

## Chapter XIV - The Fete

As soon as Georgette was well, Madame sent her away into the country. I was sorry; I loved the child, and her loss made me poorer than before. But I must not complain. I lived in a house full of robust life; I might have had companions, and I chose solitude. Each of the teachers in turn made me overtures of special intimacy; I tried them all. One I found to be an honest woman, but a narrow thinker, a coarse feeler, and an egotist. The second was a Parisienne, externally refined - at heart, corrupt - without a creed, without a principle, without an affection: having penetrated the outward crust of decorum in this character, you found a slough beneath. She had a wonderful passion for presents; and, in this point, the third teacher - a person otherwise characterless and insignificant - closely resembled her. This last-named had also one other distinctive property - that of avarice. In her reigned the love of money for its own sake. The sight of a piece of gold would bring into her eyes a green glister, singular to witness. She once, as a mark of high favour, took me up-stairs, and, opening a secret door, showed me a hoard - a mass of coarse, large coin - about fifteen guineas, in five-franc pieces. She loved this hoard as a bird loves its eggs. These were her savings. She would come and talk to me about them with an infatuated and persevering dotage, strange to behold in a person not yet twenty-five.

The Parisienne, on the other hand, was prodigal and profligate (in disposition, that is: as to action, I do not know). That latter quality showed its snake-head to me but once, peeping out very cautiously. A curious kind of reptile it seemed, judging from the glimpse I got; its novelty whetted my curiosity: if it would have come out boldly, perhaps I might philosophically have stood my ground, and coolly surveyed the long thing from forked tongue to scaly tail-tip; but it merely rustled in the leaves of a bad novel; and, on encountering a hasty and ill-advised demonstration of wrath, recoiled and vanished, hissing. She hated me from that day.

This Parisienne was always in debt; her salary being anticipated, not only in dress, but in perfumes, cosmetics, confectionery, and condiments. What a cold, callous epicure she was in all things! I see her now. Thin in face and figure, sallow in complexion, regular in features, with perfect teeth, lips like a thread, a large, prominent chin, a well-opened, but frozen eye, of light at once craving and ingrate. She mortally hated work, and loved what she called pleasure; being an insipid, heartless, brainless dissipation of time.

Madame Beck knew this woman's character perfectly well. She once talked to me about her, with an odd mixture of discrimination, indifference, and antipathy. I asked why she kept her in the establishment. She answered plainly, 'because it suited her interest to

do so;' and pointed out a fact I had already noticed, namely, that Mademoiselle St. Pierre possessed, in an almost unique degree, the power of keeping order amongst her undisciplined ranks of scholars. A certain petrifying influence accompanied and surrounded her: without passion, noise, or violence, she held them in check as a breezeless frost-air might still a brawling stream. She was of little use as far as communication of knowledge went, but for strict surveillance and maintenance of rules she was invaluable. 'Je sais bien qu'elle n'a pas de principes, ni, peut-etre, de moeurs,' admitted Madame frankly; but added with philosophy, 'son maintien en classe est toujours convenable et rempli meme d'une certaine dignite: c'est tout ce qu'il faut. Ni les eleves ni les parents ne regardent plus loin; ni, par consequent, moi non plus.'

\* \* \* \* \*

A strange, frolicsome, noisy little world was this school: great pains were taken to hide chains with flowers: a subtle essence of Romanism pervaded every arrangement: large sensual indulgence (so to speak) was permitted by way of counterpoise to jealous spiritual restraint. Each mind was being reared in slavery; but, to prevent reflection from dwelling on this fact, every pretext for physical recreation was seized and made the most of. There, as elsewhere, the CHURCH strove to bring up her children robust in body, feeble in soul, fat, ruddy, hale, joyous, ignorant, unthinking, unquestioning. 'Eat, drink, and live!' she says. 'Look after your bodies; leave your souls to me. I hold their cure - guide their course: I guarantee their final fate.' A bargain, in which every true Catholic deems himself a gainer. Lucifer just offers the same terms: 'All this power will I give thee, and the glory of it; for that is delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou, therefore, wilt worship me, all shall be thine!'

About this time - in the ripest glow of summer - Madame Beck's house became as merry a place as a school could well be. All day long the broad folding-doors and the two-leaved casements stood wide open: settled sunshine seemed naturalized in the atmosphere; clouds were far off, sailing away beyond sea, resting, no doubt, round islands such as England - that dear land of mists - but withdrawn wholly from the drier continent. We lived far more in the garden than under a roof: classes were held, and meals partaken of, in the 'grand berceau.' Moreover, there was a note of holiday preparation, which almost turned freedom into licence. The autumnal long vacation was but two months distant; but before that, a great day - an important ceremony - none other than the fete of Madame - awaited celebration.

The conduct of this fete devolved chiefly on Mademoiselle St. Pierre: Madame herself being supposed to stand aloof, disinterestedly unconscious of what might be going forward in her honour.

Especially, she never knew, never in the least suspected, that a subscription was annually levied on the whole school for the purchase of a handsome present. The polite tact of the reader will please to leave out of the account a brief, secret consultation on this point in Madame's own chamber.

'What will you have this year?' was asked by her Parisian lieutenant.

'Oh, no matter! Let it alone. Let the poor children keep their francs,' And Madame looked benign and modest.

The St. Pierre would here protrude her chin; she knew Madame by heart; she always called her airs of 'bonte' - 'des grimaces.' She never even professed to respect them one instant.

'Vite!' she would say coldly. 'Name the article. Shall it be jewellery or porcelain, haberdashery or silver?'

'Eh bien! Deux ou trois cuillers, et autant de fourchettes en argent.'

And the result was a handsome case, containing 300 francs worth of plate.

The programme of the fete-day's proceedings comprised: Presentation of plate, collation in the garden, dramatic performance (with pupils and teachers for actors), a dance and supper. Very gorgeous seemed the effect of the whole to me, as I well remember. Zelig St. Pierre understood these things and managed them ably.

The play was the main point; a month's previous drilling being there required. The choice, too, of the actors required knowledge and care; then came lessons in elocution, in attitude, and then the fatigue of countless rehearsals. For all this, as may well be supposed, St. Pierre did not suffice: other management, other accomplishments than hers were requisite here. They were supplied in the person of a master - M. Paul Emanuel, professor of literature. It was never my lot to be present at the histrionic lessons of M. Paul, but I often saw him as he crossed the *carre* (a square hall between the dwelling-house and school-house). I heard him, too, in the warm evenings, lecturing with open doors, and his name, with anecdotes of him, resounded in one's ears from all sides. Especially our former acquaintance, Miss Ginevra Fanshawe, - who had been selected to take a prominent part in the play - used, in bestowing upon me a large portion of her leisure, to lard her discourse with frequent allusions to his sayings and doings. She esteemed him hideously plain, and used to profess herself frightened almost into hysterics at the sound of his step or voice. A dark little man he certainly was; pungent and austere. Even to me he seemed a harsh apparition, with his close-shorn, black head, his

broad, sallow brow, his thin cheek, his wide and quivering nostril, his thorough glance, and hurried bearing. Irritable he was; one heard that, as he apostrophized with vehemence the awkward squad under his orders. Sometimes he would break out on these raw amateur actresses with a passion of impatience at their falseness of conception, their coldness of emotion, their feebleness of delivery. 'Ecoutez!' he would cry; and then his voice rang through the premises like a trumpet; and when, mimicking it, came the small pipe of a Ginevra, a Mathilde, or a Blanche, one understood why a hollow groan of scorn, or a fierce hiss of rage, rewarded the tame echo.

