

THE FRENCH GOVERNESS'S STORY OF SISTER ROSE.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

"Well, Monsieur Guillaume, what is the news this evening?"

"None that I know of, Monsieur Justin, except that Mademoiselle Rose is to be married to-morrow."

"Much obliged, my respectable old friend, for so interesting and unexpected a reply to my question. Considering that I am the valet of Monsieur Danville, who plays the distinguished part of bridegroom in the little wedding comedy to which you refer, I think I may assure you, without offense, that your news is, so far as I am concerned, of the stalest possible kind. Take a pinch of snuff, Monsieur Guillaume, and excuse me if I inform you that my question referred to public news, and not to the private affairs of the two families whose household interests we have the pleasure of promoting."

"I don't understand what you mean by such a phrase as promoting household interests, Monsieur Justin. I am the servant of Monsieur Louis Trudaine, who lives here with his sister, Mademoiselle Rose. You are the servant of Monsieur Danville, whose excellent mother has made up the match for him with my young lady. As servants, both of us, the pleasantest news we can have any concern with is news that is connected with the happiness of our masters. I have nothing to do with public affairs; and, being one of the old school, I make it my main object in life to mind my own business. If our homely domestic politics have no interests for you, allow me to express my regret, and to wish you a very good-evening."

"Pardon me, my dear sir, I have not the slightest respect for the old school, or the least sympathy with people who only mind their own business. However, I accept your expressions of regret; I reciprocate your 'Good-evening'; and I trust to find you improved in temper, dress, manners, and

appearance the next time I have the honor of meeting you. Adieu, Monsieur Guillaume, and! Vive la bagatelle!"

These scraps of dialogue were interchanged on a lovely summer evening in the year seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, before the back door of a small house which stood on the banks of the Seine, about three miles westward of the city of Rouen. The one speaker was lean, old, crabbed and slovenly; the other was plump, young, oily-mannered and dressed in the most gorgeous livery costume of the period. The last days of genuine dandyism were then rapidly approaching all over the civilized world; and Monsieur Justin was, in his own way, dressed to perfection, as a living illustration of the expiring glories of his epoch.

After the old servant had left him, he occupied himself for a few minutes in contemplating, superciliously enough, the back view of the little house before which he stood. Judging by the windows, it did not contain more than six or eight rooms in all. Instead of stables and outhouses, there was a conservatory attached to the building on one side, and a low, long room, built of wood, gayly painted, on the other. One of the windows of this room was left uncurtained and through it could be seen, on a sort of dresser inside, bottles filled with strangely-colored liquids oddly-shaped utensils of brass and copper, one end of a large furnace, and other objects, which plainly proclaimed that the apartment was used as a chemical laboratory.

"Think of our bride's brother amusing himself in such a place as that with cooking drugs in saucepans," muttered Monsieur Justin, peeping into the room. "I am the least particular man in the universe, but I must say I wish we were not going to be connected by marriage with an amateur apothecary. Pah! I can smell the place through the window."

With these words Monsieur Justin turned his back on the laboratory in disgust, and sauntered toward the cliffs overhanging the river.

Leaving the garden attached to the house, he ascended some gently rising ground by a winding path. Arrived at the summit, the whole view of the Seine, with its lovely green islands, its banks fringed with trees, its gliding boats, and little scattered water-side cottages, opened before him. Westward, where the level country appeared beyond the further bank of the river, the landscape was all aglow with the crimson of the setting sun. Eastward, the long shadows and mellow intervening lights, the red glory that quivered on the rippling water, the steady ruby fire glowing on cottage windows that reflected the level sunlight, led the eye onward and onward, along the windings of the Seine, until it rested upon the spires, towers, and broadly-

massed houses of Rouen, with the wooded hills rising beyond them for background. Lovely to look on at any time, the view was almost supernaturally beautiful now under the gorgeous evening light that glowed up in it. All its attractions, however, were lost on the valet; he stood yawning with his hands in his pockets, looking neither to the right nor to the left, but staring straight before him at a little hollow, beyond which the ground sloped away smoothly to the brink of the cliff. A bench was placed here, and three persons--an old lady, a gentleman, and a young girl--were seated on it, watching the sunset, and by consequence turning their backs on Monsieur Justin. Near them stood two gentlemen, also looking toward the river and the distant view. These five figures attracted the valet's attention, to the exclusion of every other object around him.

