Chapter XX - The Concert

One morning, Mrs Bretton, coming promptly into my room, desired me to open my drawers and show her my dresses; which I did, without a word.

'That will do,' said she, when she had turned them over. 'You must have a new one.'

She went out. She returned presently with a dressmaker. She had me measured. 'I mean,' said she, 'to follow my own taste, and to have my own way in this little matter.'

Two days after came home - a pink dress!

'That is not for me,' I said, hurriedly, feeling that I would almost as soon clothe myself in the costume of a Chinese lady of rank.

'We shall see whether it is for you or not,' rejoined my godmother, adding with her resistless decision: 'Mark my words. You will wear it this very evening.'

I thought I should not; I thought no human force should avail to put me into it. A pink dress! I knew it not. It knew not me. I had not proved it.

My godmother went on to decree that I was to go with her and Graham to a concert that same night: which concert, she explained, was a grand affair to be held in the large salle, or hall, of the principal musical society. The most advanced of the pupils of the Conservatoire were to perform: it was to be followed by a lottery 'au benefice des pauvres;' and to crown all, the King, Queen, and Prince of Labassecour were to be present. Graham, in sending tickets, had enjoined attention to costume as a compliment due to royalty: he also recommended punctual readiness by seven o'clock.

About six, I was ushered upstairs. Without any force at all, I found myself led and influenced by another's will, unconsulted, unpersuaded, quietly overruled. In short, the pink dress went on, softened by some drapery of black lace. I was pronounced to be en grande tenue, and requested to look in the glass. I did so with some fear and trembling; with more fear and trembling, I turned away. Seven o'clock struck; Dr. Bretton was come; my godmother and I went down. *She* was clad in brown velvet; as I walked in her shadow, how I envied her those folds of grave, dark majesty! Graham stood in the drawing-room doorway.

'I *do* hope he will not think I have been decking myself out to draw attention,' was my uneasy aspiration.

'Here, Lucy, are some flowers,' said he, giving me a bouquet. He took no further notice of my dress than was conveyed in a kind smile and satisfied nod, which calmed at once my sense of shame and fear of ridicule. For the rest; the dress was made with extreme simplicity, guiltless of flounce or furbelow; it was but the light fabric and bright tint which scared me, and since Graham found in it nothing absurd, my own eye consented soon to become reconciled.

I suppose people who go every night to places of public amusement, can hardly enter into the fresh gala feeling with which an opera or a concert is enjoyed by those for whom it is a rarity: I am not sure that I expected great pleasure from the concert, having but a very vague notion of its nature, but I liked the drive there well. The snug comfort of the close carriage on a cold though fine night, the pleasure of setting out with companions so cheerful and friendly, the sight of the stars glinting fitfully through the trees as we rolled along the avenue; then the freer burst of the night-sky when we issued forth to the open chaussee, the passage through the city gates, the lights there burning, the guards there posted, the pretence of inspection, to which we there submitted, and which amused us so much - all these small matters had for me, in their novelty, a peculiarly exhilarating charm. How much of it lay in the atmosphere of friendship diffused about me, I know not: Dr. John and his mother were both in their finest mood, contending animatedly with each other the whole way, and as frankly kind to me as if I had been of their kin.

Our way lay through some of the best streets of Villette, streets brightly lit, and far more lively now than at high noon. How brilliant seemed the shops! How glad, gay, and abundant flowed the tide of life along the broad pavement! While I looked, the thought of the Rue Fossette came across me - of the walled-in garden and school-house, and of the dark, vast 'classes,' where, as at this very hour, it was my wont to wander all solitary, gazing at the stars through the high, blindless windows, and listening to the distant voice of the reader in the refectory, monotonously exercised upon the 'lecture pieuse.' Thus must I soon again listen and wander; and this shadow of the future stole with timely sobriety across the radiant present.

By this time we had got into a current of carriages all tending in one direction, and soon the front of a great illuminated building blazed before us. Of what I should see within this building, I had, as before intimated, but an imperfect idea; for no place of public entertainment had it ever been my lot to enter yet.

We alighted under a portico where there was a great bustle and a great crowd, but I do not distinctly remember further details, until I found myself mounting a majestic staircase wide and easy of ascent, deeply and softly carpeted with crimson, leading up to great doors closed solemnly, and whose panels were also crimson-clothed.

