

of so much importance: why, then, should we trouble ourselves? As to this little *pastorale* which it seems to be enacted as a sort of interlude to the more serious business of the stage, it is what I imagine invariably takes place. What would become of the poets and romancers, otherwise? We must think of our own youth, Comte, and not be too hard upon the young people. Positively I feel quite old when I think of those delightful days—that spring-time of existence, those first loves,” and the Marquis closed his eyes and sighed deeply, apparently from his heart.

The Count took a turn or two in the saloon, but it did not seem to soothe his temper.

“This is all very well, Monsieur le Marquis,” he said, sharply, “and very witty; in delicate badinage we all know no one can equal Monsieur de St. Palaye, but I assure you, this is no laughing matter. This affair has grown beyond a joke. When my daughter has the honour—an honour I am well aware far higher than any she had a right to expect—of signing herself Madeleine, Marquise de St. Palaye, it will not be my place, of course, to say a word. Then her honour will be in her husband’s keeping—her honour and his. But while she remains in my house she is my daughter, and in my care, and I tell you plainly that this matter is past a joke.”

A fleeting expression of extreme *ennui* passed over the Marquis’s face, and he evidently suppressed an inclination to yawn. Then with more *bonhomie* than he had previously shown he put his hand on his companion’s arm.

“Well, my dear Comte,” he said, smilingly, “I will do anything you wish—anything, that is, short of unpleasantly hurrying the nuptials—that I cannot do. It would be—in fact it would be such wretched taste—*travaux*—a scene!—an *esclandre* in general, my dear Count!”

Then linking his arm in that of the Count, he led him, still sulky and grumbling, out of the saloon, and into the modern court of the chateau; and the long lines of ancestors on the walls followed them as they passed, with angry and vindictive looks, as though enraged that they could not descend from their places and join again in the turmoil of life.

III.

The second morning after the contract had been signed, the Marquis was seated in his dressing-room, about an hour before *déjeuner*, reading, apparently with great entertainment, though not for the first time, *Le Tancrède* of Monsieur de Voltaire. While he was thus agreeably occupied the door was violently thrown open, and the Count, heated and excited, burst into the room.

“Marquis,” he said, utterly regardless of any who might hear, “let me beg of you to get to horse at once and come with me. I have positive information that my daughter is at this moment giving an interview to that young scoundrel on one of the terraces in the wood. While we speak they may be planning an elopement—may, even carrying it into effect. Let me beg of you to come at once!”

The Marquis laid down his book, crossed one knee over the other, and leaning back on his chair looked the Count in the face steadily for a second or two, as if he would say “This man will be too much for me; I shall have to press forward the nuptials, I see, in self-defence.” Then he sighed deeply and rose from his seat.

“Very well, my dear Count,” he said, “I will be as quick as possible. Pierre, see that they bring some horses round; come into my closet yourself, and send Charles and Alphonse and all the men here at once. I will make haste, my dear Count, indeed I will.”

Whether the Marquis did make haste as he said, or whether the number of valets impeded each other, it is certain that it was a long time before he descended to the court of the chateau, where he found the Count pacing up and down, fuming and cursing his delay. They got to horse as soon as possible, and rode down the forest road, but the Marquis reined his horse in so often, and made such inappreciate remarks upon the beauty of the morning and of the view, that the Count could bear it no longer.

“Monsieur le Marquis,” he said, “I am sorry I have disturbed you so much; I am very anxious to press forward, but I will not hurry you, I will ride forward at once.”

“Pray do not delay a moment on my account,” said the other; “I shall rejoin you anon.”

The Count put spurs to his horse, and, followed by his servants, was lost to sight behind the windings of the path.

The moment he disappeared the Marquis drew his rein, and turning to his valet, said in a tone perfectly different from that which he had hitherto used:—

“On the north terrace, do you say?”

“Yes, Monsieur le Marquis,” replied the man, with a smile; “on the north terrace to the left; not on the old terrace, as the Count is wrongly advised. They have been there a long time; I should think they must be about parting.”

The Marquis turned his horse, and, followed by his men, retraced his steps until they reached a scarcely perceptible path which now on their right hand, found its way down into the road. Here he dismounted, and taking his riding-whip with him in place of a cane, began leisurely to ascend the path. When he had gone a yard or two, however, he turned to the valet and said:—

“Wait here with the horses, and should

Monsieur le Comte return, say to him that I have taken the opportunity of the fine morning to enjoy one of the numerous views on his delightful estate. Say that to him, neither more nor less.”