"There they are still," he said to himself, discontentedly. "Madame Danville in the same place on the seat; my master, the bridegroom, dutifully next to her; Mademoiselle Rose, the bride, bashfully next to him; Monsieur Trudaine, the amateur apothecary brother, affectionately next to her; and Monsieur Lomaque, our queer land-steward, officially in waiting on the whole party. There they all are indeed, incomprehensibly wasting their time still in looking at nothing! Yes," continued Monsieur Justin, lifting his eyes wearily, and staring hard, first up the river at Rouen, then down the river at the setting sun; "yes, plague take them! looking at nothing, absolutely and positively at nothing, all this while."

Here Monsieur Justin yawned again, and, returning to the garden, sat himself down in an arbor and resignedly went to sleep.

If the valet had ventured near the five persons whom he had been apostrophizing from a distance, and if he had been possessed of some little refinement of observation, he could hardly have failed to remark that the bride and bridegroom of the morrow, and their companions on either side, were all, in a greater or less degree, under the influence of some secret restraint, which affected their conversation, their gestures, and even the expression of their faces. Madame Danville--a handsome, richly-dressed old lady, with very bright eyes, and a quick, suspicious manner--looked composedly and happily enough, as long as her attention was fixed on her son. But when she turned from him toward the bride, a hardly perceptible uneasiness passed over her face--an uneasiness which only deepened to positive distrust and dissatisfaction whenever she looked toward Mademoiselle Trudaine's brother. In the same way, her son, who was all smiles and happiness while he was speaking with his future wife, altered visibly in manner and look exactly as his mother altered, whenever the presence of Monsieur Trudaine specially impressed itself on his attention.

Then, again, Lomaque, the land-steward--quiet, sharp, skinny Lomaque, with the submissive manner, and the red-rimmed eyes--never looked up at his master's future brother-in-law without looking away again rather uneasily, and thoughtfully drilling holes in the grass with his long sharp-pointed cane. Even the bride herself--the pretty, innocent girl, with her childish shyness of manner--seemed to be affected like the others. Doubt, if not distress, overshadowed her face from time to time, and the hand which her lover held trembled a little, and grew restless, when she accidentally caught her brother's eye.

Strangely enough there was nothing to repel, but, on the contrary, everything to attract in the look and manner of the person whose mere presence seemed to exercise such a curiously constraining influence over the wedding-party. Louis Trudaine was a remarkably handsome man. His expression was singularly kind and gentle; his manner irresistibly winning in its frank, manly firmness and composure. His words, when he occasionally spoke, seemed as unlikely to give offense as his looks; for he only opened his lips in courteous reply to questions directly addressed to him. Judging by a latent mournfulness in the tones of his voice, and by the sorrowful tenderness which clouded his kind, earnest eyes whenever they rested on his sister, his thoughts were certainly not of the happy or the hopeful kind. But he gave them no direct expression; he intruded his secret sadness, whatever it might be, on no one of his companions. Nevertheless, modest and self-restrained as he was, there was evidently some reproving or saddening influence in his presence which affected the spirits of every one near him, and darkened the eve of the wedding to bride and bridegroom alike.

As the sun slowly sank in the heavens, the conversation flagged more and more. After a long silence, the bridegroom was the first to start a new subject.

"Rose, love," he said, "that magnificent sunset is a good omen for our marriage; it promises another lovely day to-morrow."

The bride laughed and blushed.

"Do you really believe in omens, Charles?" she said.

"My dear," interposed the old lady, before her son could answer, "if Charles does believe in omens, it is nothing to laugh at. You will soon know better, when you are his wife, than to confound him, even in the slightest things, with the common herd of people. All his convictions are well founded--so

well, that if I thought he really did believe in omens, I should most assuredly make up my mind to believe in them too."

"I beg your pardon, madame," Rose began, tremulously, "I only meant--"

"My dear child, have you so little knowledge of the world as to suppose that I could be offended--"

"Let Rose speak," said the young man.

He turned round petulantly, almost with the air of a spoiled child, to his mother, as he said those words. She had been looking fondly and proudly on him the moment before. Now her eyes wandered disconcertedly from his face; she hesitated an instant with a sudden confusion which seemed quite foreign to her character, then whispered in his ear,

"Am I to blame, Charles, for trying to make her worthy of you?"

Her son took no notice of the question. He only reiterated sharply, "Let Rose speak."

"I really had nothing to say," faltered the young girl, growing more and more confused.

"Oh, but you had!"

There was such an ungracious sharpness in his voice, such an outburst of petulance in his manner as he spoke, that his mother gave him a warning touch on the arm, and whispered "Hush!"

Monsieur Lomaque, the land-steward, and Monsieur Trudaine, the brother, both glanced searchingly at the bride, as the words passed the bridegroom's lips. She seemed to be frightened and astonished, rather than irritated or hurt. A curious smile puckered up Lomaque's lean face, as he looked demurely down on the ground, and began drilling a fresh hole in the turf with the sharp point of his cane. Trudaine turned aside quickly, and, sighing, walked away a few paces; then came back, and seemed about to speak, but Danville interrupted him.

