their friends together." Hélène had what so many others were deficient in—animation, tact and sparkling wit. She was no longer a Pariah! She was about to win the affectionate interest of intelligent men, who would be her friends and take the place of a family, who would love and appreciate her who had never been loved or appreciated by any one but Romain and his son.

Hélène was greatly gratified by these remarks made by her nurse, because all the thoughts of her confidante grew upon soil she herself had sown. The good creature was a widow, her children and her nephews served Hélène, and belonged to her, body and soul. She could, without fear of indiscretion, open her whole heart before her, tell all her wishes and hopes, her desires and her fancies.

"You see, nurse, I have made up my mind what to do, and what to be. I am original and eccentric. I am the declared enemy of women."

"My child, it is always wise to have the fault with which you are charged. I have often reproached you for being too humble with women. They think you are jealous because you are not beautiful, malicious because you are witty; and you are well aware that those who are most severe toward you are the plainest and silliest of your acquaintances."

"Only very beautiful women could ever be my friends, because as a rule they are very amiable; but I feel toward them an invincible repulsion. Do you remember, nurse, what we heard one of those beauties say one day? It hurt me deeply at the time, and threw me back into the seclusion from which I had begun to emerge.

"'I should like to see a great deal of Martial's daughter,' said this lady; 'she is intelligent, and she interests me, but I am afraid that I should be suspected of choosing her as a foil.'"

"Has it been difficult for you to do what you have

done to-night, Hélène?" asked the nurse, in order to distract her dear child from thoughts which were calculated to awaken all the dormant bitterness in her heart.

"No, I felt myself at perfect liberty; a liberty, in fact, which at times amounted to recklessness. I said anything which came into my head without the smallest reflection. My spirits rose almost beyond my control, and I felt an immense sense of relief at no longer being compelled to weigh my words.

"Resignation and submission cost me more than revolt. I am a rebel by nature, and this is the rôle I intend to play among my new friends. But you, dear nurse, will be more necessary to me than ever, for the friendship of men for an ugly woman is not of much value, it is rough, indifferent, and at the same time very exacting. The more such friendships I inspire the more need I shall feel of your tenderness."

"You will feel great pride, my haughty Hélène, in standing upright among these men who refuse to prostate themselves at your feet. Protected by armor like those of the men in your salon, you will be strong until your old nurse comes and takes you away. If Fate has not allowed you to show a fair face to the world, they will, at all events, permit you to make a fine figure in it!"

Hélène's nurse undressed her child, as she always called her, and put her to bed as if she had been an infant, and then, sitting by her side, talked of the fête in a low voice, which by degrees became softer and

softer until, seeing that her charge was asleep, it died into silence.

The next morning Hélène rose, feeling very weary and consequently very sad. All tastes gratified, all success obtained, each step won by gratified pride, every end attained, leaves in certain natures a feeling of insufficiency and disappointment.

With the exception, therefore, of once in each week, Hélène's house would be empty. She, nevertheless, gave strict orders that the Hôtel should be in order each day as for a reception, and that the salons should be constantly filled with flowers. She changed the position of the chairs in order to give an inhabited look to her vast rooms.

Guy was coming that evening to dine with his childhood's friend, and she displayed for him the same luxury as she had done the evening before for a hundred persons. She also wore the same toilette which the painter had so much admired, installed herself in the white and gold salon; she had an easel brought in and placed on it a half-finished sketch, opened her piano and scattered books about; in short, she gave a look of delightful ease to the apartment, and took away as much as possible of the stiffness of the rich and massive furniture.

In this employment the long day passed away. As twilight came on she threw herself into a *chaise longue* and looked about her. Things were very much to her taste. Hélène then applied herself to the solution of

a certain problem. How should she further improve herself and develop her mind?

Should she apply herself to her music? The march she had improvised the evening before had aroused so much enthusiasm that she determined to develop her talent in that direction.

Hélène had also the gift, without condescending to the grotesque, of exaggerating some single feature or some salient characteristic, and execute the most delightfully amusing caricatures.

After a while she went to her easel and said to herself that she would astonish Guy, by showing him some of the faces he had seen the evening before. He would be pleased at this talent, which he had never suspected.

She was laughing aloud, though alone by herself, as she quickly sketched some of her guests, when a letter was brought in from Romain, who told her that her rout was the subject of every conversation, and that by her originality, her eccentricity and good taste, she had made a great success. Romain concluded in these words:

"Courage, my dear Hélène. You already count for something in our dear Paris. You have even now won a certain influence and command much affection."

This note thrilled Hélène with joy. Romain's sincerity was a guaranty of the impressions he had found to have been made. People never told this man anything but the truth, and it was absurd to entertain a doubt when he repeated a compliment or alluded to praise he had heard.

Thus it had come to pass that this singularly plain woman, by disregarding envious and malicious tongues, by having the courage to be and act herself, had gathered about her a group of artists who understood and appreciated her.

Hélène, at this point asked herself if society did not prefer bold faults to listless resignation. Was it then necessary that all characteristics should be brought into play, even those which seem intended only to wound?

Hélène's declaration of war toward women, seemed to have given her suddenly as her defenders, just those whom her submission to the triumphs of beauty would never have won.

The quality which most men admire in women who have met with undeserved misfortune is courage, and the thing they most dislike is an appeal to their pity.

"If each of these artists," said Hélène to herself, "should allow themselves to be touched by the trials each person in the world is called upon to bear, and add this burthen to that of his own sorrows, which he has assumed or which are inflicted upon him, the strongest among them all would soon find his courage exhausted and his spirits sink under the weight. It is to be an artist one's self," thought Martial's daughter, "it is to struggle on without help, it is worldly-wise to ask no aid from persons entirely absorbed in their own efforts. It is humane to spare the humanity of others.

"To protest without complaint against those who are privileged by Nature, to awaken and encourage within

one's self, the strengthening desire for intellectual revenge, to demonstrate that one likes the combat even if the victory is with the opponent, to prove hatred rather than envy, to be strong if weakness is a demand for mercy—to be, in short, a fine fellow if Fate has not made you a pretty woman." This, Hélène said to herself, was what she intended to do.

Such a course was not without a certain nobility. It had already won, not only the approval of friends of distinction, but also her own.

Another note was brought to her, and after reading it once hastily, she said to herself with a laugh:

"I have pleased every one, even my father!"

"Hélène," wrote the sculptor, "the dissatisfaction I have felt with you, I at last understand, and I sincerely implore your pardon.

"I wished you, my daughter, to develop into something far above the commonplace. There is something about you of the rebellious angel. Romain applauds your ambition to take your destiny in your own hands, and I cry out to you: 'Hélène, the task you have undertaken, to make of yourself an original woman, is most ably commenced. If you need any assistance from your father to finish it, you have only to signify the wish to him.'"

"Artists! Artists!" said Hélène, agitated but not indignant. "They are all alike; they prefer imprecations to speechlessness. As children break their toys out of curiosity, so do these men like to know what is going on within these human models. So much the worse then, for those who are broken!"

"With Romain, with Martial, with all these men it is necessary to have a physiognomy, so to speak, even if it consists of grimaces. It is more necessary even when the limbs are paralyzed, for inertia and insensibility exasperate artists. So be it, then, I will live! Heaven grant that to live it may not be necessary to die!"

One thought came to her most inopportunely at this moment. It seemed to Hélène that these two letters, glowing with approbation, were the mere result of gratitude for the pleasure she had conferred, and this affectionate spontaneity was born of the efforts she had made to amuse them.

She shook off these reflections, and the capricious thoughts of this young girl who was born with all the whims of a pretty woman, turned suddenly to other things.

She had believed up to this moment that men were selfish, and now they suddenly seemed to her very generous. She was astonished, and immediately began to plead the cause of those of whom she had often complained.

After all, had not these men a right to ask amusement?

Every circle has its own benevolence. Men who come together for amusement are almost always amiable. As soon as Hélène laid aside her air of martyrdom and unhappiness, which had been more or less her characteristics while in her father's house, she was received with open arms.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FAIR ITALIAN.

GUY, on awakening under his father's roof, was astonished by the impressions he preserved of his dreams through a restless night.

Hélène and the Marchesa had flashed through his visions haughty and proud alike. He had talked with each in turn and had proposed an alliance which neither had rejected. The young man tried to recall the action of these dreams, to remember their events and also the causes of the association of ideas. He in vain recalled his reflections on Hélène's strange remarks after he had told the history of the portrait, and he could recollect no apparent indulgence on her part toward the Marchesa.

Finally, fatigued with his fruitless efforts, Guy thrust aside Hélène's image, as well as the remembrance of the fête, and dwelling only on the thought that he was once more in his father's house, dreamed again, but this time his dream was a waking one.

Again he stood on the lofty terrace in the *Guisté* gardens at Verona, which he had visited the night before his departure. The young man had left Italy so recently, his heart and his mind were so full of it that every detail of this scene was singularly real.

He believed himself again in the presence of his beloved and lived over again all the emotions of that blissful interview. The Marchesa had come to meet him an hour after the time she had appointed and complained of the surveillance of her friends, of their jealousy and constant presence. Guy, who had a perilous game to play with this proud creature, took care to add his own complaints to hers in regard to the people by whom she was surrounded. He then waited for a word or two of encouragement and walked silently by the side of his beloved, looking down upon the moonlit town.

He found, too, a happy augury in comparing that evening with the dreary day when his eyes had first rested upon her. Did he not then as now, look down at Verona sleeping at his feet?

The fair Veronese suddenly asked him why he had the impertinence to forget that she was near. He at once told her of what he was thinking—spoke of the circus, of the *loge*, of the vestals and of his mad and sudden passion.

She answered boldly with her eyes fixed on those of her adorer:

"You wish me to love you. I do love you, but I can do no more. I have struggled against myself and against you. I have thought of fleeing from you—of having you killed in a duel; all my resistance, all my tears—for I have wept so bitterly—have been useless. When I call all my virtue and all my strength of will to my aid, a voice within myself answers with your

name—Guy, and calls for you. I feel that I am conquered. I look down into the abyss at my feet by which I am strangely attracted!

"If I felt only love for you I could control it; I could control it as I have done in many other instances—and in the end I could become my own mistress once more. Alas! I feel not only love, but that passion which it is useless to attempt to control; which is at once weakness and transport.

"I am utterly your slave, then, and I lay my pride bound and captive at your feet. I see a commonplace word hovering on your lips," added the Marchesa, "You are about to swear that you will be my slave.

"What does that matter? I have too many slaves, now," she continued; "they weary me! The extraordinary thing is, that I in my turn should submit to this slavery. Know, then, Guy, that while I desire to preserve my dignity in form, I cannot do so in reality. I had determined never to re-marry, preferring to be under my own control rather than that of any lover; but a woman of my rank and my character can live independently only when she is free, which I am no longer, as I have just admitted to you. I shall, therefore, re-marry.

"Go away, therefore, and do not see me for a month. I will write to you at Paris, and that letter will complete this conversation. You will receive it the day after your arrival at your father's."

Alas! this letter had not been brought by the first Italian mail, and Guy still waited for it as he lay in his bed at eleven o'clock in the morning.

While he repeated to himself over and over again the promises made by the Marchesa, the letter was at last brought in.

"My dear painter," wrote the fair Veronese, "I do not know if you have understood, under my many reticences, the precise sense of my words. I shall be now more explicit. There is one thing of which you certainly have not thought, which is, to ask me to marry you! I am sure you have not indulged in this hallucination, but if you have dreamed of it, I should simply send you back to the Renaissance, and remind you of the lesson taught there, that marriage kills love.

"To adore his lady and make her his wife was to deny all the laws of true gallantry, and times have not in many respects changed since then.

"My sermon is over, and now let us think of repentance!

"I shall marry again, but it will be to a man of my own rank, of my own position, my equal at least, if not more, and I have made to Prince Croscio the offer to bestow on him the hand he has so long coveted, but only on certain conditions. He is too much in love, however, to accept such conditions as those to which my second husband shall accede.

"'And what are these?' you ask.

"Simply that he can be only my *cicisbeo*, whose rights will be established by contract, according to the respectable and ancient customs of our old Italian aristocracy, and more especially in correspondence

with the usages of our family. I have studied all the papers which have furnished me with precisely the models I require.

"I have hidden from no one Prince Croscio's refusal. I have told his reasons and the terms of my proposition, and I have declared that whomsoever should present himself with the hope of marrying me must submit to all the restrictions which were known to past centuries. The papers are all prepared and in the hands of my notary, and are the precise copies of the marriage contract of one of my ancestors, a Scaliger. All Verona understands this now, and have heard it discussed in all its bearings.

"The common people, tradespeople and the like are greatly scandalized. They gossip and pretend to veil their faces, but I have on my side the women of the highest nobility, and even the men, who, on my admission of my love for you, approve of my preferring the honor of my name to the new theories of mésalliance. The aristocracy of Verona and its vicinity are persuaded that we two agree to this arrangement, and when you return you will be fêted and caressed as a sensible man and excellent artist by those whom you have suspected of vulgar prejudices, and who hitherto have shown you a cold shoulder.

"I will inform you of my movements and notify you of the day of my marriage, which will be very soon, for I am eager to see you again and be worshipped once more.

"Yours, forever,

"JULIA."

"P. S.—Among the claimants for my hand is the Duc Charles, whom you remember. I shall be his third wife. His mother arranged his marriage when he was not more than twenty, on almost the same conditions under which I marry him at thirty.

"Write at once, and give orders that the pretty Hôtel Leopardi, which is to sell or to let, shall be furnished for you. In it there is a lovely atelier with a good northern light."

Guy was not quite sure, when he first read this letter, whether he was indignant, humiliated or relieved by this singular communication. Analysing his different impressions he discovered that he had a mixture of all these sensations.

He hastened to his old Professor of History, who explained to him what was meant by an Italian marriage in the style of several centuries previous, and the precious rights and privileges enjoyed by the *cavaliere servante* or *cicisbeo*. This information calmed his uneasiness fully and entirely. Finally, the originality of the liaison fascinated his somewhat *blasé* heart. He dreamed, not without satisfaction, of a love without the trammels of a marriage, a love which need not, however, be hidden from the world.

This forbidden fruit offered by the husband to the lover in the bottom of the marriage corbeille, struck him as very delightful. He was now for the first time in his life to be endowed as a *cavaliere servante*, with the advantages of a husband. He could be proud of

the woman of whom he was the possessor, he could permit himself to be publicly jealous, and yet incur no responsibility.

Every right and not one duty! A most excellent arrangement, and a most agreeable sensation, to be sure!

The thing too, of all others, which this ingenious arrangement spared him, was precisely that which was in his eyes most absolutely detestable — and that was the vulgar cares of every day life.

To enter the world freely with her whom he loved, to take her back to her home, and then to return to his own, had always struck him as a delightful, if possible, arrangement.

Under those circumstances he would not be required to assist at the toilette of the mind and moods, so to speak, of his fair one, and yet he would see her when he wished, without mystery and without difficulty. Everything, which up to this moment had weaned, chilled or overtasked his various passions, would thus be gotten rid of; the suspicious husband, his violence and his folly, or worse still, his complaisance; or horror on horrors—his threats to drive the faithless wife from under the shelter of his roof, and surrender her to her lover.

Now he would be spared all this. All the benefit of an establishment would be his without the smallest risk.

What a wonderful invention were these ancient Italian marriages!

The young man paid visits with his father from two to five o'clock, and affectionately jeered at Romain's efforts to retain him in Paris.

Tired at last of his father's entreaties, he fairly ran away and went to Hélène's before the dinner hour.

Having completed her drawing she went to the piano while waiting for Guy. Hélène had acquired a habit, from living so much alone, of singing in recitative while she played, and this recitative was simply thinking aloud, all the while accompanying herself, sometimes slowly, sometimes with nervous rapidity and often accentuating her words with ironical emphasis.

These improvisations amused and absorbed many long, solitary hours. She liked, she said, to sing her own story. Singing it, made it seem less sad.

Toward five o'clock she was singing aloud in her rich contralto, the advice she had given herself. There was rhythm if not rhyme in her maxims for future self-government, as she sang them; she expressed her joy in being no longer alone in the world, of having at least one day in seven when she would assemble people about her—of being some one at last!

Hélène did not hear the door bell, and her nurse softly opened the door of her salon to admit Guy. The old woman divined the pleasure the young man would feel in surprising the fair singer at her piano, for she had heard him go into ecstasies the previous evening over the admirable voice of his dear friend.

Suddenly Hélène was interrupted by Guy's frantic applause just outside the door, and then he came in

tossing his hat high in the air, and crying "Bravo! Bravo!"

"Miser!" he said, as he pressed Hélène's hand, "you have the most charming talent in the world, and yet you keep it entirely to yourself. Let me tell you that I intend to have my share of this delight during my stay in Paris.

"You see, comrade," added the painter, as he drew a chair to Hélène's side, "in proportion to my adoration for spoken harmony, or vocal harmony, if you prefer so to denominate it, is my detestation of this science of orchestration, which demands silence in return for its noise. The Italians are the people to enjoy music.

"The greatest work of the greatest master would, if rendered as the Germans render it, become as heavy as the fist of Hercules.

"Song should express only the simplest sentiments, Love, Courage, and Joy. Musicians should be compelled to express themselves with fluent ease. Germans and Germanized Frenchmen are scandalized at Italian inattention, but the only way of listening with pleasure to an opera in my opinion, is to take it in small doses, and as a restful accompaniment. Italian music is spirituelle, agreeable and melodious. German music is solemn rather than easy, psychological rather than sympathetic, humanitarian rather than human, scientific more than skilful, metaphysic more than devout.

"Music, in fact, on the other side of the Rhine is made in the image and after the likeness of the dwellers

in the land. But enough," continued Guy, "my own discourse wearies me. Go on, dear Hélène, I beg of you."

She hesitated.

"I entreat you to go on," he said, not now as if ordering a comrade, but as entreating a woman whom he adored.

"What shall I sing?"

"A love song."

"I do not know one."

"I will teach you."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I have had so much experience in love that I know all its infinite shades of expression, and I can teach them to you."

"I believed you sincere in these fancies while they lasted. Have you not been?"

"Yes—and no. Sincerity has very fragile limits."

"But if you are content with acting a farce of sentiment, I can do it as well as if I had received lessons from you. I imagined—"

"Ah! you imagined that men exacted truth, did you?" cried Guy, gayly interrupting Hélène. "How unhappy we should be, we roués, if we exacted more than a semblance of truth. The mere appearance is rare enough, and few women permit even that much of an illusion.

"Sing of love," he continued, "because your voice is rich and full. I will close my eyes, and imagine what I will. Remember, if you please, that my Italian

sings very badly, therefore you have nothing to lose by comparison, in case your vanity anticipates a wound."

"I am inclined to believe," answered Hélène, with a laugh, "that as you consider this explanation necessary it really was so."

And without false modesty, with an art and power, with a wealth of resources, which filled Guy with enthusiastic admiration, she sang the second act of Norma, imitating the voices of the various singers, transposing the parts and adding variations.

"You would make the fortune of a theatre, and you would have a stupendous success," cried Guy.

"Yes," she answered, "a success, if only my back were seen!"

"What a pity it is!" he said. "Ah! if Martial could mould you over anew! If you with all your talents, for you write letters which are inimitable, and which make me anxious to burn all those I have received from other women—with your voice, for you sing like no one else in the world, with your originality, which was as refreshing yesterday to our *blasé* natures and as brightening to our intellects as acid on a rusty blade—with all these attractions you would be the woman of our day, if you had only a trifle of beauty.'

Hélène turned her head away quickly.

These few words sufficed to cause her to loosen her grasp of the Sisyphus rock she had climbed so valiantly in the last two months.

In those who have the principal quality the secondary ones may be lacking without detriment.

"And I," thought Hélène, "had I every talent in the world, can never have beauty. People will admire me as a rare and curious object. I shall be studied, wondered at and sought; courted, too, if you please, but I shall never be loved!"

