

was his prisoner, and imposed on me a ransom of four hundred crowns; he had for a moment, indeed, the villainous idea of hanging me. This detail, however, is of no consequence. On the evening of my arrest, the Seigneur Croixmore committed the imprudence—it would be too great an exaggeration to call it an act of gallantry—of furnishing me an opportunity of taking my revenge. I did my best, and the chief of Messieurs de Tournon, fallen into my power, finds himself at this moment my prisoner of war!"

"And in what way do those explanations concern me, Captain de Maurevert?" demanded the Dame d'Erlanges, beginning to grow impatient.

"The object of these explanations, madame, is to prevent a grave injustice being done to you. I am still indebted to the Seigneur Croixmore, madame; and, as if it is absolutely demonstrated that, if I have been put to ransom, the cause can only be imputed to my desire to serve you, it is only just that you should indemnify me for the loss which my goal in your behalf has led me to incur."

"In other words, captain," replied the chateleine, coldly, and with an air of marked contempt, "you demand four hundred crowns of me?"

"Yes, madame; four hundred crowns only. I should be entitled, it is true, to add something on account of the dangers I have incurred, and the loss of time I have suffered in your cause; but I am too gallant a man to enter upon such details. I ask only for my bare expenses out of pocket."

"Your money shall be paid you, captain," replied the Dame d'Erlanges, desirous of dismissing her former guest from her presence as quickly as possible.

The captain passed his hand slowly over his beard, and looked at the chateleine out of the corner of his eye.

"By Venus," he said to himself, "this woman is not bad, for her age—a little wrinkled, a little stiff, and not at all pleasant; but that's only because nobody thinks of making love to her. Horns of Saturn!—here's a chance! The thing's worth thinking of. Seigneur de Tauve!—a really good ending to my career! How often one goes seeking one's fortune at the other end of the world, when all the while it is waiting under one's very nose! But I must see Raoul."

Almost before he was out of the reception hall, he turned to Croixmore with a gracious smile.

"My dear friend," he said, "will it be agreeable to you if we settle accounts?"

The bandit replied only by a sort of grunt.

"Good!" cried De Maurevert; "now you are going to show yourself ungrateful. Ugly thing, ingratitude! It generally denotes a shabby mind. Of what have you to complain? Has not my conduct been that of delicacy itself? What should prevent me, if I were not an honorable man—having you in my power—keeping back from you the price of my ransom? Nothing! You have imposed on me, in consideration of my rank as captain—a consideration for which I expressed my obligations to you—a ransom of four hundred crowns. Not wishing to be in the least behind you in gallantry and generosity, I have treated you still better, and—as the Seigneur de Tournon—doubled the sum of my own ransom, making yours eight hundred crowns. The four hundred crowns which the Dame d'Erlanges is about to remit to you, joined to an equal sum, will purchase your liberty. Why, you'll hardly have to loosen the strings of your purse! If, however, you prefer to keep the four hundred crowns paid you for my ransom, I shall offer no objection—the diversion of hanging you will compensate me for the loss. I love to see people hanged!"

"Come, captain," cried Croixmore, "I've no wish to bear ill-feeling towards you, or to put a scowling face on the matter. Your way of doing business is so pleasant, and carries with it such a perfume of gentility, that it is impossible for me not to recognize your superiority. Take care not to fall into my hands again, for I esteem you so highly that another time I should fix your ransom at a hundred thousand golden doubloons!"

The question of the ransom settled, De Maurevert hurried to the chevalier. The interview of the two companions-in-arms was most affecting. Raoul, happy to have some one by him to whom he could talk of Diane, received his companion with evident pleasure. On De Maurevert's side, the affection he felt for the young man was real and sincere, and he embraced him with all his heart. He related to him all the incidents of his journey to Tournon—the scene of the meeting of the members of the League of Equity, the means he had taken to recover his freedom, and, finally—a detail of which the reader has not yet been informed—the new position in which his victory had placed him; that is to say, as leader of the revolted peasants.

"And now, dear companion," he said, in conclusion, "there is the Marquis de la Tremblais to be brought to account. I have nearly three thousand men at my disposal; and though, not to cast about the bush, these three thousand men are well-armed and undisciplined that a company of mercenaries would put the whole to flight, I have not the least appearance of being equipped by an army; but within a month I shall have so well-armed my mountaineers in the handling of the arquebuses and pike that they will be taken for old troops. Get well quickly, dear companion, and as soon as you are strong again you will not want for

work! And now tell me what has brought you to this pitiful condition. Thunder and furies! If you were not in the wrong, I will avenge you in such a way as to frighten Maitre Satanus himself!"