"Pardon me, Rose," he said; "I am so jealous of even the appearance of any want of attention toward you, that I was nearly allowing myself to be irritated about nothing."

He kissed her hand very gracefully and tenderly as he made his excuse; but there was a latent expression in his eye which was at variance with the apparent spirit of his action. It was noticed by nobody but observant and submissive Monsieur Lomaque, who smiled to himself again, and drilled harder than ever at his hole in the grass.

"I think Monsieur Trudaine was about to speak," said Madame Danville. "Perhaps he will have no objection to let us hear what he was going to say."

"None, madame," replied Trudaine, politely. "I was about to take upon myself the blame of Rose's want of respect for believers in omens, by confessing that I have always encouraged her to laugh at superstitions of every kind."

"You a ridiculer of superstitions?" said Danville, turning quickly on him. "You, who have built a laboratory; you, who are an amateur professor of the occult arts of chemistry--a seeker after the Elixir of Life. On my word of honor, you astonish me!"

There was an ironical politeness in his voice, look, and manner as he said this, which his mother and his land-steward, Monsieur Lomaque, evidently knew how to interpret. The first touched his arm again and whispered, "Be careful!" the second suddenly grew serious, and left off drilling his hole in the grass. Rose neither heard the warning of Madame Danville, nor noticed the alteration in Lomaque. She was looking round at her brother, and was waiting with a bright, affectionate smile to hear his answer. He nodded, as if to reassure her, before he spoke again to Danville.

"You have rather romantic ideas about experiments in chemistry," he said, quietly. "Mine have so little connection with what you call the occult arts that all the world might see them, if all the world thought it worth while. The only Elixirs of Life that I know of are a quiet heart and a contented mind. Both those I found, years and years ago, when Rose and I first came to live together in the house yonder."

He spoke with a quiet sadness in his voice, which meant far more to his sister than the simple words he uttered. Her eyes filled with tears; she turned for a moment from her lover, and took her brother's hand. "Don't talk, Louis, as if you thought you were going to lose your sister, because--" Her lips began to tremble, and she stopped suddenly.

"More jealous than ever of your taking her away from him!" whispered Madame Danville in her son's ear. "Hush! don't, for God's sake, take any notice of it," she added, hurriedly, as he rose from the seat and faced

Trudaine with undisguised irritation and impatience in his manner. Before he could speak, the old servant Guillaume made his appearance, and announced that coffee was ready. Madame Danville again said "Hush!" and quickly took one of his arms, while he offered the other to Rose. "Charles," said the young girl, amazedly, "how flushed your face is, and how your arm trembles!"

He controlled himself in a moment, smiled, and said to her: "Can't you guess why, Rose? I am thinking of to-morrow." While he was speaking, he passed close by the land-steward, on his way back to the house with the ladies. The smile returned to Monsieur Lomaque's lean face, and a curious light twinkled in his red-rimmed eyes as he began a fresh hole in the grass.

"Won't you go indoors, and take some coffee?" asked Trudaine, touching the land-steward on the arm.

Monsieur Lomaque started a little and left his cane sticking in the ground. "A thousand thanks, monsieur," he said; "may I be allowed to follow you?"

"I confess the beauty of the evening makes me a little unwilling to leave this place just yet."

"Ah! the beauties of Nature--I feel them with you, Monsieur Trudaine; I feel them here." Saying this, Lomaque laid one hand on his heart, and with the other pulled his stick out of the grass. He had looked as little at the landscape or the setting sun as Monsieur Justin himself.

They sat down, side by side, on the empty bench; and then there followed an awkward pause. Submissive Lomaque was too discreet to forget his place, and venture on starting a new topic. Trudaine was preoccupied, and disinclined to talk. It was necessary, however, in common politeness, to say something. Hardly attending himself to his own words, he began with a commonplace phrase: "I regret, Monsieur Lomaque, that we have not had more opportunities of bettering our acquaintance."

"I feel deeply indebted," rejoined the land-steward, "to the admirable Madame Danville for having chosen me as her escort hither from her son's estate near Lyons, and having thereby procured for me the honor of this introduction." Both Monsieur Lomaque's red-rimmed eyes were seized with a sudden fit of winking, as he made this polite speech. His enemies were accustomed to say that, whenever he was particularly insincere, or particularly deceitful, he always took refuge in the weakness of his eyes, and so evaded the trying ordeal of being obliged to look steadily at the person

whom he was speaking with.