"Are these caricatures yours?" the young man continued. "I recognize all our friends in these sketches. Here am I and here is my fair Italian! You have not finished it, and why not, comrade? Come, take up your pencil again. Here, make this line stronger. Deepen that shadow. Perfect! Wonderful! My ideal resembles her mother! I have been told so, but I refused to believe it. Alas! Alas!"

"Implacable contradictions of varieties and similitudes, my dear Guy. Those are adorable Marchesa, who resemble a mother made to be caricatured. Here an incomparable mother has left a frightful daughter. Nature, then, is as contradictory as men are malevolent."

"You are skeptical, Hélène."

"Naturally."

"And you have a right to be. Irony suits you, too, better than Resignation. Nature and men are your enemies, and you are right to speak ill of them. I did not understand you until yesterday. You are bizarre and strange, that I admit, but you are harmonious, as the Painters say. You are totally different from any one I ever saw before."

The two young people sat down to the table. They were witty and clever, and after a while they began to talk of their childhood, of their disputes and their reconciliations.

"It is delightful to be with you once more, comrade," said the restless traveller. "Is there not, then, something else in this world but Love? The truth is, however, you were my first love, and my first despair. You, too, have loved me! Nay, do not deny it. You wished to be my wife when you were hardly able to walk! Do you remember how we played together in the Luxembourg? We were two pretty little creatures, were we not, Hélène? We were the admiration of all the nurses and the soldiers, of the servants and students—"

"And of the mothers," added Hélène, gravely, with her heart swelling and ready to burst. "Mine was mad with pride, as mad as she was with grief, later, when that terrible fever destroyed all my beauty. Do you think, Guy, as my father does, that she died of this grief?"

The young man started.

"Hush!" he answered, with some brusquerie, "you bring to my mind something which troubles me very much."

"And what is that?"

"I had forgotten it, but now it stings me like a remorse! Let us leave the table, Hélène, if you have no objection. Fate often dictates man's words with cruel precision."

He drew Hélène's arm through his, and in considerable agitation traversed the Salon in silence.

A thousand eager thoughts, a thousand resolutions and as many indefinite plans passed through his brain.

"And why not?" he suddenly exclaimed, "why should I not realize my dream? I have the explanation at last."

"Speak plainly, Guy—you torture me," said Hélène. "You know some fact in regard to my mother's death which is terrible—I feel it, and know it. Hide nothing from me, I implore you on my knees. In the name of her who loved us both, tell me this secret which has taken all the color from your face. You owe me this, as your sister!"

"Yes; I will tell you," answered Guy, and he took Hélène's hand in his. "She died because of her idolatry of you, and it is your duty to live only to worship her memory. My beloved adopted mother, in her last moments, sent for me, and ordered every one else to leave the room. These, Hélène, were her last words: 'I had dreamed, Guy, that my daughter would be your wife, and that you would be my son. Now it is impossible, and this conviction has killed me!'"

Hélène trembled from head to foot as she heard these words—her heart seemed to rise in her throat and choked her. Her eyes opened to an unnatural size, and she seemed to see an immense void before her which filled her with terror.

Guy, uneasy and grieved at the evident sorrow he had caused his friend, drew her toward an arm-chair, and scolding her gently, finally recalled her to herself.

"Forgive me," murmured the young man, "forgive me, and I will tell you, presently, why I gave you this shock. Let us talk calmly together."

She was seated near a table and placed her elbow upon it. Guy took a chair just opposite her. Both looked at each other. Hélène in a questioning sort of way; he with the same expression.

"Listen to me," he said, "and clever woman that you are, divine and comprehend a project hastily conceived. Do not commit yourself by a sudden exclamation. Keep your lips sealed until some phrase in my discourse touches a corresponding chord. Await the conclusion of what I am going to say, and even then give no definite response until you have fully measured the result, for it is possible that you will be responsible for the rupture of our friendship."

Hélène was naturally greatly disturbed by these words, but she did not speak.

"You," began the young man, "know something—more than something—of the adventures of my life, since I have either written them or told them all to you. I have every reason to rejoice at the confidence I have placed in your discretion and affection.

"Until yesterday I could never reconcile your tolerance for a person like myself with your other characteristics. In future, however, I prefer hatred to your encouragement, or disdain to your indulgence. You are irrevocably the enemy of women, and, therefore, you wish that I should bestow upon them my inconstant love. I must confess I do not feel flattered by

this reasoning. I should comply with your wishes and fulfil the mission with which you would intrust me, were I to marry, should I not?"

"Were you to marry," cried Hélène, vehemently, "you could no longer avenge me."

"At all events," he said, "I should never marry the woman I loved. I am of the opinion of Héloise, that marriage is the tomb of love, and I have always felt certain that the joys of passion become more keen when one is not hampered by the vulgar cares of every day life.

"As I am unfaithful by nature," he continued, "I cannot marry, and thus consent that a woman with whom I may be at sword's points after a time should be able to claim certain rights. When a man marries the woman he adores, he hurls defiance in the face of Love, and shuts the door in the face of passion. A gallant ought to marry only when he feels that marriage is his only protection.

"It is less of a risk to a man's health to have his head broken than it is to be slowly soaked through by the rain. A man may jump into the water in his own time and season, but a shower usually arrives at a moment when he is least prepared for it. Marriage, then, is a good thing in itself, even for a libertine. As I look at it, it is a guaranty, an association, unprofitable at first, but formed as a provision for the future—an alliance in view of a repose to come—without grief, without reproaches, without retrospective jealousy, since no love is mingled with it.

"I sometimes think, Hélène, when I leave women or they leave me, when all my fair friends one after the other have attained in my recollection the same point of perspective, I dream of having a wife some day in whose eyes all my errors toward her sex would not be errors toward her. I will not submit to the regrets of a wife who, were she certain of being my last love, would none the less do her best to make me feel remorse for my first.

"I should like, on the contrary, to be able to narrate my adventures as old soldiers describe their campaigns, for Passion has its vicissitudes, its surprises, quite as much as Glory! I should like to come home —home to a friend and companion—to seek the peaceful rest, the calmness which in riper years when two persons see life as it really exists, is sure to come.

"You understand, Hélène, that I can only select, to fill the intervals between my gallantries, and as a crowning touch to the edifice of my ambition, a woman who has not the smallest aspirations toward love. And it must be one who would be interested in my *bonnes fortunes* as you have been, who will not pity the fair creatures I have deserted, but who will encourage new inconstancies on my part! In short, Hélène, I will marry no one but you, and I ask you to be my wife!"

She made a violent effort to show neither surprise nor embarrassment. Certain phrases of Guy's had affected her painfully, others had awakened invincible repulsion, and others still had thrilled her with joy.

This proposition made by Romain's son was the

truest testimony of a touching and flattering faith in the disinterested friendship of Martial's daughter, a return to the tenderness of their childhood. It was the consecration of a brotherhood which had seemed to Hélène until then more enviable than the transitory passion of Guy for his favorites. Her friend offered her what he had offered to no one, the promise of a faithful affection, and it was only necessary that Hélène should accept it, that she should make a good bargain and give in return not such qualities as she had not, but her very faults.

"You can say to yourself," continued the young man, "that I am a wandering carrier-pigeon, and when tempest-tossed and worn out by storms, or with a broken wing, I shall come back to my brother's nest. Forgive me, dear Hélène, if I speak too exclusively of myself. The fault is really yours, for you have never ceased to overwhelm me with proofs of your generosity.

"You must allow me to say a few words about my father, and also of you. Poor father! his appetite is so fierce for paternity that, like Saturn, he would devour stones thinking he was devouring his children!

"Am I the stone you wish to offer him in your place?" asked Hélène, eager to say something which should make Guy think her entirely at ease.

"Little simpleton! Can't you realize how my father will love you when you are his daughter, the wife of his son. His most cherished dream has always been that you would become my wife, but he did not dare to say anything to you about it, for he had no

idea how far our intimacy would authorize me to confess to you my numerous short comings. So much for myself and for my father. And you, Hélène, as soon as you are Madame, and no longer an unmarried woman of twenty-five, neither young nor old, will be spared a thousand annoyances. You will then be able to trample down certain obstacles which hitherto you have been obliged to go around. You may be an original, as much as you please, but you must not be extravagant in your likes and dislikes. Even this haughty attitude you have assumed as an enemy of women, an attitude which suits you well, will suit Madame Guy Romain infinitely better, when she is petted and caressed by her chevaliers than when she was as Mademoiselle Hélène, the daughter of the indifferent Martial."

And as she did not speak, he continued:

"And now," he said, with a nervous smile and a slight tremor of his voice, "I have accomplished the wishes of our beloved dead. Hélène, will you bear my name? Will you, my sister, fulfil toward my father, who is growing old, the duties which I neglect in the most culpable manner?"

Hélène's impressions were so confused that she could not reply. She saw only one thing clearly, which was that she could not, and must not, reveal to Guy the hundreth part of her trouble. She gave him a little nod to imply that she was deliberating, while, in reality, she was simply trying to calm herself. After staunching, with some roughness, the wounds inflicted on her feminine vanity she replied:

"Your demand, comrade, honors both your friendship and mine. I accept it, Guy, for the sake of the dear memory you have evoked, for your father's sake, for your own, but—"

"You make a reservation, then?"

"Yes;" she answered, with a laugh.

"And what is that?"

"If I should chance to become beautiful and should wish to love, you must assent to it, Sir Adventurer."

He was about to reply with a jesting "yes," in as gay a tone as Hélène's question, but he checked himself.

"If you should become beautiful, you must summon me first, in order that I may pass my judgment on the event," answered the young man, "and then— Until then, Hélène, it is useless to touch on this point."

"What did that mysterious 'then' mean? Is it a promise of tolerance—"

"One cannot argue about a miracle. Hélène, tell me, will you marry me?"

"I will."

"Then let us go and ask your father's consent, and then that of my own father," cried the young man, gayly. "Let us strive at once to make the old people happy, to gladden their declining years—that is the proper phrase, is it not?"

"Your father will faint with joy," answered Hélène, as she rang the bell with a nervous hand. Her voice, however, when she gave the order that the carriage should be brought round, was given in a perfectly composed tone.

"I will go up stairs to change my dress, Guy," she said, turning to him, "and will come back in fifteen minutes."

As soon as Hélène had left the room, Guy went to her desk and there wrote, in haste, a note to the Marchesa, which he sent at once to the post by one of the lacqueys in Hélène's anteroom.

The note to the divine Julia, was as follows:

"I so entirely understood your meaning and your views, fair lady, that on my arrival here, my first care was to ask in marriage the daughter of the celebrated sculptor, Martial. She is the same person of whom I have so often spoken to you, my childhood's friend, my sister, the confidante of my love for you. The one whom I have described to you as being as marvellously plain as you are marvellously beautiful.

"I, like yourself, have no partiality for marriage, which would be an impossibility for me except with a person of my own position and rank. We, the sons of artists, believe that the aristocracy of genius should be guilty of no mésalliances. I have, therefore, chosen as my wife, my equal, but I wished her to be so ugly that she could never inspire me with love. Then you and I, dear Marchesa — widow and confirmed bachelor as we are—will be united by such ties as you desire.

"I love you with a haughty love, with the love your cavalier ought to feel for you, and with a humble love, such as is the duty of your humble servant.

"I shall hasten, Madame, to throw myself at your feet. "GUY ROMAIN."

"P. S.—My respects to the old Duc, whom I prefer to Prince Croscio. I have engaged by telegram the Hôtel Leopardi, but I shall send the furniture and decorations from Paris."

Hélène and Guy left the Hôtel in an open carriage, drawn by two superb horses, of which the young man fully appreciated their beauty.

They drove toward the Square of *L'Arc de Triomphe*, and Guy, although he was a Parisian, admired the line of lights all down the Champs-Elysées, some of which were in wreaths, while others were as restless as fire-flies. These diamond-pointed lights, sparkling among the trees, were suggestive of a perpetual fête, to which the oldest habitués returned each night with ever renewed pleasure.

The night was mild and lovely. The young people drove across the bridge lighted by the gas lamps which, reflected in the Seine, added to the brilliancy of the scene.

The carriage rolled along under the low hanging foliage and finally drew up in front of Romain's door. Hélène and Guy descended and noiselessly penetrated as far as the hall of the Greek house, intending to surprise the two fathers who for twenty years had spent their evenings together in Martial's atélier.

Then Hélène stopped short in front of the famous

statue, which had really been the cause of her abrupt departure. She had been away from her father's house two months and had not, therefore, seen it. She was struck dumb with admiration.

The statue was beautiful, divinely beautiful. It resembled the portrait Romain had painted of Martial's adored wife. This daughter of Leda bent her white throat with the grace of a swan.

Surprise, humiliation and intoxication were expressed in the fair face of the sister of the noble twins.

Martial depicted Helen at the moment when she discovered the deception practiced by Venus, and sees in Menelaus, whom she has innocently followed under the features of a husband — the shepherd Paris, her lover. Fate, the master of Helen's acts, has taken her to an island. Irresponsible and amorous, Jupiter's daughter leaves to the gods who have deceived her, the care of absolving or of avenging her. Fatalism and love were mingled with consummate art in the face of this statue.

Martial and Romain, at the moment of the arrival of their children, were discussing for the thousandth time the superiorities and inferiorities of sculpture and painting. They were so full of their argument that Romain, on seeing his son appear, cried out:

"Paris!"

"Running away with Helen" answered the young man, turning toward his friend who lingered in the shadow without.

Martial hurried to his daughter and led her proudly

to the feet of the statue, with which, as he had a right to be, he was thoroughly satisfied.

"Look!" he said.

"My mother," she stammered.

And finding this unexpected outflow for her emotion, Hélène burst into tears. Martial, Romain and Guy all understood her feelings and knew that she, implacable as she was toward living beauty, had a passion for beauty in Art.

They said something of the kind to her.

"I love beauty in marble," she replied, "and I have often said so to Romain. I love the humanity of this model. You know that I adore in my mother just that which I abhor in pretty women."

A sad silence followed these words. Guy, in order to break it, cried:

"I give you a hundred guesses of the enigma which we have come to propose to you, noble authors of our days, great Martial and great Romain—Frenchmen and shrewd Parisians, full of experience! Well! can you guess?"

"I guess," answered Romain, "that you are jesting with us."

"By no means. It is precisely the contrary. Now then, what have Hélène and I come here to say to you two?"

Martial replied:

"Oh! young people, I am well aware that it is something unreasonable and impossible that you now propose to ask of your paternal slaves. Do you want the

sun and the moon? I will do my best to obtain them for you. I will implore the gods, whose statues I have made, to assist me in unfastening the stars from Heaven's wall. We shall see, in that undertaking, if Romain's saints have any influence in heaven, for I think he will invoke his painted saints as I do my marble ones."

"But as Martial declares that my virgins look like anything but virgins, you would perhaps prefer, my dear children, that I should descend to the infernal regions while the sculptor seeks his goddesses on the Olympian heights. Must I bring Cerberus to Hélène? Shall I lead Eurydice to Guy?"

The young man drew Hélène forward, and compelling her to make a deep reverence, he said with an air of great solemnity:

"Respected fathers, she and I ask you, out of pity for two lives that are filled with many troubles, to allow us to think of marriage."

"Marriage! Of whose marriage?" cried Romain.

"Guy's and mine," answered Hélène, gravely.

"With whom?"

"With each other, of course," answered the young man. "Hélène and I."

Martial and Romain rose hastily from their chairs and went to their children. The sculptor and the painter simultaneously discovered that they held each other's hands. Hélène, in spite of the tears in her eyes, was suddenly struck by the oddity of the situation, and the others, too, with their artistic sense of

the ridiculous, could not preserve their composure, and the whole four burst into laughter.

"Attention, gentlemen!" cried Guy, "it looks as if we had taken our places for a quadrille; but remember, no changing of partners, if you please!"

"But is it possible? With your peculiarities of character and temperament, with your tastes and habits?" exclaimed Martial. "At all events, I can only say if it be a joke, it is a poor one; if you are in earnest, it is an inspiration of genius. I give my consent, however, with my eyes open."

"Can it be, Hélène," asked Romain, "that you accept him with the conditions that he has undoubtedly imposed upon you? You admit—"

"Everything. I have all to gain, since he adds his fortunes to my wealth—and he gives me that which I most prize in the world—the joy of being your real daughter!"

"Listen to me, Hélène, cried Romain. "I love you very differently from these two men, I love you for your own sake—for yourself—not for myself, as do these selfish creatures. I understand you, too, simply because I adore you—because you are worth us all put together."

As he spoke he snatched Hélène in his arms and held her close to his heart, covering her brow with kisses.

It was with difficulty that she restrained her tears. To be thus caressed by a father other than the one whose blood flowed in her veins, here in this studio,

from which she had been dismissed by Martial, seemed strange and impossible.

"When shall the marriage be?" asked the sculptor. "You see that Romain is in such haste to gratify his paternal relations," he continued, with a vague jealousy, and feeling himself a little left out in the cold by the alliance of Hélène and his old friend.

"I leave it all with my father," answered Guy, quite enchanted, "and I have only to consent that the marriage may take place as soon as possible, and that the various preparations and ceremonies may be curtailed as much as possible, and made as simple as may be."

"To that I agree, my child," said Martial, "my first reason being that the most foolish figure in a marriage is the bride's father."

"Ah! you always think first of yourself!" answered Romain. "And suppose we should have a charming fête, like that of yesterday, would that be disagreeable to you?"

"I submit to anything—I will do all you desire, only you must agree not to scold me!"

"You will hurry things, father?" said the young man, drawing Romain aside. "You must remember that I have little time, now, not more than a month."

"Do you mean, Guy," murmured Romain, reproachfully, "that you intend to leave her so soon as that?"

"The very day of our wedding. You understand that, surely. Marriage is one thing—a life-long devotion is another!"

"All this contempt for poor Hélène as a woman,

pains and offends me," his father answered. "And you display a wonderful lack of tenderness for which you will one day be punished."

"Hélène, as a woman!" repeated Guy, shrugging his shoulders. "The very idea is preposterous. I chose her because her mind is essentially masculine in character, her imagination strongly fraternal, her heart simply filial. It is really you who will benefit by my marriage; it is mostly for you that I concluded it, and yet you reproach me with the conditions on which Hélène and I have agreed. Which of us two, then, is most unjust? As to Hélène's femininity, she hasn't a particle."

"Would to Heaven that you are right!"

"What are you after now father? Do you wish to dissuade me from this marriage? Are you seeking to destroy all the scaffolding that I have built up with such infinite pains, by your sentimental fears?"

"You are right!" exclaimed Romain. "Why should I say a word? I am a fool not to confine myself to benedictions!" When he is Hélène's husband, thought the father, he cannot, at all events, marry his Marchesa!

The preparations for the marriage were not made with any especial haste, for the prospect of having a daughter-in-law did not console him for the grief of losing his son, and he did his best to postpone to the latest possible hour the moment for the departure of the prodigal son.

The Marchesa in her turn did not press Guy to

return to Verona, her own marriage absorbing all her attention. The young man therefore, certain of the future, surrendered himself to the pleasure of being among his friends and with Hélène and his father.

The Saturday evening receptions became more and more delightful, and were the head quarters of the artistic world. Hélène was delighted, as were Guy, Martial and Romain.

The conversation at each of these soireés gave them subjects for discussion for the rest of the week, and these discussions kept up the interest of the evenings. Guy was not in the least weary of Paris. He went to Hélène every day at four o'clock and installed himself in this charming Hôtel full of flowers and of light, where each day, each evening, some charming surprise diverted him, either at the table or in the white salon, the room which he regarded as more especially his own.

Hélène's unvarying sweetness of temper was never disturbed. The solidity of her judgments, her spontaneity, her disinterested affection, the light and vivacity she spread around her, the pains she took to spare those she loved the smallest unnecessary annoyance and fatigue, caused every one who lived within her influence to feel a delicious sense of repose, an intellectual sense of living. Her quick intelligence gave an impetus to the minds of those about her, but this impetus was a gentle one. Love being forbidden her, as she believed, she expended in her friendship all the coquetry generally devoted to passion, and she consecrated herself to this devotion with exclusive fervor.

