

'*Mon Dieu!* M. Trevannance. Who would have thought—these months? Is she here? Is she well?'

'Both, monsieur.'

'And with you?'

'Always with me, monsieur. Could the child live alone?'

'Thank Heaven. Is she on the stage?'

'No, monsieur. She has never been on the stage since that time.'

'Thank Heaven again. What then, does she do?'

'Monsieur, I don't know that I ought to tell you. *Mauiselle* will not like it.'

'Why not, pray—if it be honourable? Tell me, *Madame Mic* and.'

'Well, then, she teaches singing and the piano. But it is hard work—monsieur, and poor pay. The other was so much easier, so much pleasanter. Still she toils on, and works for us both. Ah, it is a noble heart.'

'Why did she leave the stage?' Trevannance asked, more moved than he cared to show.

*Le Michaud* glanced at him askance. She was old, but she had not forgotten her youth. She understood perfectly why, but she was by far too womanly to tell. She shrugged her shoulders, and trotted on by his side.

'Ah, why indeed. Ask her that when you see her, monsieur; she never told me. Where are you going now?'

'Home with you, madame,' Trevannance answered, with quiet resolution. 'Don't be inhospitable; I insist upon it. Is *Mignonnette* there?'

'*Mignonnette* is out—at her lessons. She will be very angry when she returns—and finds you. We don't receive gentlemen in our chateau, M. Trevannance,' chirped madame.

'But such an old friend as I am, and after coming all the way from England, too. Your rule is excellent—I rejoice you don't receive gentlemen—but I am—'

'No gentleman, monsieur means to say?'

'An exception, I mean to say, madame. Is this the place?'

This was the place—up two pair of stairs—three little attic chambers—spotlessly clean kitchen, sleeping-room and parlour. Into the latter madame ushered her guest, apologizing for its lack of luxury.

'We are poor, monsieur—the *Mignonnette* never could keep her money—it flowed from her like water to all who needed it. And then, travelling from place to place melts it away. Sit here by the window, monsieur—the view is pleasant. And tell me did you really come all the way from England to find—us.'

'For no other purpose, madame. And I never mean to part from—you again.'

*Madame* laughed cheerily. At the same instant, a step came slowly and wearily up the long stair.

'*Mon Dieu!*' madame cried, in evident alarm, 'here she is. Oh, monsieur, she will be angry.'

'Then I will bear the blame. Open the door.'

The door opened of itself, and *Minette* stood on the threshold. Yes, *Minette*; but with all the old, defiant brightness, the old dash, and sparkle, and bloom, gone. She looked pale and thin, very tired and sad.

Her glance fell upon the visitor the first instant. She uttered no exclamation, no word. She stood rooted to the spot with amaze, and some thing else that left her pallid as ashes.

Trevannance rose, very pale himself, and came hastily forward.

'*Mignonnette!* at last. Thank heaven, I have found you once more.'

The sound of his voice broke the spell. She came in and closed the door, but the hand he extended was entirely overlooked.

'This is a very unexpected honour, Mr. Trevannance,' she said, slowly and frigidly. 'You will pardon me if I say as unwelcome as unexpected. To what do we owe it?'

She stood looking at him, the old, flashing light in the black eyes, the old, defiant ring in the rich voice.

*Madame* saw the coming storm, and fled before it. She retreated to the kitchen. She could hear just as well there, and awaited the battle with her eye to the keyhole.

Trevannance spoke—a very torrent of eloquence it seemed to the little madame. She could understand English, and spoke it, too, but not when it flowed in a deluge like this.

The gentleman pleaded his cause eloquently and long, looking irresistibly handsome all the while. The lady paced the little room, very angry, very haughty, very majestic, at first, but melting gradually.

*Madame* knew how it would end—oh, yes!—and chuckled inwardly at this fencing with the buttons on. And when presently monsieur, after an impassioned harangue, clasped *mademoiselle* in his arms, and held her there, and *mademoiselle*, after one or two efforts to escape, submitted to be held captive, why then madame laughed and cried, appalled softly with two brown hands, and trotted away from the keyhole.

'*Dieu merci!*' said madame: 'it's all over! And now I'll go and get supper.'

Trevannance had conquered. The little,