"I was pleased to hear you mention my late father's name, at dinner, in terms of high respect," continued Trudaine, resolutely keeping up the conversation. "Did you know him?"

"I am indirectly indebted to your excellent father," answered the land-steward, "for the very situation which I now hold. At a time when the good word of a man of substance and reputation was needed to save me from poverty and ruin, your father spoke that word. Since then I have, in my own very small way, succeeded in life, until I have risen to the honor of superintending the estate of Monsieur Danville."

"Excuse me, but your way of speaking of your present situation rather surprises me. Your father, I believe, was a merchant, just as Danville's father was a merchant; the only difference between them was that one failed and the other realized a large fortune. Why should you speak of yourself as honored by holding your present place?"

"Have you never heard?" exclaimed Lomaque, with an appearance of great astonishment, "or can you have heard, and forgotten, that Madame Danville is descended from one of the noble houses of France? Has she never told you, as she has often told me, that she condescended when she married her late husband; and that her great object in life is to get the title of her family (years since extinct in the male line) settled on her son?"

"Yes," replied Trudaine; "I remember to have heard something of this, and to have paid no great attention to it at the time, having little sympathy with such aspirations as you describe. You have lived many years in Danville's service, Monsieur Lomaque; have you"--he hesitated for a moment, then continued, looking the land-steward full in the face--"have you found him a good and kind master?"

Lomaque's thin lips seemed to close instinctively at the question, as if he were never going to speak again. He bowed--Trudaine waited--he only bowed again. Trudaine waited a third time. Lomaque looked at his host with perfect steadiness for an instant, then his eyes began to get weak again. "You seem to have some special interest," he quietly remarked, "if I may say so without offense, in asking me that question."

"I deal frankly, at all hazards, with every one," returned Trudaine; "and stranger as you are, I will deal frankly with you. I acknowledge that I have an interest in asking that question--the dearest, the tenderest of all

interests." At those last words, his voice trembled for a moment, but he went on firmly; "from the beginning of my sister's engagement with Danville, I made it my duty not to conceal my own feelings; my conscience and my affection for Rose counseled me to be candid to the last, even though my candor should distress or offend others. When we first made the acquaintance of Madame Danville, and when I first discovered that her son's attentions to Rose were not unfavorably received, I felt astonished, and, though it cost me a hard effort, I did not conceal that astonishment from my sister--"

Lomaque, who had hitherto been all attention, started here, and threw up his hands in amazement. "Astonished, did I hear you say? Astonished, Monsieur Trudaine, that the attentions of a young gentleman, possessed of all the graces and accomplishments of a highly-bred Frenchman, should be favorably received by a young lady! Astonished that such a dancer, such a singer, such a talker, such a notoriously fascinating ladies' man as Monsieur Danville, should, by dint of respectful assiduity, succeed in making some impression on the heart of Mademoiselle Rose! Oh, Monsieur Trudaine, venerated Monsieur Trudaine, this is almost too much to credit!"

Lomaque's eyes grew weaker than ever, and winked incessantly as he uttered this apostrophe. At the end, he threw up his hands again, and blinked inquiringly all round him, in mute appeal to universal nature.

"When, in the course of time, matters were further advanced," continued Trudaine, without paying any attention to the interruption; "when the offer of marriage was made, and when I knew that Rose had in her own heart accepted it, I objected, and I did not conceal my objections--"

"Heavens!" interposed Lomaque again, clasping his hands this time with a look of bewilderment; "what objections, what possible objections to a man young and well-bred, with an immense fortune and an uncompromised character? I have heard of these objections; I know they have made bad blood; and I ask myself again and again, what can they be?"

"God knows I have often tried to dismiss them from my mind as fanciful and absurd," said Trudaine, "and I have always failed. It is impossible, in your presence, that I can describe in detail what my own impressions have been, from the first, of the master whom you serve. Let it be enough if I confide to you that I cannot, even now, persuade myself of the sincerity of his attachment to my sister, and that I feel--in spite of myself, in spite of my earnest desire to put the most implicit confidence in Rose's choice--a distrust of his character and temper, which now, on the eve of the marriage,

amounts to positive terror. Long secret suffering, doubt, and suspense, wring this confession from me, Monsieur Lomaque, almost unawares, in defiance of caution, in defiance of all the conventionalities of society. You have lived for years under the same roof with this man; you have seen him in his most unguarded and private moments. I tempt you to betray no confidence--I only ask you if you can make me happy by telling me that I have been doing your master grievous injustice by my opinion of him? I ask you to take my hand, and tell me if you can, in all honor, that my sister is not risking the happiness of her whole life by giving herself in marriage to Danville to-morrow!"