Hélène had understood by instinct how to recall the memory of Guy when absent, to his father, and by a thousand trifles Guy was perpetually attracted and repelled. Guy congratulated himself daily on having assured for the future an affection which, except in ardor and in desire—except in the brief intoxication of possession, had all the sacredness of what Hélène called friendly affection.

He said to himself, since one loves one's father with filial love, one's brother with fraternal love, one's country with a patriotic love, why should not one love one's friends with love, pure and simple?"

The hours slipped away so full of occupation that their passage was almost unnoticed.

Each evening Hélène sent a carriage for Guy's father and her own. The four dined together gayly; at two o'clock, except on Saturdays, Romain and Martial left, but Guy lingered a little longer to hear his friend sing while he smoked in the Turkish boudoir, or read aloud to him while he drew, in the white salon.

He preferred those hours when he was alone with Hélène because the atmosphere about her was then more restful. Years of constant correspondence had taught him to grasp from one word the entire meaning of a sentence. This entire sympathy is one of the most precious delights of friendship, which even more impassioned pleasures cannot make us forget.

Hélène had a very clear conception of the demands made upon her, and she reserved all her eccentricities and paradoxes for her Saturday receptions.

As long as she continued to be the enemy of women, Guy asked no other originality from her. He had submitted to all feminine caprices, to exactions, jealousy, anger and reproaches, to remorse and its attendant woes, and he never wearied of admiring the resources and capabilities of Hélène's charming character. He daily became more attached to this noble heart, which gave itself to him in all its entirety, and asked for so little in return.

Enormous wealth permits enormous luxury without its appearing such; and the most costly follies, when it is not necessary to limit expenditure, lose their air of extravagance without the pleasure they impart being diminished.

Hélène had so strong a desire to amuse her dear Guy that she soon came to the conclusion that her weekly reception was not enough. She began to invite —recompensing them the next day by sending some souvenir of great price—a singer or clever actor. She received them in a friendly, informal way, most agreeable to men who see little of private life, and especially delightful to herself and her home circle. Martial, Romain and Guy as well as Hélène, came to know all the most celebrated actors on the Parisian stage and took the greatest delight in their discovery. When an artist among artists, without any other thought than for the persons he sees about him, allows himself to be seen, known and understood precisely as he is; when, too, he adds to what he says or what he sings, the reasons he has for his interpretations of such a charac-

ter or such a work; when he argues upon or defends his judgment, when he gives his opinions upon his comrades and on their talents, when he goes back to the traditions of his predecessors, it seemed in listening to him that the man attained under the eyes of his hosts a larger growth and development, corresponding to the grandeur of his art.

Saturdays, when writers, composers, painters, sculptors, engravers and journalists all appeared, because notable literary fêtes, from which every one went away rich in stores of news and anecdotes. Knowing, moreover, that they were released from all commonplace gallantry, they had the heart to be natural—and naturally agreeable.

After the second soirée Guy announced his marriage, and his friends needed no explanation to make them understand this resolution. Everybody remembered the narration of the young man, and Hélène's expressions of hatred for pretty women at her dinner-table on the day when her house was first thrown open, and more than one guest said that this handsome man and excessively plain woman might marry, but they would never be united. Hélène's guests, Martial and Romain's friends, decided that this marriage was arranged merely to give the young girl the weight and position of a married woman.

Guy, on the following Saturdays spoke without concealment of his approaching departure for Verona, without any of the habitués of the house feeling called upon to feign astonishment; all who loved him

expressed and felt a strong hope and wish for his success in his artistic career, for his happiness in his marriage and for his speedy return.

But the *cavaliére-servante* of the Marchesa, perhaps to convince himself, affirmed that his new love had over all others a strength of passion which for the first time in his life inspired him with a desire for constancy.

Everybody laughed immoderately at this.

"For a love made up of tenderness and of fidelity, for a love which is augmented by passion, for an honest, hearty love," cried a young painter, "a whole heart is required, Guy, not a fragment of one like yours."

"Hear this fellow talk of fidelity, of steadfastness, when he is as variable as the wind," said Romain, "it is simply preposterous!"

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE.

GUY and Hélène's marriage took place with the utmost simplicity one Saturday afternoon. They returned to dine, and the usual reception took place in the evening as if nothing had happened that day of especial interest to those in the house.

Romain two or three times took Hélène's hand in his and called her "My daughter."

Madame came more naturally to the lips of Hélène's guests than Mademoiselle. Martial alone pronounced the word Madam with astonished delight.

It was Guy that evening who was the first to leave. He shook hands with his friends and bade them adieu without one of them, by word or sign, trying to retain him. He obtained from the youngest man present the promise that he would each week write him a full account of his wife's Saturdays, that Guy might, as he said, obtain even in Verona the cream of Parisian wit.

He embraced Hélène cordially, with even some little tender emotion, calling her his dear comrade, his best friend. She thanked him gravely for the honor he had done her in giving her the name of Romain, and they parted. Romain went with his son to the station.

"My boy," he said, "you trifle too much with the

rules of respectable society. You have too little regard for the feelings of others. You will assuredly come to grief if you continue thus. The more your vain pride encourages you to believe that you exceed other men in your successes, the more you throw aside all private and public duties and responsibilities, the more surely you will become a being without consistency, a feather in the wind, tossed hither and thither. Let me advise you to beware of the whirlwinds which sweep over heights—they will sweep you away, they will—"

The hairbrained youth interrupted him:

"I give to the poor without conditions," he said. "I shall never marry again; I never have any vulgar affairs, and I have no debts! In short, there is so little of the Don Juan about me that nine times out of twenty it is I whom the fair creatures abandon—not I who abandons them!"

"*Bon voyage!*" cried Romain, as the train started.

Guy thought it sounded like "Go to the Devil!" He laughed heartily, as he drew from his pocket the last note from the Marchesa.

"Your love burns me," she wrote, "and I do not know whether they are the fires of Hell or the rays of Heaven. Are you the great Lucifer in person? Hasten through the sombre corridors of your domain. I am in haste to be accursed by your presence. If you are an archangel, fly over the Alps. I raise my eyes to see you descend! and I extend my arms in greeting!"

The train bore Guy swiftly away. The father, with his eyes full of tears, went back to his daughter.

CHAPTER VI.

A CONFESSION.

AS Guy had been the first to leave Hélène that evening, so was Romain the last, not in order to apologize to her for his son's departure, but to seek such consolation himself as the new-made wife would have the courage to give.

The father, with selfish pain, avowed all his grief which became more intolerable to him with each new absence of Guy's. Romain felt himself growing more and more bitter each time Guy left him. He talked to Hélène of the uneasiness felt by those whom a man with this unnatural thirst for adventure left behind him. He dwelt long on what he believed to be the fact, that a man like Guy was sure, sooner or later, to fall the prey of some astute creature, a woman probably no longer young, some woman, he said, who is more anxious to acquire influence than to lavish tenderness. Whoever resolves to reduce a nature like Guy's to subjection, does so by tyranny.

"Such women," continued the old painter, "are by no means uncommon. They subjugate the most contradictory natures—those that are calm, those that are ardent, the disdainful and the jealous, the thoughtful and the enthusiastic, the capricious and the yielding

Such is the wonderful ability of certain dangerous and irresistible women. Their greatest pride is to be recognized as having the power to transform the most inconstant of men into the steadiest of lovers."

Hélène smilingly lectured Romain, and bade him not to be jealous of his son's fleeting fancies. By her generous entreaties, and by her assurances of filial affection, she sent away her father-in-law a few hours after the marriage in a much less irritated frame of mind toward Guy.

"How strange!" she said to her nurse, when she entered her chamber, and, throwing aside her double rôle of unselfishness and skepticism, she burst into a passion of tears.

An instant later, impressed by a sense of the strange contradiction in his life, she began to laugh at herself.

"I accepted the favor of this noble friendship," she continued. "I feigned to be worthy of it and of his confidence, and I have had my reward. I am Guy's wife! But, I hate myself! and it is quite likely when I understand myself better I shall go further and despise myself!"

"Hélène! Hélène!" cried the nurse, in terror, "you cannot love Guy, now that he has insulted you by this marriage. Your dignity demands that you continue to be just what he has called you, his comrade."

"Nurse, I do not love him more, but I feel that I have the right to hate myself more. I am furious with myself for being what I am. Were I beautiful, he would love me. I know that beyond a doubt.

These two months have proved this to me most conclusively and most irritatingly. Ah, me! how hard it is to know that one is repulsive in the eyes of those about us. How sad it is to feel that no eyes can dwell lingeringly, lovingly and longingly on my face—a woman with a heart full to overflowing of tenderness, whose imagination is rich in poetry, is inferior to a friend, to a flower, to an animal—who can be neither desired nor devoured!

"Odious Fate has destined me to tell falsehoods, to smile at the woe inflicted upon me, to declare myself happy when in burning agony—to maintain that I am content when all the time I crave the impossible.

"Am I to blame for my ugliness? Why, then, should I be so cruelly punished? Nurse, I am afraid of the future. Yes, I am in deadly fear that the violent words shut up within my breast and which burn on my lips, will break their boundaries. I love Guy Romain passionately and devotedly. I am his wife, and yet he leaves me!"

"You have loved him thus for a long time," answered old Josephine, in a grave, steady voice. "You have always loved him. You will continue to love him—and now tied to him by this terrible marriage, you will not be able to avoid or fly from him, and his return will bring you only an aggravation of your trouble."

"The cruel word, 'Never'—without mercy and without hope, is written on my empty brain. It has always been a part of my life. I see nothing but that word 'Never! never!'"

"Never!" repeated the old nurse, beating her breast as if at a loss to find one word of consolation.

Hélène, half leaning and half sitting on the foot of her bed, her night-dress displaying all the thinness of her form, looked around the room — each mirror reflected her disagreeable face.

"No!" she cried, "no beautiful woman ever breathed who would rejoice in her loveliness as I would rejoice in mine! And yet there is more than one who would exchange her fair face and form for my wealth. Ah! happy creatures—how I envy them!"

"O, Nature!" she added, in a sort of desolate appeal, "will they ever praise thee as I will do? Can they ever express gratitude as I can express it? Will they ever break into religious benedictions for thy divine gifts? I do not believe a woman in the world appreciates the gift of beauty as I would do!

"Nurse," continued the sculptor's daughter, with increasing excitement, "can you have any idea what it is for the uncultivated and the refined, the commonplace herd and the artistic element all to bow down before one, to be admired and worshipped, to obtain what one wants by a smile, whether it be possible or not, whether it be just or unjust, to inspire gratitude with a smile or a look—in short, to be loved by Guy? these are my impossible dreams; these are the joys in which the Marchesa revels!"

Hélène very soon dismissed her nurse, notwithstanding the supplications of the good woman who was unwilling to leave her dear child in this nervous,

excited condition. Sometimes grief reaches such a point that only absolute silence can be endured. Hélène was tired of hearing her own sighs, and it seemed to her that she could better support the weight of a mute sorrow than the insufficient relief of words without dignity.

But when the poor girl was alone, a sudden temptation to suicide seized her; she felt almost as if it were the destiny Fate held in reserve for her. She was guilty of the crime of ugliness amid surroundings where the beautiful is the moral law, and this being the case, Hélène said to herself that she ought to die. She thought of several plans—various methods of ending her life noiselessly.

When she had once concluded on this, she made a sort of inventory of that which she was about to sacrifice, and immediately every instinct of her nature arose in rebellion. She estimated herself more fairly than ever before, and she coldly said to herself that she had no right to destroy such qualities as these with which Nature had endowed her. And amid this contest going on within her soul, between her senses and her sentiments, Hélène's haughty intelligence rose to the ascendency, and she felt that she was capable of governing others as well as herself. One or two points slowly established themselves clearly before her: the first being, that it was infinitely better to surpass others than to envy them; the second, that a face even if unbeautiful may still acquire a grandeur and nobility of expression.

Contained passion, the effusions of a heart forced back on itself, are irresistible forces for the development of character. Hélène, who had not until then discovered the paradoxical secret of an unattractive woman, made up her mind that indifference and pride, combined with intelligence, had still their value.

The light of the Hymeneal torch, which had for a few moments flashed in the eyes of the young bride and half blinded her, suddenly expired, and gave place to a brilliant picture of fame. The artist's daughter determined to be an artist herself, and felt more than a faint hope of success.

Shadowy, formless images floated before her. Confused sounds, vibrating with harmony, filled her ears. Hélène meant to become either a painter or composer.

If originality, knowledge, and artistic education, and peculiar aptitude fitted a woman for such a career, then Madame Guy Romain was peculiarly qualified for it. She felt that will alone was necessary to develop her peculiar qualities.

Hélène now devoted herself to work, spending her entire time testing her ability for musical improvisation and at her easel.

To her short mornings, she added also those evening hours which Martial and Romain left to her. Her brain was in a perpetual state of activity. Impressions, timid or joyous, cruel doubts, flashes of triumph assailed her in the moments of highest inspiration and left her not the bitterness of personal struggles, but the exquisite lassitude of intellectual fatigue. She

had formerly accepted solitude with humility; she was now grateful for its consolations which she eagerly sought.

Three, almost happy weeks passed away in these various employments. Hélène selected from the melodies which flashed through her brain, certain ones which she wrote down. Accustomed to caricature, which demands a good memory and a quick hand, she made twenty sketches, no one of which did she take time to work up.

But, alas, when one's ardor outsteps one's knowledge the end must surely come. In music, Hélène sought perfection before having fixed the first idea, and found after a little that nothing was clear. In drawing, she set down too hastily the first impressions, which therefore retained the proportions of a sketch, and did not have patience enough to change and work it up to perfection.

Madame Guy Romain, at last, discovered that she was on the wrong path, and was involved in difficulties which only a true and great artist could have assisted her to conquer. She had falsely supposed that all that was necessary was taste and talent, and that in one day an amateur could become an artist.

She then resolved to consult Romain, and submit her attempts to him. Hélène made a mistake and confided in him at the same time. It was, she said, in order to detach herself from Friendship that she desired to attach herself to Art. If necessary, she would give up the world entirely to work with more profit and

regularity. Romain took care to discourage all these ideas which were calculated to insure retirement from the world, for he felt very certain that solitude was precisely that which the uncertain health of his daughter-in-law could not support. He discouraged her, in short, to that degree, that she renounced all these projects, which had for some weeks been her comfort, and laid aside all her dreams of glory and her last illusion.

CHAPTER VII.

NATURE.

GUY, indifferent or embarrassed, did not write to Hélène, as had always been his habit on arriving in Italy. The young wife, ignorant of the tone she should take in this new correspondence, awaited the first letter from her husband. This letter did not appear.

Marriage, therefore, had deprived Hélène of a most precious consolation. For ten years she had been intimately associated with all the whims of her old companion. She had been his confidante and, to a certain extent, his adviser. Guy had sworn to her on his departure, that he would send his dear comrade frequent news of his movements, but he did not keep his word, and Hélène longed day and night for the story of his happy love, which she dreaded more than all others. A month had passed away—of which the first three weeks were short because they were happily occupied, but the last seven days were endless—and Hélène with difficulty bore up under her husband's silence.

Her Saturdays, always brilliant, brought around her even men of fashion, who were anxious to enter her artistic circle, and Hélène was compelled to submit to

the gallantries of many elegant idlers, whose vanity was gratified by being seen in the society of this wealthy, influential, and fashionable woman. Her ugliness counted for nothing with them.

At the Bois, Hélène was an object of immense curiosity, people whispered as she passed and pointed her out to persons near her. Her success was that which falls to the lot of all distinguished persons. Martial and Romain were often with her, and when a fourth person was seen in her carriage he was at once set down as some celebrity.

One day, when both her father and her father-in-law were detained until the hour of dinner in their respective atéliers, Hélène went alone with her nurse, in an open carriage, driven by Cæsar, Josephine's son.

"To the Bois!" said Hélène, in the weary tone of those who say the same thing to the same people at the same hour of each day.

"Mother," asked the young coachman, turning round, "ask Madame to permit us to take her into the country?"

"Yes, dear Hélène, let us go to the country, I beg of you," added the nurse, "I have longed for so many years for a stroll through the fields. Grant me this favor to-day, I beg of you?"

Hélène belonged to that large Parisian class who abhor excursions and journeys, and who by dint of paradoxes and witty assertions have come to believe that one describes best not what one has seen, but that which one imagines.

When one speaks of local color, the old habitué of the Boulevard, never having seen Naples, offers as an indisputable proof of the advantages of his theory the startling example of more than one painter of Eastern scenery, whose feet have never trodden any other sand than that of the Squares and the Champs Elysées.

The nurse being a peasant adored the country. She feigned to take Hélène's silence for consent, and ordered Cæsar to drive toward the woods of Bellevue.

They took the *Quais* on the other side of the bridges.

A white, intense light, at once pale and incandescent, inundated the sky, the Seine and the rivers. Great boats were anchored near the shore, others moved slowly over the sleeping water, while the wooded shores, the small green islands made a most charming picture.

The carriage slowly ascended the heights of Bellevue, and Hélène's almost unconscious eyes were caught by the sight of Paris, trimmed, so to speak, by its ribbon-like river. The view became momentarily more extensive, and Hélène half rose in her seat, in order that her gaze might comprehend it. She had a passion for this great city; she appreciated each one of its graces, adored its elegances, but it now seemed to her, as she looked down upon its vast extent that it was more entirely her own, and that she loved it more than ever.

The nurse drank in the fresh air and twittered like a bird just escaped from a cage. Intoxicated with the

sunshine, she talked more loudly than usual in order to make her voice heard above the noise of the wheels. She told Hélène the names of all the trees, went into ecstasies over every living thing, every green tree and meadow on which her eyes rested.

Hélène's inattentive ears heard Josephine's hymn of praise, and the delighted exclamations of the good woman's son.

"Do you remember, my lad," said the old woman, "the time when your mother was only a peasant woman, and when you yourself were only a sturdy peasant lad? We measured you one day by the side of our ripe rye, and the stalks were taller than you. When you stood on tiptoe you could just reach the beard on the rye. You laughed, and proudly called to me, 'Mamma, in a year I will be taller than the rye, even when I stand among it bare-footed.'"

"Ah! Cæsar, how sweet it would be to walk in the dewy grass every morning, to bask in the sunshine, to see things grow, and the wheat ripen, to see the trees, first white with blossoms, and then watch the coming of the fruit, to sow the seed and then reap the harvests! Can you tell me anything more delightful? And the harvests, Cæsar, tell me, do you remember them? The wealth piled up in the granaries, the rich returns made by the earth to those who cultivate it generously, who water and enrich it, who labor over it. Look, my son, over the plateau of Bellevue; they are reaping there. Drive quickly, that I may walk once more among the wheat, and lie down

among the sheaves. Once more I will eat some of the new grain!"

"Yes," cried Cæsar, "and once more hear the songs of the reapers!"

They were now in the country. Hélène looked around in surprise at the glowing plateau. At last, aroused from her indifference, she took in every detail of the wonderful spectacle at which she was by accident present. It was all new to her. The sun was slowly setting and seemed to have sent out long, lingering shafts of light, as if on a mission to gather up all the sunshine still lying on the plateau and return it faithfully to the God of Day, which, heavy and swollen, was gradually sinking upon the earth.

The vast plain extended before her. The cracked soil, the road covered with fine white dust, and the parched grass, all told of the heat of burning August. The wheat, as yet uncut in many places, bent double under its own weight. Here, again, the reaper had thrown them on the ground where they lay in restful attitudes. Beyond, the dry stalks were being piled on carts which were driven over the stubble and sank deep into old ruts.