When the Marquis reached the head of the path he found himself at the end of a long and grassy terrace, from which the path was screened by thick bushes. Standing for a moment, so concealed, he became conscious of the presence of the two young lovers whom he had met some few days ago in the forest. Again he could see the face of the young girl, and again he was moved by the sight. He waited till they had reached the other end of the terrace, and then came forward, so as not to startle them by his sudden appearance. They met half way.

“I am sorry once again,” said the Marquis, speaking simply, and without affectation, “to intercept Mademoiselle, especially as this time I have no excuse but have acted with premeditation. Monsieur le Comte, your father, is ridden out in hot haste and temper upon some mischievous information he has received concerning Mademoiselle and Monsieur le Chevalier. I did what I could to delay him, and finally left him, having better information, it appears, than he had. But he will be here anon. I was compelled to leave my horses in the road below, and when he returns from his fruitless quest he will doubtless follow me here. Monsieur le Chevalier will doubtless see the propriety of avoiding an unpleasant meeting.”

“I have to thank you, Monsieur le Marquis,” said the young man, whose manner seemed compounded of an intense dislike, and a sense that politeness was due to one who, under singular circumstances had behaved in a more friendly manner than could have been looked for; “I have to thank you for previous courtesy, and for, I have no doubt, much consideration today. I will not linger any more.”

He took the girl in his arms, and imprinted a kiss upon her lips, which, under the circumstances, was perhaps scarcely courteous; then, gloomily bowing to the Marquis, he plunged into the thicket of the wood and disappeared.

The Marquis took no notice of the warmth of his leave-taking, but, waving his riding-whip and hat in one hand, he offered the other arm to the girl, saying:—

“If Mademoiselle will honour me by taking a turn upon the terrace before her father’s arrival I shall esteem it a favour, as it will give me the opportunity of saying a single word.”

The girl took his arm willingly, and as she did so she said, with a winning and confident gesture:—

“Monsieur le Marquis, I think you are the best and kindest men.”

“I wish to put before Mademoiselle,” said the Marquis, speaking gently, but very gravely, “one or two considerations; and I could wish that it were possible for her to regard it as the advice of an absolutely impartial friend. The first is one of which I hesitate to speak, because it seems to cast a slur, in some manner, upon the character of Monsieur le Chevalier. But man is very weak, especially when exposed to such temptation as, fortunately for him, rarely in this world crosses his path. These shady groves and grassy banks are the places where the deceitful god delights to work his mischief—a mischief which is never repaired. I know, of course, that there are many who speak of these things lightly, and who even view these flowery, but dangerous, paths with approbation; but I cannot think that Mademoiselle would tread them without violating the *bienséance* which alone makes life tolerable, or tainting the purity of those lustrous ranks of which she will be the brightest star. I pass, at once, to another thought which it is not impossible Monsieur le Chevalier has already suggested.” He paused, as the tremor of the girl’s hand upon his arm showed that he was not speaking in vain. “I mean,” he continued, “the project of seeking in another land that happiness which I fear appears to Mademoiselle to be denied her in this. Could I see any permanent prospect of happiness in such a course I would not shrink, Quixotic as it might seem, from advising you to adopt it. But there appear to me insuperable objections to such a course. I do not see how it is possible for Mademoiselle so to elude the affectionate solicitude of her family as to obtain more than a couple of hours’ start. Couriers on swift horses would be sent to the *Intendants* of the provinces, to the postmasters on the great roads, and to the officers on the frontiers. After experiencing toil and hardships which it is pitiful to think of, Mademoiselle would probably be overtaken before she reached the frontier. But supposing that such was not the case; supposing that she succeeded by the skill of Monsieur le Chevalier and the swiftness of his horses in reaching a foreign land, the Chevalier is a servant of the King of France. He would be arrested in any court and city of Europe; he would be brought back to France, and the Bastille, or some inferior prison, would be his home for life. When I add to this the hardships of life in a foreign land, of the rupture of family ties, of hatred and animosity where there should be nothing but serenity, of the failure of family schemes and hopes, and of the tie which binds persons of our rank all over the world to subterfuge actions which are regarded as subversive of family order, and even life—I cannot, I say, I think of such certain hardship, of such possible disgrace and misery—I cannot advise Mademoiselle to adopt such a course. The certainty that she would soon be separated from her friend seems to me to decide the matter.”