'Vous n'etes donc que des poupees,' I heard him thunder. 'Vous n'avez pas de passions - vous autres. Vous ne sentez donc rien? Votre chair est de neige, votre sang de glace! Moi, je veux que tout cela s'allume, qu'il ait une vie, une ame!'

Vain resolve! And when he at last found it *was* vain, he suddenly broke the whole business down. Hitherto he had been teaching them a grand tragedy; he tore the tragedy in morsels, and came next day with a compact little comic trifle. To this they took more kindly; he presently knocked it all into their smooth round pates.

Mademoiselle St. Pierre always presided at M. Emanuel's lessons, and I was told that the polish of her manner, her seeming attention, her tact and grace, impressed that gentleman very favourably. She had, indeed, the art of pleasing, for a given time, whom she would; but the feeling would not last: in an hour it was dried like dew, vanished like gossamer.

The day preceding Madame's fete was as much a holiday as the fete itself. It was devoted to clearing out, cleaning, arranging and decorating the three schoolrooms. All within-doors was the gayest bustle; neither up-stairs nor down could a quiet, isolated person find rest for the sole of her foot; accordingly, for my part, I took refuge in the garden. The whole day did I wander or sit there alone, finding warmth in the sun, shelter among the trees, and a sort of companionship in my own thoughts. I well remember that I exchanged but two sentences that day with any living being: not that I felt solitary; I was glad to be quiet. For a looker-on, it sufficed to pass through the rooms once or twice, observe what changes were being wrought, how a green-room and a dressing-room were being contrived, a little stage with scenery erected, how M. Paul Emanuel, in conjunction with Mademoiselle St. Pierre, was directing all, and how an eager band of pupils, amongst them Ginevra Fanshawe, were working gaily under his control.

The great day arrived. The sun rose hot and unclouded, and hot and unclouded it burned on till evening. All the doors and all the windows

were set open, which gave a pleasant sense of summer freedom - and freedom the most complete seemed indeed the order of the day. Teachers and pupils descended to breakfast in dressing-gowns and curl-papers: anticipating 'avec delices' the toilette of the evening, they seemed to take a pleasure in indulging that forenoon in a luxury of slovenliness; like aldermen fasting in preparation for a feast. About nine o'clock A.M., an important functionary, the 'coiffeur,' arrived. Sacrilegious to state, he fixed his head-quarters in the oratory, and there, in presence of *benitier*, candle, and crucifix, solemnised the mysteries of his art. Each girl was summoned in turn to pass through his hands; emerging from them with head as smooth as a shell, intersected by faultless white lines, and wreathed about with Grecian plaits that shone as if lacquered. I took my turn with the rest, and could hardly believe what the glass said when I applied to it for information afterwards; the lavished garlandry of woven brown hair amazed me - I feared it was not all my own, and it required several convincing pulls to give assurance to the contrary. I then acknowledged in the coiffeur a first-rate artist - one who certainly made the most of indifferent materials.

The oratory closed, the dormitory became the scene of ablutions, arrayings and bedizenings curiously elaborate. To me it was, and ever must be an enigma, how they contrived to spend so much time in doing so little. The operation seemed close, intricate, prolonged: the result simple. A clear white muslin dress, a blue sash (the Virgin's colours), a pair of white, or straw-colour kid gloves - such was the gala uniform, to the assumption whereof that houseful of teachers and pupils devoted three mortal hours. But though simple, it must be allowed the array was perfect - perfect in fashion, fit, and freshness; every head being also dressed with exquisite nicety, and a certain compact taste - suiting the full, firm comeliness of Labassecourien contours, though too stiff for any more flowing and flexible style of beauty - the general effect was, on the whole, commendable.

In beholding this diaphanous and snowy mass, I well remember feeling myself to be a mere shadowy spot on a field of light; the courage was not in me to put on a transparent white dress: something thin I must wear - the weather and rooms being too hot to give substantial fabrics sufferance, so I had sought through a dozen shops till I lit upon a crape-like material of purple-gray - the colour, in short, of dun mist, lying on a moor in bloom. My *tailleuse* had kindly made it as well as she could: because, as she judiciously observed, it was 'si triste - si pen voyant,' care in the fashion was the more imperative: it was well she took this view of the matter, for I, had no flower, no jewel to relieve it: and, what was more, I had no natural rose of complexion.

We become oblivious of these deficiencies in the uniform routine of daily drudgery, but they *will* force upon us their unwelcome blank on those bright occasions when beauty should shine.

However, in this same gown of shadow, I felt at home and at ease; an advantage I should not have enjoyed in anything more brilliant or striking. Madame Beck, too, kept me in countenance; her dress was almost as quiet as mine, except that she wore a bracelet, and a large brooch bright with gold and fine stones. We chanced to meet on the stairs, and she gave me a nod and smile of approbation. Not that she thought I was looking well - a point unlikely to engage her interest - but she considered me dressed 'convenablement,' 'decentement,' and la Convenance et la Decence were the two calm deities of Madame's worship. She even paused, laid on my shoulder her gloved hand, holding an embroidered and perfumed handkerchief, and confided to my ear a sarcasm on the other teachers (whom she had just been complimenting to their faces). 'Nothing so absurd,' she said, 'as for des femmes mures 'to dress themselves like girls of fifteen' - quant a la. St. Pierre, elle a l'air d'une vieille coquette qui fait l'ingenue.'

Being dressed at least a couple of hours before anybody else, I felt a pleasure in betaking myself - not to the garden, where servants were busy propping up long tables, placing seats, and spreading cloths in readiness for the collation but to the schoolrooms, now empty, quiet, cool, and clean; their walls fresh stained, their planked floors fresh scoured and scarce dry; flowers fresh gathered adorning the recesses in pots, and draperies, fresh hung, beautifying the great windows.