In the centre of the plateau a huge heap was being formed. Men standing on their carts, tossed with rhymic nonchalance from their pitch-forks, great masses which were seized by other men who, skilled in the art of building up a mow, rounded and smoothed in such a way as to be agreeable to the eye as well as best calculated to preserve the grain.

The men smoothed and pressed the straw and grain into place with their feet buried in all this richness, and soon gave to the pile the form of a primitive hut.

The fallen spikes were gathered up by patient gleaners and fastened into bundles. After these came other gleaners, the birds; frightened away by the scythes, they were not reassured until they saw so much excellent food lying on the ground. After the wheat is cut down the sparrows and larks can for another week pillage and run riot among the white straw, hunting for the deep brown seed suspended as if by magic from between a pair of open wings.

Hélène listened with a soothed spirit while the reassured birds sang a gay good night to the sun, and drank in all the poetry of this pastoral scene. Her heart swelled with tender emotion, and she realized that it was possible to love such things. Solitude exists in towns even amid a crowd; in the fields, everything shares with man a visible existence, everything speaks to him, listens to him, and replies to him.

The evening draws to a close, and pale Night appears. The moon is on its third quarter, and with serene brow, and mouth drawn down, disdainfully smiled upon the earth.

Hélène amused herself very much with a star that actually winked at her. She said to herself, laughing, that she could employ her talent for caricature even under the stars, and felt a faint pleasure in indulging in this little sarcasm amid her sincere admiration.

She was glad to find that her senses were not oppressed by all these forces nor crushed by all this grandeur. She entered into familiar intercourse with Nature, and found her so amiably disposed that she did not for a moment foresee the dangers of an enthusiasm to which she was soon to yield.

Hélène watched the light clouds and saw near the moon a huge dog, a gigantic dragon fly, and another tremendous but unknown reptile. They were placidly moving on, side by side, to meet a band of strange, erratic-looking creatures, who held distaffs in their claws.

"The grotesque is everywhere," said Hélène gayly, to herself. "These delightful animals have doubtless occasioned Diana a hearty laugh," she added, for Madame Guy Romain had become a Pagan and peopled the stars, which Science declares to be vacant. "Perhaps Apollo, who is retiring, has ordered out these fleecy clouds to amuse his sister, who is just arising!"

But the distaffs broke in the claws of the monsters. Even the outlines of the animals themselves became confused, and, after floating about meaninglessly for some moments, again massed together and assumed the menacing form of a colossal bear, whose limbs seemed but loosely attached, and finally separated from the body and disappeared. The great dog had remained intact; his open jaws seemed to swallow huge mouthfuls of the bear. Hélène watched these clouds around the moon, which seemed to be guarded by strange animals, thus fighting for her favor or her protection.

Soon, however, victors and vanquished lost their faint rosy flush, and floated away into the cold gray mist of the horizon.

Swallows on fleet wings darted hither and thither in the silvery moonlight, flying in straight lines or describing with hurried grace the most capricious curves.

On the right of the plateau stood thick woods. Tall oaks rose above their neighbors, their shining leaves rustling in the soft evening breeze, murmured a gentle lullaby. Oaks prefer the moon and its gentle caresses to the hot kisses of the sun and the ardor of noon day.

Hélène was carried away by all the beauties she beheld, and began to think that she understood Nature, and yet, beneath all she saw, she felt there was some vague mystery which attracted and charmed her. What is the mystery of the real? Where is it hidden? Are the secrets written on that which we see, or hidden within depths of our own natures which we cannot reach?

If this mystery be hidden in the mind of man, Hélène promised herself to deliver it, for she uses the master key of Nature. How many vague impressions will then assume a tangible form, and how many new ones will she receive! The passion for acquiring knowledge has come to tempt her ignorance. Nature offers herself to Science, and before revealing herself fully is pleased to instruct by great sights. She demands that man shall pursue her night and day, at all hours, and desires to be questioned with persistency and wisdom.

Notwithstanding the remonstrances of her nurse, Hélène left her carriage, and saying that she did not wish to be followed, takes her way to the wood. She has a strange sensation. "Those murmuring, rustling trees, with their branches extended like arms, were they only trees? Might they not be sentient beings?" asked the city-bred woman, half afraid and half attracted.

She hesitated a moment, and then stood still. Her heart swelled with a strange emotion. The perfume of growing things which she breathed for the first time in her life intoxicated her and quickened her pulses.

"The woods are inhabited by fauns," thought the young woman, half dreaming. "I will invoke them this evening. They may be ugly, as well as myself, and yet love and are beloved. They will reveal to me the love that even ugliness may inspire."

She made her way into a deep glade and stood on a mossy mound covered with shining green leaves and blue periwinkle. As she entered this temple of verdure she lifted her eyes and dropped them again, as do pious women on entering the portals of a church.

The branches of the oaks curved over her head in protecting arches. The ground is covered with ivy and delicate anemones. The moon whitens the trunks of the trees until they look like marble columns, the air is filled with a holy hush.

As soon as Hélène entered this spot her heart began to beat to suffocation. The fever of summer nights

invaded her brain, and burned her lips and hands. She believed herself to be among the fauns, and in the nuptial chamber of the nymphs. Where are the fauns beloved by the Hamadryads? Might she not hear their kisses and have her share of their embraces?

These were Hélène's troubled thoughts as she walked on. Breathless, timid and half afraid that some hairy Satyr would suddenly appear before her, she still made her way deeper into the forest. Her feet trod on the dry twigs and she fancied that other feet were pursuing her.

"Whoever may be the companion who will grasp my hand in his," she said aloud, "I accept him; whatever his love may be, I receive it; I will fly with him to the innermost recesses of this forest, that so I may escape the solitude that crushes me!"

Suddenly Hélène, who was entangled in a mass of unruly briars, was so caught by one of them that it seemed to her that she was grasped by an invisible arm. She falls softly on the moss among the rosy flowers of the Digitalis, the leaves brushing against her face and her hair, the odor of the crushed plants, the moonlight and the shadows all troubled her to such an extent that she took the images which figured in her feverish hallucinations for apparitions. Her eyes, unnaturally distended, beheld light vapors which presently assumed vague forms. Then these forms became living creatures who lifted her from the turf and drew her among them to teach her their mystic dances.

Exhausted, she leaned against a tree; the dancers

had disappeared or were reposing like herself. Afar off the trees were inundated with moonlight; between them and her was a wide expanse of turf, without tree or underbrush upon it, but a thousand glancing fire-flies played over the surface.

Suddenly a peculiar rustling was heard among the foliage; a shiver pervaded the whole scene and Hélène trembled from head to foot. The moon had slowly and imperceptibly crept up the Heavens until all at once it shone down directly above the open glade at the entrance of which Hélène was standing. The moon looked as if poised midway between the forest and the sky, and would descend in another moment.

Hélène uttered a cry of supplication, and throwing herself on her knees raised imploring hands and addressed Diana, the favorite goddess of the sculptor Martial. Diana, too, was the Divinity adored by her mother, and more than once as a little child had she murmured her soft words of invocation at that mother's bidding. This was the strange prayer now addressed by Hélène:

"O, divine sister of Apollo, Destroyer that thou art! It pleases thee to pierce women with thy arrows, for like me thou hatest them. Thy chastity is irritated by their compliance as my ugliness is irritated by their beauty. Permit me to be one of thy Priestesses, and let me dream that this is the sacred island of Paphos, where no profane sound is ever heard. Shall I, like the young girls of yore, bring you offerings, and shall I swear to thee to love no mortal?

"If thou receivest this vow, O Diana, soothe my madness, calm the agony I feel. Thou art not always cruel, and sometimes it pleases thee to pour balm into wounds. Deign, then, to look upon me with compassion, this night. In mercy extinguish in my heart the passion by which it is consumed. I abandon myself to thy care, and implore thee to drive from my heart this absorbing desire. Aid me to stand with thee, Diana, far above the temptations of Eros. Take from me all wish for love enable me to become icily indifferent to the magical presence of my lover, let me remain cold under his glances, indifferent to the sound of his voice. Enable me to belong to myself alone; to be free, in short, from the trammels by which I am now bound and under which I now suffer. Listen to my prayer, gracious goddess—grant my wishes, I entreat thee!"

But Hecate speaks to her faithful worshippers only in the rush and ripple of running waters, or in the voice of the breeze that stirs the surface of the sleeping lakes.

The moon left the glade and was lost among the trees. Hélène watched the slow departure of the divine rays and sought some sign or revelation, some response from the Goddess.

She caught a gleam and glitter in the distance, through the low hanging branches. Diana was summoning her worshippers to the shore of some river consecrated to her rites. Hélène heard feet swiftly advancing, but this time she did not turn, for she was now flying from the love which before she had sought.

Hélène appoached a small lake. The dark water shines on the darker back ground like a mirror in the twilight shadow. She had left the massive oaks behind her and now stood among slender white birches. They reminded her of herself as they leaned sadly over the sleeping waters. Exhausted by her mad haste and by her emotions, Hélène now sat on the wet grass close to the water.

Her head is buzzing, her throat dry and parched, She still hears approaching steps among the dry leaves —it is Diana who follows her. Diana would soon show her majestic face above the birches and the larches, and be reflected in the water. Then the fish which she protected would gladly dart into the radiant circle.

"Ah! fair Diana," said Hélène to herself, with her eyes aching with fever, "how have I offended you?"

The evening breeze scattered the dew with which the leaves were heavy, and slowly, dully dropping to the ground was weighted, as Hélène believed, with threatening words of doom. Diana had written in flaming letters on the surface of the water that she detested ugliness. Supreme in beauty herself, she had no mercy on those of her own sex who were repulsive. Her priestesses could be only Arcadian nymphs with lovely faces, inspired eyes and divine forms. She pursued at night with her hatred, the women—the despised of Apollo—whom he pursued by day.

Diana, invoked by Hélène, has no pity for women who, without the excuse of beauty, dream of love and its pleasures. Through the troubled brain of Mar-

tial's daughter passed radiant forms, the woodland nymphs evoked by her imagination. Each slender birch became a maiden fair and undefiled. Leaning toward her they whispered hopeless words in her ear. Hélène could distinguish each word uttered by these Pagan voices, and hears them say over and over again:

"Hecate offers Elysian peace to imperfect mortals who seek it and offer themselves up in Death!"

Hélène's brain reeled. She drew herself along the grass until she reached the edge of the water.

"Elysian peace," she murmured, as her feet were lapped by the mimic waves.

She uttered a silent farewell to life, took still another step, and threw herself forward into the arms of Death, as she believed.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUICIDE.

JOSEPHINE had not once lost sight of her beloved child. She had followed her step by step, disturbed by Hélène's strange manner. She knew, too, that her nursling loved neither the country, the woods nor the night. Josephine was accompanied by her son, who drove his horses through impracticable paths to join her. His mother and he stood at some distance from their mistress when she approached the lake. There, invisible to her, they watched her with terrified curiosity, stupefied by her sudden passion for Nature. The nurse divining nothing of all that was going on in the mind of her young mistress, did not move until Hélène stood on the very edge of the water. She then whispered to her son as she snatched the reins from him:

"Go quick and prevent her from any imprudence."

But Cæsar did not require these instructions. He rushed toward his mistress: just as she sank beneath the bubbling water he seized her by her dress, and lifting her in his arms bore her to his mother, who met them half way down the slope.

Together they tore off a portion of Hélène's garments and wrapped her in the carriage blankets.

Josephine held the girl in her arms as she had done when a child, and seating herself in the carriage bade her son get home as quickly as possible.

Cæsar, however, was obliged to lead his horses through the woods by the bridle, but when he was once on the high road, he drove at full speed.

The jolts and jars of the carriage, which came near being broken to pieces in that frightful descent from Bellevue to Paris, did not arouse the unfortunate girl. Either from torpor or because she was unconscious, she could not reply to the faithful servant who was covering her with kisses and calling upon her with sobs.

Romain and Martial expected their daughter to dinner. Surprised that she did not return from the Bois at her usual hour, they did their best to reassure each other, but with little success.

Hélène suddenly appeared before them in the conservatory which they, side by side, were pacing with restless steps and ever growing uneasiness. Cæsar bore her in his arms, and Josephine, bathed in tears, was close behind.

Hélène's long hair was unbound and still wet. Her colorless face and lips gave her the look of a dead woman.

"Send for our old Doctor—quick! quick!" cried the nurse. "Let there be no delay, I implore you!"

But the heart-broken servants were bewildered. No one of them moved, while all eagerly asked questions to which no one replied.

"Brother!" cried Cæsar to the Maitre d'Hôtel,

"will you not go for the physician! Bring him with you if you wish to save Madame's life! Do you hear?"

Josephine's second son rushed to seek the physician.

Martial and Romain, stunned and voiceless, followed Cæsar and the nurse as they bore Hélène up-stairs and to her room. They stood looking on helplessly while she was laid on her bed. After being wrapped in a flannel peignoir, Cæsar rubbed her feet and Josephine applied hot cloths to her breast.

A long, shivering sigh from Hélène, followed by several gasps for breath, restored some activity to Martial and Romain.

Together they exclaimed:

"What has happened?"

"Only that she drowned herself!" answered the nurse, almost brutally, for she was indignant with the two fathers, as well as with the whole world, on her darling's account.

On the way from Bellevue to the Hôtel, Josephine, in spite of her despair and anxiety, had reflected much on Hélène's strange conduct, and knowing as she did so much of the young girl's secret, her sorrows and her despair, she had decided that it was a suicide.

"Drowned herself!" cried Martial, without understanding the woman's full meaning. "What on earth do you mean?"

"Do you intend to say," asked Romain, "that she did it intentionally?"

"Yes, intentionally! Because she was made too unhappy to live!"

"You do not mean that we—I—" asked Martial, "made her unhappy? It is impossible, nurse!"

"It is not you, sir, now who is entirely in fault. She has shaken off much of the sorrow and mortification you inflicted upon her when you drove her from your home. But he who tortures her, who is killing her by slow degrees, is ——"

Hélène called her nurse to her side in a faint voice.

"Hush!" she said, "not another word; you are betraying my secret!"

"I will be silent for your sake," answered Josephine, "but not for theirs, selfish creatures that they are! They deserve to know all that you conceal under your sweetness, your smiles and your goodness."

"Begin, then, by sparing me before you preach to others!" murmured her idol.

The physician entered. He had taken care of Martial's daughter ever since her birth, and in the grave illness which came near carrying her off when she was seven years old, he was the one whose care and devotion had been the means to snatch her from the jaws of death. Hélène had often reproached him for this in a tone in which there was more of earnest than of jest.

"Ah! you have come," murmured Hélène, in a tone of intense discouragement. "Do not try to cure me again. Leave me in peace this time."

Having received some hints from Cæsar, who was watching for him at the door of the Hôtel, the physician believed, with Josephine, that Hélène had been

driven to this act by despair. And the words uttered by his patient on his arrival confirmed these suspicions.

"The most careful nursing, no excitement, silence and solitude!" he ordered, addressing Josephine, "for I see symptoms of great cerebral excitement. It is this which impelled her to the act, and the feverish excitement has not been quelled by the bath!"

Hélène made a little impatient gesture, but the old man pretended not to see it, and departed.

Martial and Romain followed him out.

"Is she in danger?" asked one.

"Do not leave her!" said the other.

"I am only going out to see my prescriptions made up under my own eye, for everything is of the greatest importance in a case as critical as this. In the beginning of a fever such as, I am sorry to say, I anticipate, every care must be taken. I shall return shortly. You had best remain here until I come back."

The two fathers seated themselves outside of Hélène's door, which stood open.

A servant appeared, coming up the corridor, bringing the mail. Romain saw a letter from his son among the others.

"A letter from Guy!" he whispered to Martial.

Hélène, with that excessive acuteness of hearing which is often found at such times, heard this whisper, low as it was, and exclaimed:

"Nurse, I want Guy's letter!"

"What letter?"

"The one his father is speaking of. Go and get it at once!"

Josephine fancied this to be the beginning of delirium, but she called Romain and repeated what Hélène had said. The painter, not having the smallest idea that she could have said it and believing that news from Guy would only aggravate the malady of his beloved daughter-in-law, denied that there was a letter from Verona.

"I am not mistaken," repeated Hélène, with glittering eyes. "No, I am not mistaken, give me that letter!"

Romain, who on first seeing his son's writing had been overwhelmed with joy, trembled now at the idea of relinquishing this letter, for he had begun to believe that her illness was caused by despair in regard to the Marchesa, begged his daughter-in-law to be calm and not insist.

But Hélène threatened to rise, and Romain had nothing to do but obey.

Supported by her nurse, the young creature, after being a month married, broke the seal of the first letter from her husband.

This was the way it began:

"At last, my dear Hélène, after an infinite deal of trouble, I am the accepted *cavalière servante*, received and fêted. Our double marriage has been a great success, at least for three persons: she, you, and I. Thanks to my fair mistress, and thanks to my intelli-

gent wife, I am amid all these conjugal ties, the freest of men—"

She could read no more.

"Enough generosity! enough restraint and enough martyrdom!" cried Hélène, in a choked voice.

Romain snatched Guy's letter from the hands of his daughter-in-law, and glanced over the first few lines.

Indignant at his son's cruelty, he repeated after Hélène:

"Enough indulgence for this worthless fellow, for this reckless trifler!"

Josephine turned a look of approval on Romain.

Martial, leaning against the door of his daughter's chamber, looked on in silence at this scene.

"You can now understand, perhaps, why life to-night seems very hard to me," murmured poor Hélène, to her father-in-law.

Martial timidly approached her bed.

"Do not say such things," he whispered, "take pity on me, on Romain—remember, my child, that we two are growing old."

"Who has any right to claim pity from me," she replied, coldly, "not you, surely? Yes, to-night, I long to be at rest, and I will not renounce, for the sake of any one, my right to bring to an end some day the sufferings which have become intolerable."

"So, then," asked Romain, earnestly, "all this gayety for the last three months has been feigned, all these simple, gentle ways were studied? All that

seemed to be the expression of spontaneous feeling was artificial?"

"Yes, and no—no, and yes," she answered, wearily. "It is easy to pretend to be natural with those who really know nothing of you.

"Why should I ever revert to the Past?" she continued. "Why need I say more than that I do not wish to live? Why should I live, I ask, since I love Guy Romain, my husband?"

"She has always loved him!" added the nurse. "Ah! you know my child at last, do you? You know her courage, and her wonderful powers of endurance. You begin to understand her at last, do you? You have discovered that she is too brave, and has worn herself out in her self-appointed task?"

"Nurse," cried Romain, "do you mean to say that she loved Guy before she was his wife?"

"I mean to say, that she has loved him ever since she could walk."

"And we have allowed her to undertake this terrible trial. We have all united, in fact, in imposing it upon her," cried Romain, sinking on his knees by the side of the bed of his daughter-in-law. "Forgive me, my beloved, forgive me!"

"Forgive me," repeated Martial.

"You have tortured her," said the old nurse, "when you could have consoled her, as I have tried to do."

"I am the most unhappy creature in the world," stammered Hélène, bursting into wild tears and sobs.

Suddenly, the old physician appeared.

"Madmen! Criminals!" he exclaimed. "Is this the way you obey my injunctions. Every one shall leave this room, and I will take care of her myself!"

And he sent them all away, despite their protestations and the tears of the old nurse.

"You, Josephine, may return when you are entirely calm," said the Doctor, in a tone which admitted of no contradiction. "No one shall come in, now, until I ring."

And he closed the door on the three criminals.

The old man took his seat by the side of the invalid's bed and soothed her with low, monotonous words, but Hélène's fever was increasing; she said the same thing over and over again.

"Diana, cruel Goddess," she cried, "prompted my expiation—she forbade me to live—and the Avenger Hecate desires my death."

The physician thought it wiser to direct Hélène's delirium than to contradict it; he asked her several questions, and followed the thread of her ideas.

"Hecate wishes to calm the ills she has caused," he said. "Look at her, she is smiling upon you."

"Ah! she smiles! You see her then?" answered Hélène.