I hardly noticed by what magic these doors were made to roll back - Dr. John managed these points; roll back they did, however, and within was disclosed a hall - grand, wide, and high, whose sweeping circular walls, and domed hollow ceiling, seemed to me all dead gold (thus with nice art was it stained), relieved by cornicing, fluting, and garlandry, either bright, like gold burnished, or snow-white, like alabaster, or white and gold mingled in wreaths of gilded leaves and spotless lilies: wherever drapery hung, wherever carpets were spread, or cushions placed, the sole colour employed was deep crimson. Pendent from the dome, flamed a mass that dazzled me - a mass, I thought, of rock-crystal, sparkling with facets, streaming with drops, ablaze with stars, and gorgeously tinged with dews of gems dissolved, or fragments of rainbows shivered. It was only the chandelier, reader, but for me it seemed the work of eastern genii: I almost looked to see if a huge, dark, cloudy hand - that of the Slave of the Lamp - were not hovering in the lustrous and perfumed atmosphere of the cupola, guarding its wondrous treasure.

We moved on - I was not at all conscious whither - but at some turn we suddenly encountered another party approaching from the opposite direction. I just now see that group, as it flashed - upon me for one moment. A handsome middle-aged lady in dark velvet; a gentleman who might be her son - the best face, the finest figure, I thought, I had ever seen; a third person in a pink dress and black lace mantle.

I noted them all - the third person as well as the other two - and for the fraction of a moment believed them all strangers, thus receiving an impartial impression of their appearance. But the impression was hardly felt and not fixed, before the consciousness that I faced a great mirror, filling a compartment between two pillars, dispelled it: the party was our own party. Thus for the first, and perhaps only time in my life, I enjoyed the 'giftie' of seeing myself as others see me. No need to dwell on the result. It brought a jar of discord, a pang of regret; it was not flattering, yet, after all, I ought to be thankful; it might have been worse.

At last, we were seated in places commanding a good general view of that vast and dazzling, but warm and cheerful hall. Already it was filled, and filled with a splendid assemblage. I do not know that the women were very beautiful, but their dresses were so perfect; and foreigners, even such as are ungraceful in domestic privacy, seem to

posses the art of appearing graceful in public: however blunt and boisterous those every-day and home movements connected with peignoir and papillotes, there is a slide, a bend, a carriage of the head and arms, a mien of the mouth and eyes, kept nicely in reserve for gala use - always brought out with the grande toilette, and duly put on with the 'parure.'

Some fine forms there were here and there, models of a peculiar style of beauty; a style, I think, never seen in England; a solid, firm-set, sculptural style. These shapes have no angles: a caryatid in marble is almost as flexible; a Phidian goddess is not more perfect in a certain still and stately sort. They have such features as the Dutch painters give to their madonnas: low-country classic features, regular but round, straight but stolid; and for their depth of expressionless calm, of passionless peace, a polar snow-field could alone offer a type. Women of this order need no ornament, and they seldom wear any; the smooth hair, closely braided, supplies a sufficient contrast to the smoother cheek and brow; the dress cannot be too simple; the rounded arm and perfect neck require neither bracelet nor chain.

With one of these beauties I once had the honour and rapture to be perfectly acquainted: the inert force of the deep, settled love she bore herself, was wonderful; it could only be surpassed by her proud impotency to care for any other living thing. Of blood, her cool veins conducted no flow; placid lymph filled and almost obstructed her arteries.

Such a Juno as I have described sat full in our view - a sort of mark for all eyes, and quite conscious that so she was, but proof to the magnetic influence of gaze or glance: cold, rounded, blonde, and beauteous as the white column, capitalled with gilding, which rose at her side.

Observing that Dr. John's attention was much drawn towards her, I entreated him in a low voice 'for the love of heaven to shield well his heart. You need not fall in love with *that* lady,' I said, 'because, I tell you beforehand, you might die at her feet, and she would not love you again.'

'Very well,' said he, 'and how do you know that the spectacle of her grand insensibility might not with me be the strongest stimulus to homage? The sting of desperation is, I think, a wonderful irritant to my emotions: but' (shrugging his shoulders) 'you know nothing about these things; I'll address myself to my mother. Mamma, I'm in a dangerous way.'

'As if that interested me!' said Mrs Bretton.

‘Alas! the cruelty of my lot!’ responded her son. ‘Never man had a more unsentimental mother than mine: she never seems to think that such a calamity can befall her as a daughter-in-law.’

‘If I don't, it is not for want of having that same calamity held over my head: you have threatened me with it for the last ten years. 'Mamma, I am going to be married soon!' was the cry before you were well out of jackets.’

