

over the uplands on their sturdy ponies, bound for a day's exploration of some famous ruins at some distance away, retired as usual to the arbour in the garden. Ere they were well seated they saw the post messenger coming towards the chateau, and in a little while madame herself, with her rosy face all aglow, came out to them with her hands full of letters and papers.

"There!" she said, tumbling them in a heap on the little rustic table, and surveying them with wonder—for the good soul could do no more than spell a little in her old Bible, and follow the curé in his simple discourses on the Sabbath-day. To her there seemed something rather awe-inspiring in the ease and rapidity with which her guests disposed of their communications, and the speed with which the delicate lady used her pen made Madame cross herself and wonder if she did not possess some supernatural power.

"I have two letters from Auchengray, Joan," said Isabel Angus, when Madame had once more left them. "Long, gossipy epistles—just the thing for an idle, sunny morning like this. They will delight Mr Angus's soul when he comes back. I tell him sometimes that, though he is here in the flesh, his spirit is in Auchengray."

"It was selfish of me, Isabel," said Joan, a little sadly, "to allow him to sacrifice himself for me. To a man of his active temperament this idle life must be very irksome. But I was incapable of understanding anything at the time. I have often regretted it since."

"Hush! hush! what nonsense! Don't you see how young and strong Mr Angus has grown since we began our wanderings? He is delighted with this place; and Father Lacoste is an endless source of diversion to him, with his fund of queer stories and his deep insight into human nature," said Isabel, very tenderly. "And it is a great joy to us to see how this refreshing air and quiet are restoring you. You look almost well."

"I am better; and I find this solitude very sweet," an-