"Yes, I see her. She has chosen me, your preserver, as you call me, to save you the second time."

"I demand from her and from you Elysian peace."

"She has promised it," answered the kind old man. "Rest then, dear Hélène, sleep and rest!"

The girl closed her weary lids and was silent, but

she soon opened them again wildly, and tossed to and fro in delirium.

The next day her lips were blackened with fever, her teeth were discolored, her eyes sunken and her pulse irregular. The old Doctor felt compelled to send for Martial and Romain, and tell them that their daughter had typhoid fever.

"Ought we to write to Guy? Do you think his presence can do Hélène any good?" asked Romain.

"We must not dream of allowing her to undergo such a shock, which be it agreeable or painful cannot fail to disturb her," answered the physician.

Toward evening Hélène called to her father and to Romain.

"I feel," she said, "that I am going to be seriously ill. I have the greatest difficulty in fixing my attention. I do not utter the words I intend to speak; I begin a sentence and forget the conclusion. Ah! what was it that I wished to say just now? I cannot remember. Everything disturbs me—I am, I believe, a little delirious already. Listen to me, quickly, before I am worse. If, during my illness, I should ask to see Guy, if I should implore you to send for him, pay no heed to this request, I beseech you. Respect my real wishes which I now declare to you; respect them as you would those of a dying woman. I beg of you not to write to Guy to tell him of my illness. You must receive, Saturday, the same as if I were down stairs and well. I insist on this being done. The friends who have promised Guy to keep

him informed of the success of my evenings will continue to do this, and will make no mention of my illness, for he will not think it of sufficient consequence."

She again repeated, "I wish it—I insist upon it!" and then her delirium returned.

For twenty-one mortal days she hung between life and death. Her nurse, Martial, Romain and Cæsar, with her servants, watched over her with a devotion which few pretty women are able to inspire.

In her rare moments of lucidity she expressed such gratitude for the devotion of which she was the object, that her friends were somewhat reassured as to her ultimate conduct should she be restored to health. They all felt sure that she no longer wished to die.

The words love and to be loved, were constantly on her lips during her delirium, and she more than once expressed her passion for her husband with such power and such poetry that Romain had the greatest difficulty to keep the promise he had made to her and refrain from sending for his son.

When Hélène's eyes glittered with fever and the color mounted to her cheeks, her face could hardly have been recognized. Her long, soft hair had been cut short—in quantity and quality it was all that it should have been—but it was faded and lustreless.

One morning after a fearful night, the nurse, more uneasy than she had yet been, was left alone with the patient while Romain and Martial breakfasted.

Suddenly Hélène started up, and said in an imperious tone:

"Ugly as I am," she cried, "I do not wish to die. I am only twenty-five!"

"Hélène," answered the nurse, at her wits' end to know with what words to calm the excitement that was killing her child, "you are no longer plain—your eyes are no longer dull and spiritless; your complexion is no longer waxen."

Hélène listened as if she heard and understood, and her signs encouraged the nurse to speak. The physician, who greatly feared the continuance of the fever, had insisted that she should not be crossed in any way, but that she should be gently encouraged to take less gloomy views.

"Hélène, my Hélène!" continued the nurse, "you will recover from this illness, and be as beautiful as you were at seven years of age."

"Beautiful!" repeated Hélène, in a tone of such heart-breaking sadness instantly followed by a torrent of tears.

The nurse rang for a mirror and brought it to her with wonderful courage.

"Look yourself, and see if I exaggerate," she said, "and make haste to get well and enjoy your beautiful face and figure."

Hélène lifted her head, which felt both heavy and strangely empty. She supported herself on her right hand and leaned toward the mirror. After looking around the room as if not quite certain where she was, she turned her eyes to the mirror. Her feverish excitement brought fresh color to her cheeks.

"Is that really myself?" asked the sick girl. "It cannot be! That is not an ugly face that I see there. Ah! nurse, my trials would be light if the Goddess I invoked in the woods where you took me, had given me the hope of a change like this!"

Neither Hélène nor the faithful old servant, one from weakness the other from prudence, ventured to talk more on this subject. Hélène simply said to herself that when she recovered it might come to pass that she would be less ugly. And Josephine said to herself that with the hope of becoming fair, Hélène would soon recover.

And, in fact, after this hour, the fever, which had abated, turned, improvement began, and soon Hélène was pronounced out of danger.

CHAPTER IX.

A CHRYSALIS.

MADAME GUY ROMAIN, under the peremptory orders of her physician, consented to leave Paris and spend the Autumn in the country. She was advised to go to the sea shore, and selected Bellevue, where she took a furnished house not far from the beech grove and the little lake.

As soon as she could bear the journey, Hélène, accompanied by her most devoted servants, went to the Villa des Acacias. The physician had insisted that Romain and Martial should not follow their daughter, and even refused to give them permission to visit her.

"She requires," he said, to the two fathers, "simply to vegetate. She must not talk, read or think. She must be thoroughly indolent. You need have no fears of her now; an illness like hers gives new enjoyment of life. My friend," added the old man, turning to Romain, "if any news come from your son, suppress it."

All was settled by this tyrannical doctor. He arranged Hélène's life for the next three months. He sternly fixed the hours for her walks and drives, for her siestas and her meals, and even forbade her to speak except at certain hours of the day, and under no circumstances was she to converse.

"Shall you not come to see me, Doctor?" asked Hélène, when they parted; "you ought to endure some of the tedium you so mercilessly inflict on me."

"No, I shall not come, for you would question me in regard to your father, your father-in-law, your handsome young husband, your Saturdays and a host of other things. Now, in my opinion, you ought for the next three months to be interested only in yourself. I wish I could, with any chance of being obeyed, forbid you to think."

"What would you give me, were I to obey you?"

"Health, Hélène, and consequently— Ah! my child, I dare not promise you what I hope!"

"Promise, Doctor."

"If you follow my directions to the point I require, if you lead a perfectly indolent life—stupid, slothful and sleepy—if, in short, you will agree to be a chrysalis for the next three months, you will undergo the transformation I desire and anticipate, and, some fine morning, you will awaken a butterfly!"

"After having been a caterpillar," she answered, with a smile. "I will follow your magical prescriptions, and we shall see what will happen. I will submit blindly and follow your commands, as we do those of the soothsayers we consult."

She embraced the three old men who consented with a very bad grace to her leaving them, and departed for Bellevue. She ordered the curtains to be drawn close over the carriage windows, and closed her eyes that she might not be tempted to look out upon her dear Paris, and breathe a last lingering farewell.

On her arrival at the Villa, Hélène ordered that every mirror should be covered. She determined never to see her own reflection for the next three months.

"If your hopes, nurse," she said, turning to Josephine, "and the promises of the Doctor are realized, I desire to taste joy in its fullness. I desire that it shall be an entire surprise, a complete transfiguration, and besides, if I were to find that the old waxen hue of my skin should return, if my hair should be dull and lustreless, and my eyes heavy and faded; in short, if I were to see that I was as ugly as before my illness, my courage would forsake me, and I should not have faith to follow out to the end this insupportable prescription."

From her windows and from her garden, Hélène could see nothing but trees. Cæsar, when he drove her out, took her only through shaded lanes and forest paths, where the carriage wheels rolled noiselessly over the thick moss.

Hélène in this intimacy with solitude found infinite comfort. Men formed by society are strengthened by contact with their equals, and given new vigor by public activity. Women, on the contrary, are refreshed only in solitude under the starry skies, or in the radiant sunlight in the fields and woods.

Hélène, who had one evening discovered that one may worship inanimate things, conceived the strongest love of Nature and received more than one lesson in regard to loving her fellow creatures. Her sentiments lost by degrees all that was artificial and became

ennobled and enlarged. Her emotions were intuitive, her reflections being no longer hampered by the narrow, conventional horizon, against which they jostled from time to time, lost much of their sombreness.

Instead of looking upon herself as a disinherited creature, amid surroundings where the only idea was Beauty, she felt herself to be a privileged person in the great Universe. She began to realize the unfinished attempts in the vegetable and mineral kingdoms, and seeing the difficulties of each life, she enjoyed the advantages with which our species is endowed, and learned to wonder at the perfections with which even an ugly woman is gifted by Nature.

Her gratitude softened her character; her natural sweetness of disposition returned to her. The consciousness of benefits received inspired her with the idea of benefits to give. She tried to extend to others the ties which attached her to the generous Universe. An ardent desire to make others happy revealed to her the meaning of true charity.

Martial's daughter had, up to this time, attached little value to anything but talent. Never had she thought of relieving the sorrows of others. Believing herself to be hopelessly unhappy, she had never realized that in her wealth she held a mighty engine for good. No one had ever come to her to ask charity at her hands, because she was supposed to be entirely insensible to the sufferings of the poor.

But having one day questioned her nurse on what could be done with money, Hélène learned that a few

thousand francs have a magical effect in delivering some hundred families from poverty, and bestowing upon them positive happiness.

From this time, Madame Guy Romain had but one passion: that of doing good. Spontaneous acts are, oftentimes, the ripe fruit of slow reflections. Hélène, with her intelligence quickened by daily observation, said to herself that exchange is the law of the Universe. She hoped, therefore, that her charity toward the unhappy would arouse the charity of Nature toward herself.

For three months, then, Hélène lived near the gods, and made them offerings that she might obtain from their generosity, her lost beauty. She showered happiness about her, complaining only that she had not opportunities enough to do what she would. She was rarely deceived by pretended poverty or distress of any kind.

She took pains to inform herself to the smallest detail, of the situation of the poor people she aided, and gave her assistance only to those persons who needed her kindness. Hélène did not, like most rich women, under pretext of being discouraged by deceptions, allow herself to become the dupe of those who only abused her charity.

As she hoped to obtain a reward for her gifts, a reward of another kind, she detested the gratitude which diminishes the benefits of the benefactor. Taking infinite pains, therefore, to remain unknown, she expended all the resources of her intelligence to escape the ardent thanks of her protégés.

The last days of November passed with unexampled activity. Hélène's exile was drawing to a close, for the first day of December was fixed by the old doctor as the end of her retreat. The Autumn had been unusually soft and mild. While Hélène poured out her wealth with prodigal hands among the poor and humble about her, the sun, too, had poured down upon her all its golden treasures of light and warmth.

The evening preceding her departure, Hélène determined to visit those places which her physicians had forbidden her to visit before her cure was complete. She drove out to the plateau, again, but she saw no resemblance to the August landscape. The bare, deserted meadows recalled the harvest only by scattered heaps of blackened straw. A flock of heavy black crows replaced the swift darting swallows.

Hélène's sad heart had been once repulsed by finding the plateau all gay and bright, and now, when she was hopeful, the stall was vacant and dreary. She believed this contrast to be a happy augury, and turned her steps toward the lake.

She has now reached the spot where she, her heart swelling with a sense of her own unattractiveness, had resolved to die—and here she beheld young girls dancing together on the smooth turf. Like Arcadian nymphs, they danced around one of their companions who, wearing a wreath of green leaves upon her head, held a spray of roses in her hand.

Hélène, who, as a rule, avoided young girls, approached the gay circle, surprised at the attraction it

had for her. She smiled at the happy young creatures and this smile was returned. They stopped singing, their circle opened and she was taken into it. She stood opposite the nymph crowned with green leaves, who gayly sang:

> "These roses, comrades,
> I offer to the fairest among us."

Then the chorus of dancers took up the refrain, slightly modifying it:

> "These roses, comrades,
> Are offered to the fairest among us."

And, on this, Hélène, who made no attempt to struggle against them, felt herself kissed with great warmth and effusion. It was the nymph crowned with verdure who had given them to her.

"Will you dance with us, Madame Guy Romain?" said the girl.

"You know my name, then, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, Madame, I am your nearest neighbor. I have told all my friends of your kindness to us. I have told them how my father was robbed and could not make his monthly payments—how he was threatened with failure and dishonor—he did not wish to live. I wrote to you, Madame, and you came to his rescue. Ah! I adore you, for you saved him! If you were less good than you are beautiful you would be still more beautiful than you are good!"

Happy Hélène, confused and delighted at this first success won by her beauty, rushed to her carriage, but she was pursued through the woods by the gay refrain sang by the maidens.

When she reached the Villa, Hélène begged her nurse to take the covers from off the mirrors. For three months the convalescent had done her best to forget her face, in spite of the flattering eyes she met, Josephine, Cæsar and her other faithful servants restrained with difficulty the demonstrations of a joy which increased each day when they eagerly watched the continually brightening face of their dear mistress.

Hélène's figure had immensely improved. This Hélène had known for some time. Her fine grained skin was filled out, she had become plump and round. When she looked at her rounded arms, her lovely dimpled hands—when she looked down on the undulating lines of her form, she thought of her father's beautiful statues without a pang of envy or self-loathing.

Her hair, formerly so colorless, now rippled over her head in soft rings, for of course it had not grown long since it was cut during her fever. It was golden red, with dark brown shadows, reminding one of Autumnal leaves touched by the sun. But her face, how shall we describe it? What was its peculiar beauty? Whom did Hélène resemble? Herself when a child, or her mother?

When she stood in front of her mirror she felt troubled and bewildered. She saw no look of her former self. The lovely face before her was that of a perfect stranger. She did not recognize it, and her thoughts wandered far away. Guy's image was in the mirror. She saw only him and the features of the

absent one were far more real to her, than the reflection of her own face.

To conquer Guy, to hold firmly this insatiable lover of novelty, positive beauty was essential, and Martial's daughter, Romain's daughter-in-law, had been brought up in too artistic an atmosphere to be satisfied or deceived in a question of beauty.

Finally, she ventured to examine herself slowly, and with infinite care. Half supported by her nurse, she stood in front of a long mirror in an *armoire*. The last rays of the setting sun poured into the windows. Hélène caught her breath and colored deeply as she gazed.

Her eyes were riveted upon her own eyes, which seemed to her larger and darker than ever before. Her complexion is exquisite, her lips brilliant in color, fresh, and dewy, show her white teeth. Her throat is like her mother's, and like the throat of her father's best statue, beautiful in its roundness and its grace; her short hair curls over her fair brow in an original and *piquante* fashion.

"Yes, you are beautiful, my Hélène!" said her nurse, tenderly.

"I am beautiful!" cried the girl, in her full, rich voice, thrilled with happy triumph. Her voice suited the especial character of her beauty.

Hélène, at first absorbed and intoxicated, was soon moved by a different emotion. Then gratitude was so great that she dropped on her knees, and offered thanks to the great goddess, Diana, for her generous bounty and prompt response to her appeal.

CHAPTER X.

THE BUTTERFLY TAKES FLIGHT.

THE next day, Hélène, dressed in a rich costume of gray velvet trimmed with blue fox, left the Villa des Acacias; her servants standing in the vestibule uttered respectful murmurs of admiration as she, in all her grace and beauty, passed down to her carriage. They were to follow later.

Their mistress entered a coupé, lined with violet-colored satin, which she had ordered some time before, but which had been sent home only the evening before.

Cæsar, waving his whip, finally gave the signal for departure.

"Long live Bellevue!" he cried. "Comrades! Follow us with all speed."

The servants replied with chorus to this salutation from Cæsar, who proudly drove his horses toward the Capital, promising himself the great pleasure of crushing his comrades with Hélène's beauty the next day, for he had more than once detected them smiling with pity at the ugliness of the lady he drove.

Martial, Romain, and the old doctor were pacing the court-yard of Hélène's Hôtel with feverish impatience.

"Ah!" said the sculptor, "I am as disturbed as I was the day that I asked my Hélène to become my

wife. I hoped, and was hopeless. I was happy, and miserable. Romain, what is our Art compared to life? What is your painting and my marble in the presence of that which my daughter has become? If, as her nurse writes, all the beauty of her childhood has been restored to her, we shall see a startling resemblance to her mother, the adored companion of my youth. Romain, do you realize this? Do you realize what is in store for us? I shall adore her, I warn you, with the jealousy of a lover."

"Yes, Martial, I see and understand all that, and more too. Do you know, that if she is beautiful, I may have my son near me again? For, my dear old friend, we must not judge him too harshly. He is not corrupt at heart, and I am certain that if he once loves Hélène all his follies will be forgotten, and he will be faithful to her, and then—"

"Then we shall see strange things in their home. Ah! the gallant married out of disdain for matrimony, he took unto himself a wife so ugly that he believes himself exonerated from all duties toward her! Very good! astute young man! We will teach you that you cannot assume such responsibilities lightly, and that a man is not born simply to go through the world and amuse himself, and that what is called pleasure has its risks, even when one supposes oneself clever enough to have guarded against them all. We shall laugh well at this husband who believed himself marrying an ugly woman, and suddenly discovers his wife to be a beauty. I am not quite sure that this is not good ground for

annulling the marriage, and I shall suggest the idea to Hélène."

"Hush!" answered Romain. "Allow me to believe that the happiness of your daughter will not cause the unhappiness of my son."

"There she is!" cried the old doctor.

"It is she!" murmured Martial and Romain, who strong men as they were, felt momentarily dizzy and faint.

The porte cochère of the Hôtel was thrown open. The coupé drew up in front of the two expectant fathers.

Hélène descended from the carriage with an easy grace which in no way recalled her former abrupt movements. She was so much less thin that she looked less tall. Her animated face, her bright eyes, the somewhat haughty carriage of her head testified to her joy at being admired. One of Hélène's charms was a certain naïve content that she frankly showed—content with herself, added to her general look of youthful gayety.

"Ah! well, my fathers!" she said, "can you not speak to me?"

"My Hélène! my Hélène, twice over!" murmured Martial, with tears in his eyes.

"Madame Guy Romain!" stammered the painter, invoking his son as his friend had invoked his wife.

"So did Helen of Troy appear to the old men at the gates," added the physician.

"She looks and moves like a goddess," the fathers

whispered, and they praised her beauty in a low, monotonous hum that sounded like the chirping of grasshoppers among the trees in the woods.

Hélène, in the meantime, had thrown herself into the arms of first one of her beloved friends and then the other. She was nearly stifled by their passionate embraces. Then, disengaging herself, she slowly moved forward, unconsciously assuming the bearing of a queen. Martial and Romain followed in her lead.

Beauty to these great artists was literally the only superiority which they recognized.

"My home was too much crowded, too loaded with ornaments," she said; "now all this luxury suits me better!"

"And to think," Hélene continued, "that I owe the change in my appearance to him whom I accused with bitterness of allowing me to live!" And turning to her old physician, she took his hand tenderly in hers.

"Thanks!" she murmured, "thank you again and forever!"

"My reward is in the pleasure given to my eyes," answered the old man, with great feeling.

Dinner was announced, but Hélène, after making a rapid tour of her rooms, suddenly dropped the Doctor's arm and seizing Romain and Martial by the hand, compelled them to follow her to the gallery, in spite of their resistance, for they divined her idea.

"No, no!" said Romain, "you shall crush the Marchesa with your beauty and I will crush Guy with my talent, for I will paint your portrait myself, and when he sees it he will admit that he is conquered."

"Come!" she cried, "you must compare before you judge!"

And she took her stand before Guy's *chef d'œuvre* under the portrait of the Marchesa. Involuntarily they looked from one to the others with the eyes of an artist.

"There is an equal amount of beauty," said Romain, "with more intelligence, more fire, more charm in our daughter. Hélene's figure is better, it is more graceful, more statuesque!"

"I am most pleased, Hélène," said the old physician, "with the lovely and good expression of your face."

She, much moved, replied promptly:

"It is because I am so intensely grateful. I should like to shower benefits on those who are less fortunate than myself, and so win the right to retain my inestimable blessings."

"Hélène, my child, be charitable to us?" said Guy's father.

She nodded toward him with a restrained smile.

Whereupon, Martial uttered one of his characteristic impertinences:

"Bid this importunate leave your presence, O, Sovereign," he said. "He wishes to attach himself to your triumphal car. He is meditating absolution for his son. He will demand it as a trophy of your victory. We will offer to the gods in his behalf a white lamb; it would not do to be so unpoetical as to allude to the fatted calf."