He held out his hand while he spoke. By some strange chance, Lomaque happened just at that moment to be looking away toward those beauties of Nature which he admired so greatly. "Really, Monsieur Trudaine, really such an appeal from you, at such a time, amazes me." Having got so far, he stopped and said no more.

"When we first sat down together here, I had no thought of making this appeal, no idea of talking to you as I have talked," pursued the other. "My words have escaped me, as I told you, almost unawares; you must make allowances for them and for me. I cannot expect others, Monsieur Lomaque, to appreciate and understand my feelings for Rose. We two have lived alone in the world together; father, mother, kindred, they all died years since, and left us. I am so much older than my sister that I have learned to feel toward her more as a father than as a brother. All my life, all my dearest hopes, all my highest expectations, have centered in her. I was past the period of my boyhood when my mother put my little child sister's hand in mine, and said to me on her death-bed: 'Louis, be all to her that I have been, for she has no one left to look to but you.' Since then the loves and ambitions of other men have not been my loves or my ambitions. Sister Rose--as we all used to call her in those past days, as I love to call her still--Sister Rose has been the one aim, the one happiness, the one precious trust, the one treasured reward, of all my life. I have lived in this poor house, in this dull retirement, as in a paradise, because Sister Rose--my innocent, happy, bright-faced Eve--has lived here with me. Even if the husband of her choice had been the husband of mine, the necessity of parting with her would have been the hardest, the bitterest of trials. As it is, thinking what I think, dreading what I dread, judge what my feelings must be on the eve of her marriage; and know why, and with what object, I made the appeal which surprised you a moment since, but which cannot surprise you now. Speak if you will--I can say no more." He sighed bitterly; his head dropped on his breast, and the hand which he had extended to Lomaque trembled as he withdrew it and let it fall at his side.

The land-steward was not a man accustomed to hesitate, but he hesitated now. He was not usually at a loss for phrases in which to express himself, but he stammered at the very outset of his reply. "Suppose I answered," he began, slowly; "suppose I told you that you wronged him, would my testimony really be strong enough to shake opinions, or rather presumptions, which have been taking firmer and firmer hold of you for months and months past? Suppose, on the other hand, that my master had his little" (Lomaque hesitated before he pronounced the next word)--"his little--infirmities, let me say; but only hypothetically, mind that--infirmities; and suppose I had observed them, and was willing to confide them to you, what purpose would such a confidence answer now, at the eleventh hour, with Mademoiselle Rose's heart engaged, with the marriage fixed for tomorrow? No! no! trust me--"

Trudaine looked up suddenly. "I thank you for reminding me, Monsieur Lomaque, that it is too late now to make inquiries, and by consequence too late also to trust in others. My sister has chosen; and on the subject of that choice my lips shall be henceforth sealed. The events of the future are with God; whatever they may be, I hope I am strong enough to bear my part in them with the patience and the courage of a man! I apologize, Monsieur Lomaque, for having thoughtlessly embarrassed you by questions which I had no right to ask. Let us return to the house--I will show you the way."

Lomaque's lips opened, then closed again; he bowed uneasily, and his sallow complexion whitened for a moment.

Trudaine led the way in silence back to the house; the land-steward following slowly at a distance of several paces, and talking in whispers to himself. "His father was the saving of me," muttered Lomaque; "that is truth, and there is no getting over it; his father was the saving of me; and yet here am I--no! it's too late!--too late to speak--too late to act--too late to do anything!"

Close to the house they were met by the old servant.

"My young lady has just sent me to call you in to coffee, monsieur," said Guillaume. "She has kept a cup hot for you, and another cup for Monsieur Lomaque."

The land-steward started--this time with genuine astonishment. "For me!" he exclaimed. "Mademoiselle Rose has troubled herself to keep a cup of coffee hot for me?" The old servant stared; Trudaine stopped and looked

back.

"What is there so very surprising," he asked, "in such an ordinary act of politeness on my sister's part?"

"Excuse me, Monsieur Trudaine," answered Lomaque; "you have not passed such an existence as mine--you are not a friendless old man--you have a settled position in the world, and are used to be treated with consideration. I am not. This is the first occasion in my life on which I find myself an object for the attention of a young lady, and it takes me by surprise. I repeat my excuses; pray let us go in."

Trudaine made no reply to this curious explanation. He wondered at it a little, however, and he wondered still more when, on entering the drawing-room, he saw Lomaque walk straight up to his sister, and--apparently not noticing that Danville was sitting at the harpsichord and singing at the time--address her confusedly and earnestly with a set speech of thanks for his hot cup of coffee. Rose looked perplexed, and half inclined to laugh, as she listened to him. Madame Danville, who sat by her side, frowned, and tapped the land-steward contemptuously on the arm with her fan.