Withdrawing to the first classe, a smaller and neater room than the others, and taking from the glazed bookcase, of which I kept the key, a volume whose title promised some interest, I sat down to read. The glass-door of this 'classe,' or schoolroom, opened into the large berceau; acacia-boughs caressed its panes, as they stretched across to meet a rose-bush blooming by the opposite lintel: in this rose-bush bees murmured busy and happy. I commenced reading. Just as the stilly hum, the embowering shade, the warm, lonely calm of my retreat were beginning to steal meaning from the page, vision from my eyes, and to lure me along the track of reverie, down into some deep dell of dreamland - just then, the sharpest ring of the street-door bell to which that much-tried instrument had ever thrilled, snatched me back to consciousness.

Now the bell had been ringing all the morning, as workmen, or servants, or *coiffeurs*, or *tailleuses*, went and came on their several errands. Moreover, there was good reason to expect it would ring all the afternoon, since about one hundred externes were yet to arrive in carriages or fiacres: nor could it be expected to rest during the evening, when parents and friends would gather thronging to the play.

Under these circumstances, a ring - even a sharp ring - was a matter of course: yet this particular peal had an accent of its own, which chased my dream, and startled my book from my knee.

I was stooping to pick up this last, when - firm, fast, straight - right on through vestibule - along corridor, across *carre*, through first division, second division, grand *salle* - strode a step, quick, regular, intent. The closed door of the first *classe* - my sanctuary - offered no obstacle; it burst open, and a *paletot* and a *bonnet grec* filled the void; also two eyes first vaguely struck upon, and then hungrily dived into me.

'C'est cela!' said a voice. 'Je la connais: c'est l'Anglaise. Tant pis. Toute Anglaise, et, par consequent, toute *begueule* qu'elle soit - elle fera mon affaire, ou je saurai pourquoi.'

Then, with a certain stern politeness (I suppose he thought I had not caught the drift of his previous uncivil mutterings), and in a jargon the most execrable that ever was heard, 'Meess - - , play you must: I am planted there.'

'What can I do for you, M. Paul Emanuel?' I inquired: for M. Paul Emanuel it was, and in a state of no little excitement.

'Play you must. I will not have you shrink, or frown, or make the prude. I read your skull that night you came; I see your *moyens*: play you can; play you must.'

'But how, M. Paul? What do you mean?'

'There is no time to be lost,' he went on, now speaking in French; 'and let us thrust to the wall all reluctance, all excuses, all *minauderies*. You must take a part.'

'In the *vaudeville*?'

'In the *vaudeville*. You have said it.'

I gasped, horror-struck. *What* did the little man mean?

'Listen!' he said. 'The case shall be stated, and you shall then answer me Yes, or No; and according to your answer shall I ever after estimate you.'

The scarce-suppressed impetus of a most irritable nature glowed in his cheek, fed with sharp shafts his glances, a nature - the injudicious, the mawkish, the hesitating, the sullen, the affected,

above all, the unyielding, might quickly render violent and implacable. Silence and attention was the best balm to apply: I listened.

'The whole matter is going to fail,' he began. 'Louise Vanderkelkov has fallen ill - at least so her ridiculous mother asserts; for my part, I feel sure she might play if she would: it is only good-will that lacks. She was charged with a *role*, as you know, or do *not* know - it is equal: without that *role* the play is stopped. There are now but a few hours in which to learn it: not a girl in this school would hear reason, and accept the task. Forsooth, it is not an interesting, not an amiable, part; their vile *amour-propre* - that base quality of which women have so much - would revolt from it. Englishwomen are either the best or the worst of their sex. Dieu sait que je les deteste comme la peste, ordinairement' (this between his recreant teeth). 'I apply to an Englishwoman to rescue me. What is her answer - Yes, or No?'

A thousand objections rushed into my mind. The foreign language, the limited time, the public display... Inclination recoiled, Ability faltered, Self-respect (that 'vile quality') trembled. 'Non, non, non!' said all these; but looking up at M. Paul, and seeing in his vexed, fiery, and searching eye, a sort of appeal behind all its menace, my lips dropped the word 'oui'. For a moment his rigid countenance relaxed with a quiver of content: quickly bent up again, however, he went on, -

'Vite a l'ouvrage! Here is the book; here is your *role*: read.' And I read. He did not commend; at some passages he scowled and stamped. He gave me a lesson: I diligently imitated. It was a disagreeable part - a man's - an empty-headed fop's. One could put into it neither heart nor soul: I hated it. The play - a mere trifle - ran chiefly on the efforts of a brace of rivals to gain the hand of a fair coquette. One lover was called the 'Ours,' a good and gallant but unpolished man, a sort of diamond in the rough; the other was a butterfly, a talker, and a traitor: and I was to be the butterfly, talker, and traitor.

I did my best - which was bad, I know: it provoked M. Paul; he fumed. Putting both - hands to the work, I endeavoured to do better than my best; I presume he gave me credit for good intentions; he professed to be partially content. 'Ca ira!' he cried; and as voices began sounding from the garden, and white dresses fluttering among the trees, he added: 'You must withdraw: you must be alone to learn this. Come with me.'

Without being allowed time or power to deliberate, I found myself in the same breath convoyed along as in a species of whirlwind, upstairs, up two pair of stairs, nay, actually up three (for this fiery little man seemed as by instinct to know his way everywhere); to the solitary and lofty attic was I borne, put in and locked in, the key being, in the door, and that key he took with him and vanished.



The attic was no pleasant place: I believe he did not know how unpleasant it was, or he never would have locked me in with so little ceremony. In this summer weather, it was hot as Africa; as in winter, it was always cold as Greenland. Boxes and lumber filled it; old dresses draped its unstained wall - cobwebs its unswept ceiling. Well was it known to be tenanted by rats, by black beetles, and by cockroaches - nay, rumour affirmed that the ghostly Nun of the garden had once been seen here. A partial darkness obscured one end, across which, as for deeper mystery, an old russet curtain was drawn, by way of screen to a sombre band of winter cloaks, pendent each from its pin, like a malefactor from his gibbet. From amongst these cloaks, and behind that curtain, the Nun was said to issue. I did not believe this, nor was I troubled by apprehension thereof; but I saw a very dark and large rat, with a long tail, come gliding out from that squalid alcove; and, moreover, my eye fell on many a black-beetle, dotting the floor. These objects discomposed me more, perhaps, than it would be wise to say, as also did the dust, lumber, and stifling heat of the place. The last inconvenience would soon have become intolerable, had I not found means to open and prop up the skylight, thus admitting some freshness. Underneath this aperture I pushed a large empty chest, and having mounted upon it a smaller box, and wiped from both the dust, I gathered my dress (my best, the reader must remember, and therefore a legitimate object of care) fastidiously around me, ascended this species of extempore throne, and being seated, commenced the acquisition of my task; while I learned, not forgetting to keep a sharp look-out on the black-beetles and cockroaches, of which, more even, I believe, than of the rats, I sat in mortal dread.