"You are thoroughly mischievous!" cried Romain.

"I am nothing save Hélène's slave. Will you accept me as such?" asked the sculptor of his daughter.

"Yes;" she said, laughing, "and I shall spare you no one of the many trials of servitude."

"I accept them all, divine creature, for everything from your hands I should regard as favors. I shall be now the most envied of fathers. I shall hear the contrary to all with which my ears have been irritated for the last seventeen years. When my talents are praised my paternal pride will also be gratified, and my admirers will never again say to me, 'It is impossible to believe, Martial, that you with your passion for beauty, can have a daughter as plain as that?'"

"If the sculptor Martial is worthy of being your father, Hélène," said Romain, with legitimate pride, "it seems to me that the painter, your old friend, is not unworthy of the honor of being your father-in-law. Ah! What Court of Love shall we found for you? What new Art shall we discover by the aid of which we can glorify you still more, fairest among women?"

The dinner was a joyous one. Hélène realized, for the first time, all the sweet pleasure of the flatteries which a pretty woman receives even in her own family circle. She listened with thirsty joy to the praise lavished upon her by her two fathers.

Martial and Romain were no more wearied in expressing their admiration, than was Hélène in receiving it.

They spoke of the next day, which was Saturday.

"Hélène's friends, though somewhat prepared," said

Martial, "will be none the less thunderstruck, petrified, so to speak, and will be, one and all, transformed into lovers."

"Hélène will be enthroned among a thousand worshippers," said Romain, "and it will be with difficulty that she will condescend to remember her—"

The painter was here promptly stopped by his daughter-in-law.

"Do not let us talk of Guy," she replied, in a haughty voice. "You will please understand, dear friend, that since my transfiguration I have not the smallest weakness for him. I wish to be free in my turn now. I am afraid you will be often disturbed by my conduct, for I thirst for conquests. I shall be the proper mate, as you will see, for the gay trifler whom you call son."

"In that case," said Martial, "I shall recall my son-in-law, and I shall die of laughing when this roué undertakes to reform his wife. The new situation will be deliciously droll. Upon my word, I begin to find the world very amusing. We shall see wonders in this astonishing *menage*," and the sculptor laughed heartily.

"There is one person, at least, who does not merit this cruelty at the hands of you two," answered Romain, somewhat drearily, "and that is myself."

"Bless your heart! You are the entire cause of this marriage. It was to get rid of your sentimentality that your son married Hélène. Here is my daughter tied for life to a son like yours, who is continually roaming over the world in search of adven-

tures, and yet you dare claim the benefit of extenuating circumstances and deafen us with your complaints!"

"I complain, because I suffer!" answered the painter! "I ask mercy, because you are as pitiless in your joy as in your woe."

"Dear friend!" said Hélène, throwing her arms around Romain's neck, "you must allow me to make you a little unhappy, and if a victim is demanded in compensation for the happiness of others, you must promise that it shall be you rather than me!"

"As you please, my child. If you lead me to the sacrifice with all this grace, I will gladly go, if only to please you. I love you now more than I love myself!"

"These would have been very sweet words some time ago, could I have heard them from the lips of my own father," said Hélène.

"Scold, if you choose, you have the right," interposed Martial.

"My reproach was only intended for Romain's ears," continued his daughter. "He loves me like a father, and I, therefore, desire that he should regard me as more his child than Guy is."

"I wish to have you both," answered the painter.

"You want everything—you want too much," Martial began. "You are becoming troublesome and exacting, and I, for one, do not propose to yield to you."

CHAPTER XI.

CHANGED VIEWS.

THE next day Hélène had an enormous success. Her friends overwhelmed her with admiration, and every form of acclamation was employed in her honor. The hurrahs and bravos were deafening, but Martial's daughter enjoyed them all.

Beauty adds a charm to most things. Hélène was in the gayest of spirits, and her amiable replies, her thoughtfulness and kindness were a hundred times more unexpected and unusual than her former studied and eccentric phrases.

As she had not been seen for more than three months of course every one had a thousand things to tell her. She must have all the news of the town, all that was going on in Politics, Society, and Art.

She was ready to enjoy even news stale to the ears of others, and was so delighted with all she heard, that new enthusiasm was felt by the narrator.

She was asked at the close of the evening, if she felt the same aversion to women.

"Gentlemen," she replied, you will please understand that on physical transformations are often grafted moral ones. I beg that each one of you, on returning home, will say to his wife, to his mother, or to his sister,

'Madame Guy Romain, now that she has become the equal of pretty women, no longer hates them.' Dear friends," continued Hélène, "I long now to receive lessons in womanliness, in coquetry, if you will! I am heartily ashamed of all that I formerly felt and expressed. It is a woman, a true woman, who has emerged from the cocoon spun by an ugly girl, and I beg your kind assistance in many ways, and the assistance of your mothers, sisters and wives. I beg you, therefore, to bring them to me and claim their indulgence for me. Therefore, you will please understand that no one of you must come unaccompanied next Saturday night."

"Shall I write to Guy a faithful account of this evening?" asked the young painter, who for four months had dispatched a false account of Hélène's Saturdays to Verona. "I have lied," he said, "and dissimulated in each of these letters, Madame. May I now venture to speak the truth?"

"Has Guy answered your letters?"

"Yes, each week; but only with a word of thanks. Last Tuesday, however, I received a longer epistle, and I hardly know whether I should tell you that he begs me to ask your pardon for having written to you only once."

Hélène replied, with heightened color and scarce repressed indignation:

"I give you thus publicly a message that you may send to the most forgetful and the most faithless of husbands. You may say to him that the fair Madame

Guy Romain replies only to the tenderest of *billet doux!*"

"Is this lesson for the absent intended as an encouragement to those now present?" asked an audacious and handsome young fellow.

"May we all bow at your feet?" added several other voices.

Hélène laughed gayly.

"Gentlemen," she replied, taking her stand in the centre of the salon—and she rapped with her pretty little fists, on a table near which she stood, in order to attract the attention of those who were in the further part of the room—"gentlemen," she repeated, "I want you all to hear me. You are hereby informed that if your hearts are ready to take fire, you can, if you will, set the match to them. You are requested, however, to divide the fire into two equal portions. Keep one for me, the other for Guy. This last you will, if you please, send to him at Verona."

"That your flames may scorch the young man and that he may know the torments of jealousy!" said Martial. "That he may come back to us and allow us to enjoy the pleasing sight of a loving husband!"

"Ah!" said Hélène, "if—"

She hesitated.

"If! If what?" cried the chorus of friends.

"If he should be disappointed in his affection!"

"It will do him good," interposed Guy's correspondent. "Tell us what you intend to do."

"If I were to tell you the end of my story, you would not care to see the plot unfold," answered the lady, gayly. "Besides, if you insist upon the truth, I must reply that I really do not myself know what dénoûement I desire."

Upon this, every one seemed to consider himself justified in discussing Guy's position as a husband. Those men who proposed to themselves that they should pay serious court to his wife, declared that the painter, enjoying as he did the enviable position of *cavalière servante* to the Marchesa Julia, was incapable of experiencing a faithful, long-lived sentiment, and was, in short, unworthy of Hélène's love.

Others, again, who adored their comrade, uttered the hearty wish that he should be forgiven. But every person present — for they were all artists — enjoyed the situation, said to themselves:

"We must see this comedy played out."

Hélène talked of giving during the month, in honor of her marvellous cure a fête like that she had given to inaugurate her Hôtel.

Every one immediately entreated her to invite her husband. She begged Romain, therefore, to write to his son, and the Painter received with enthusiastic gratitude permission from Hélène to write to Guy in her name.

All Paris knew the next day, which was Sunday, that Martial's daughter had been transformed from ugliness into beauty, and that she would receive the

mothers, wives and daughters of her friends with as much grace as she had formerly shown rudeness in dismissing them.

On the next Saturday, therefore, the most curious and prettiest responded to Hélène's invitation. Madame Guy Romain had by this time discovered that women as much as men are charmed by kindly courtesy, that they, too, can appreciate wit, and that most of them are quite willing to recognize the superiority of individuals of their own sex, and can fully recognize and appreciate their beauty. She felt that in feminine association there was a great charm and restfulness.

Hélène made many visits with her father and Romain.

It was an event in a *Salon* when these two men appeared. The sculptor and painter, so celebrated and so admired—and so little known. Hitherto they had rarely been met outside of their own houses, and people were very gracious to this charming woman who exercised an influence over them, that brought them among people who were always eager to see men of distinction and exceptional merit.

The following Saturday the crowd was so great that Hélène decided to throw open the gallery and allow the young people to dance there.

This was a great innovation but a delightful one, and it became the fashion to go to Madame Guy Romain, whose good taste, good manners, learning and intelligence were the constant theme of conversation.

Hélène enjoyed her success with the artless delight of a child. She occupied herself with her toilette and attained the reputation of great taste and distinction.

Her robes were, as a rule, excessively simple. Madame Claire and her "tailor" were quite ready now to agree to this. Nothing now tempted her to eccentricity. If a woman is beautiful she does not require eccentricity of toilette. One of her greatest pleasures was now to dress for herself—to please herself. Smiles and delightful words of praise followed her everywhere she went.

More than once she walked out alone merely to enjoy the looks of admiration which she encountered on every side. The insignificant drive in the Bois no longer wearied her, although formerly she was deadly tired when she had once gone around the Lake. It seemed to her that the curiosity shown by others, whetted her own. Overwhelmed by congratulations on every side—congratulations which were new in her ears—she even came to consider the most ordinary compliment, poetical and charming. Praise offered in such quantities assumed an importance which it certainly had not in detail and in quality. The number of Hélène's friends increased as by magic. It was like the millet seed growing and multiplying in Robert Houden's magic goblets.

She wondered now, every day of her life, how she could inspire such passionate affection so suddenly, when for twenty years she had tried unsuccessfully to win Guy's love.

She was surrounded now not by the friends of her father nor those of her father-in-law; not by her husband's comrades, but by her own devoted friends and admirers. All Hélène's relations with the social world were characterized by the same adulation. The women who appealed to her charity for their good works, or were struggling for admission to her brilliant Saturdays, talked to her of her beauty. She constantly received letters full of allusions to the grace of her movements, to the brilliancy of her complexion and to the charm of her smile.

All the goddesses, all the nymphs chiselled by Martial hardly sufficed to furnish mythological comparisons to the admirers of Madame Romain.

Declarations, verses and flowers rained down on the Hôtel in the Avenue du Bois. Hélène gluttonously devoured them all, confounding the mediocre with the best, and this faded gallantry, these phrases which other women had heard for years and were heartily wearied of seemed to her, food divine.

Madame Guy Romain persuaded herself that no one could feel satisfied with admiration. Where almost any other pretty woman would have said "enough, I pray you," she would smilingly reply, "Go on, I am listening."

Her laughing eyes were absolutely insatiable, and as she drank in the incense offered, they seemed to say, "Thank you!" over and over again.

Hélène was nevertheless so extraordinarily clever, in spite of her naïvete, that she never gave the people

about her any reason to laugh. Her beauty was great, but she was so totally without affectation that it was impossible to criticise her severely.

A letter from Guy came to her one day, and when she had read it, she laid it down with a feeling of mingled anger and astonishment.

Attaching little importance to what his comrades had written, supposing these accounts of all that had taken place to be some practical joke upon which they had agreed among themselves, he took no trouble to answer or allude to them. He gave a calm recital of his amusements and of his own love affair, which narration he had begun in the long epistle destroyed by Romain the day that Hélène had committed suicide.

"As you now permit billet doux," wrote Guy, who, in this one phrase, gave the only indication that he had received the numerous letters sent by his friends, "I wish to give further impetus to your hatred for pretty women, and implore you not to permit it to die out. I have a new subject for vengeance to offer you.

"Know, then, my beloved comrade, my last adventure, since you are aware of all the others. I found my fair friend married in the Milanese fashion, and I undertook with joy the precious duties of a *cavalière servante*. I went every where with her, and saw her very rarely alone.

"But all was changed, Hélène. It was too smooth sailing for me. The affair was altogether too much like a marriage, there were no surprises, no caprices, no difficulties, it was, as I have said, too much like a mar-

riage with a woman who had no especial cleverness and no especial cultivation.

"The Marchesa had fascinated me by her pride, by her tyranny, by her oddities, and by the prejudices of her rank, by her insolence and indifference. Now she had become punctual, matter of fact, plausible and serene.

"'We are very happy,' she said to me, very often, 'why should we take so much trouble.'

"The Marchesa has five estates, and two palaces. She lives in turn at Milan and Verona, and at her country houses. I, of course, am expected to install myself in her vicinity, and I spend my days in wild confusion only that I may enjoy the commonplace favors of a commonplace intimacy, sanctioned by the husband of my lady, smiled upon by her friends, and waited upon by her servants.

"The craving I felt for new impressions drove me one morning out of this magic circle of happiness, as the wolf is driven by hunger from the woods. I had the blues. I was sulky. She reproached me, and our troubles began.

"I was in a very nasty mood, and showed my ill temper to the husband of the Marchesa, whom she highly esteems, who allows her to spend his fortune, and regulate his household; while she, in her turn, permits him to do as he chooses with her money. She is at home in his house, as he is at home in hers. She bears his name, and loves him after a certain fashion. Of course it is my duty to respect him. He is of high

family, of delightful manners, delicate in his perceptions, and calm, with that delightful serenity born of a long life of pleasures, sought and found. He bears his sixty-eight years with vigor. Having espoused a beautiful woman, this gallant Prince pays her his court before the world, and kisses her hand whenever he enters or leaves the room. All this has a delightful air of former days and manners, of *la vielle noblesse* in short, but it irritates and bores me.

"I fret, and fume, and attack the Marchesa. She, deeply wounded, calls me insolent, and assumes all her former air of pride. I, then, regret my conduct and my injustice, and we both taste the delights of pardon.

"I feel that the next thing I ought to do, is to excite her jealousy; she is too sure of her beauty, and I imagine that her contempt would precede her hatred if she believes me capable of an infidelity. She is so secure in her proud serenity that she has nothing to fear from my inconstancy, that she does not stop to take into consideration my education or my character, and, therefore, never feels the smallest suspicion.

"Hélène, I am weary of so much sweetness! I dreamed of an indomitable creature, a being unlike all others of her sex, changeable, imperious, and wilful; a *grande dame* who would put my love to the test, who would be as cruel as the Italian women of yore—in short, a creature of ever varying mood! Alas! three times, alas!

"Do you know, comrade, that the quality most lack-

ing in women who are in love is intelligence, or, I had better say, intelligent curiosity.

"As soon as a woman gives herself to a man, she believes that all mystery, and all secrets should be promptly done away with, and thinks unlimited confidence is the first duty. Now, I have an absolute detestation of sincerity, the mother of all commonplace joys.

"I could have loved for a long time, forever, perhaps, some woman who would have inspired me with perpetual uneasiness, of whom I could never have felt absolutely secure.

"No one of my enchantresses has ever affected me in this way.

"You, dear comrade, during those weeks which I spent near you enchanted me with your originality and your endless diversity. What an inexhaustible stock of fancies and imagination you have! I was at that time kept in a state of perpetual suspense. Your plans, your arrangements, your hopes and your discoveries were one and all novel and interesting. I felt that with you, each day would differ from the preceding one. I never knew in what mood I should find you, what you would say or what you would do. And I was equally ignorant in regard to myself.

"In short, I compared myself to some Arab steed, ridden by a marvellous horseman, who uses his whip almost as a caress; and who invites, rather than compels the animal to swiftness. Sometimes skeptical and bitter with that little air of bravado which gives you,

my dear comrade, a certain blasé manner, a manner which seems to say 'you must take me with all my faults. Take me, or leave me.' Sometimes abrupt and rude, sometimes gentle and sympathetic. You judge the world through your jealousy and yet I feel that in your heart you occasionally say, I defy the greatest artists to feel for inanimate beauty more admiration than for me.

"Ah! my friend, I need you and miss you at every turn. Take pity on my disillusion; forgive my silence and write to me. Summon me to your side again.

"The rupture of my present relations is imminent, I had hoped so much from this Veronese affair that my disappointment throws me into the depths of woe. It is perfectly clear to me that my *bonnes fortunes* have withered my heart. I must give it time to acquire a new growth before I risk another adventure.

"May I not hope to have you, Hélène, as a companion in my solitude? Formerly, when my edifice of cards fell, I fled to the other end of the world in order to escape the sight of it. Now, however, I wish to go no further than to you, my consoler—it is your aid that I implore.

"I beg of you, therefore, either to meet me in Italy, or to receive me in your home in Paris. I am impatient to grasp your hand with fraternal cordiality. Come, or send for me to come!

"Thine, far more than the Marchesa's,

"GUY ROMAIN."

Hélène read and re-read this long letter. Could it be that Guy, while still believing her to be as plain as he had left her, preferred her society to that of this charming Veronese who was more sensual than loving, more ardent than tender! Guy then remembered the days passed with Hélène, he regretted them even while he was in the society of the most fascinating of Italian princesses: what a triumph for Hélène! All things have their reward after all, and for a second she almost regretted her beauty. Had she continued ugly, she might have won by her wit and her mind, and by the power of her devotion—this man who had left her so dissatisfied with her lack of beauty.

But Hélène, in the pride of her new born beauty was indignant with Guy—indignant at his weakness of which she had been the confidante, and now resolved to punish, not to forgive him. Her contemplated vengeance was not perhaps very logical — but she had only one desire, which was to exercise it as swiftly as possible.

When she was ugly she was reproached with being good—and now, that she was beautiful she was encouraged to be wicked. If she had any scruples they were very slight.

"It is not worth while to be hypocritical toward myself," she said, "if I were, I could always find reasons for anything I might choose to do."

Did Madame Guy Romain love her husband still? This is a question to which it is difficult to find an answer, for since Hélène had realized the power of

her beauty she had become something of a coquette, and had thrust aside her love for Guy.

Free as pretty women like to be, and certain that she could always find champions interested in her independence, Madame Guy Romain smiled at the idea of being to her husband more of a trial than a consolation.

She read Guy's letter several times that night, and then, as she laid her head on her pillow, she recalled every incident of the day when her comrade had proposed this most singular marriage. She recalled her humiliation, her agony and her doubts. And now this man who had insulted her by his open allusions to her repulsive ugliness only four months before, would, in all probability, now insult her beauty by claiming his rights as a husband, after having thrown aside with such marvellous promptness every conjugal duty.

Hélène laughed disdainfully, and listened to the echo of this laugh with delight, for it proved to her that Guy's return, instead of arousing her tenderness only strengthened her positive determination that their relations should continue to be the same as now.

"There is," said Hélène to herself, "a certain cruelty in the pride a woman feels, when she knows that the man who was indifferent when she loved him, is ready to become her lover. She feels an intense strength of will, a superiority, a sense of victory."

Pretty women like to see their vengeance clear before them, and the risk of repenting later of their too great haste never deters them. In the act which

inflicts a defeat on masculine vanity and audacity, certain excessively feminine natures find great excitement and intense pleasure. They become intoxicated under its influence. And it comes to pass, sometimes, that they confound justice with retaliation.

Hélène, proud of what she called courage, but which in reality was only anger and bitterness against the Past, answered Guy Romain thus:

"My poor comrade, I decline to meet you in Italy. I am not to be summoned there in this cavalier fashion, though it might well come to pass that I go there some day with some fond adorer, to enjoy every moment of the journey which under such circumstances could not fail to be charming.

"I assure you, however, although you may not believe me, I am not and never could be a satisfactory *pis-aller*.

"If you return to Paris, you must not think I can receive you under my roof. You are the only gallant to whose gallantry I object. Unfortunately, your reputation is such that Madame Guy Romain herself would not consider herself protected by the title of wife.