"Be so good as to keep silent until my son has done singing," she said. Lomaque made a low bow, and retiring to a table in a corner, took up a newspaper lying on it. If Madame Danville had seen the expression that came over his face when he turned away from her, proud as she was, her aristocratic composure might possibly have been a little ruffled.

Danville had finished his song, had quitted the harpsichord, and was talking in whispers to his bride; Madame Danville was adding a word to the conversation every now and then; Trudaine was seated apart at the far end of the room, thoughtfully reading a letter which he had taken from his pocket, when an exclamation from Lomaque, who was still engaged with the newspaper, caused all the other occupants of the apartment to suspend their employments and look up.

"What is it?" asked Danville, impatiently.

"Shall I be interrupting if I explain?" inquired Lomaque, getting very weak in the eyes again, as he deferentially addressed himself to Madame Danville.

"You have already interrupted us," said the old lady, sharply; "so you may now just as well explain."

"It is a passage from the Scientific Intelligence which has given me great delight, and which will be joyful news for every one here." Saying this, Lomaque looked significantly at Trudaine, and then read from the newspaper these lines:

"ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, PARIS.--The vacant sub-professorship of chemistry has been offered, we are rejoiced to hear, to a gentleman whose modesty has hitherto prevented his scientific merits from becoming sufficiently prominent in the world. To the members of the academy he has been long since known as the originator of some of the most remarkable improvements in chemistry which have been made of late years--improvements, the credit of which he has, with rare, and we were almost about to add, culpable moderation, allowed others to profit by with impunity. No man in any profession is more thoroughly entitled to have a position of trust and distinction conferred on him by the State than the gentleman to whom we refer--M. Louis Trudaine."

Before Lomaque could look up from the paper to observe the impression which his news produced, Rose had gained her brother's side and was kissing him in a flutter of delight.

"Dear Louis," she cried, clapping her hands, "let me be the first to congratulate you! How proud and glad I am! You accept the professorship, of course?"

Trudaine, who had hastily and confusedly put his letter back in his pocket the moment Lomaque began to read, seemed at a loss for an answer. He patted his sister's hand rather absently, and said:

"I have not made up my mind; don't ask me why, Rose--at least not now, not just now." An expression of perplexity and distress came over his face, as he gently motioned her to resume her chair.

"Pray, is a sub-professor of chemistry supposed to hold the rank of a gentleman?" asked Madame Danville, without the slightest appearance of any special interest in Lomaque's news.

"Of course not," replied her son, with a sarcastic laugh; "he is expected to work and make himself useful. What gentleman does that?"

"Charles!" exclaimed the old lady, reddening with anger.

"Bah!" cried Danville, turning his back on her, "enough of chemistry. Lomaque, now you have begun reading the newspaper, try if you can't find something interesting to read about. What are the last accounts from Paris? Any more symptoms of a general revolt?"

Lomaque turned to another part of the paper. "Bad, very bad prospects for the restoration of tranquillity," he said. "Necker, the people's Minister, is dismissed. Placards against popular gatherings are posted all over Paris. The Swiss Guards have been ordered to the Champs Elysees, with four pieces of artillery. No more is yet known, but the worst is dreaded. The breach between the aristocracy and the people is widening fatally almost hour by hour."

Here he stopped and laid down the newspaper. Trudaine took it from him, and shook his head forebodingly as he looked over the paragraph which had just been read.

"Bah!" cried Madame Danville. "The People, indeed! Let those four pieces of artillery be properly loaded, let the Swiss Guards do their duty, and we shall hear no more of the People!"

"I advise you not to be sure of that," said her son, carelessly; "there are rather too many people in Paris for the Swiss Guards to shoot conveniently. Don't hold your head too aristocratically high, mother, till we are quite certain which way the wind really does blow. Who knows if I may not have to bow just as low one of these days to King Mob as ever you courtesied in your youth to King Louis the Fifteenth?"

He laughed complacently as he ended, and opened his snuff-box. His mother rose from her chair, her face crimson with indignation.

"I won't hear you talk so--it shocks, it horrifies me!" she exclaimed, with vehement gesticulation. "No, no! I decline to hear another word. I decline to sit by patiently while my son, whom I love, jests at the most sacred principles, and sneers at the memory of an anointed king. This is my reward, is it, for having yielded and having come here, against all the laws of etiquette, the night before the marriage? I comply no longer; I resume my own will and my own way. I order you, my son, to accompany me back to Rouen. We are the bridegroom's party, and we have no business overnight at the house of the bride. You meet no more till you meet at the church. Justin, my coach! Lomaque, pick up my hood. Monsieur Trudaine, thanks for your hospitality; I shall hope to return it with interest the first time you

are in our neighborhood. Mademoiselle, put on your best looks to-morrow, along with your wedding finery; remember that my son's bride must do honor to my son's taste. Justin! my coach--drone, vagabond, idiot, where is my coach?"