My impression at first was that I had undertaken what it really was impossible to perform, and I simply resolved to do my best and be resigned to fail. I soon found, however, that one part in so short a piece was not more than memory could master at a few hours' notice. I learned and learned on, first in a whisper, and then aloud. Perfectly secure from human audience, I acted my part before the garret-vermin. Entering into its emptiness, frivolity, and falsehood, with a spirit inspired by scorn and impatience, I took my revenge on this 'fat,' by making him as fatuitous as I possibly could.

In this exercise the afternoon passed: day began to glide into evening; and I, who had eaten nothing since breakfast, grew excessively hungry. Now I thought of the collation, which doubtless they were just then devouring in the garden far below. (I had seen in the vestibule a basketful of small *pates a la creme*, than which nothing in the whole range of cookery seemed to me better). A *pate*, or a square of cake, it seemed to me would come very *apropos*; and as my relish for those dainties increased, it began to appear somewhat hard that I should pass my holiday, fasting and in prison. Remote as was the attic from

the street-door and vestibule, yet the ever-tinkling bell was faintly audible here; and also the ceaseless roll of wheels, on the tormented pavement. I knew that the house and garden were thronged, and that all was gay and glad below; here it began to grow dusk: the beetles were fading from my sight; I trembled lest they should steal on me a march, mount my throne unseen, and, unsuspected, invade my skirts. Impatient and apprehensive, I recommenced the rehearsal of my part merely to kill time. Just as I was concluding, the long-delayed rattle of the key in the lock came to my ear - no unwelcome sound. M. Paul (I could just see through the dusk that it *was* M. Paul, for light enough still lingered to show the velvet blackness of his close-shorn head, and the sallow ivory of his brow) looked in.

'Brava!' cried he, holding the door open and remaining at the threshold. 'J'ai tout entendu. C'est assez bien. Encore!'

A moment I hesitated.

'Encore!' said he sternly. 'Et point de grimaces! A bas la timidite!'

Again I went through the part, but not half so well as I had spoken it alone.

'Enfin, elle sait,' said he, half dissatisfied, 'and one cannot be fastidious or exacting under the circumstances.' Then he added, 'You may yet have twenty minutes for preparation: au revoir!' And he was going.

'Monsieur,' I called out, taking courage.

'Eh bien! Qu'est-ce que c'est, Mademoiselle?'

'J'ai bien faim.'

'Comment, vous avez faim! Et la collation?'

'I know nothing about it. I have not seen it, shut up here.'

'Ah! C'est vrai,' cried he.

In a moment my throne was abdicated, the attic evacuated; an inverse repetition of the impetus which had brought me up into the attic, instantly took me down - down - down to the very kitchen. I thought I should have gone to the cellar. The cook was imperatively ordered to produce food, and I, as imperatively, was commanded to eat. To my great joy this food was limited to coffee and cake: I had feared wine and sweets, which I did not like. How he guessed that I should like a *petit pate a la creme* I cannot tell; but he went out and procured me

one from some quarter. With considerable willingness I ate and drank, keeping the *petit pate* till the last, as a *bonne bouche*. M. Paul superintended my repast, and almost forced upon me more than I could swallow.

‘A la bonne heure,’ he cried, when I signified that I really could take no more, and, with uplifted hands, implored to be spared the additional roll on which he had just spread butter. ‘You will set me down as a species of tyrant and Bluebeard, starving women in a garret; whereas, after all, I am no such thing. Now, Mademoiselle, do you feel courage and strength to appear?’

I said, I thought I did; though, in truth, I was perfectly confused, and could hardly tell how I felt: but this little man was of the order of beings who must not be opposed, unless you possessed an all-dominant force sufficient to crush him at once.

‘Come then,’ said he, offering his hand.

I gave him mine, and he set off with a rapid walk, which obliged me to run at his side in order to keep pace. In the *carre* he stopped a moment: it was lit with large lamps; the wide doors of the classes were open, and so were the equally wide garden-doors; orange-trees in tubs, and tall flowers in pots, ornamented these portals on each side; groups of ladies and gentlemen in evening-dress stood and walked amongst the flowers. Within, the long vista of the school-rooms presented a thronging, undulating, murmuring, waving, streaming multitude, all rose, and blue, and half translucent white. There were lustres burning overhead; far off there was a stage, a solemn green curtain, a row of footlights.

‘Nest-ce pas que c'est beau?’ demanded my companion.

I should have said it was, but my heart got up into my throat. M. Paul discovered this, and gave me a side-sowl and a little shake for my pains.

‘I will do my best, but I wish it was over,’ said I; then I asked: ‘Are we to walk through that crowd?’

‘By no means: I manage matters better: we pass through the garden - here.’

In an instant we were out of doors: the cool, calm night revived me somewhat. It was moonless, but the reflex from the many glowing windows lit the court brightly, and even the alleys - dimly. Heaven was cloudless, and grand with the quiver of its living fires. How soft are the

nights of the Continent! How bland, balmy, safe! No sea-fog; no chilling damp: mistless as noon, and fresh as morning.

Having crossed court and garden, we reached the glass door of the first classe. It stood open, like all other doors that night; we passed, and then I was ushered into a small cabinet, dividing the first classe from the grand salle. This cabinet dazzled me, it was so full of light: it deafened me, it was clamorous with voices: it stifled me, it was so hot, choking, thronged.

'De l'ordre! Du silence!' cried M. Paul. 'Is this chaos?', he demanded; and there was a hush. With a dozen words, and as many gestures, he turned out half the persons present, and obliged the remnant to fall into rank. Those left were all in costume: they were the performers, and this was the green-room. M. Paul introduced me. All stared and some tittered. It was a surprise: they had not expected the Englishwoman would play in a *vaudeville*. Ginevra Fanshawe, beautifully dressed for her part, and looking fascinatingly pretty, turned on me a pair of eyes as round as beads. In the highest spirit, unperturbed by fear or bashfulness, delighted indeed at the thought of shining off before hundreds - my entrance seemed to transfix her with amazement in the midst of her joy. She would have exclaimed, but M. Paul held her and all the rest in check.

Having surveyed and criticized the whole troop, he turned to me.

'You, too, must be dressed for your part.'

'Dressed - dressed like a man!' exclaimed Zelig St. Pierre, darting forwards; adding with officiousness, 'I will dress her myself.'

To be dressed like a man did not please, and would not suit me. I had consented to take a man's name and part; as to his dress - *halte la!* No. I would keep my own dress, come what might. M. Paul might storm, might rage: I would keep my own dress. I said so, with a voice as resolute in intent, as it was low, and perhaps unsteady in utterance.

He did not immediately storm or rage, as I fully thought he would he stood silent. But Zelig again interposed.

