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THE APPARITION OF MONSIEUR BODRY.

I.

JUST one hundred years ago, there lived in Paris, in the Rue Saint Martin, a rich silk-merchant named Gombert. He was about sixty years of age, a widower, with an only child, a beautiful girl of nineteen, who was no less admired for her personal attractions than for the handsome fortune which she was likely one day to inherit. Madeleine Gombert was, indeed, the great match of the quarter in which the silk-merchant dwelt, and if she did not marry it was not certainly for want of suitors. A hundred years ago the reign of the Encyclopedists had begun, their doctrines had penetrated far and wide, and religion was going out of fashion; but a stranger accidentally dropping into the church of St. Merri, on a Sunday morning, would have concluded, from the number of young men who knelt at mass and sat out the sermon, that devotion had—at all events—lost no ground in that quarter of the city. He would, however, have been wrong; the cause of this crowd of devotees arising simply from the fact, that Saint Merri was the parish church of Monsieur Gombert and his daughter, and that to see and, possibly, attract the notice of the beautiful Madeleine, had a great deal more to do with their attendance than the sincerity of their faith, or their admiration for the preacher. Whether Madeleine Gombert was aware or not, I will not pretend to say; the chances are that feminine

instinct set her right on this point, though it did not influence her conduct. As for Monsieur Gombert, he was as far as possible from putting a right construction on this peculiar demonstration; to doubt was not his habit. He accepted everything literally, and believed religiously in all he saw.

Of course, it was never intended by nature or custom, by Madeleine Gombert or her father, that the possessor of so much wealth should go to the grave unwed. Her marriage had, in fact, been a thing decided on, after the usual French mode of that time—where there was anything to marry for—while she was yet a child. The business of the silk-merchant of the Rue Saint Martin had thrown him in very close relations with a rich manufacturer of the city of Lyons, of the name of Bodry. As the connection increased, the desire arose on each side to cement it by the union of the two families. Monsieur Bodry had an only son, Monsieur Gombert had an only daughter. Could anything be more natural than a compact between two capitalists, the term of which should be, that Monsieur Bodry's son should marry Monsieur Gombert's daughter?

Although the proposed marriage of Henri Bodry and Madeleine Gombert was an arrangement of ten years' standing between their parents, which needed no consent on the part of the contracting parties, still, with the view of making them ac-