‘But, mother, one of these days it will be realized. All of a sudden, when you think you are most secure, I shall go forth like Jacob or Esau, or any other patriarch, and take me a wife: perhaps of these which are of the daughters of the land.’

‘At your peril, John Graham! that is all.’

‘This mother of mine means me to be an old bachelor. What a jealous old lady it is! But now just look at that splendid creature in the pale blue satin dress, and hair of paler brown, with 'reflets satines' as those of her robe. Would you not feel proud, mamma, if I were to bring that goddess home some day, and introduce her to you as Mrs Bretton, junior?’

‘You will bring no goddess to La Terrasse: that little chateau will not contain two mistresses; especially if the second be of the height, bulk, and circumference of that mighty doll in wood and wax, and kid and satin.’

‘Mamma, she would fill your blue chair so admirably!’

‘Fill my chair? I defy the foreign usurper! a rueful chair should it be for her: but hush, John Graham! Hold your tongue, and use your eyes.’

During the above skirmish, the hall, which, I had thought, seemed full at the entrance, continued to admit party after party, until the semicircle before the stage presented one dense mass of heads, sloping from floor to ceiling. The stage, too, or rather the wide temporary platform, larger than any stage, desert half an hour since, was now overflowing with life; round two grand pianos, placed about the centre, a white flock of young girls, the pupils of the Conservatoire, had noiselessly poured. I had noticed their gathering, while Graham and his mother were engaged in discussing the belle in blue satin, and had watched with interest the process of arraying and marshalling them. Two gentlemen, in each of whom I recognised an acquaintance, officered this virgin troop. One, an artistic-looking man, bearded, and with long hair, was a noted pianiste, and also the first music- teacher in Villette; he attended twice a week at Madame Beck's

pensionnat, to give lessons to the few pupils whose parents were rich enough to allow their daughters the privilege of his instructions; his name was M. Josef Emanuel, and he was half-brother to M. Paul: which potent personage was now visible in the person of the second gentleman.

M. Paul amused me; I smiled to myself as I watched him, he seemed so thoroughly in his element - standing conspicuous in presence of a wide and grand assemblage, arranging, restraining, over-aweing about one hundred young ladies. He was, too, so perfectly in earnest - so energetic, so intent, and, above all, so of the foreigners then resident in Villette. These took possession of the crimson benches; the ladies were seated; most of the men remained standing: their sable rank, lining the background, looked like a dark foil to the splendour displayed in front. Nor was this splendour without varying light and shade and gradation: the middle distance was filled with matrons in velvets and satins, in plumes and gems; the benches in the foreground, to the Queen's right hand, seemed devoted exclusively to young girls, the flower - perhaps, I should rather say, the bud - of Villette aristocracy. Here were no jewels, no head-dresses, no velvet pile or silken sheen purity, simplicity, and aerial grace reigned in that virgin band. Young heads simply braided, and fair forms (I was going to write *sylph* forms, but that would have been quite untrue: several of these 'jeunes filles,' who had not numbered more than sixteen or seventeen years, boasted contours as robust and solid as those of a stout Englishwoman of five-and-twenty) - fair forms robed in white, or pale rose, or placid blue, suggested thoughts of heaven and angels. I knew a couple, at least, of these 'rose et blanche' specimens of humanity. Here was a pair of Madame Beck's late pupils - Mesdemoiselles Mathilde and Angelique: pupils who, during their last year at school, ought to have been in the first class, but whose brains never got them beyond the second division. In English, they had been under my own charge, and hard work it was to get them to translate rationally a page of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Also during three months I had one of them for my vis-a-vis at table, and the quantity of household bread, butter, and stewed fruit, she would habitually consume at 'second dejeuner' was a real world's wonder - to be exceeded only by the fact of her actually pocketing slices she could not eat. Here be truths - wholesome truths, too.

