

"I said my mother-in-law. (Once find the two places, and I am master of the situation. You don't know me. I have made up my mind what to say to the mother, what to say to the young brother-in-law, he is quite a nice looking fellow, and what to say to my fiancée, I shall have won them all over before we are at Lyons. Well, Lyons; no, that is rather rapid; say Valence or Montelimar. Just hand me the time table. Let us have everything cut and dried, we must leave nothing to chance. Oh, do look at her! She has been cracking nuts for the last quarter of an hour, and how she cracks them! Just a little snap with her teeth and, crack! What darling little teeth they are! She is as pretty as ever when she eats; that is a great point. Women who are pretty whilst they eat or sleep are rare. But this dear creature, she eats like an angel! Crack! there goes another nut! And she's looking at me under her eyes; I can see she's looking at me! Oh, the whole thing is going splendid."

And in fact, everything did go splendidly. At Montbard, where they were due at 12:32, the introduction of Raoul to Mme. Derame took place. As soon as she heard the name of Chamblard she gave a start—the start of a mother with a marriageable daughter, as she thinks: "Oh, what an excellent match!" The fact was that her husband had often spoken to her of young Chamblard. "He would make a capital husband for Marthe. Chamblard and I talk of it now and then over our piquet, but the young fellow is restive and will not settle down. It would be first rate. Chamblard is richer than we are, twice or three times as rich. And Marthe sets herself against marrying. She has already refused five or six thoroughly suitable matches, under one pretext or another. They did not take her fancy; one was too old, another had no style, another lived in an unfashionable quarter—she would not marry into sugar, nor yet into cotton, nor into wine, nor into anything else, for that matter. Nothing will suit her but a very young husband and he must not be too grave. She insists on having somebody who is very rich, with nothing to do, and fond of pleasure."

How exactly the younger Chamblard tallied with this sketch. If it came to doing nothing, Raoul showed talent of the first order. No sooner did the conversation turn on horses, dogs, carriages, hats, bonnets, dresses, jewels, races, fencing, skating, cookery and the like, than he gave evidence of the rarest and highest ability.

Then they fell into general conversation. Raoul was very brilliant as they neared Chalons-sur-Saône at 8:10, relating how he had devised a wonderful little brougham, though he did not men-

tion that this brougham was presented by him to Mlle. Juliette Lorphelm, of the corps de ballet at the Folies-Bergere. It was a marvel of a brougham. It was small, as a brougham ought always to be, but a great deal was compressed into a little space. There was the indispensable toilet drawer, a secret money-box and jewel-case, a clock, a thermometer, a baremeter, a slide for writing—but all this was nothing.

He grew animated and excited as he spoke of his achievement. Marthe was listening to him intently.

"When you raised the four panels of the brougham you were naturally in the dark, but the four panels were lined with looking-glasses. Then you had only to press a knob concealed in the cushion on your right, and six crystal drops, ingeniously arranged in the blue satin lining of the brougham instantly became so many electric globules, and your boudoir was lighted up. Not for five minutes, mind, but for an hour, or for two hours, if you liked. There was an accumulator under the seat. When I gave this idea to my carriage builder, he was overcome with envy and admiration."

Marthe also was overcome.

"What a charming man!" she said to herself. "I only wish I had such a brougham! Not blue, though—I don't care for blue."

Then they went on to speak of jewels, bonnets, dress, and Raoul distinguished himself more than before, if that were possible, on all these questions. He had paid ever so many long accounts from fashionable dressmakers, milliners and jewellers! He had been present at many consultations on the designs of some particular dress, or the arrangement of some particular costume, and at ever so many trying-ons and attirings! As he could draw very fairly, he used, as he finely put it, to throw his ideas on paper without being asked. He had even designed the costumes of a little piece for the stage, which was played at some little theatre devoted to the interpretation of revolutionary, anarcho-symbiotic ideas—ideas of decency and delinquency, fin de siècle, fin du monde.

He took out his notebook and pencil, and lightly sketched a few of his creations, in spite of the shaking of the train. He had plenty of tact and thought of everything.

"It was for a set of charades," he said, "played to very nice people at the house of my friend, Baron So-and-So." He invented the baron on the spot, and gave him a fine name which was highly effective.

Marthe was carried away. Never had anybody struck her as being such an original and attractive talker.

"Not so long ago," said Raoul, a con-

sin of mine, who has a way of coming to me for advice, consulted me about a ball dress for the carnival at Nice. Let me tell you what I recommended to her. Here—I'll draw it as I go along. Look Mademoiselle!" You may be sure that she was looking. "I will try to make myself understood. A clinging dress of blue satin—I am awfully fond of blue." She felt sorry; she hated blue. "A clinging dress, I said—close-fitting—my cousin has a splendid figure and can afford to do that." He glanced at Marthe, and his glance implied, "so could you." She understood and blushed slightly at the delicate flattery. Raoul went on:

"Pale blue satin, of the palest blue; and over the satin skirt a robe of pompadour lace with very soft shades of green, pink, mauve, cream and deep blue. Then wide double sleeves of blue velvet, with Venetian lace cuffs. Do you see what I mean?"

"Thoroughly."

And with a sympathetic voice, she repeated:

"Double sleeves of blue velvet, with Venetian lace cuffs."

Suddenly the train stopped with a jerk, and the porters were crying, "Macon! Macon!"

"Macon—so soon?" said Marthe.

That "so soon" had a delightful sound in Raoul's ears. It meant a good deal, that "so soon?" Raoul occupied the 5 minutes of the stoppage in completing and touching up his little sketch, which was somewhat disjointed; and he did not observe that his young brother-in-law had gone to the telegraph office with a message. It had been privately written out by Mme. Gerame, and this also was dispatched to the Old Club.

The train departed at 4.11, and Raoul had not even thought of getting out to see if there was a telegram for him in the office window. And there was one, too, which was permitted to lie at Macon forever. It was a message of five words only—"Come back, Antwerp scheme dropped."

On and on rushed the train. Another dress was under discussion now, a peau de soie of delicate pink with bows of guipure lace running down the front. Raoul literally dazzled Marthe by his inexhaustible wealth and learned technical expressions.

As the express was dashing through the station of Romaneche at 4.32 Chamblard the elder walked into the card room at the Old Club and met his friend Derame.

"Shall we have a game of piquet?"

"Delighted."

They set to work at once. The first piquet ended in a defeat for old Derame, and the second was just beginning when a footman came up with a telegram for M. Chamblard.