"My mother looks handsome when she is in a passion, does she not, Rose?" said Danville, quietly putting up his snuff-box as the old lady sailed out of the room. "Why, you seem quite frightened, love," he added, taking her hand with his easy, graceful air; "frightened, let me assure you, without the least cause. My mother has but that one prejudice, and that one weak point, Rose. You will find her a very dove for gentleness, as long as you do not wound her pride of caste. Come, come, on this night, of all others, you must not send me away with such a face as that."

He bent down and whispered to her a bridegroom's compliment, which brought the blood back to her cheek in an instant.

"Ah, how she loves him--how dearly she loves him!" thought her brother, watching her from his solitary corner of the room, and seeing the smile that brightened her blushing face when Danville kissed her hand at parting.

Lomaque, who had remained imperturbably cool during the outbreak of the old lady's anger--Lomaque, whose observant eyes had watched sarcastically the effect of the scene between mother and son on Trudaine and his sister, was the last to take leave. After he had bowed to Rose with a certain gentleness in his manner, which contrasted strangely with his wrinkled, haggard face, he held out his hand to her brother "I did not take your hand when we sat together on the bench," he said; "may I take it now?"

Trudaine met his advance courteously, but in silence. "You may alter your opinion of me one of these days." Adding those words in a whisper, Monsieur Lomaque bowed once more to the bride and went out.

For a few minutes after the door had closed the brother and sister kept silence. "Our last night together at home!" That was the thought which now filled the heart of each. Rose was the first to speak. Hesitating a little as she approached her brother, she said to him, anxiously:

"I am sorry for what happened with Madame Danville, Louis. Does it make you think the worse of Charles?"

"I can make allowance for Madame Danville's anger," returned Trudaine, evasively, "because she spoke from honest conviction."

"Honest?" echoed Rose, sadly, "honest?--ah, Louis! I know you are thinking disparagingly of Charles's convictions, when you speak so of his mother's."

Trudaine smiled and shook his head; but she took no notice of the gesture of denial--only stood looking earnestly and wistfully into his face. Her eyes began to fill; she suddenly threw her arms round his neck, and whispered to him: "Oh, Louis, Louis! how I wish I could teach you to see Charles with my eyes!"

He felt her tears on his cheek as she spoke, and tried to reassure her.

"You shall teach me, Rose--you shall, indeed. Come, come, we must keep up our spirits, or how are you to look your best to-morrow?"

He unclasped her arms, and led her gently to a chair. At the same moment there was a knock at the door, and Rose's maid appeared, anxious to consult her mistress on some of the preparations for the wedding ceremony. No interruption could have been more welcome just at that time. It obliged Rose to think of present trifles, and it gave her brother an excuse for retiring to his study.

He sat down by his desk, doubting and heavy-hearted, and placed the letter from the Academy of Sciences open before him.

Passing over all the complimentary expressions which it contained, his eye rested only on these lines at the end: "During the first three years of your professorship, you will be required to reside in or near Paris nine months out of the year, for the purpose of delivering lectures and superintending experiments from time to time in the laboratories." The letter in which these lines occurred offered him such a position as in his modest self-distrust he had never dreamed of before; the lines themselves contained the promise of such vast facilities for carrying on his favorite experiments as he could never hope to command in his own little study, with his own limited means; and yet, there he now sat doubting whether he should accept or reject the tempting honors and advantages that were offered to him--doubting for his sister's sake!

"Nine months of the year in Paris," he said to himself, sadly; "and Rose is to pass her married life at Lyons. Oh, if I could clear my heart of its dread on her account--if I could free my mind of its forebodings for her future--how gladly I would answer this letter by accepting the trust it offers me!"

He paused for a few minutes, and reflected. The thoughts that were in him marked their ominous course in the growing paleness of his cheek, in the dimness that stole over his eyes. "If this cleaving distrust from which I cannot free myself should be in very truth the mute prophecy of evil to come--to come, I know not when--if it be so (which God forbid!), how soon she may want a friend, a protector near at hand, a ready refuge in the time of her trouble! Where shall she then find protection or refuge? With that passionate woman? With her husband's kindred and friends?"