I knew another of these seraphs - the prettiest, or, at any rate, the least demure and hypocritical looking of the lot: she was seated by the daughter of an English peer, also an honest, though haughty- looking girl: both had entered in the suite of the British embassy. She (*i.e.* my acquaintance) had a slight, pliant figure, not at all like the forms of the foreign damsels: her hair, too, was not close-braided, like a shell or a skull-cap of satin; it looked *like* hair, and waved from her head, long, curled, and flowing. She chatted away volubly, and seemed full

of a light-headed sort of satisfaction with herself and her position. I did not look at Dr. Bretton; but I knew that he, too, saw Ginevra Fanshawe: he had become so quiet, he answered so briefly his mother's remarks, he so often suppressed a sigh. Why should he sigh? He had confessed a taste for the pursuit of love under difficulties; here was full gratification for that taste. His lady-love beamed upon him from a sphere above his own: he could not come near her; he was not certain that he could win from her a look. I watched to see if she would so far favour him. Our seat was not far from the crimson benches; we must inevitably be seen thence, by eyes so quick and roving as Miss Fanshawe's, and very soon those optics of hers were upon us: at least, upon Dr. and Mrs Bretton. I kept rather in the shade and out of sight, not wishing to be immediately recognised: she looked quite steadily at Dr. John, and then she raised a glass to examine his mother; a minute or two afterwards she laughingly whispered her neighbour; upon the performance commencing, her rambling attention was attracted to the platform.

On the concert I need not dwell; the reader would not care to have my impressions thereanent: and, indeed, it would not be worth while to record them, as they were the impressions of an ignorance crasse. The young ladies of the Conservatoire, being very much frightened, made rather a tremulous exhibition on the two grand pianos. M. Josef Emanuel stood by them while they played; but he had not the tact or influence of his kinsman, who, under similar circumstances, would certainly have *compelled* pupils of his to demean themselves with heroism and self-possession. M. Paul would have placed the hysteric debutantes between two fires - terror of the audience, and terror of himself - and would have inspired them with the courage of desperation, by making the latter terror incomparably the greater: M. Josef could not do this.

Following the white muslin pianistes, came a fine, full-grown, sulky lady in white satin. She sang. Her singing just affected me like the tricks of a conjuror: I wondered how she did it - how she made her voice run up and down, and cut such marvellous capers; but a simple Scotch melody, played by a rude street minstrel, has often moved me more deeply.

Afterwards stepped forth a gentleman, who, bending his body a good deal in the direction of the King and Queen, and frequently approaching his white-gloved hand to the region of his heart, vented a bitter outcry against a certain ‘fausse Isabelle.’ I thought he seemed especially to solicit the Queen's sympathy; but, unless I am egregiously mistaken, her Majesty lent her attention rather with the calm of courtesy than the earnestness of interest. This gentleman's state of mind was very harrowing, and I was glad when he wound up his musical exposition of the same.

Some rousing choruses struck me as the best part of the evening's entertainment. There were present deputies from all the best provincial choral societies; genuine, barrel-shaped, native Labassecouriens. These worthies gave voice without mincing the matter their hearty exertions had at least this good result - the ear drank thence a satisfying sense of power.

Through the whole performance - timid instrumental duets, conceited vocal solos, sonorous, brass-lunged choruses - my attention gave but one eye and one ear to the stage, the other being permanently retained in the service of Dr. Bretton: I could not forget him, nor cease to question how he was feeling, what he was thinking, whether he was amused or the contrary. At last he spoke.

'And how do you like it all, Lucy? You are very quiet,' he said, in his own cheerful tone.

'I am quiet,' I said, 'because I am so very, *very* much interested: not merely with the music, but with everything about me.'

He then proceeded to make some further remarks, with so much equanimity and composure that I began to think he had really not seen what I had seen, and I whispered - 'Miss Fanshawe is here: have you noticed her?'

'Oh, yes! and I observed that you noticed her too?'

'Is she come with Mrs Cholmondeley, do you think?'

'Mrs Cholmondeley is there with a very grand party. Yes; Ginevra was in *her* train; and Mrs Cholmondeley was in Lady - - 's train, who was in the Queen's train. If this were not one of the compact little minor European courts, whose very formalities are little more imposing than familiarities, and whose gala grandeur is but homeliness in Sunday array, it would sound all very fine.'

'Ginevra saw you, I think?'

'So do I think so. I have had my eye on her several times since you withdrew yours; and I have had the honour of witnessing a little spectacle which you were spared.'

I did not ask what; I waited voluntary information, which was presently given.

'Miss Fanshawe,' he said, 'has a companion with her - a lady of rank. I happen to know Lady Sara by sight; her noble mother has called me in professionally. She is a proud girl, but not in the least insolent, and

I doubt whether Ginevra will have gained ground in her estimation by making a butt of her neighbours.'

'What neighbours?'

'Merely myself and my mother. As to me it is all very natural: nothing, I suppose, can be fairer game than the young bourgeois doctor; but my mother! I never saw her ridiculed before. Do you know, the curling lip, and sarcastically levelled glass thus directed, gave me a most curious sensation?'