"Ah! secondly and traitorous marquis," exclaimed De Maurevert when Raoul had acquainted him of all that had happened; "we will make him give us full satisfaction for his felony! What you tell me concerning the Demoiselle Diane gives me real pleasure, Raoul. You may well love her; she is worthy of being the companion of a brave warrior. You disgust—Come, come—be candid; you have not waited for my advice. I have seen how things were going from the moment of our arrival at the chateau—and saw at once that the demoiselle looked on you with an eye of favor! Tell me—what do you think of the Dame d'Erlanges? Does it not strike you that her face—if the unpleasance of its expression were got rid of—might be bearably ugly?"

"Why do you ask this question, captain?"

"You are quite right. Why do I ask this question? It has reference to a project which is as yet floating about among the clouds in my brain. When I have got it thoroughly clear and distinctly shaped, I will tell you about it. Let us now rather talk about yourself!"

The two friends found the rest of the day passed rapidly. At nightfall De Maurevert parted with Raoul, assuring him that before a week had passed he would hear him spoken of. He then quitted the Chateau de Tauve and went to rejoin his army of peasants.

During the fortnight which followed the chevalier advanced towards convalescence with such great strides as not only to leave his bed, but to take, every morning, several hours' exercise in the gardens of the chateau. Diane met him there—accidentally—almost every day, and bore him company in his walk.

Though neither Raoul nor the young girl went beyond the strictest bounds of reserve, they knew—thanks to a thousand ingenious circumlocutions—how to tell all the love they felt for one another. These chaste and infantine confidences plunged them into such a delightful state of dreaminess that they entirely forgot the clouds by which their horizon was darkened. The Marquis de la Tremblais was never taken into account. But this existence was, alas! too charming to last.

One day, after dinner, the Dame d'Erlanges requested the chevalier to remain with her, and when the servants had quitted the room, said, in a severe tone:

"Chevalier Strozzi, hospitality is a sacred thing, as binding on the part of him who receives it as on that of the giver. I learned yesterday, through one of my women, that my daughter, forgetful of all decency, passes, every day, several hours in your company, walking in the garden. I will not reproach you either with the want of dignity or the want of delicacy exhibited in your conduct, in so abusing the ignorance of a young girl brought up in seclusion. I shall be obliged to you, Monsieur le Chevalier, not to enter into any explanation on this subject. My only wish is to justify the harshness under which I find myself compelled to withdraw from you the hospitality of my house, and to require you to quit Tauve to-morrow at the latest."

This unjust and naughty language of the chateleine de Tauve brought a flush of hot anger to the cheeks of the chevalier, but, restrained by the respect he owed to the mother of Diane, he bowed lowly before the Dame d'Erlanges, and left the room without a word of reply.

As soon as he was alone Raoul abandoned himself to despair. To be for ever separated from Diane appeared a sacrifice beyond his powers of endurance.

"Alas!" he groaned, as he paced his room, while burning tears obscured his sight, "am I not justified in saying that I was born under a malignant star? Every time happiness appears to smile upon me, fatefully pursues me with unremitting cruelty. Ah! why did I not die that night, when, wounded by the marquis, I heard Diane declare to her mother that she loved me? Death would have been a pleasure then. But my destiny is to live and suffer!"

The rest of the day he spent shut up in his room. At nightfall he threw himself, fully dressed, upon his bed, and, after a while, exhausted by the violence of the emotion he had so long endured, fell into a heavy and disturbed sleep. About two o'clock in the morning he was suddenly awakened by hearing a succession of terrible outcries.

At first he thought himself under the influence of a troubled dream; but sounds of furious struggling, mixed with shrieks of distress, rang on all sides of him, and left him no doubt. It was evident that some frightful catastrophe was taking place. He sprang out of bed and seized his sword, a violent blow at the same instant burst open the door of his room, and a breathless voice, which he recognized as that of Lehardy, cried:

"Help, Monsieur le Chevalier! help! The Marquis de la Tremblais has surprised the chateau!"

*(To be continued.)*

"Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt," sighed Jones, the other morning, as he wrestled with his breakfast, "thaw, and resolve itself into a dew." "And so it might, Mr. Jones," snapped Mrs. Cloggers, "if there was not so much due from some of my boarders whom I might name." Jones did not reply, but continued to ruminate upon the stale, flat and unprofitable uses of this world.