He shuddered as the thought crossed his mind, and opening a blank sheet of paper, dipped his pen in the ink. "Be all to her, Louis, that I have been," he murmured to himself, repeating his mother's last words, and beginning the letter while he uttered them. It was soon completed. It expressed in the most respectful terms his gratitude for the offer made to him, and his inability to accept it, in consequence of domestic circumstances which it was needless to explain. The letter was directed, sealed; it only remained for him to place it in the post-bag, lying near at hand. At this last decisive act he hesitated. He had told Lomaque, and he had firmly believed himself, that he had conquered all ambitions for his sister's sake. He knew now, for the first time, that he had only lulled them to rest--he knew that the letter from Paris had aroused them. His answer was written, his hand was on the post-bag, and at that moment the whole struggle had to be risked over again--risked when he was most unfit for it! He was not a man under any ordinary circumstances to procrastinate, but he procrastinated now.

"Night brings counsel; I will wait till to-morrow," he said to himself, and put the letter of refusal in his pocket, and hastily quitted the laboratory.

CHAPTER II.

Inexorably the important morrow came: irretrievably, for good or for evil, the momentous marriage-vow was pronounced. Charles Danville and Rose Trudaine were now man and wife. The prophecy of the magnificent sunset overnight had not proved false. It was a cloudless day on the marriage morning. The nuptial ceremonies had proceeded smoothly throughout, and had even satisfied Madame Danville. She returned with the wedding-party to Trudaine's house, all smiles and serenity. To the bride she was graciousness itself. "Good girl," said the old lady, following Rose into a corner, and patting her approvingly on the cheek with her fan; "good girl, you have looked well this morning--you have done credit to my son's taste. Indeed, you have pleased me, child! Now go upstairs, and get on your traveling-dress, and count on my maternal affection as long as you make Charles happy."

It had been arranged that the bride and bridegroom should pass their honeymoon in Brittany, and then return to Danville's estate near Lyons. The parting was hurried over, as all such partings should be. The carriage had driven off; Trudaine, after lingering long to look after it, had returned hastily to the house; the very dust of the whirling wheels had all dispersed; there was absolutely nothing to see; and yet there stood Monsieur Lomaque at the outer gate; idly, as if he was an independent man--calmly, as if no such responsibilities as the calling of Madame Danville's coach, and the escorting of Madame Danville back to Lyons, could possibly rest on his shoulders.

Idly and calmly, slowly rubbing his hands one over the other, slowly nodding his head in the direction by which the bride and bridegroom had departed, stood the eccentric land-steward at the outer gate. On a sudden the sound of footsteps approaching from the house seemed to arouse him. Once more he looked out into the road, as if he expected still to see the carriage of the newly-married couple. "Poor girl! ah, poor girl!" said Monsieur Lomaque softly to himself, turning round to ascertain who was coming from the house.

It was only the postman with a letter in his hand, and the post-bag crumpled up under his arm.

"Any fresh news from Paris, friend?" asked Lomaque.

"Very bad, monsieur," answered the postman. "Camille Desmoulins has appealed to the people in the Palais Royal; there are fears of a riot."

"Only a riot!" repeated Lomaque, sarcastically. "Oh, what a brave Government not to be afraid of anything worse! Any letters?" he added, hastily dropping the subject.

"None to the house," said the postman, "only one from it, given me by Monsieur Trudaine. Hardly worth while," he added, twirling the letter in his hand, "to put it into the bag, is it?"

Lomaque looked over his shoulder as he spoke, and saw that the letter was directed to the President of the Academy of Sciences, Paris.

"I wonder whether he accepts the place or refuses it?" thought the land-steward, nodding to the postman, and continuing on his way back to the house.

At the door he met Trudaine, who said to him, rather hastily, "You are going back to Lyons with Madame Danville, I suppose?"

"This very day," answered Lomaque.

"If you should hear of a convenient bachelor lodging, at Lyons, or near it," continued the other, dropping his voice and speaking more rapidly than before, "you would be doing me a favor if you would let me know about it."

Lomaque assented; but before he could add a question which was on the tip of his tongue, Trudaine had vanished in the interior of the house.

"A bachelor lodging!" repeated the land-steward, standing alone on the doorstep. "At or near Lyons! Aha! Monsieur Trudaine, I put your bachelor lodging and your talk to me last night together, and I make out a sum total which is, I think, pretty near the mark. You have refused that Paris appointment, my friend; and I fancy I can guess why."

He paused thoughtfully, and shook his head with ominous frowns and bitings of his lips.

"All clear enough in that sky," he continued, after a while, looking up at the lustrous midday heaven. "All clear enough there; but I think I see a little cloud rising in a certain household firmament already--a little cloud which hides much, and which I for one shall watch carefully."