'Think nothing of it, Dr. John: it is not worth while. If Ginevra were in a giddy mood, as she is eminently to-night, she would make no scruple of laughing at that mild, pensive Queen, or that melancholy King. She is not actuated by malevolence, but sheer, heedless folly. To a feather-brained school-girl nothing is sacred.'

'But you forget: I have not been accustomed to look on Miss Fanshawe in the light of a feather-brained school-girl. Was she not my divinity - the angel of my career?'

'Hem! There was your mistake.' 'To speak the honest truth, without any false rant or assumed romance, there actually was a moment, six months ago, when I thought her divine. Do you remember our conversation about the presents? I was not quite open with you in discussing that subject: the warmth with which you took it up amused me. By way of having the full benefit of your lights, I allowed you to think me more in the dark than I really was. It was that test of the presents which first proved Ginevra mortal. Still her beauty retained its fascination: three days - three hours ago, I was very much her slave. As she passed me to-night, triumphant in beauty, my emotions did her homage; but for one luckless sneer, I should yet be the humblest of her servants. She might have scoffed at *me*, and, while wounding, she would not soon have alienated me: through myself, she could not in ten years have done what, in a moment, she has done through my mother.'

He held his peace awhile. Never before had I seen so much fire, and so little sunshine in Dr. John's blue eye as just now.

'Lucy,' he recommenced, 'look well at my mother, and say, without fear or favour, in what light she now appears to you.'

'As she always does - an English, middle-class gentlewoman; well, though gravely dressed, habitually independent of pretence, constitutionally composed and cheerful.'

'So she seems to me - bless her! The merry may laugh *with* mamma, but the weak only will laugh *at* her. She shall not be ridiculed, with my consent, at least; nor without my - my scorn - my antipathy - my -'

He stopped: and it was time - for he was getting excited - more it seemed than the occasion warranted. I did not then know that he had witnessed double cause for dissatisfaction with Miss Fanshawe. The glow of his complexion, the expansion of his nostril, the bold curve which disdain gave his well-cut under lip, showed him in a new and striking phase. Yet the rare passion of the constitutionally suave and serene, is not a pleasant spectacle; nor did I like the sort of vindictive thrill which passed through his strong young frame.

'Do I frighten you, Lucy?' he asked.

'I cannot tell why you are so very angry.'

'For this reason,' he muttered in my ear. 'Ginevra is neither a pure angel, nor a pure-minded woman.'

'Nonsense! you exaggerate: she has no great harm in her.'

'Too much for me. *I* can see where *you* are blind. Now dismiss the subject. Let me amuse myself by teasing mamma: I will assert that she is flagging. Mamma, pray rouse yourself.'

'John, I will certainly rouse you if you are not better conducted. Will you and Lucy be silent, that I may hear the singing?'

They were then thundering in a chorus, under cover of which all the previous dialogue had taken place.

'*You* hear the singing, mamma! Now, I will wager my studs, which are genuine, against your paste brooch - '

'My paste brooch, Graham? Profane boy! you know that it is a stone of value.'

'Oh! that is one of your superstitions: you were cheated in the business.'

'I am cheated in fewer things than you imagine. How do you happen to be acquainted with young ladies of the court, John? I have observed two of them pay you no small attention during the last half-hour.'

'I wish you would not observe them.'

‘Why not? Because one of them satirically levels her eyeglass at me? She is a pretty, silly girl: but are you apprehensive that her titter will discomfit the old lady?’

‘The sensible, admirable old lady! Mother, you are better to me than ten wives yet.’

‘Don't be demonstrative, John, or I shall faint, and you will have to carry me out; and if that burden were laid upon you, you would reverse your last speech, and exclaim, 'Mother, ten wives could hardly be worse to me than you are!'‘

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The concert over, the Lottery ‘au benefice des pauvres’ came next: the interval between was one of general relaxation, and the pleasantest imaginable stir and commotion. The white flock was cleared from the platform; a busy throng of gentlemen crowded it instead, making arrangements for the drawing; and amongst these - the busiest of all - re-appeared that certain well-known form, not tall but active, alive with the energy and movement of three tall men. How M. Paul did work! How he issued directions, and, at the same time, set his own shoulder to the wheel! Half-a-dozen assistants were at his beck to remove the pianos, &c.; no matter, he must add to their strength his own. The redundancy of his alertness was half-vexing, half-ludicrous: in my mind I both disapproved and derided most of this fuss. Yet, in the midst of prejudice and annoyance, I could not, while watching, avoid perceiving a certain not disagreeable naivete in all he did and said; nor could I be blind to certain vigorous characteristics of his physiognomy, rendered conspicuous now by the contrast with a throng of tamer faces: the deep, intent keenness of his eye, the power of his forehead, pale, broad, and full - the mobility of his most flexible mouth. He lacked the calm of force, but its movement and its fire he signally possessed.

