

known man, she drew back and made a masterly retreat to the edge of the car.

"I did not know that you were in the train," she said to Maurice. "Are you going away?"

"Yes, to Algiers."

"We are going to Marseilles. I was just fetching a shawl for mamma, who felt the cold. She will be so pleased to see you. You will find her in the restaurant. I shall be back directly."

"Let me be your escort."

"You are very kind."

She disappeared with a slight inclination of the head for young Chambard, who stood as if he had been turned to stone, gazing at Mdlle. Marthe with eyes full of admiration.

She had just had time to observe that he was a very good looking youth, dressed irreproachably, and that he was gazing at her with large and somewhat stupid eyes. But she could divine in these eyes a thought which was naturally not displeasing to her: "Ah! mademoiselle, how lovely you are!"

As for Raoul, he was saying to himself. "This is my ideal, distinctly my ideal. That simple traveling dress is the best possible form! And the cap, a trifle on one side, just over the ear—that cap was perfection! That is a girl who knows how to dress! She would make a hit in a stage-box! That spice of English accent, too!"

She had, in fact, a little English accent. For years past she had taken a vast amount of trouble to catch that slight accent. She would say to her English teacher. "Oh! yes, Miss Butler, I do want to know English but still more do I want to talk French with an English accent." She had given most of her time to that; and fortunately she had been rewarded for her perseverance, and her little Anglo-Parisian brogue was at times quite original.

Whilst Maurice was retracing his steps with Mdlle. Marthe, Raoul took his seat at a table in the restaurant car. Presently he saw them return together with her mother's shawl. Maurice remained for a few minutes by the table where the ladies were at breakfast with the brother of the golden-haired damsel, and then he came back to Raoul. As soon as he came up Raoul broke out:

"Who is that? Tell me quick who it is! Now I'll marry that girl if they like, straight away, the moment we leave the train. In my very arms—I held her in my arms! Talk about figures—why, she's a dream! There are very different sorts of slender figures, don't you know! You can have slender figures which are hard, rough, stiff, bony, ramped up by those hateful stays—and I have devoted a good deal of study to the theory of the corset—it is one of great importance. Then again there is the genuine sort of slenderness, easy, natural and melting. No, melting does not

come up to the idea of what has just flitted by me—glided between my hands. Unctuous! Yes, that is the word to suit it! unctuous! That is my impression to a nicety. Unctuous is the word."

Raoul was frankly delighted with his own talk.

"Ah, yes!" he went on, "she is unctuous. And that little nose in the air! Utterly Chinese! Every bit of her, in short—all in the air! Who is it? Tell me, who is it?"

"She is the daughter of one of my mother's friends."

"Rich?"

"Very."

"I was thinking of the governor when I asked that, for I declare I would marry her without a penny. It is the first time I have said such a thing about any girl. And what is her name?"

"Mademoiselle Marthe Derame."

"Derame! You said Derame?"

"I did."

"You don't mean to say that her father is a merchant, trading with Japan and China?"

"That is the man."

"My dear boy, I can't believe it. This is the sort of thing you only meet with in the vaudevilles of the smaller theatres."

"What is the matter with you now?"

"The matter with me! Why, that is the governor's Number Three—yes, Number Three! The father of this little wonder is one of the governor's piquet friends at the Old Club—and I wouldn't see this Number Three. And there it comes tumbling into my arms on a gangway between Paris and Lyons! After breakfast you must introduce me, and I shall tell the mother everything."

"Not everything!"

"Yes, every word—that her daughter is my father's Number Three—that I would have nothing to say to Numbers One and Two, but that I am quite ready for Number Three. Oh, my dear boy, how lovely she is! That nose especially, so, beautifully tilted! She was looking at me then. And in a peculiar way—I'm sure she doesn't dislike me. Did you talk about me? Did you mention my name?"

"No."

"Why didn't you? But you will after breakfast. Do you know, it is my belief that this affair will simply run as if it was on wheels. The first thing to do is to telegraph to the governor, and then to-morrow—Oh, by Jove! I wonder if there is a telephone between Paris and Marseilles!"

He stopped short and called the waiter.

"Is there a telephone between Paris and Marseilles?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good business—thanks. Think of that, Maurice—there is the telephone! The governor will make the proposal to-morrow

by telephone. That will be capital. Marriage by express—electric, telephonic and romantic all at the same time. Between a little face of that sort and a journey round the world, don't you see. I have not the slightest hesitation. But how is it you never thought of marrying her?"

"Oh, that is too big a match for me. And then—then you see—she is not exactly the sort to go and bury herself in an Algerian garrison town. She is a Parisian, an out-and-out Parisian, who wants to be amused, and means to be amused."

"That just suits me—suits me down to the ground. That's me all over! I want to be amused, she means to be amused, I mean to be amused, we both mean to be amused."

Young Raoul was beside himself with joy; and as soon as he had finished breakfast he indited a new message for his father. Even as he wrote he continued to talk in great excitement.

"I shall send my telegram from Dijon—and I shall address it to the club—the governor will be there about 5 o'clock, and so will the father of the little phenomenon. They will be able to talk the thing over straight away. Can I ask for an answer to Lyons? Where is the time table? Just hand me that time table. Lyons, 5:25—no, that would be too quick. I shall get the answer at Marseilles. Are they stopping at Marseilles? Yes. For a day? Capital—so shall I. 'Send answer to Hotel Noailles.' My telegram is first rate—you shall see in a minute. It's as good as the other—nay, better. I have a regular knack for telegrams to-day. Yes it is first rate."

He wrote and wrote, glowing with inspiration and rapture, after he had read his message over again, with vast satisfaction. He showed it to Maurice. The Chasseur found the whole thing very entertaining, though he tried not to laugh. When Raoul had counted the words in his telegram, he said to the waiter: "I want you to send off this message at Dijon. Here are 10 francs and there will be two or three left over for yourself."

Then, turning suddenly around on Maurice, he said: "Are you leaving to-morrow? What o'clock?"

"At 2."

"Oh! then there will be time. Everything will be settled by 2 o'clock."

"Settled? You must be mad!"

"Not at all; it is already in good train, seeing that she was the governor's Number Three. There is only one thing I want you to do, and that is to introduce me to the mother at once. After that you can leave me alone. I will answer for all the rest. But we must change cars at any cost, and secure two places near my mother-in-law!"

"Your mother-in-law?"