THE WRONG PICTURE.

"A pretty face—a very pretty face, indeed!" I turned the little photograph upside down, held it off at arm's length, and scrutinized it closely with my eye-glasses.

Henry Wallis looked pleased; a man naturally likes to have his affluence duly admired and appreciated.

"So this is the Bossie Armitage I have heard so much of; really, Wallis, she does credit to your taste. A blonde, I suppose?"

"Fair as a lily, with blue eyes and the sunniest golden hair!"

"Ah! well, I must say I prefer the brunette style so far as my taste goes; but then, faucons differ, you know."

It was all very well for Henry Wallis to go into ecstasies about this pallid, fair-haired little Bossie Armitage; he had never met the glance of Cecina Vernon's magnificent dark eyes. What did he know about the true type of feminine beauty?

"As you say, faucons differ," Wallis returned, lightly. "But I wish you would select a handsome frame for it when you go to town next—blue velvet, with a gold rim on the margin, or some such tasteful arrangement."

"I'll see to it," I said, depositing the picture in its envelope, and returning it to my inside breast-pocket.

"You'll be very careful of it?"

"Careful? Of course I shall!"

I smiled a little listlessly at Wallis' solicitude, and we parted.

After all, Henry Wallis was better off than I was, for he was securely engaged to the dimpled, yellow-tressed little object of his affections; while I was yet, as it were, in outer darkness, uncertain whether my peerless Cecilla returned my devotion, or whether she secretly inclined towards that fellow, Fitzhugh Trefoil. A score of times I had resolved to set the question; a score of times I had gone to the Vernons' house with the very formula of declaration on my lips, and as often had the words died away unspoken.

If I had only gifted me with one thousandth part of Fitzhugh Trefoil's off-hand audacity! I don't think any thing short of the deluge could check that fellow's cool self-possession, an earthquake would not.

However, love inspires the feeblest heart with a sort of courage, and I was a new man since Miss Vernon had smiled upon me. What was the use of doubting? Why not decide my fate at once? Henry Wallis' serene content exercised a stimulating influence upon me. I would fain have been even as he was.

"There is no sense in procrastinating matters any further," I said half aloud, as I walked up and down the limited domains of my law office. "I have been a doubling fool quite long enough."

"I'm afraid I wasn't a very amiable member of the domestic circle that afternoon."

"I think Paul is growing crosser every day," said my sister, shrugging her plump little shoulders. "Mamma, I wish you'd speak to him."

But my mother, bless her wise old soul, knew better than that. She only looked at me over the rim of her spectacles, and went on darning stockings.

Paul is worried with business matters, I suppose," she said, apologetically. "Paul will do well enough, if you only let him alone."

I went up to my room after dinner, and made an elaborate toilet, but all the pains I bestowed upon it served only to heighten the general effect of awkwardness.

"I've two minds to wait till to-morrow," quoth I to myself, abruptly stopping, with my cravat half tied.

No, I might be a coward, but I was not such a poltroon as that. I had begun the enterprise, and I would carry it through. Moreover, I had had an inspiration. An entirely new and original method of putting the momentous query had occurred to me.

"Hang Fitzhugh Trefoil!" I exclaimed, gleefully, half aloud, though there was no ear to hear my ejaculation. "I'll win the dark-eyed treasure yet, in spite of him."

I opened my writing-case, and carefully took out a little carte de visite wrapped in tissue paper, and tenderly laid it away with a pink alk perfumed sachet that Minnie had made for me once. It was Cecilla's picture; she had allowed me to steal it away from her, with scarcely a remonstrance, a week before. Then was the time I ought to have confessed, but, like the timorous, dobbing moon-calf that I was, I had let the golden tide of opportunity slip away from me.

I drew Bossie Armitage's vacant, Joll-like face from its envelope, and compared the two with a thrill of triumph in my heart.

"Colorless water beetle—limson, sparkling champagne! a pale violet in the shadow of a royal rose! pearls eclipsed by the fiery flash of diamonds!" I exclaimed. "Henry Wallis' taste may be correct and classical, but give me my radiant brunette! These bleached-out beauties don't correspond with my ideal of perfection."

It was a lovely spring evening as I entered the wide gravelled path that led up to the broad porch of the old-fashioned Vernon mansion. Squire Vernon sat there smoking his meerschaum.

"Won't you sit down and have a smoke?" he demanded, hospitably. "It's a real luxury to be able to take a whiff out of doors, after being

shut up in the house all the winter. Or may be you'd prefer going in to see Cecil?"