Meantime the whole hall was in a stir; most people rose and remained standing, for a change; some walked about, all talked and laughed. The crimson compartment presented a peculiarly animated scene. The long cloud of gentlemen, breaking into fragments, mixed with the rainbow line of ladies; two or three officer-like men approached the King and conversed with him. The Queen, leaving her chair, glided along the rank of young ladies, who all stood up as she passed; and to each in turn I saw her vouchsafe some token of kindness - a gracious word, look or smile. To the two pretty English girls, Lady Sara and Ginevra Fanshawe, she addressed several sentences; as she left them, both, and especially the latter, seemed to glow all over with gratification. They were afterwards accosted by several ladies, and a

little circle of gentlemen gathered round them; amongst these - the nearest to Ginevra - stood the Count de Hamal.

'This room is stiflingly hot,' said Dr. Bretton, rising with sudden impatience. 'Lucy - mother - will you come a moment to the fresh air?'

'Go with him, Lucy,' said Mrs Bretton. 'I would rather keep my seat.'

Willingly would I have kept mine also, but Graham's desire must take precedence of my own; I accompanied him.

We found the night-air keen; or at least I did: he did not seem to feel it; but it was very still, and the star-sown sky spread cloudless. I was wrapped in a fur shawl. We took some turns on the pavement; in passing under a lamp, Graham encountered my eye.

'You look pensive, Lucy: is it on my account?'

'I was only fearing that you were grieved.'

'Not at all: so be of good cheer - as I am. Whenever I die, Lucy, my persuasion is that it will not be of heart-complaint. I may be stung, I may seem to droop for a time, but no pain or malady of sentiment has yet gone through my whole system. You have always seen me cheerful at home?'

'Generally.'

'I am glad she laughed at my mother. I would not give the old lady for a dozen beauties. That sneer did me all the good in the world. Thank you, Miss Fanshawe!' And he lifted his hat from his waved locks, and made a mock reverence.

'Yes,' he said, 'I thank her. She has made me feel that nine parts in ten of my heart have always been sound as a bell, and the tenth bled from a mere puncture: a lancet-prick that will heal in a trice.'

'You are angry just now, heated and indignant; you will think and feel differently to-morrow.'

'*I* heated and indignant! You don't know me. On the contrary, the heat is gone: I am as cool as the night - which, by the way, may be too cool for you. We will go back.'

'Dr. John, this is a sudden change.'

'Not it: or if it be, there are good reasons for it - two good reasons: I have told you one. But now let us re-enter.'

We did not easily regain our seats; the lottery was begun, and all was excited confusion; crowds blocked the sort of corridor along which we had to pass: it was necessary to pause for a time. Happening to glance round - indeed I half fancied I heard my name pronounced - I saw quite near, the ubiquitous, the inevitable M. Paul. He was looking at me gravely and intently: at me, or rather at my pink dress - sardonic comment on which gleamed in his eye. Now it was his habit to indulge in strictures on the dress, both of the teachers and pupils, at Madame Beck's - a habit which the former, at least, held to be an offensive impertinence: as yet I had not suffered from it - my sombre daily attire not being calculated to attract notice. I was in no mood to permit any new encroachment to-night: rather than accept his banter, I would ignore his presence, and accordingly steadily turned my face to the sleeve of Dr. John's coat; finding in that same black sleeve a prospect more redolent of pleasure and comfort, more genial, more friendly, I thought, than was offered by the dark little Professor's unlovely visage. Dr. John seemed unconsciously to sanction the preference by looking down and saying in his kind voice, 'Ay, keep close to my side, Lucy: these crowding burghers are no respecters of persons.'

I could not, however, be true to myself. Yielding to some influence, mesmeric or otherwise - an influence unwelcome, displeasing, but effective - I again glanced round to see if M. Paul was gone. No, there he stood on the same spot, looking still, but with a changed eye; he had penetrated my thought, and read my wish to shun him. The mocking but not ill-humoured gaze was turned to a swarthy frown, and when I bowed, with a view to conciliation, I got only the stiffest and sternest of nods in return.