"You see it would be extremely awkward for me to refuse you admittance if you chose to apply for it, and if forgetful of your agreement at the time of our marriage, you should allow yourself to approach me with too great familiarity. I inaugurate my fair self on December 14th, with more solemnity than I have

already inaugurated my beautiful Hôtel four months since. If you wish to leave your Veronese Princess and can content yourself in Paris for a week with only her pictured likeness, you can consider yourself invited to my fête, but that is all. "HÉLÈNE."

Guy's correspondent in a letter, to which was affixed the signatures of their mutual and intimate friends, urged the young man to appear at Hélène's fête, but bade him not to appear before midnight at his wife's Hôtel.

"They were all determined," the letter continued, "that there should be no scandal or gossip in regard to his coming, therefore Guy must make his appearance there in the same public manner as that in which he had left it."

To this positive injunction thirty-two young artists had affixed their signature.

The *cavalière servante* was more than ever convinced that some practical joke was in progress, when he received Hélène's letter and this singular document from his friends.

This extraordinary way of recalling him pleased him greatly. He did not care to enter his wife's presence in an ordinary, matter of fact fashion, and was convinced that his friends had prepared some delightful jest.

He was weary with the life he was living, and the

idea of going back to Paris, of seeing his father, Martial, his friends and a Parisian fête, with its lights and its gayety, was most agreeable to him. Nor was he in the least displeased at the thought of once more meeting the woman whom he had married, and whom he supposed—embellished by the success of which he so constantly heard, success won by her elegance and eccentricity—all this, as we say, delighted and combined to detach him from his weakening affection.

He replied in these simple words to his friends:

"It is evident that you have prepared some surprise for me—a surprise which I know will be thoroughly Parisian and witty. I am quite willing to play my part. At midnight, therefore, on the 14th of December, I will make my appearance among you in the character of the repentant husband."

Hélène, gay and active, seconded by all her friends, and not in the least disturbed by the thought of the approaching conjugal interview, went on with her preparations for one of those entertainments of which Paris cherishes the recollection for at least ten years. She ordered from the south, for her white and gold Salon, boxes with Mimosa growing in them. Mimosas with swaying branches and delicate foliage, and a wealth of yellow blossoms, round, fuzzy balls, under the weight and profusion of which the boughs drooped.

It was Martial who undertook the decoration of the red salon. He placed the famous statue, "Helen, the

daughter of Leda," in the centre of the room on a high pedestal surrounded with evergreens.

This statue was a likeness of Hélène, Martial's dead wife, and the beautiful Madame Guy Romain had now become its image.

The dining-room was adorned with grape vines, clusters of ripe, purple fruit hanging from them. In the gallery, the pictures had disappeared to give place to ornaments of artificial flowers and Venetian lanterns.

The portrait painted by Guy was the only one left, and that in its glittering frame, at the end of the gallery, looked as if she were the Queen of the fête.

Hélène, with a certain malice in her premeditation, wished to make Guy understand, as soon as he came in that she had not forgotten his fair Italian. This portrait should remain in her house, she said to herself, in spite of any protestations from him. The fair Marchesa, though detested in Verona, should reign triumphant in Paris.

Madame Guy Romain decided that her toilette should be of white satin—two different shades harmoniusly combined—white on white, dead white, and cream white. The corsage and the skirt were ornamented with clusters of natural mimosas, and around the throat and arms of this beautiful woman were small gold beads, such as were worn by the women of ancient Greece.

When Hélène received her friends in the boudoir, the walls of which were covered with flowers like

the flowers on her robe, she made an extraordinary impression.

The great attraction of this fête, the especial interest to the women, was the return of Guy Romain. There had been so much talk about Hélène, her husband's desertion and her illness, that everybody knew her story as well as she did herself. Every detail was known, even to the note from the husband who believed his wife to be still a very ugly woman; and every one looked forward to the evening of his arrival with great interest and curiosity.

Interminable discussions among Hélène's guests resulted in the fact that when the clock struck eleven, every guest who had been bidden, had entered the *Salon* of Madame Guy Romain. The women stood near the doors of the ante-chamber in order that they might see the husband pass.

Some of the men cherished the idea of an ovation, and others proposed that a feigned resistance to his entrance should be made.

Others again talked of lifting him on their shoulders and bearing him to the feet of his wife.

Hélène laughed heartily as these plans were proposed to her, but she offered objection to none, granting her friends liberty to oppress him whom all women called the unfaithful husband.

But Romain was watching and quietly set aside all these arrangements. Hélène, toward midnight felt less calm, a strange agony of suspense first assailed her and then her heart began to beat. As the solemn

moment approached she became more anxious and disturbed.

This was not what she had anticipated. She had flattered herself that she would be actually indifferent to her husband's arrival, not that she had by any means ceased to care for him, but she believed that anger against him was her strongest feeling. She enumerated her wrongs and said to herself that she should undoubtedly forget them in time, but not immediately, nor suddenly, merely because the friend of her childhood appeared before her. Surprised at her own weakness, vexed and irritated against him who occasioned it, Hélène as soon as she was privately informed that her husband had come, hurried through all the salons until she stood at the further end of the long gallery under the portrait of the Italian Marchesa. Here she hoped to regain her courage and her self-possession. A little comforted by the long distance she had placed between herself and Guy, and by the sight of this brilliant portrait, Hélène summoned in haste all her pride to her assistance. She succeeded in persuading herself that her husband's emotion must naturally exceed hers, and promised herself to remain just in the place where she now stood, and there await his coming.

Her father, who had followed her, and whose counsel she asked, advised her not to stand beneath the portrait, but to advance a few steps to meet the criminal. This counsel was shrewdly given in order that the young artist might have time to see and

admire not only the beauty, but the Olympian walk of the sculptor's daughter.

The bravos came nearer and nearer, and kept Hélène informed of the approach of her husband.

The young man, convinced that he was to be subjected to some especial test, and refusing any credence to Hélène's metamorphose which had been laughingly described to him, greeted her friends gayly.

As he made his way through the crowd several pretty women welcomed him warmly but with such compassion in their eyes, that for the first time a doubt entered his mind, and turning pale he exclaimed to his father:

"If this be true, if Hélène has become beautiful I feel that my emotion will be beyond my control, I am not prepared—"

"But it is true, I assure you," answered Romain, leaving his son at this moment.

The young man, a prisoner among his comrades, was hurried from the conservatory to the red salon. He was placed in front of Martial's statue.

"There she is! and her comrades."

"Ah! very good," answered Guy laughing. "I have the key to the riddle now!"

He approached the statue, and in a mocking way kissed the hand.

"She is beautiful indeed!" he said, "I take her for my second wife! And it would not be the first block of marble which a man has possessed, would it, my friends? This Helen is charming! Might I

be permitted to place on her finger a nuptial ring. I am ready if this be the test to which you subject me."

"He suspects nothing!" cried a voice in the crowd. "But he will be well punished soon. Make haste, show him the beauty of this age."

They hurried Guy along to the gallery, where Hélène had taken refuge. But the crowd had become so great that his progress was impeded. Romain managed to get near his son and take his arm.

"Does this comedy please you, father?" asked Guy, secretly uneasy.

"A comedy, do you call it?" answered Romain in an agitated voice. "Hélène is more charming, more beautiful than any one of the women by whom she is surrounded. See how many mocking eyes are riveted upon you. I beg of you to commit no imprudence. Hélène is to-day even more proud than she is beautiful. The happiness of all our lives, as well as of your own, may be fixed or destroyed by the first words you utter to your wife. Look at her well and hold your tongue if you are entirely upset."

"My father, will you swear to me that Hélène is beautiful? Tell me quickly, for I need a second, at least, to reflect on what I am about to be called on to endure," stammered Guy.

"I swear it is true, upon my honor," said the old man.

Guy closed his eyes. He was anxious to recall the memory of the fair face of his childhood's friend. A

sudden rush of tenderness filled his heart to overflowing. He grew dizzy.

"Behold her!" cried the crowd of guests as with one voice.

"Look, my son!" said Romain.

Hélène detached herself from the encircling crowd which opened before her as it had opened before Guy, when he entered the salon. He stood in the presence of his wife as he had stood before Martial's statue.

She moved forward but he stood motionless.

"Hélène! Can this be you?" cried her husband. "Am I in my right mind? Yes, I see you again fair as I first remember you, nay, fairer and lovelier than my wildest imagination could have pictured you. I do not know whether I feel pain or pleasure. I am terrified at the violence of my emotions. You are pitiless: why could you not have informed me of this miracle?"

"Your friends have written to you, they have told you, and now it is proved to you," answered Hélène in her rich voice.

"And now it is proved to me!" repeated Guy, not knowing in the least what he was saying.

But suddenly he started like a man seized with the delirium of a fever. His wild eyes became fixed. He drew from his pocket a small Corsican dagger, and tore it from the sheath which he tossed upon the ground. He darted toward Hélène, as the crowd thought, who uttered a cry of alarm.

But Guy rushed to the portrait of the Marchesa.

Romain, Martial, and Hélène followed him with anxious eyes, asking themselves, what he was about to do.

The young man struck a hundred blows in rapid succession, stabbing the picture with such violence that the cord broke by which it was hung, and the picture fell with shattered frame and the canvas in slits at the feet of Hélène, who uttered a triumphant cry which was lost, however, in the burst of applause uttered by her guests.

After this capital punishment, Guy, animated, bold, and audacious, approached his wife, and whispered low in her ear.

"You are more beautiful than all the others," he murmured, in a passionate voice.

And he gazed at her with the bold eyes of a conqueror.

"Why did you summon this crowd to see our meeting?" he asked. "I am tempted, in spite of their presence, to throw myself at your feet."

"At my feet, Guy? No, you would not dare do that."

"Yes, Hélène. I would dare that, and I would, moreover, dare to tell you that I adore you, now that you have fulfilled the promise of your childhood, and that I am now and always your devoted lover. Will you permit me to say this to you?"

She turned away in disdainful silence.

Romain, seeing that a circle of curious listeners were watching every movement of the husband and wife, ordered the orchestra to play a waltz.

"Let us waltz together, Hélène," said Guy. "Let me feel the beating of your heart, let me hold you in my arms!"

And before his wife could recover from the alarm and agitation caused by Guy's manner, he had drawn her into the circle of dancers.

Hélène had learned to dance only recently, but she never waltzed with any one but her dancing-master. She shivered in the arms of her husband, with all the natural terror of a woman who in her twenty-five years of life had never felt a lover's arm about her waist. She shrank back, but Guy only held her with a firmer clasp.

"Leave me!" she said, at last, in an imperious tone.

He stopped.

"I have found my lost youth," he murmured, "I realize all my dreams, and my ideal of beauty! I bow before you with gratitude," murmured the intoxicated young man. "Hélène, have you never thought of me with one gleam of tenderness? Have you not become beautiful with the intention of vanquishing me?" he added. "Tell me, does it not please you to please me?"

"If I loved you, comrade," she answered with a little mocking laugh, "when you were in my eyes but unripe fruit, I lost all relish for that love since you ripened in that Italian sunshine, and became the prey of wasp and gnats."

"Dissipation and corruption, Hélène, are maladies like ugliness! A purifying fever may cure them all,

and by this fever I am seized; it causes my heart to beat and sends the blood bounding through every artery."

"Hush! hush!" she replied. "The strong clasp of your arm showed me that you were not utterly indifferent to womanly charms, that you were not entirely *blasé*. But I am not moved by your frenzy, you must remember that I know nothing of the ways or words of lovers, and I feel only the most violent repulsion for the love which you, as my returned husband, may feel that you have a right to offer.

"If I should ever love you, Guy, my love would be the growth of time. I should watch the budding and the opening of the tardy blossoms in myself, and have no faith in those which leap to maturity in you. I do not care to hear phrases and protestations which have been on your lips a thousand times before, which if I were to heed would dazzle my ignorance. I do not choose to be a pupil, a slave, nor a dutiful wife!"

"What would you be, a queen?"

"No; I wish to be adored."

"I have no objection, provided I am the adorer."

"You! You are the husband!"

"Hélène!" Guy exclaimed, passionately. "Do you really mean to revenge yourself on me? Is it a torture or a test that you propose to inflict. Do you wish to make of me either a madman or a laughing stock? You are a woman, you are beautiful, be courageous then. Dare to say what you think, what you desire."

"I desire a love which has not been already given a hundred times and more. I refuse yours as utterly worthless because it has been lost and won, over and over again, because in this continual bandying about, it has become impoverished and lost all its value in my eyes."

Guy turned abruptly away. His father seeing him vainly endeavoring to get through the crowd in a bewildered sort of way, preceded and opened a path for him.

Guy was saying to himself, angrily:

"I am her husband, nevertheless!"

Surprising as was his suffering, it was nevertheless, very real. Perhaps Guy mistook his wounded vanity and natural exasperation for suffering. He determined none the less to become master of the situation by laughing at it. There was certainly a ridiculous side to the affair, and also another feature which to a man of his experience was quickly revealed.

He said to himself, that the first adorer who managed adroitly—and he recalled a similar case in the long catalogue of his experiences—could conquer Hélène's pride, and take advantage of the naïveté of her heart—in short, could rob him of his wife. And why not? Why should not Guy Romain be treated in this way as well as so many other men?

In that case, he would be the standing joke of the season, every one would laugh at the idea of the man whose *bonnes fortunes* were on everybody's lips, sinking to the level of an ordinary deceived husband.

Did he not belong, however, to that class of men against whom society authorizes reprisals? He said to himself that Hélène had certainly loved him when she was plain and unattractive, and would therefore be quite likely to treat him as an enemy now.

The thought was not an agreeable one, and he frowned in disgust and fear.

Women, when they come to realize their power, are apt to be ungenerous, to delight in capricious revenge, and will listen to no appeal to their sense of justice. Guy knew them well, and he at once realized what his position would be as the husband of a woman who was caressed on every side.

He suddenly turned and retraced his steps until he reached a place where he could command a view of Hélène standing among her admirers. She seemed to him to greatly enjoy the adulation she received, and he concluded that her beauty coming to her so suddenly, had probably intoxicated her.

Guy felt strangely sad. Did he love her already? Had he loved other women only because his own wife was unattractive? And now that he beheld her in all her pride of beauty, his love leaped to sudden life and all his adventures faded away into the indistinct haze of the Past. Very soon all memories which had no relation to Hélène, became mere shadowy outlines.

Fear, jealousy, self-distrust and an impatient anxiety besieged Guy and tore him to pieces. All his former strategy was forgotten, and he, generally so sure of himself, lost all confidence.

A man who has had such experience of women as Guy, is rarely at fault. If he has grace, cleverness, and charm, as well as the easy insolence which has become second nature to such a person, he becomes irresistible. However forewarned and forearmed they be, the victims say to themselves "Why not? Why may I not be the exception?"

The exception is sure to come, sooner or later. And the most indifferent and careless of men encounters, not *a* woman, but *the* woman, the Sphinx—this profound mystery as impenetrable as nature itself—this being endowed with all wonderful and inscrutable charm—he struggles and resists in vain, and soon succumbs to the yoke of a power that skepticism cannot deny. There is in the world more than one of the creatures, strange because inexplicable—who are endowed with the attributes of Pagan goddesses—proud and cruel, only to be softened and humanized by love. If Don Juan himself had come within the magic circle of such an one, he would find it hopeless to attempt an escape; he would love before being loved.

Hélène was unquestionably one of those women, and Guy at once saw this. Hélène was associated with his sweetest memories—those of his childhood, and he was almost tempted to throw himself at her feet and exclaim in the presence of this crowd:

"This woman has won my heart, and for the first time in my life, I promise eternal fidelity."

"My son," said Romain in his ear, "the sight of your disturbance is a great triumph to your rivals. Let us go home."

"There are rooms in this Hôtel which Hélène formerly called mine," said Guy. "Let us go there; we shall, in all probability, discover some indications either of her indifference or interest."

They went to the rooms. They had an entirely neglected aspect, and everything demonstrated that the return of the husband was not expected and therefore not desired.

"She will be obliged to request me to leave, then, for here I shall take up my abode," he said to his father.

He rang the bell in spite of Romain's entreaties, and ordered the windows to be opened and the room put in order. He then sent for the old nurse.

"Josephine," he said, "I came to my father's, on my arrival, to-night, in order that I might conform to the regulations of the fête, but I now, of course, propose to take up my abode here. Have these apartments at once put in order. Send to my father's for my trunks, as I shall remain here."

The nurse hesitated.

"Josephine," continued Guy, "you know perfectly well, for you adore your mistress, that she can never be happy, except with me."

"Yes, Master Guy, I know that, but she must be coaxed, not driven; and she must be loved with your whole soul. Can you do that?"

"Nurse," answered the young man, in the coaxing tone he had used to her in his childhood, "I love her tenderly. Do you not remember how I used to call

her my little wife, and made her promise when we were both grown up that I should be her husband? Do you remember? Do you understand?"

"Do I remember? do I understand? For eighteen long years I have lived on the hope of hearing these words."

"And you will do what I ask?"

"I am with you and against her, my Master. Go down stairs and I will arrange the rooms for you."

He embraced the good woman with his whole heart, and holding both her hands in his, they swore alliance.

Romain exclaimed, as soon as Josephine left the room:

"It cannot be possible that you love Hélène so soon as this!"

"I do love her with my whole heart!" answered his son, "be it soon or late! I feel as if I were fourteen, and a boy again. All that has taken place since, is a mere succession of bad dreams."

"Alas! Guy, I fear you are too late. We who love Hélène so tenderly, have been most unwilling spectators of her unhappiness. And now I fear we are to witness yours. This beautiful woman will not spare you one of the mortifications which you heaped upon her when she was ugly."

"Do you mean to say that I have made my only friend suffer? the only woman whom I ever heartily esteemed in my life?"

"It is the simple truth, one which I think you can readily comprehend. She loved you passionately until this fever which transformed her."

"Impossible! Hélène never felt toward me other than as a comrade! She loved me, you say?"

"Yes, libertine that you were, she loved you."

"Spare me, my dear father, do not crush me with the conviction of my unworthiness."

"You may therefore imagine," resumed Romain, "the torture which you inflicted upon her by your odious confidences at the time you proposed this humiliating marriage."

"Poor Hélène! Will she ever forgive me?"

"I cannot say. She is very beautiful and greatly admired. And then, too, the idea of returning wound for wound has enchanted her, for underneath the apparent gentleness of her nature sleeps something of her father's ferocity and hardness. She is delighted to inflict on you a portion of her own suffering. Fortunately you are not ugly as she was."

"She thought me morally, ugly. She has just said to me that I was over-ripe under the hot suns of Italy."

"And she is right," answered the painter vehemently, "and I am enraged with myself that I can feel the smallest compassion for you. You will be punished, and you deserve to be. It is now your turn to be the supplicant, to know what it is to meet indifference, and be deserted!"

Guy had never seen his father in a mood like this. He was moved by his irritation.

"Did you blame me so much then?" he asked.

"Blame! What a word to use! Blame expresses

nothing of the anxiety, the bitterness and the despair you have occasioned me. Neither my art, nor the glory and the fame I have won consoled me. My strongest feeling since your birth has been my love for you. I wished to be near my son, where extending my hand I could assure myself of his living presence. I wished to see my own youth renewed in my boy, and I have been eager to behold while my power and genius are withering, the gradual development of yours. To my paternal and austere affection I have sacrificed all facile joys. I have concentrated all my ardor, all my hopes in you, my son—flesh of my flesh—soul of my soul!

"Then all at once I was impoverished, for my son fled to spend in foreign lands, his youth—his fortune and my own—am I not right when I say to-day that his present misfortunes are richly deserved?"

"My dear father, if you had only told me!" answered Guy, despairingly, "I adored you, and I adore you now."

"Silence!" cried Romain! "Would that I could also silence all other selfish sons and daughters who think only of their own amusements. You all think that you do all you ought, because the best of you feel that you are capable in an hour of need of doing some great thing, of making some great sacrifice in testimony of your filial love. But, as you well know, paternal love stands rarely in need of your sacrifices. That which it claims at your hands is the sweetness of constant thoughtfulness. It is no miracle—it is perpetual, loving

cares. We learn this when we as sons become fathers, and we ask of our children but one recompense—that of tenderness. Do you know, have you any idea what tenderness means? Do you know that sometimes you have allowed four months to elapse without writing to me?"