'She will make a capital *petit-maitre*. Here are the garments, all - all complete: somewhat too large, but - I will arrange all that. Come, chere amie - belle Anglaise!'

And she sneered, for I was not 'belle.' She seized my hand, she was drawing me away. M. Paul stood impassable - neutral.

'You must not resist,' pursued St. Pierre - for resist I did. 'You will spoil all, destroy the mirth of the piece, the enjoyment of the company, sacrifice everything to your *amour-propre*. This would be too bad - monsieur will never permit this?'

She sought his eye. I watched, likewise, for a glance. He gave her one, and then he gave me one. 'Stop!' he said slowly, arresting St. Pierre, who continued her efforts to drag me after her. Everybody awaited the decision. He was not angry, not irritated; I perceived that, and took heart.

'You do not like these clothes?' he asked, pointing to the masculine vestments.

'I don't object to some of them, but I won't have them all.'

'How must it be, then? How accept a man's part, and go on the stage dressed as a woman? This is an amateur affair, it is true - *a vaudeville de pensionnat*; certain modifications I might sanction, yet something you must have to announce you as of the nobler sex.'

'And I will, Monsieur; but it must be arranged in my own way: nobody must meddle; the things must not be forced upon me. Just let me dress myself.'

Monsieur, without another word, took the costume from St. Pierre, gave it to me, and permitted me to pass into the dressing-room. Once alone, I grew calm, and collectedly went to work. Retaining my woman's garb without the slightest retrenchment, I merely assumed, in addition, a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletot of small dimensions; the whole being the costume of a brother of one of the pupils. Having loosened my hair out of its braids, made up the long back-hair close, and brushed the front hair to one side, I took my hat and gloves in my hand and came out. M. Paul was waiting, and so were the others. He looked at me. 'That may pass in a pensionnat,' he pronounced. Then added, not unkindly, 'Courage, mon ami! Un peu de sangfroid - un peu d'aplomb, M. Lucien, et tout ira bien.'

St. Pierre sneered again, in her cold snaky manner.

I was irritable, because excited, and I could not help turning upon her and saying, that if she were not a lady and I a gentleman, I should feel disposed to call her out.

'After the play, after the play,' said M. Paul. 'I will then divide my pair of pistols between you, and we will settle the dispute according to form: it will only be the old quarrel of France and England.'

But now the moment approached for the performance to commence. M. Paul, setting us before him, harangued us briefly, like a general addressing soldiers about to charge. I don't know what he said, except that he recommended each to penetrate herself with a sense of her personal insignificance. God knows I thought this advice superfluous for some of us. A bell tinkled. I and two more were ushered on to the stage. The bell tinkled again. I had to speak the very first words.

'Do not look at the crowd, nor think of it,' whispered M. Paul in my ear. 'Imagine yourself in the garret, acting to the rats.'

He vanished. The curtain drew up - shrivelled to the ceiling: the bright lights, the long room, the gay throng, burst upon us. I thought of the black-beetles, the old boxes, the worm-eaten bureau. I said my say badly; but I said it. That first speech was the difficulty; it revealed to me this fact, that it was not the crowd I feared so much as my own voice. Foreigners and strangers, the crowd were nothing to me. Nor did I think of them. When my tongue once got free, and my voice took its true pitch, and found its natural tone, I thought of nothing but the personage I represented - and of M. Paul, who was listening, watching, prompting in the side-scenes.

By-and-by, feeling the right power come - the spring demanded gush and rise inwardly - I became sufficiently composed to notice my fellow-actors. Some of them played very well; especially Ginevra Fanshawe, who had to coquette between two suitors, and managed admirably: in fact she was in her element. I observed that she once or twice threw a certain marked fondness and pointed partiality into her manner towards me - the fop. With such emphasis and animation did she favour me, such glances did she dart out into the listening and applauding crowd, that to me - who knew her - it presently became evident she was acting *at* some one; and I followed her eye, her smile, her gesture, and ere long discovered that she had at least singled out a handsome and distinguished aim for her shafts; full in the path of those arrows - taller than other spectators, and therefore more sure to receive them - stood, in attitude quiet but intent, a well-known form - that of Dr. John.

The spectacle seemed somehow suggestive. There was language in Dr. John's look, though I cannot tell what he said; it animated me: I drew out of it a history; I put my idea into the part I performed; I threw it into my wooing of Ginevra. In the 'Ours,' or sincere lover, I saw Dr. John. Did I pity him, as erst? No, I hardened my heart, rivalled and out-rivalled him. I knew myself but a fop, but where *he* was outcast *I* could please. Now I know acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer. Ginevra seconded me; between us we half- changed the nature of the *role*, gilding it from top to toe. Between the acts M. Paul, told us he knew not what possessed us, and half expostulated. 'C'est

peut-etre plus beau que votre modele,' said he, 'mais ce n'est pas juste.' I know not what possessed me either; but somehow, my longing was to eclipse the 'Ours,' *i.e.*, Dr. John. Ginevra was tender; how could I be otherwise than chivalric? Retaining the letter, I recklessly altered the spirit of the *role*. Without heart, without interest, I could not play it at all. It must be played - in went the yearned-for seasoning - thus favoured, I played it with relish.

What I felt that night, and what I did, I no more expected to feel and do, than to be lifted in a trance to the seventh heaven. Cold, reluctant, apprehensive, I had accepted a part to please another: ere long, warming, becoming interested, taking courage, I acted to please myself. Yet the next day, when I thought it over, I quite disapproved of these amateur performances; and though glad that I had obliged M. Paul, and tried my own strength for once, I took a firm resolution, never to be drawn into a similar affair. A keen relish for dramatic expression had revealed itself as part of my nature; to cherish and exercise this new-found faculty might gift me with a world of delight, but it would not do for a mere looker-on at life: the strength and longing must be put by; and I put them by, and fastened them in with the lock of a resolution which neither Time nor Temptation has since picked.

No sooner was the play over, and *well* over, than the choleric and arbitrary M. Paul underwent a metamorphosis. His hour of managerial responsibility past, he at once laid aside his magisterial austerity; in a moment he stood amongst us, vivacious, kind, and social, shook hands with us all round, thanked us separately, and announced his determination that each of us should in turn be his partner in the coming ball. On his claiming my promise, I told him I did not dance. 'For once I must,' was the answer; and if I had not slipped aside and kept out of his way, he would have compelled me to this second performance. But I had acted enough for one evening; it was time I retired into myself and my ordinary life. My dun-coloured dress did well enough under a paletot on the stage, but would not suit a waltz or a quadrille. Withdrawing to a quiet nook, whence unobserved I could observe - the ball, its splendours and its pleasures, passed before me as a spectacle.