'Whom have you made angry, Lucy?' whispered Dr. Bretton, smiling. 'Who is that savage-looking friend of yours?'

'One of the professors at Madame Beck's: a very cross little man.'

'He looks mighty cross just now: what have you done to him? What is it all about? Ah, Lucy, Lucy! tell me the meaning of this.'

'No mystery, I assure you. M. Emanuel is very exigeant, and because I looked at your coat-sleeve, instead of curtseying and dipping to him, he thinks I have failed in respect.'

'The little - ' began Dr. John: I know not what more he would have added, for at that moment I was nearly thrown down amongst the feet of the crowd. M. Paul had rudely pushed past, and was elbowing his way with such utter disregard to the convenience and security of all around, that a very uncomfortable pressure was the consequence.

'I think he is what he himself would call 'mechant,'' said Dr. Bretton. I thought so, too.

Slowly and with difficulty we made our way along the passage, and at last regained our seats. The drawing of the lottery lasted nearly an hour; it was an animating and amusing scene; and as we each held tickets, we shared in the alternations of hope and fear raised by each turn of the wheel. Two little girls, of five and six years old, drew the numbers: and the prizes were duly proclaimed from the platform. These prizes were numerous, though of small value. It so fell out that Dr. John and I each gained one: mine was a cigar-case, his a lady's head-dress - a most airy sort of blue and silver turban, with a streamer of plumage on one side, like a snowy cloud. He was excessively anxious to make an exchange; but I could not be brought to hear reason, and to this day I keep my cigar-case: it serves, when I look at it, to remind me of old times, and one happy evening.

Dr. John, for his part, held his turban at arm's length between his finger and thumb, and looked at it with a mixture of reverence and embarrassment highly provocative of laughter. The contemplation over, he was about coolly to deposit the delicate fabric on the ground between his feet; he seemed to have no shadow of an idea of the treatment or stowage it ought to receive: if his mother had not come to the rescue, I think he would finally have crushed it under his arm like an opera-hat; she restored it to the band-box whence it had issued.

Graham was quite cheerful all the evening, and his cheerfulness seemed natural and unforced. His demeanour, his look, is not easily described; there was something in it peculiar, and, in its way, original. I read in it no common mastery of the passions, and a fund of deep and healthy strength which, without any exhausting effort, bore down Disappointment and extracted her fang. His manner, now, reminded me of qualities I had noticed in him when professionally engaged amongst the poor, the guilty, and the suffering, in the Basse- Ville: he looked at once determined, enduring, and sweet-tempered. Who could help liking him? *He* betrayed no weakness which harassed all your feelings with considerations as to how its faltering must be propped; from *him* broke no irritability which startled calm and quenched mirth; *his* lips let fall no caustic that burned to the bone; *his* eye shot no morose shafts that went cold, and rusty, and venomed through your heart: beside him was rest and refuge - around him, fostering sunshine.

And yet he had neither forgiven nor forgotten Miss Fanshawe. Once angered, I doubt if Dr. Bretton were to be soon propitiated - once alienated, whether he were ever to be reclaimed. He looked at her more than once; not stealthily or humbly, but with a movement of hardy, open observation. De Hamal was now a fixture beside her; Mrs

Cholmondeley sat near, and they and she were wholly absorbed in the discourse, mirth, and excitement, with which the crimson seats were as much astir as any plebeian part of the hall. In the course of some apparently animated discussion, Ginevra once or twice lifted her hand and arm; a handsome bracelet gleamed upon the latter. I saw that its gleam flickered in Dr. John's eye - quickening therein a derisive, ireful sparkle; he laughed: - -

'I think,' he said, 'I will lay my turban on my wonted altar of offerings; there, at any rate, it would be certain to find favour: no grisette has a more facile faculty of acceptance. Strange! for after all, I know she is a girl of family.'

'But you don't know her education, Dr. John,' said I. 'Tossed about all her life from one foreign school to another, she may justly proffer the plea of ignorance in extenuation of most of her faults. And then, from what she says, I believe her father and mother were brought up much as she has been brought up.'

'I always understood she had no fortune; and once I had pleasure in the thought,' said he.

'She tells me,' I answered, 'that they are poor at home; she always speaks quite candidly on such points: you never find her lying, as these foreigners will often lie. Her parents have a large family: they occupy such a station and possess such connections as, in their opinion, demand display; stringent necessity of circumstances and inherent thoughtlessness of disposition combined, have engendered reckless unscrupulousness as to how they obtain the means of sustaining a good appearance. This is the state of things, and the only state of things, she has seen from childhood upwards.'