Sensible old gentleman! he had not forgotten his own young days. I intimated that the special object of my visit had been to "see Cecil." "Well, she is in the parlor, all by herself," said the Squire, good-humoredly. "Walk in—walk in."

Cecilla Vernon was sitting in the parlor alone, as her father had said, the bright centre of a cheerful circle of lamplight. A bit of crocheted work was lying in her lap, and an open volume of poems—poems I had sent her—was on the table.

Cecilla Vernon was always fair to look upon, in my sight; to-night, however, she seemed more than ordinarily beautiful.

I sat down, and began hesitatingly upon the never-failing topic of the weather. A proposal had seemed the easiest thing in the world as I walked along the drowsy edges of the peaceful starlighted road, contemplating, from afar off, but now that I was facing it, Alpe upon Alpe of difficulty and perplexity seemed to surround its accomplishment. I would have given all that I was worth to postpone the evil day but twenty-four hours—all but my self-respect, and that was imperilled now.

Cecilla tried her best to keep the ball of conversation in motion, she introduced new subjects, asked leading questions, and feigned deep interest in the most abstruse of topics. But even Cecina couldn't talk on forever, and presently, with a little sigh of despair, she subsided into silence.

Now was the eventful moment of my destiny. "Cecilia!" I said, softly.

She raised the liquid brown eyes to mine.

"I want to confide in you to-night—have I your permission to speak?"

"Certainly, Mr. Markham."

"I am very much in love, Cecilia; in fact, my heart has long ago gone out of my own possession into that of—"

I stopped, with the fatal lucky feeling in my throat. Cecilia was blushing divinely! I drew my chair close to hers, with the sensation of a man who has just pulled the string of a cold shower-bath.

"Who is the lady?" faltered Cecilia; as if she did not know perfectly well already.

"Shall I show you her picture, Cecilia?"

Miss Vernon inclined her head almost to the level of my shoulder, to look at the little carte de visite I drew from my pocket. I skillfully stole one arm round her waist.

"See, dearest!"

But, to my horror and dismay, she snatched her hand from my clasp, sprang up, and started away, like some fair avenging goddess!

"How dare you insult me thus, Mr. Markham?"

"Cecilia! how—what—"

"Don't presume to call me Cecilia, sir!" rebuked the indignant girl, bursting into tears, and sweeping from the room.

I sat like one paled. What had I done? Why was the gracious mood of my enchantress thus suddenly transformed to gall and bitterness? Surely she would presently return and apologise for her capricious exit? But she did not return; and after waiting long in vain, I sneaked out of a side door, and crept dejectedly home, my heart burning with wonder and resentment. I had no mind to meet the assembled family group; so I admitted myself with the latch key, and stole noiselessly up stairs, where my lamp still burned—the lamp I had lighted with such high and bounding hopes!

I threw off my coat viciously; as I did so the forgotten carte de visite dropped from my pocket. I stooped to pick it up. It was the portrait of Bossie Armitage! And there on the mantel, where in my heedless haste I had left it, was the divine countenance of my queen, Cecilia!

I had shown her the wrong photograph!

All was clear now! Her indignation and resentment—the whole tangled web of mystery was unravelled now; I caught up my hat to rush back to her, but at that moment the clock struck eleven!

It was too late now. All apology and explanation must be deferred until the morrow. And with a disappointed spirit I sought my couch. Early the next morning I walked over to the old Vernon mansion; but, expeditious as I was, Trefoil had been there before me. I met him coming whistling down the walk as self-possessioned as ever.

"Good-morning!" I said, briefly, endeavoring to pass him; but he detained me.

"Congratulations, my dear fellow! I am the happiest man in the world. Cecilia Vernon has just promised to be my wife!"

I stared blankly at him, and with one or two quivering lip-movements, turned short round and walked home again. My rival had improved the propitious opportunity, and caught Cecilia's heart in the rebound!

Well—so goes the world, and I am a bachelor yet. There is but one Cecilia, and she, alas! is married to Fitzhugh Trefoil!

"Evil of no man," says the apocryphal; as plain a command as "Thou shalt do no murder." But who, even among Christians, regards this command? What is evil speaking? It is not the same as lying or blasphemy. All a man says may be as true as the Bible, and yet the saying of it be evil speaking. For evil speaking is neither more nor less than speaking evil of an absent person, relating something evil which was really done or said by one who is not present when it is related.