

horses were impatient and restive. The coachman whipped them, and they plunged. Mademoiselle Gaultier sprang out again, pulling Mina with her into the house. She sank on a chair in the hall, and gave a sort of a half cry, half groan, which rang through the house. The company in the dining-room it, and wondered what it was. They little guessed whence it proceeded.

"I cannot," she murmured. "My God! I cannot go; the effort is too great."

A singular instinct seemed to inspire Mina at that moment. She guessed there was a struggle between right and wrong in that woman's heart. Without knowing what she was leaving, or where she was going, she seized her hand, and cried—

"Come, come; Oh, do come away!"

There are moments when the whole of a person's existence—when even their eternal destiny—seems to hang on an apparently casual circumstance; when good and bad angels are watching the upshot. Mina's own heart was overcharged with sorrow, and she longed to get away from the sound of voices and laughter which reached them where they sat. She clung to Mdle. Gaultier, and again said: "Come *now*, or you will *never* come." She did not know the strength of her own words. They fell on the actress's ear with prophetic force. Madame de Stael says, that the most mournful and forcible expression in our language is "no more." Perhaps the words "now or never," have a still more thrilling power. They have been the war-cry of many a struggle—the signal of many a victory.

Once again Mdle. Gaultier got into the carriage with Mina, and they drove to the Rue des Saints Peres. She wept bitterly. It was odd, perhaps, that she should give thus a free vent to her feeling before a child and stranger, but she was a very singular person; a great impulsiveness—a careless frankness—had always marked her character.

"I am very glad I met you, my dear," she said to her young companion, who was trying to thank her. "You have done more for me to-day than you can now, or you perhaps ever understand. It was just what I wanted to help me through the operation I am undergoing."

"What operation, dear lady?"

"An operation you may have read in the Gospel, my dear. Cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye, rather than walking into hell with them. May your sweet eyes and your little innocent feet never need plucking out and cutting off! It hurts, I can tell you!"

"I would cut off my hand, and have my eyes burnt out, if that would make all my own people Christians," Mina answered, eagerly.

"I do not know who are your people, little one; but I have heard of innocent souls, angels in human form, glad to suffer for the guilty and the perishing, and I think you may be one of them . . . I, too, had such thoughts when I was your age . . ."

"And why did you let them go?" Mina said. "I felt sure you were good the first day I saw you."

"What could make you think so, dear child?"

"You looked good, though you did push the German lady into the mud."

The mention of this incident caused a revolution in Mademoiselle Gaultier's nervous system. She burst into an hysterical fit of laughter. "What a wretch I have been," she exclaimed; and then, after a pause, said, "I ought to have been good, but I was not suffered to be so. An orphan and a dependent, I prayed for a bare pittance to keep me off the stage. But my relations would not hearken to my pleadings. They said I had beauty and wit, and must shift for myself. I have done so, God knows how!"

"But you can, you will be good now?"

The carriage stopped at the door of Mina's lodgings. She threw her arms round Mademoiselle Gaultier's neck, and said again, as she pressed her lips to her cheeks, "You will be good now?" It was like the whisper of an angel. Another voice had been urging, "Return to your pleasant home—to your gay friends—your luxurious life. You never can fast, obey, and pray for the rest of your life." It was the decisive hour—on the order then given to drive to one place or the other—on these few words the future turned. She bade the coachman go to the convent of the Anticailles. In after years, when she could afford to look back and write, with the gaiety of a grateful heart, an account of that terrible struggle, she spoke of the rude pallet on which she slept that night, of the bits of cold stewed carp she ate for supper, and said it was the sweetest sleep and the best meal, she had enjoyed for many a long year.

Two years later, the Parisian world flocked to the Carmelite convent of the Rue St. Jacques—the same where Louis de la Valliere had fled half a century before—to see one of the first actresses of the French stage, the witty, the handsome Mademoiselle Gaultier, put on St. Theresa's habit, and renounce for ever the world which had so long burnt unholy incense at her feet. She retained in the cloister the eager spirit, the indomitable gaiety, the intellectual gifts, with which she had been so rarely endowed. She spoke from behind the grate with the eloquence of former days, only the subject-matter was changed. "Wonders will never cease!" the world said at the news of Mademoiselle Gaultier's conversion, and the world was right. As long as it lasts, miracles of grace will take it by surprise.

CHAPTER VII.

At about six o'clock that day, his majesty Lewis the well-beloved, the idol of his people, one of the most pleasing and attractive men of his time, was sitting in his private apartments at Versailles, conversing with the queen to whom he was still devotedly attached. The young dauphin and his little sisters were playing about the room. The gentleman in waiting brought in a letter for the king, who read it, and smiled.

"Our good friend the Comte de Saxe," his majesty said, "entreats the favour of an immediate interview. In order, I suppose, to pique our curiosity, he pledges himself to make known to us a history that we shall with difficulty credit, so like does it sound to a tale of fiction,