



Scene on the Lake of Geneva.

ENTERTAINING STRANGERS.

THE little town of Nyon lies along the shore beside the Lake of Geneva. The houses seem to rise out of it; the blue waters dash against their very walls. Blue? Yes, indeed, we in England can hardly know what the word means till we have seen this blue. Hardly less vivid is the green foliage of the maples and acacias along the quay where the children play, and the women knit, and the men smoke—cool and comfortable even under the hottest sun.

In the same thick closely-cut maple trees the swallows roost at night; whispering in the early morning tender twitters to their little ones, and then darting forth and sweeping the calm glassy surface beneath them to collect flies for their breakfast. Across the lake on the other side are rocky, jagged mountain peaks, and through an opening seen in his glory, when he pleases to reveal himself, rises the mighty Mont Blanc himself.

We might have thought that the little town was planted on that spot on very purpose, that its inhabitants might always thus feast their eyes on the highest point of Europe. But no; it was Julius Cæsar who built it, and I expect he had too much to do in conquering the world to think about such a trifle as natural beauty. Most likely it seemed to him the right place for a fortress, and so he built the strong castle which still stands there, and a few houses soon nestled under its shadow, and then some of his wealthy Romans thought it a pleasant spot to rest in, so they built pretty villas for themselves along the shore, and thus arose the town of Nyon, which, after eighteen hundred years, still stands.

Not that those old Romans would see it still the same, could they arise and look. Gas is in the streets, quaint and ancient as they are; the railway whistle sounds over the roofs, and across the lake steamboats now carry crowds of visitors all through the summer. Yes; Julius Cæsar would be astonished indeed. But at this present moment we wish to take you back—not to the year 47 before Christ, which was the time Nyon dates from—but to the time of the French Revolution at the end of the last century. It was a terrible time in France, and other nations, even if not involved in it, looked on and trembled. Though there were neither trains nor telegraphs to waft the news, tidings were looked for and waited for even in quiet Nyon.

There was a governor of the town at that time living in that stern old castle of which we have spoken. His name was Bonstetton. (Is it not always nice to know people's names? It makes a story so much more real.) He must have been a good and generous man, or he would not have done what he did.

One night, just as he was sitting down to supper, one of his servants came to tell him a man wished to speak with him.

"Who is he, and what does he want, Henri?" asked his master. "Tell him I am at supper, and cannot now be disturbed. He must send his message by you."

"Nay, sir," replied the servant; "I asked him his errand, and he says he must speak with you himself. But he is a poor man, dirty and ragged."

"A poor man, is he?" said Bonstetton; "then I will go to him at once."

Wretched indeed was the traveller whom he found;