'I believe it - and I thought to mould her to something better: but, Lucy, to speak the plain truth, I have felt a new thing to-night, in looking at her and de Hamal. I felt it before noticing the impertinence directed at my mother. I saw a look interchanged between them immediately after their entrance, which threw a most unwelcome light on my mind.'

'How do you mean? You have been long aware of the flirtation they keep up?'

'Ay, flirtation! That might be an innocent girlish wile to lure on the true lover; but what I refer to was not flirtation: it was a look marking mutual and secret understanding - it was neither girlish nor innocent. No woman, were she as beautiful as Aphrodite, who could give or receive such a glance, shall ever be sought in marriage by me: I would

rather wed a paysanne in a short petticoat and high cap - and be sure that she was honest.'

I could not help smiling. I felt sure he now exaggerated the case: Ginevra, I was certain, was honest enough, with all her giddiness. I told him so. He shook his head, and said he would not be the man to trust her with his honour.

'The only thing,' said I, 'with which you may safely trust her. She would unscrupulously damage a husband's purse and property, recklessly try his patience and temper: I don't think she would breathe, or let another breathe, on his honour.'

'You are becoming her advocate,' said he. 'Do you wish me to resume my old chains?'

'No: I am glad to see you free, and trust that free you will long remain. Yet be, at the same time, just.'

'I am so: just as Rhadamanthus, Lucy. When once I am thoroughly estranged, I cannot help being severe. But look! the King and Queen are rising. I like that Queen: she has a sweet countenance. Mamma, too, is excessively tired; we shall never get the old lady home if we stay longer.'

'I tired, John?' cried Mrs Bretton, looking at least as animated and as wide-awake as her son. 'I would undertake to sit you out yet: leave us both here till morning, and we should see which would look the most jaded by sunrise.'

'I should not like to try the experiment; for, in truth, mamma, you are the most unfading of evergreens and the freshest of matrons. It must then be on the plea of your son's delicate nerves and fragile constitution that I found a petition for our speedy adjournment.'

'Indolent young man! You wish you were in bed, no doubt; and I suppose you must be humoured. There is Lucy, too, looking quite done up. For shame, Lucy! At your age, a week of evenings-out would not have made me a shade paler. Come away, both of you; and you may laugh at the old lady as much as you please, but, for my part, I shall take charge of the bandbox and turban.'

Which she did accordingly. I offered to relieve her, but was shaken off with kindly contempt: my godmother opined that I had enough to do to take care of myself. Not standing on ceremony now, in the midst of the gay 'confusion worse confounded' succeeding to the King and Queen's departure, Mrs Bretton preceded us, and promptly made us a lane through the crowd. Graham followed, apostrophizing his mother

as the most flourishing grisette it had ever been his good fortune to see charged with carriage of a bandbox; he also desired me to mark her affection for the sky-blue turban, and announced his conviction that she intended one day to wear it.

The night was now very cold and very dark, but with little delay we found the carriage. Soon we were packed in it, as warm and as snug as at a fire-side; and the drive home was, I think, still pleasanter than the drive to the concert. Pleasant it was, even though the coachman - having spent in the shop of a 'marchand de vin' a portion of the time we passed at the concert - drove us along the dark and solitary chaussee far past the turn leading down to La Terrasse; we, who were occupied in talking and laughing, not noticing the aberration till, at last, Mrs Bretton intimated that, though she had always thought the chateau a retired spot, she did not know it was situated at the world's end, as she declared seemed now to be the case, for she believed we had been an hour and a half en route, and had not yet taken the turn down the avenue.

Then Graham looked out, and perceiving only dim-spread fields, with unfamiliar rows of pollards and limes ranged along their else invisible sunk-fences, began to conjecture how matters were, and calling a halt and descending, he mounted the box and took the reins himself. Thanks to him, we arrived safe at home about an hour and a half beyond our time.

Martha had not forgotten us; a cheerful fire was burning, and a neat supper spread in the dining-room: we were glad of both. The winter dawn was actually breaking before we gained our chambers. I took off my pink dress and lace mantle with happier feelings than I had experienced in putting them on. Not all, perhaps, who had shone brightly arrayed at that concert could say the same; for not all had been satisfied with friendship - with its calm comfort and modest hope.