

physical well-being, Mme. de Fresnes and M. de Valtravers could obey a sentiment more disinterested and more poetic, which had been gradually and unconsciously developed in them. They had passed, without being aware of it, the steps which lead from trade to art, like Jacob's ladder, mounting from earth to heaven. The marquise essayed, in reduced copy, some pictures from the old masters. She succeeded; and her miniatures after Holbein and Albert Durer were eagerly sought after. On his side, the chevalier entered seriously upon sculpture-in-wood; he distinguished himself and became one of the most eminent artists of this kind beyond the Rhine. They show, to-day, in the Cathedral of Nuremberg, a chair of his make. Executed perfectly, the ornaments are not wholly of irreproachable taste, but the principal piece, which represents St. John preaching in the wilderness, is one of the most beautiful that Germany possesses, and would be able to sustain comparison with the carved wainscots seen at Venice, in the church of San Giorgio Maggiore.

Besides the pleasure that it contributes, however humble and modest it be, Art possesses these infallible and precious qualities: it elevates the heart; it enriches the mind; it opens to thought larger and serener horizons. This is what happened at least in the case of the marquise and chevalier. Both succeeded through it, little by little, in breaking entirely the circle of narrow ideas in which their birth and education had imprisoned them. They recognized the aristocracy of work and the royalty of intelligence; like two butterflies escaped from their chrysalis, they went out of their narrow and limited caste to enter triumphant into the great human family. All this time, wasted away by ennui even to a skeleton, the marquis continued to be consumed with ineffectual desires and sterile regrets. One beautiful day he restored to God whatever he possessed of soul; his wife and friend mourned him as a child.

Some months after,—this was in 1802,—at the invitation of the First Consul, they repassed the Rhine and returned joyously to their country, regenerated like themselves. Since a long time, they had succeeded in comprehending and accepting the new glories of France; touching this brave soil, they felt their hearts throb and sweet tears moistened their eyes. The best part of their domains being left national property, they readily obtained re-possession; so that the years of exile which had flowed by were, for them, only a long dream; but, different from Epimenides, they went to sleep aged and awakened youthful. As soon as he was re-established in the hall of his fathers, the

chevalier hastened to summon a beautiful and chaste creature whom he had loved in Germany, whom he married, and who died in giving birth to a son. This child grew up between his father and Mme. de Fresnes, who were wholly devoted to him, and who continued to live philosophically in their retreat doing good, enjoying their pleasures, scarcely hearing the noise of the world, stranger to every ambition. Of all habits, that of labour is the rarest and most imperious. The marquise painted as a pastime, while the chevalier, rising every morning at daybreak, planned, carved and polished pear-wood walnut and oak. He had undertaken to magnificently renovate, with his own hands, the worm-eaten wainscots of his manor; perhaps also, by a pleasant return to his first successes, he turned now and then some nut-crackers, which he presented to the daughters of his farmers. Reading, riding, the delights of a friendship whose charm had never grown old, and the education of young Maurice, absorbed the remainder of the day, ever too short when one is busy and when one is loved.

CHAPTER III.

A NEW DEPARTURE.

One evening then, seated near each other, these old companions were enjoying themselves in remounting the current of the days that they had descended together, when they perceived, issuing by a path of the park, the two young people that we left at the gate. Arrived at the foot of the perron, the young girl ascended the steps slowly with a composed air, although apparently moved. The marquise and chevalier rose to receive her. She drew from her bosom a letter that she piously pressed to her lips; then she gave it to M. de Valtravers, who was examining with a sentiment of gentle curiosity this child that he saw for the first time. The old gentleman broke the seal and read. Standing, her thin arms resting upon her bosom, calm in her grief, dignified in her humility, the foreigner remained, the eyes bent upon the ground, under the look of Mme. de Fresnes, who was observing her with interest, while a few steps distant the young man who had brought her stood a discreet witness of this silent scene.

'MUNICH, July 18th, 18—

'About to leave this world, in face of the eternity which is near at hand, it is not towards Heaven, it is towards France that my eyes turn before closing; it is not to God, it is to you that I cry, my brother, and extend

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