Again Ginevra Fanshawe was the belle, the fairest and the gayest present; she was selected to open the ball: very lovely she looked, very gracefully she danced, very joyously she smiled. Such scenes were her triumphs - she was the child of pleasure. Work or suffering found her listless and dejected, powerless and repining; but gaiety expanded her butterfly's wings, lit up their gold-dust and bright spots, made her flash like a gem, and flush like a flower. At all ordinary diet and plain beverage she would pout; but she fed on creams and ices like a humming-bird on honey-paste: sweet wine was her element, and

sweet cake her daily bread. Ginevra lived her full life in a ball-room; elsewhere she drooped dispirited.

Think not, reader, that she thus bloomed and sparkled for the mere sake of M. Paul, her partner, or that she lavished her best graces that night for the edification of her companions only, or for that of the parents and grand-parents, who filled the *carre*, and lined the ball-room; under circumstances so insipid and limited, with motives so chilly and vapid, Ginevra would scarce have deigned to walk one quadrille, and weariness and fretfulness would have replaced animation and good-humour, but she knew of a leaven in the otherwise heavy festal mass which lighted the whole; she tasted a condiment which gave it zest; she perceived reasons justifying the display of her choicest attractions.

In the ball-room, indeed, not a single male spectator was to be seen who was not married and a father - M. Paul excepted - that gentleman, too, being the sole creature of his sex permitted to lead out a pupil to the dance; and this exceptional part was allowed him, partly as a matter of old-established custom (for he was a kinsman of Madame Beck's, and high in her confidence), partly because he would always have his own way and do as he pleased, and partly because - wilful, passionate, partial, as he might be - he was the soul of honour, and might be trusted with a regiment of the fairest and purest; in perfect security that under his leadership they would come to no harm. Many of the girls - it may be noted in parenthesis - were not pure-minded at all, very much otherwise; but they no more dare betray their natural coarseness in M. Paul's presence, than they dare tread purposely on his corns, laugh in his face during a stormy apostrophe, or speak above their breath while some crisis of irritability was covering his human visage with the mask of an intelligent tiger. M. Paul, then, might dance with whom he would - and woe be to the interference which put him out of step.

Others there were admitted as spectators - with (seeming) reluctance, through prayers, by influence, under restriction, by special and difficult exercise of Madame Beck's gracious good-nature, and whom she all the evening - with her own personal surveillance - kept far aloof at the remotest, drearest, coldest, darkest side of the *carre* - a small, forlorn band of 'jeunes gens;' these being all of the best families, grown-up sons of mothers present, and whose sisters were pupils in the school. That whole evening was Madame on duty beside these 'jeunes gens' - attentive to them as a mother, but strict with them as a dragon. There was a sort of cordon stretched before them, which they wearied her with prayers to be permitted to pass, and just to revive themselves by one dance with that 'belle blonde,' or that 'jolie brune,' or 'cette jeune fille magnifique aux cheveux noirs comme le jais.'



'Taisez-vous!' Madame would reply, heroically and inexorably. 'Vous ne passerez pas a moins que ce ne soit sur mon cadavre, et vous ne danserez qu'avec la nonnette du jardin' (alluding to the legend). And she majestically walked to and fro along their disconsolate and impatient line, like a little Bonaparte in a mouse-coloured silk gown.

Madame knew something of the world; Madame knew much of human nature. I don't think that another directress in Villette would have dared to admit a 'jeune homme' within her walls; but Madame knew that by granting such admission, on an occasion like the present, a bold stroke might be struck, and a great point gained.

In the first place, the parents were made accomplices to the deed, for it was only through their mediation it was brought about. Secondly: the admission of these rattlesnakes, so fascinating and so dangerous, served to draw out Madame precisely in her strongest character - that of a first-rate *surveillante*. Thirdly: their presence furnished a most piquant ingredient to the entertainment: the pupils knew it, and saw it, and the view of such golden apples shining afar off, animated them with a spirit no other circumstance could have kindled. The children's pleasure spread to the parents; life and mirth circulated quickly round the ball-room; the 'jeunes gens' themselves, though restrained, were amused: for Madame never permitted them to feel dull - and thus Madame Beck's fete annually ensured a success unknown to the fete of any other directress in the land.

I observed that Dr. John was at first permitted to walk at large through the classes: there was about him a manly, responsible look, that redeemed his youth, and half-expiated his beauty; but as soon as the ball began, Madame ran up to him.

'Come, Wolf; come,' said she, laughing: 'you wear sheep's clothing, but you must quit the fold notwithstanding. Come; I have a fine menagerie of twenty here in the carre: let me place you amongst my collection.'

'But first suffer me to have one dance with one pupil of my choice.'

'Have you the face to ask such a thing? It is madness: it is impiety. Sortez, sortez, au plus vite.'

She drove him before her, and soon had him enclosed within the cordon.

Ginevra being, I suppose, tired with dancing, sought me out in my retreat. She threw herself on the bench beside me, and (a demonstration I could very well have dispensed with) cast her arms round my neck.

'Lucy Snowe! Lucy Snowe!' she cried in a somewhat sobbing voice, half hysterical.

'What in the world is the matter?' I drily said.

'How do I look - how do I look to-night?' she demanded.

'As usual,' said I; 'preposterously vain.'

'Caustic creature! You never have a kind word for me; but in spite of you, and all other envious detractors, I know I am beautiful; I feel it, I see it - for there is a great looking-glass in the dressing-room, where I can view my shape from head to foot. Will you go with me now, and let us two stand before it?'

'I will, Miss Fanshawe: you shall be humoured even to the top of your bent.'

The dressing-room was very near, and we stepped in. Putting her arm through mine, she drew me to the mirror. Without resistance remonstrance, or remark, I stood and let her self-love have its feast and triumph: curious to see how much it could swallow - whether it was possible it could feed to satiety - whether any whisper of consideration for others could penetrate her heart, and moderate its vainglorious exultation.

Not at all. She turned me and herself round; she viewed us both on all sides; she smiled, she waved her curls, she retouched her sash, she spread her dress, and finally, letting go my arm, and curtsying with mock respect, she said: 'I would not be you for a kingdom.'

The remark was too *naive* to rouse anger; I merely said: 'Very good.'

'And what would *you* give to be ME?' she inquired.

'Not a bad sixpence - strange as it may sound,' I replied. 'You are but a poor creature.'

'You don't think so in your heart.'

'No; for in my heart you have not the outline of a place: I only occasionally turn you over in my brain.'

'Well, but,' said she, in an expostulatory tone, 'just listen to the difference of our positions, and then see how happy am I, and how miserable are you.'

'Go on; I listen.'

'In the first place: I am the daughter of a gentleman of family, and though my father is not rich, I have expectations from an uncle. Then, I am just eighteen, the finest age possible. I have had a continental education, and though I can't spell, I have abundant accomplishments. I *am* pretty; *you* can't deny that; I may have as many admirers as I choose. This very night I have been breaking the hearts of two gentlemen, and it is the dying look I had from one of them just now, which puts me in such spirits. I do so like to watch them turn red and pale, and scowl and dart fiery glances at each other, and languishing ones at me. There is *me* - happy ME; now for *you*, poor soul!

