

ter eggs. Be it said here, to her credit, that she had had strength enough to hide her ignoble feelings from the poor innocent ones. The unsuspecting children accordingly ran to the drawing room, anxious to see what the big eggs would contain this year. How she had watched their eyes glowing with the fever of impatience ! How she had beheld them, with a feeling half remorse and half hatred, trembling with anticipated joy when their hands tried to open the gaudily painted eggs ! With indescribable anguish did she gaze upon their pretty faces enraptured at the sight of the objects which they contained : a gold cross and chain for the girl and a silver watch and guard for the boy—their long-cherished desires.

Good God ! how innocently and how cruelly they tormented her ! Their artless joy, their buoyancy of life were like a double-edged knife that rent asunder the heart of her heart ! A sob lay imprisoned in her throat ; she was suffocating ! To hide her feelings and tears fast rushing to her eyes, she left hastily the room before she had received the customary kisses in token of their unalloyed love and gratitude.

III.

“ Good heavens ! ” said she half aloud as she left the room, “ how their happiness tortures me ! ” Soon she found herself alone, having reached the large grove that flanked her home on the north. There she paused for a moment, ; heaved up a sigh that told of the tempest that raged within her breast. Yes, she envied the happiness of her husband’s children ! This frenzied aversion made her blush with shame but the feeling was indomitable. Most unjust, indeed, it was, but is there any justice in this world ? Evidently the two poor orphans did not deserve such iniquitous resentment. But herself, did she deserve to be deprived of her darling son ?

What a moral subversion had taken place in her ! This woman, once so pious, so kind, so considerate, so devoted and who was still so in her exterior bearing, was undergoing that depravation caused by a grief too constant and too keen. “ Oh ! if one of them at least were dead ! ” Hardly had she uttered these words that distant silvery voices called out : “ Maman, where are you ? ” She startled at the sound, and passing her hand over her aching brow as if to exorcise the tentation of that abominable wish, hasten-