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Paul is not present to enjoy his triumph. He waged me a pair of embroidered gloves that I could not produce."

"But not his fault," I answered her eagerly. "It is not M. de Mar's fault, mademoiselle. He has been hurt today, and he could not come. He is in bed of his wounds; he could not wait to dress."

"He tried," she replied, "to make me lay at mademoiselle's feet his life-long services."

"Ah, Lorraine!" cried a young demoiselle, who had just entered the room. "You have indeed lost M. de Mar if he sends you no better messenger of his regrets than this horse-boy."

"I am not," said Lorraine, "in the least sad." Mlle. de Montieu replied, as if the loss of the waver were all her care, "I am punished for my vanity, and I am punished for my vanity, because I have not been able to produce my recraint squire and I have failed. Alas!" And she put up her white hands before her face with a sigh.

"But," said Lorraine, "under her eyes sparkled from between her fingers."

By this time the gamblers about us had stopped their play in a general interest.

"What is the matter?" asked they, coming forward with an air of authority demanded.

"What is this disturbance, Lorraine?" asked the duke between me and my cousin Paul, madame, she answered with instant gravity and respect.

"Paul de Lorraine! Is he here?" the other asked, unpleased I thought.

"He is not," said Lorraine, "he has fled the skies on us this afternoon. He is out of the house again now."

"But while he was in the house," quoth she in sky color, "though he did not find time to pay his respects to Mme. La Duchesse, he had the leisure for considerable conversation with Mlle. de Montieu."

The other lady, whom I now guessed to be the Duchesse de Mayenne herself, turned somewhat sharply on her

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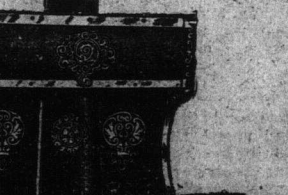


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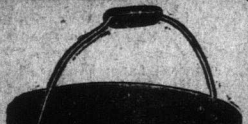
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consin of Monticuc.

"I do not yet hear your excuses, mademoiselle, for the introduction of a stable-boy in my salon," said Mlle. de Mayenne, madam, that I am not responsible for it," she protested.

"Paul, when he was here, saw fit to rally me concerning M. de Monticuc. Mlle. de Mayenne informed him of the count's defection and they were pleased to be merry with me over it. I vowed I could get him back if I wished. The count, however, has not yet written me a letter which my cousin promised to have conveyed to M. le Comte's old lodgings. This is the answer," mademoiselle cried with a wave of her hand toward me.

"But I did not expect it in this guise," madame. Blame your lackeys who know not their duties, not me."

"Blame you, madame!" Mme. de Mayenne answered her tartly. "I consider my salon no place for intrigues with horse-boys. If you must hold colloquy with this fellow, take him whither he belongs, the stables."

"I cannot laugh went up among those who laugh at whatever a duchess says."

"Come, mesdames, we will resume our play," said Mlle. de Mayenne, who had now bowed her on the scene, and turned her back in lofty disdain on Mlle. de Monticuc and her concerns. But though some of the company obeyed her, she did not circle still surrounded us.

"Dame! if you must be banished to the stables, we all will go; mademoiselle," declared the pink gallant. "What want news of the vanished Marquis?"

"Indeed we do. We have missed him sorely, and I dare swear this messenger's account will prove diverting," lisped the countess.

"I was not enjoying myself. I had given all my hopes of glory to be out in the street again. I wished Mlle. de Monticuc would take the trouble to trouble any one of this laughing company. But she had no such intent."

"I think madame does not mean her sentence," said the countess, who would not for the world frustrate your hopes, Blanche; not yours, M. de Champfleury. Tell us what has befallen your master, Sir Coulhier."

"There has been in a duel, mademoiselle."

"Whom was he fighting?"

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