The Marquis paused; but as the girl made no reply, he continued:—

“For myself, I say nothing; it is my misfortune that I have been introduced to Mademoiselle under circumstances which render it impossible that I should make that impression which it would have been the ambition of my life to achieve; but this, perhaps, I may say, that should Mademoiselle decide to let matters take their course, and as far as circumstances will permit, to repose in me her confidence, it would indeed seem a fatality no less strange than sad, should she prove the first who, in the long course of centuries, had reason to regret that they placed confidence in the word of a St. Palaye.”

It seemed that something in the words of the Marquis, strange as they may appear to some people, or something in his manner as he spoke them, did not affect the girl unpleasantly, for she was in the act of saying, what indeed she had said before, but now with one slight but important modification:—

“Marquis, you are the best and kindest of men”—when her father, heated with riding and with anger, burst through the trees at the end of the terrace, and overlooking in his fury what was before his eyes, exclaimed:—

“Well, Marquis, I told you how it would be: I cannot find them! This wretched girl!” he stopped suddenly, open mouthed, as straight before him, apparently on the most friendly terms, the girl hanging confidently upon her companion’s arm, stood the Marquis, and she of whom he was in such desperate chase. It was impossible for either to conceal a smile.

“My dear Comte,” said the Marquis, “I am sorry you have had so much unnecessary trouble. The truth is that after you left me it occurred to me that, in the little domestic scene you were anticipating, I should play an insignificant, not to say a somewhat ridiculous figure. Warm as is the interest which I must naturally feel in everything that concerns Mademoiselle, I think that these family matters are always best managed by the family itself. I therefore turned aside to enjoy perhaps the most beautiful of the many beautiful views to be found on this estate, and to my delight I found Mademoiselle engaged in a precisely similar occupation. It augurs well, I am sure, for our future happiness, that at this early period our tastes are found to be so similar.”

The Count saw that he was being laughed at, and indeed it may as well be confessed at once that the Marquis erred in the manner in which he treated the Count. This, however, should be remembered in extenuation, that nothing could be more intolerable to him than the part of jealous husband and lover which the Count appeared determined to force him to play. It was not in human nature but that he should take a little quiet revenge.

“But did you see nothing of the Chevalier?” blundered out the Count.

“Really, my dear Count, I have not had time, had I possessed the power, to challenge my adversary to mortal combat, to run him through the heart, to cut him up into small bits, and to bury him beneath the sod. Besides, you will observe that the grass all around is perfectly undisturbed. I assure you solemnly, Monsieur le Comte,” continued the Marquis, apparently with the greatest earnestness, “that the Chevalier does not lie murdered beneath my feet.”

The words were spoken in jest, but they were recalled to memory, afterwards, by more than one.

The Count turned sulkily away, and his daughter and the Marquis followed him back to the chateau.

(To be continued.)

NEW YORK CAUSERIE.

The Langtry stories are beginning to circulate freely: harmless little things enough, for they are too ridiculous to believe. The nasty ones that were rife a year ago, and which have been repeated by the lowest writers in the lowest newspapers on occasion, no one gives any credence to, and our most straight-laced set will receive the Jersey Lily cordially. Those who were in doubt about her were inclined to her favor, and since a certain lady, prominent and immaculate, of the Dutch set, wrote for a “character” it has been settled that Mrs. Langtry is fair in fame as in face, and worthy of their best consideration.

She will be well received, and it is to be hoped that her wit (and they say the whispers that have reached her of the social pitfalls here) will keep her from lionizing at the wrong houses.

Is it not strange how people can believe the stories they hear, unless it takes a more superior sort of intelligence to disbelieve than to accept blindly? I cannot account for it. I have heard how Mrs. Langtry slipped a piece of ice down the Prince of Wales’ back, told as solemnly as one relating an accident at sea—the narrator believing as firmly in it as the Creed. I wonder who started that “cram”? It isn’t in the least witty; by far the best is one, I heard in London two years ago, of a garden breakfast at Lady——, which the Prince attended to meet Mrs. Langtry: “Good morning, your Royal Highness” (this is what Mrs. Langtry is supposed to have said), “Does your Royal Ma know you were coming here to meet me to-day?”

“Your Royal Ma” is very delicious.

The charm of the Lily is the play of light in her eyes. Her features are not severely beautiful. She is *chic*, charming; there is an at-

mosphere about her that attracts one and all; she is—irresistible. Her pose in public is utter repose; but in talking she is the soul of animated grace. Her expressions are changeable, and her eyes can look very sad indeed.