'I suppose you are nobody's daughter, since you took care of little children when you first came to Villette: you have no relations; you can't call yourself young at twenty-three; you have no attractive accomplishments - no beauty. As to admirers, you hardly know what they are; you can't even talk on the subject: you sit dumb when the other teachers quote their conquests. I believe you never were in love, and never will be: you don't know the feeling, and so much the better, for though you might have your own heart broken, no living heart will you ever break. Isn't it all true?'

'A good deal of it is true as gospel, and shrewd besides. There must be good in you, Ginevra, to speak so honestly; that snake, Zelig St. Pierre, could not utter what you have uttered. Still, Miss Fanshawe, hapless as I am, according to your showing, sixpence I would not give to purchase you, body and soul.'

'Just because I am not clever, and that is all *you* think of. Nobody in the world but you cares for cleverness.'

'On the contrary, I consider you *are* clever, in your way - very smart indeed. But you were talking of breaking hearts - that edifying amusement into the merits of which I don't quite enter; pray on whom does your vanity lead you to think you have done execution to-night?'

She approached her lips to my ear - 'Isidore and Alfred de Hamal are both here?' she whispered.

'Oh! they are? I should like to see them.'

'There's a dear creature! your curiosity is roused at last. Follow me, I will point them out.'

She proudly led the way - 'But you cannot see them well from the classes,' said she, turning, 'Madame keeps them too far off. Let us cross the garden, enter by the corridor, and get close to them behind: we shall be scolded if we are seen, but never mind.'

For once, I did not mind. Through the garden we went - penetrated into the corridor by a quiet private entrance, and approaching the *carre*, yet keeping in the corridor shade, commanded a near view of the band of 'jeunes gens.'

I believe I could have picked out the conquering de Hamal even undirected. He was a straight-nosed, very correct-featured little dandy. I say *little* dandy, though he was not beneath the middle standard in stature; but his lineaments were small, and so were his hands and feet; and he was pretty and smooth, and as trim as a doll: so nicely dressed, so nicely curled, so booted and gloved and cravated - he was charming indeed. I said so. 'What, a dear personage!' cried I, and commended Ginevra's taste warmly; and asked her what she thought de Hamal might have done with the precious fragments of that heart she had broken - whether he kept them in a scent-vial, and conserved them in otto of roses? I observed, too, with deep rapture of approbation, that the colonel's hands were scarce larger than Miss Fanshawe's own, and suggested that this circumstance might be convenient, as he could wear her gloves at a pinch. On his dear curls, I told her I doated: and as to his low, Grecian brow, and exquisite classic headpiece, I confessed I had no language to do such perfections justice.

'And if he were your lover?' suggested the cruelly exultant Ginevra.

'Oh! heavens, what bliss!' said I; 'but do not be inhuman, Miss Fanshawe: to put such thoughts into my head is like showing poor outcast Cain a far, glimpse of Paradise.'

'You like him, then?'

'As I like sweets, and jams, and comfits, and conservatory flowers.'

Ginevra admired my taste, for all these things were her adoration; she could then readily credit that they were mine too.

'Now for Isidore,' I went on. I own I felt still more curious to see him than his rival; but Ginevra was absorbed in the latter.

'Alfred was admitted here to-night,' said she, 'through the influence of his aunt, Madame la Baronne de Dorlodot; and now, having seen him, can you not understand why I have been in such spirits all the evening, and acted so well, and danced with such life, and why I am now happy as a queen? Dieu! Dieu! It was such good fun to glance first at him and then at the other, and madden them both.'

'But that other - where is he? Show me Isidore.'

'I don't like.'

'Why not?'

'I am ashamed of him.'

'For what reason?'

'Because - because' (in a whisper) 'he has such - such whiskers, orange - red - there now!'

'The murder is out,' I subjoined. 'Never mind, show him all the same; I engage not to faint.'

She looked round. Just then an English voice spoke behind her and me.

'You are both standing in a draught; you must leave this corridor.'

'There is no draught, Dr. John,' said I, turning.

'She takes cold so easily,' he pursued, looking at Ginevra with extreme kindness. 'She is delicate; she must be cared for: fetch her a shawl.'

'Permit me to judge for myself,' said Miss Fanshawe, with hauteur. 'I want no shawl.'

'Your dress is thin, you have been dancing, you are heated.'

'Always preaching,' retorted she; 'always coddling and admonishing.'

The answer Dr. John would have given did not come; that his heart was hurt became evident in his eye; darkened, and saddened, and pained, he turned a little aside, but was patient. I knew where there were plenty of shawls near at hand; I ran and fetched one.

'She shall wear this, if I have strength to make her,' said I, folding it well round her muslin dress, covering carefully her neck and her arms. 'Is that Isidore?' I asked, in a somewhat fierce whisper.

She pushed up her lip, smiled, and nodded.

'Is *that* Isidore?' I repeated, giving her a shake: I could have given her a dozen.

'C'est lui-meme,' said she. 'How coarse he is, compared with the Colonel-Count! And then - oh ciel! - the whiskers!'

Dr. John now passed on.

'The Colonel-Count!' I echoed. 'The doll - the puppet - the manikin - the poor inferior creature! A mere lackey for Dr. John his valet, his foot-boy! Is it possible that fine generous gentleman - handsome as a vision - offers you his honourable hand and gallant heart, and promises to protect your flimsy person and feckless mind through the storms and struggles of life - and you hang back - you scorn, you sting, you torture him! Have you power to do this? Who gave you that power? Where is it? Does it lie all in your beauty - your pink and white complexion, and your yellow hair? Does this bind his soul at your feet, and bend his neck under your yoke? Does this purchase for you his affection, his tenderness, his thoughts, his hopes, his interest, his noble, cordial love - and will you not have it? Do you scorn it? You are only dissembling: you are not in earnest: you love him; you long for him; but you trifle with his heart to make him more surely yours?'

'Bah! How you run on! I don't understand half you have said.'

I had got her out into the garden ere this. I now set her down on a seat and told her she should not stir till she had avowed which she meant in the end to accept - the man or the monkey.

'Him you call the man,' said she, 'is bourgeois, sandy-haired, and answers to the name of John! - cela suffit: je n'en veux pas. Colonel de Hamal is a gentleman of excellent connections, perfect manners, sweet appearance, with pale interesting face, and hair and eyes like an Italian. Then too he is the most delightful company possible - a man quite in my way; not sensible and serious like the other; but one with whom I can talk on equal terms - who does not plague and bore, and harass me with depths, and heights, and passions, and talents for which I have no taste. There now. Don't hold me so fast.'