"Dear father!" stammered Guy.

"Do you dare defend yourself? Upon my word, I doubt if you would have taken the trouble to come to my funeral, had I died in your absence!"

Romain's son was silent, but his eyes, full of tears, were fixed on his father's face. He drank in with mingled pain and joy these passionate words that came from the heart of the old painter. Glad to have inspired such affection, he stretched out his arms eager to bestow the caresses for which his father had so longed.

Romain was filled with satisfaction when he saw the expression in his son's face, and exclaimed, "Guy, if you only knew what it was to be a father!"

"I never realized it until to-day," the young man replied. "My heart has learned a new lesson and has expanded under its teachings. I never suspected the warmth of your tenderness—and I never thought that the generous gifts of paternal love and friendship demanded a return in kind.

"I have often thought," said Romain, "that you neglected me because you had other affections—that you might have a son of your own in Italy, perhaps."

"No;" answered the young man, "I have no such excuse. I wish now to be such a son as you deserve.

To be a husband and a father—I love my wife and I hope to win her heart."

"Ah! my child, I dare not encourage you; and can only repeat what Hélène's nurse just said. I was with her against you; now I join forces with you against Hélène!"

And Romain took his dearly loved son in his arms.

"Let us be calm, father;" answered the young man, "we need all our strength and coolness. Assist me in regaining my self possession. Let us reflect on what is best for us to do. I have just been guilty of a great error. I allowed myself to utter words of passion to Hélène. I do not wish to be guilty of another mistake, by showing her the deep tenderness I feel. Let us go down stairs; perhaps she will not notice us among the crowd of her friends—some of them perhaps may still be mine," added the young man bitterly. "I will play that eternal comedy of indifference again, which is apt to succeed with those who retain a little liking for us. I shall soon find out if the harshness of my wife comes from antipathy, or if it be intended as a punishment for my iniquities."

"Employ all your ingenuity," said the father. "May it serve you now as it never did before, since your father approves."

"Is it more difficult, to fascinate your own wife than to fascinate the wives of other men?" asked Guy, with a smile.

"Possibly—but it is, at all events, a more moral exercise of your powers," answered Romain, whose gayety had returned.

Guy paced his room for some time. Finally he felt that he was calm enough to appear again among Hélène's guests, who had began to triumph over his absence, interpreting it as a rout.

He looked around the *Salon*, and from among all the women present, he selected as the object of his attentions, the prettiest brunette, because Hélène was fair. He begged the favor of a waltz, and took several turns around the room. Both his rivals and his friends admired the grace of his movements. The latter rejoiced that he had not made a foolish figure in the rôle that had been thrust upon him; the others, enchanted to see him devote himself to another woman than his wife, came to the hasty conclusion that he would continue to like her in the same brotherly sort of way now that she was lovely, as he had done when she was plain.

Guy, on the contrary, threw his heart wide open to receive his new and all-absorbing affection. The impetuous flood of his passion, which had burst their bonds during the waltz with his wife, were ordered back to their legitimate channels. After this outburst and the former fatigues of his life, happiness now appeared to Guy under the image of a peaceful brook flowing calmly in a deep channel.

The waltz was over, but he did not leave his charming partner, still lingering at his side. They made a tour of the rooms, he anxious that his attentions should be noticed by Hélène.

She, astonished, indignant and wounded by Guy's

disappearance, now saw him laughing and talking with the fairest among her guests. He was apparently utterly indifferent to her, and gave disdain for disdain. "Was he not free to do as he pleased?" she asked herself.

It was plain that now when she had rejected his advances because she doubted the sincerity of his sudden affection, this incorrigible trifler had actually begun under her own eyes and under her own roof a new flirtation.

She anticipated with terror the possibility of being called upon to bear new agonies like those which she had undergone. In spite of this acknowledged fear, Hélène declared to herself that she hated him for the pain he had caused her, and was yet aware that she could hate him more if he inflicted further wrong upon her. Her jealousy suddenly revealed to her her injured dignity as a wife.

Although she had become beautiful her husband had not become ugly. Because it pleased her to receive and enjoy receiving the most devoted attention from the best men in Paris, was no reason why he should cease his gallantries. And by what right should Hélène forbid him to love another woman if she were not willing to believe in his conversion.

Martial's daughter discovered with a pang of terror that jealousy can eat into the heart of the most flattered of women.

Her heart swelled and her color changed when Guy,

pretending not to see her and to be absorbed in his companion, passed close by her.

He contrived to catch sight of Hélène, however, and the most delicious emotion thrilled him from head to foot when he saw the angry light in his wife's eyes, the quick flush in her cheek followed by an almost ghastly pallor.

Guy instantly found a seat for his partner, and hastened back to Hélène. He found her as usual, surrounded by admirers.

"Hélène," asked her husband timidly, "will you give me the last waltz played to-night, since you so parsimoniously abridged the first?"

She left the circle and took his arm; leaning toward him she whispered something in his ear.

He started, as she almost touched him with her rosy lips. Hélène, in her turn, felt the same magnetic thrill, and impatiently turned away.

"No," she said, "I will not waltz with you. I detest the impression you make upon me. I shall not dance!"

"I am sorry."

"You may waltz with some one else."

"Do you insist upon it?"

"Why should I?"

"Because it pleases you, I think, to see me make myself conspicuous as a husband who is in love with his wife."

"Is that the reason that you have been playing this public court to my fairest guest?"

"Yes."

"What an outrageous falsehood."

"Shall I prove it to you?"

"In what way?"

"By paying you the same."

"No. You can go and find another partner."

"And you will do the same."

"Yes, for I wish to find out if it be the waltzer or the waltz which disturbs me."

She moved away. Her husband followed her, and caught her hand.

"Hélène," he exclaimed, with violence, "I forbid you to waltz to-night!" And then recovering himself he added, in a different tone, "I implore you not to inflict this suffering upon me. Farewell!"

"But, Guy," she answered, "why do you say this? It is impossible that you should love me already."

"Not love you! It is the first time that I have already loved. I have just said the same thing to your father and to Josephine."

"Did they believe in your sincerity?"

"They did, indeed. Two hours ago when I waltzed with you, I felt that each turn released me from the innumerable threads in which my own caprices and follies had involved me. All those ties which bound me to my former life of adventure are broken, and I feel myself once more free and worthy to take you in my arms, and swear eternal fidelity."

"Guy," she said, "you must not look at me in that way. I feel all my old sisterly affection revive, and you will set it down to a different emotion."

"Hélène, I am utterly carried away by you, and in spite of my former determination not to tell you this at present, I cannot refrain from saying that I adore you."

"You may say this to me by and by, and, perhaps—But take care, in the meantime, and not confound me with your other transitory passions."

"But you will not allow me to pay you my court as my wife," he answered.

"But, Guy, how is that possible? Did you not, the very day that I accepted your hand tell me that there was no question of love; that if there were you would never marry!"

"I have said this more than once, and Destiny, in revenge for my presumption, to humiliate my utter fatuity, to conquer my pride, has finally thrown me bound, hand and foot, at the feet of her whom I call my wife."

"And she, my friend, raises you, and recalls you to your expressed principles," answered Hélène, with some solemnity. "She accomplishes her duty, and keeps her oath! Let your pride accomplish the rest!"

"My pride! You are laughing at me!"

They both laughed at this. Their debate interested them. They gradually drew back from the dancers, and seated themselves in the farther corner of the Conservatory.

"Héléne," said the young painter, taking the hand of his friend, "allow me to speak openly to-night. To-morrow you will think the most specious of my

arguments the result of thought. Let me tell you now that you are the most beautiful creature my eyes ever rested upon, and that yours is precisely the type of beauty which I have pursued all my life."

Hélène gently withdrew her hand. Her heart beat deafeningly—she heard her own emotion rather than Guy's words.

"When I wrote you my last letter, Hélène," he continued, "do you know that I had begun to love you and yet I supposed you to be still just what I had left you—"

"A very ugly woman?"

"Frankly, yes."

"Do you know that I have loved you for ten years in spite of all my ugliness?"

"And to-day?"

"To-day I am beautiful, and I detest all your adventures, feeling beside that it is my duty to avenge myself. If I loved you I should hate them all the same, since they prevent me from expecting a love from you which it is impossible you should ever feel again."

"Dear Hélène, look in my eyes, look down into the depths of this heart which you know so well, and see, beneficent and idolized judge, if my confession be not sincere!

"I have been idle and curious," he continued, "I have loved through vanity and ennui and possibly through my imagination. At Verona I for the first time thought I loved with both my senses and my

head. My disillusion has been most complete and most cruel, as you knew and understood. I now feel that you are the only woman who has moved my heart —and that senses, head and heart, are all aroused; this is the love of which I have dreamed!"

Hélène sat with her eyes fixed on the ground, her breast heaving with uncontrollable agitation. Guy leaned toward her and placed one burning hand upon her shoulder.

"Listen to me one moment," he said. "I love you and I have loved no one but you." His daring lips were pressed on the white beauty of her shoulder.

"That may be true," she said, "but I demand constancy and fidelity."

"And I am ready to swear it," he answered. "Is it nothing that I say this to you now when I have always rebelled against ties and bonds of any nature?"

"But if you should be as unfaithful to me as you have been in all your other relations, Guy?" said Hélène, sadly. "Question yourself carefully—promise nothing, if you have the shadow of a doubt. I ask—I insist on absolute certainty. I have loved, I shall love no one but you. Nevertheless, not until you are able to assure me on this point—not until you can convince me that you will love me always, can I listen to you."

"I have never given to any one but yourself that side of love which contains fidelity, because I have loved only yourself with tenderness. I have felt this one lasting sentiment in all these twenty-five years —and that is, my affection for you. Hardly had I

left you after our marriage than it seemed to me that I was living in exile. I return to find you adorably beautiful, with all that beauty, the loss of which had settled the lot of my heart.

"I have as suddenly thrown aside my moral inferiority as you have your physical inferiority. What, then, have we to do except to cry out 'a miracle,' and believe ourselves cured?"

He knelt at her feet; then, in a trembling voice, he said:

"Hélène, I offer you the love of your husband, who swears, so far as anything on earth is eternal, that his love is!"

Hélène rose all flushed and radiant.

"Our guests are indiscreetly discreet," she said; "they will not come to seek us—we had best return to them."

"You will not leave me without a reply," murmured Guy reproachfully.

"I accept your love and I believe it true," said Hélène, she was so pale and agitated that her husband was obliged to sustain her in his arms.

The waltz was still heard, and Guy bore his beloved to the red salon and danced around Martial's noble statue as if the Diana it represented was his protecting goddess. Martial and Romain whom they brushed against as they danced, fancied that the marble statue bent forward and blessed her children.

"Ah! my Hélène," murmured Guy, "let me adore you, Hélène—do not drive me away."

"What is it you ask?" she replied, blushing and disturbed.

"I will never leave you again! Grant that your home from this moment shall also be mine."

As she did not yield consent, he added, "decide for yourself. I bow to your decision. I am not your husband; I am your humble slave!"

"And I," murmured Hélène, with passion, "I am your wife!"

THE END.

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"Bertha's Baby" is a book that will make a place for itself at once in every heart, and a very warm place, too, for it is simply delicious. Gustave Droz, its author, is another John Habberton, though his work is in many respects vastly superior to "Helen's Babies." It has, however, the same distinguishing vein of naturalness and the same vividness in its pictures of childhood that made its famous predecessor so immensely popular, though "Bertha's Baby" is in every point of view eminently original. Droz's language in talking of children is simply exquisite, his sentiments are pure as the drifted snow, and his powers of description infinitely varied and picturesque. He shows intense and discriminating love for all babyish prattlers, a love which all young mothers especially will appreciate to the full; in fact, a more fascinating and delightful book for young mothers than "Bertha's Baby" cannot be found in the literature of the world. "Baby" is a real boy—there is nothing indecisive about him. He romps and plays with all his might, disembowels his toy horses, and wants to be a big man, like papa, that he may have a moustache, carry a cane, say by thunder and not be afraid at night. At one time "Baby" gets sick and lies at the point of death. Here Droz becomes exceedingly touching, and the exquisite eloquence of the grief expressed would melt a heart of stone. But "Baby" does not die. He gets well again and becomes as hearty as a buck, passing through a thousand adventures peculiar to babyhood, and, at last, growing exceedingly tenacious of his manly dignity, his chief ambition being to protect his mother during her promenades in the street, though he is tremendously afraid of the big dog. "Baby" has an experience in the country during an autumn tempest. This experience is described in such glowing colors and with such intensity of expression, that the entire chapter resembles a charming poem in prose. There is much that is serious and even sentimental in "Bertha's Baby," but pervading the entire book is an undercurrent of the most refined and enjoyable humor, together with keen wit, sound philosophy, and now and then a spice of sarcasm. The pictures of "Bertha" and "Oscar," "Baby's" parents, are the perfection of natural character-sketching, and will take a firm hold on the affections of all young married couples. The children, too, will like "Bertha's Baby," and, in fact, everybody will be more than pleased with it. Its entire purity and healthful teachings render it particularly suitable for admission into all family circles.

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HELEN'S BABIES.

WITH

Some accounts of their ways innocent, crafty, angelic, impish, witching and repulsive. Also, a partial record of their actions during ten days of their existence.

BY JOHN HABBERTON.

With an Illustrated Cover, with Portraits of Budge and Toddie.

"Helen's Babies" is famous. It contains more merriment than any other book extant, and at the same time is wonderfully interesting. A masterpiece in every sense of the word, it awakens intense admiration while it produces hearty laughter. As a picture of child-life it is nature itself, and it could not well be otherwise, for John Habberton, its author, made his own children sit for the portraits of Budge and Toddie, the refreshingly droll little heroes. The tone of the charming volume is healthful and vigorous, while all the incidents are bright and telling. Budge and Toddie, "the best children in the world," are mischief incarnate. They are consigned to the care of their Uncle Harry while their parents spend a fortnight with a friend, and at once the fun begins. The boys demand stories, and, when their uncle favors them with a biblical narrative, they correct him and tell him he doesn't know anything about Jonah and Noah and the Ark. Toddie is fearfully persistent, and, when denied anything, has a way of bursting into such a storm of tears that his wish is instantly granted. He wants "to shee the wheels of his uncle's watch go wound," and has a terrible craving for candy, while he echoes all his brother's words, and is always getting into some difficulty or other. Budge is inquisitive and perplexing. He interprets Toddie's picturesque baby talk, and is ever ready for a frolic. The children cause their uncle no end of worriment. Budge has a goat and a carriage to which the animal is harnessed. In this vehicle he meets with frequent mishaps. The boys will besmear their garments with mud, and their adventurous dispositions occasionally lead them into danger. To amuse them and keep them in order, their uncle sings them camp-meeting hymns and impersonates in turn bears, lions, zebras, elephants, dogs and cats. Toddie has a favorite song, which he invariably demands when he gets hurt, and which exercises a peculiarly soothing influence upon him. But though veritable imps, the boys are charming little fellows, and it is utterly impossible not to love them. They are devout after their own peculiar fashion, and insist upon saying prayers, some of which are indescribably comical. Altogether, "Helen's Babies" is one of the most captivating stories in existence, the courtship of Uncle Harry and Miss Mayton lending it variety and romance. No one can fail to be delighted with it, whether married or single, old or young, and all who read it will certainly enjoy a series of hearty laughs. Budge and Toddie are capital creations and excellent types of American boyhood. They will remain in the memory forever, for "Helen's Babies" can never be forgotten.

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THE ANNALS OF A BABY.

HOW IT WAS NAMED—HOW IT WAS NURSED—HOW IT BECAME A TYRANT—THE BABY'S PARTY—THE BABY'S LIFE, ETC.

BY SARAH BRIDGES STEBBINS.

"THE ANNALS OF A BABY" *is a delightful book that it is impossible to praise too highly. Everybody should read it and enjoy its exquisite humor and telling pathos. Sarah Bridges Stebbins, the author, has evidently a deep knowledge of the human heart, for she pictures humanity in all its various phases, and does it so naturally that the impression produced is profound and lasting. She depicts the sorrowful and the comical with equal power, so that the reader, while almost moved to tears by some pathetic passage, is suddenly convulsed with laughter by incidents as droll as unexpected. The Baby, of course, is the main figure about which all the other characters are grouped, and the influence for good exerted by the tiny creature is shown in a thousand different ways. The little mite fills every heart with tenderness and kindliness, and causes no end of charitable actions to be performed by the simple effect of its presence. The Young Mother is a superb portraiture, full of graphic touches, and the Young Father is capitally sketched. Very pleasing, too, are the gay Young Aunties, and the Grandfathers and Grandmothers are personages that instantly rivet attention. The Fat Nurse in her coal-scuttle bonnet, with her bulgy umbrella and never-failing basket, is a character that Dickens himself would not have been ashamed to own. She is good-natured and intensely practical, while her language is worthy of the immortal Sairey Gamp. The Poor Relation and her Crippled Sister are sublime creations, and it is utterly impossible not to feel a decided interest in Aunt Hannah, who was recalled to the world by the potent spell of the wonderful Baby, while the Poor Relation's Aged Father and Mother, James, the prim footman, and the Fat Coachman are admirably sketched.* "THE ANNALS OF A BABY" *is a series of word-paintings at once poetic and natural, and the style of composition is simply delicious. The incidents are fresh and captivating, and there is not one commonplace or dull scene in the entire volume. There is a delightful flutter of excitement attending the naming of the Baby, and the Baby's party is as comical an affair as ever an author put on paper. The story of the New Nurse, the Christmas gift from the poor children to the Crippled Sister, the death of the Poor Relation's parents, and Aunt Hannah's experience are pathetic in the very highest degree, and the reader who remains untouched by them must have a heart of stone. But it is impossible to point out all the beauties of this charming story in this brief article. Suffice it to say that* "THE ANNALS OF A BABY" *is a masterpiece in every point of view, and so salutary is its tone that it will benefit all who read it. No better or more interesting work of the kind can be found, and it is cordially commended to everybody, especially those who have read and admired "Helen's Babies."*

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BY AUTHOR OF "HELEN'S BABIES."

MRS. MAYBURN'S TWINS.

BY JOHN HABBERTON.

AUTHOR OF "HELEN'S BABIES."

"Mrs. Mayburn's Twins" is a book that will go straight to the heart of every young mother in the land, and that mamma does not exist who will not vote it delightful. It is by John Habberton, and is a worthy companion to his world-renowned "Helen's Babies." Natural as life, it sparkles on every page with delicious humor, and its occasional pathos is touching in the extreme, while the style of composition betrays a master hand. The action covers a single day, but what a busy day it is, and how crowded with important and realistic household events. The story is in brief the diurnal experience of Mrs. Mayburn, whose husband is loving but thoughtless, and whose children are real flesh and blood youngsters, at once the joy and the torment of their mother's life. Mamma has her hands more than full with the children, whose pranks at times almost drive her wild; but, in addition, the supervision of Bridget, the help, mending, marketing and getting ready her husband's meals on the minute claim her attention and tax her patience. But mamma is an angelic creature, and under every discouragement always tries to do her best, even when she learns that a horrid German analytic chemist is coming to deprive her of her husband's society in the evening. "Mrs. Mayburn's Twins" dashes straight ahead, nothing impeding its career, and every detail is brought out so vividly and happily that the reader is perfectly spellbound. No one who likes to read about children, their mothers and the home circle should miss this truly absorbing and fascinating story. It is a gem of the first water in a setting that adds vastly to its attractiveness. Mothers and fathers especially will find it a treat of the rarest kind.

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MAR 1996
BOOKKEEPER
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
1114 William Flinn Highway
Glenshaw, PA 15116-2657
412-486-1161
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