Do you know I think public opinion is improving? I think people are more true to the light within them, than, say for a starting point, fifteen years ago.

There is a family here who were social leaders—the husband was a stalking social gol; his wife’s “movements” were mentioned in all the society journals from Dan to Beersheba. Too much extravagance caused them to fail, and the creditors, even to the butcher and baker, were paid nothing on the dollar. After a short hibernation out of town, they returned here and took up an abode, where they still reside, at an expensive hotel, giving select dinners “semi-occasionally,” whatever that means. But they are simply tolerated, and everybody thinks he or she is only expressing just indignation, or doing the cause of truth a favor by repeating behind their backs what he or she thinks of people who pay two hundred dollars a week board with a butcher’s bill of two thousand dollars unpaid.

It is no longer *ton* to despise people who have not got big incomes. I blush to confess that I fear this new order of things, by really unthinking people, was brought about by contact with our foreign friends, who, at least *openly*, do not worship the golden calf. I am well aware that the cynic is saying “*Don’t they indeed?*” but they don’t, however experience may prove that *mere* money “wins” the world, it is only a surface success. If they could only hear what is said of them, their vulgar lives, their ridiculous *faux pas*, their horrible estimates of what living life is, and their ignorance of its possibilities, their imitation fine airs—with their butter at dinner and their *più deus* in the drawing room. If all the ridicule and mute contempt were counted up, how much would they have, after all, of what human beings most strive to obtain, praise and sympathy from their fellow-men? The shallower the *parvenu*, the quicker is he blinded in the belief that the court is paid to him and not his bank account—but even now people have feelings. American girls are quick to see, swift to detect ridicule, and there are daughters I could mention whose parents had no social advantages, and are ignorant, who have caught the sensible idea, that they, at last, need not be ridiculous if they are not to the manner born, and such are wisely adopting an easy democracy and are beginning to affect an indifference to *pa’s* purse, which is not only prettily done, but is wise, and if one must have an affectation, the healthier it is, the better.

American girls are very, very quick; in three generations they will be wiser, better, lovelier. —*Twiz.*

BOY LOVE.

One of the queerest things to think of in after-life is boy love. No sooner does a boy acquire a tolerable stature than he begins to imagine himself a man, and to ape mannish ways. He casts side glances at all the tall girls he may meet, becomes a regular attendant at church or meeting, carries a cane, holds his head erect, and struts a little in his walk. Presently, and very soon he falls in love—yes, *falls* is the proper word, because it best indicates his happy, delirious self-abasement. He lives now in a fairy region, somewhat collateral to the world, and yet blended somehow inextricably with it. He perfumes his hair with fragrant oils, scatters essences over his handkerchief and desperately shaves and anoints for a beard. He quotes poetry in which “love” and “dove” and “heart” and “dart,” peculiarly predominate; and he plunges deeper in the delicious labyrinth, fancies himself filled with the divine *agitation*, and suddenly breaks into a scarlet rash—of rhyme. He feed upon the looks of his beloved; is raised to the seventh heaven if she speaks a pleasant word; is betrayed into the gloomiest regions of misanthropy by a frown. He believes himself the most devoted lover in the world. There never was such another. There never will be. He is the one great idolator! Wealth! he despises the groveling thought. Poverty with the adorable beloved, he rapturously apostrophises as the first of all earthly blessings, and “love in a cottage, with water and a crust,” is the *beau-ideal* paradise of dainty delights. He declares to himself, with the most solemn emphasis, that he would go through fire and water; undertake a pilgrimage to China or Kamshatka; swim storm-tossed oceans; scale impassible mountains, and face legions of bayonets, for but one sweet smile from her dear lips. He dotes upon a flower she has cast away. He cherishes her glove—a little worn at the fingers—next to his heart. He scrawls her dear name over quires of foolscap—a fitting medium for his insanity. He scornfully depreciates the attention of other boys of his own age; cuts Peter Tebbets dead, because he said the adorable Angelina had carrot hair; and passes Harry Bell contemptuously for daring to compare that gawky “Mary Jane” with his incomparable Angelina. Happy! happy! foolish boy love; with its joys and its hopes, its sorrows and its jealousies, its raptures and its tortures, its ecstatic fervours and terrible heart-burnings, its solemn ludicrousness, and its intensely prosaic termination.

A CARDPLAYER’S epitaph:—

His card is cut—long days he shuffled through The game of life. He dealt as others do, Though he by honors tells not its amount— When the last trump is played his tricks will count.