I slackened my grasp, and she darted off. I did not care to pursue her.

Somehow I could not avoid returning once more in the direction of the corridor to get another glimpse of Dr. John; but I met him on the garden-steps, standing where the light from a window fell broad. His well-proportioned figure was not to be mistaken, for I doubt whether there was another in that assemblage his equal. He carried his hat in his hand; his uncovered head, his face and fine brow were most handsome and manly. *His* features were not delicate, not slight like those of a woman, nor were they cold, frivolous, and feeble; though well cut, they were not so chiselled, so frittered away, as to lose in expression or significance what they gained in unmeaning symmetry. Much feeling spoke in them at times, and more sat silent in his eye. Such at least were my thoughts of him: to me he seemed all this. An

inexpressible sense of wonder occupied me, as I looked at this man, and reflected that *he* could not be slighted.

It was, not my intention to approach or address him in the garden, our terms of acquaintance not warranting such a step; I had only meant to view him in the crowd - myself unseen: coming upon him thus alone, I withdrew. But he was looking out for me, or rather for her who had been with me: therefore he descended the steps, and followed me down the alley.

'You know Miss Fanshawe? I have often wished to ask whether you knew her,' said he.

'Yes: I know her.'

'Intimately?'

'Quite as intimately as I wish.'

'What have you done with her now?'

'Am I her keeper?' I felt inclined to ask; but I simply answered, 'I have shaken her well, and would have shaken her better, but she escaped out of my hands and ran away.'

'Would you favour me,' he asked, 'by watching over her this one evening, and observing that she does nothing imprudent - does not, for instance, run out into the night-air immediately after dancing?'

'I may, perhaps, look after her a little; since you wish it; but she likes her own way too well to submit readily to control.'

'She is so young, so thoroughly artless,' said he.

'To me she is an enigma,' I responded.

'Is she?' he asked - much interested. 'How?'

'It would be difficult to say how - difficult, at least, to tell *you* how.'

'And why me?'

'I wonder she is not better pleased that you are so much her friend.'

'But she has not the slightest idea how much I *am* her friend. That is precisely the point I cannot teach her. May I inquire did she ever speak of me to you?'

'Under the name of 'Isidore' she has talked about you often; but I must add that it is only within the last ten minutes I have discovered that you and 'Isidore' are identical. It is only, Dr. John, within that brief space of time I have learned that Ginevra Fanshawe is the person, under this roof, in whom you have long been interested - that she is the magnet which attracts you to the Rue Fossette, that for her sake you venture into this garden, and seek out caskets dropped by rivals.'

'You know all?'

'I know so much.'

'For more than a year I have been accustomed to meet her in society. Mrs Cholmondeley, her friend, is an acquaintance of mine; thus I see her every Sunday. But you observed that under the name of 'Isidore' she often spoke of me: may I - without inviting you to a breach of confidence - inquire what was the tone, what the feeling of her remarks? I feel somewhat anxious to know, being a little tormented with uncertainty as to how I stand with her.'

'Oh, she varies: she shifts and changes like the wind.'

'Still, you can gather some general idea - ?'

'I can,' thought I, 'but it would not do to communicate that general idea to you. Besides, if I said she did not love you, I know you would not believe me.'

'You are silent,' he pursued. 'I suppose you have no good news to impart. No matter. If she feels for me positive coldness and aversion, it is a sign I do not deserve her.'

'Do you doubt yourself? Do you consider yourself the inferior of Colonel de Hamal?'

'I love Miss Fanshawe far more than de Hamal loves any human being, and would care for and guard her better than he. Respecting de Hamal, I fear she is under an illusion; the man's character is known to me, all his antecedents, all his scrapes. He is not worthy of your beautiful young friend.'

'My 'beautiful young friend' ought to know that, and to know or feel who is worthy of her,' said I. 'If her beauty or her brains will not serve her so far, she merits the sharp lesson of experience.'

'Are you not a little severe?'



'I am excessively severe - more severe than I choose to show you. You should hear the strictures with which I favour my 'beautiful young friend,' only that you would be unutterably shocked at my want of tender considerateness for her delicate nature.'

'She is so lovely, one cannot but be loving towards her. You - every woman older than herself, must feel for such a simple, innocent, girlish fairy a sort of motherly or elder-sisterly fondness. Graceful angel! Does not your heart yearn towards her when she pours into your ear her pure, childlike confidences? How you are privileged!' And he sighed.

'I cut short these confidences somewhat abruptly now and then,' said I. 'But excuse me, Dr. John, may I change the theme for one instant? What a god-like person is that de Hamal! What a nose on his face - perfect! Model one in putty or clay, you could not make a better or straighter, or neater; and then, such classic lips and chin - and his bearing - sublime.'

'De Hamal is an unutterable puppy, besides being a very white-livered hero.'

'You, Dr. John, and every man of a less-refined mould than he, must feel for him a sort of admiring affection, such as Mars and the coarser deities may be supposed to have borne the young, graceful Apollo.'

'An unprincipled, gambling little jackanapes!' said Dr. John curtly, 'whom, with one hand, I could lift up by the waistband any day, and lay low in the kennel if I liked.'

'The sweet seraph!' said I. 'What a cruel idea! Are you not a little severe, Dr. John?'

And now I paused. For the second time that night I was going beyond myself - venturing out of what I looked on as my natural habits - speaking in an unpremeditated, impulsive strain, which startled me strangely when I halted to reflect. On rising that morning, had I anticipated that before night I should have acted the part of a gay lover in a vaudeville; and an hour after, frankly discussed with Dr. John the question of his hapless suit, and rallied him on his illusions? I had no more presaged such feats than I had looked forward to an ascent in a balloon, or a voyage to Cape Horn.

The Doctor and I, having paced down the walk, were now returning; the reflex from the window again lit his face: he smiled, but his eye was melancholy. How I wished that he could feel heart's-ease! How I grieved that he brooded over pain, and pain from such a cause! He, with his great advantages, *he* to love in vain! I did not then know that

the pensiveness of reverse is the best phase for some minds; nor did I reflect that some herbs, 'though scentless when entire, yield fragrance when they're bruised.'

'Do not be sorrowful, do not grieve,' I broke out. 'If there is in Ginevra one spark of worthiness of your affection, she will - she *must* feel devotion in return. Be cheerful, be hopeful, Dr. John. Who should hope, if not you?'

In return for this speech I got - what, it must be supposed, I deserved - a look of surprise: I thought also of some disapprobation. We parted, and I went into the house very chill. The clocks struck and the bells tolled midnight; people were leaving fast: the fete was over; the lamps were fading. In another hour all the dwelling-house, and all the pensionnat, were dark and hushed. I too was in bed, but not asleep. To me it was not easy to sleep after a day of such excitement.