

a woman's cares, and had known much of woman's sorrows before she had become wife to Michel Voss ; and then when the babes came, and she had settled down as mistress of that large household, and taught herself to regard George Voss and Marie Bromar almost as her own children, all idea that she was much younger than her husband departed from her. She was a woman who desired to excel her husband in nothing—if only she might be considered to be in some things his equal. There was no feeling in the village that Michel Voss had brought home a young wife and had made a fool of himself. He was a man entitled to have a wife much younger than himself. Madame Voss in those days always wore a white cap, and a dark stuff gown which was changed on Sundays for one of black silk, and brown mittens on her hands, and she went about the house in soft carpet shoes. She was a conscientious, useful, but not an enterprising woman ; loving her husband much and fearing him somewhat ; liking to have her own way in certain small matters, but willing to be led in other things so long as those were surrendered to her ; careful with her children, the care of whom seemed to deprive her of the power of caring for the business of the inn ; kind to her niece, good-humoured in her house, and satisfied with the world at large as long as she might always be allowed to entertain M. le Curé at dinner on Sundays. Michel Voss, Protestant though he was, had not the slightest objection to giving M. le Curé his Sunday dinner, on condition that M. le Curé on these occasions would confine his conversation to open subjects. M. le Curé was quite willing to eat his dinner and give no offence.

A word too must be said of Marie Bromar before we begin our story. Marie Bromar is the heroine of this little tale ; and the reader must be made to have some idea of her as she would have appeared before him had he seen her standing near her uncle in the long room up stairs of the hotel at Granpere. Marie had been fifteen when she was brought from Epinal to Granpere, and had then been a child ; but she had now reached her twentieth birthday, and was a woman. She was not above the middle height, and might seem to be less indeed in that house because her aunt and her uncle were tall ; but she was straight, well made, and very active. She was strong and liked to use her strength, and was very keen about all the work of