

docile animal, cropping here and there the young sprouts of autumn.

'So, mademoiselle, when I met you, you were puzzled, lost, and knew not what to do? I thank the chance that led me thither, for you were in danger of sleeping this night by the light of the stars, upon the moss of the woods.'

'I had resigned myself to it, monsieur.' And the young girl recounted the manner in which she had been mystified by M. Pierrot.

'M. Pierrot is a little rascal who deserves to have his ears boxed. And you are going to Valtravers? Then, perhaps, mademoiselle, you know the chevalier, or at least some one at the chateau?'

'I don't know any one.'

'Indeed!'

'Absolutely no one; but you, monsieur, you know M. le Chevalier?'

'Yes, certainly; we are old friends.'

'He is said to be good, generous, charitable.'

'Oh! very charitable,' replied the young man, who conjectured that it was a matter pertaining simply to the help of some unfortunate; but after a rapid glance thrown upon his young companion, he quickly repelled this idea, and clearly comprehended that this was not an ordinary *soliciteuse*.

'Mademoiselle,' added he, gravely, 'I inform you that M. le Chevalier is the noblest heart that beats under heaven.'

'I know it. I do not doubt it: however, at this hour, it is very sweet to hear it affirmed anew. And little Maurice, monsieur, you must know him also?'

'What little Maurice, mademoiselle?'

'Oh! well, the son of the chevalier.'

'Ah! good, good!' cried the young man, laughing. 'Yes, certainly, I know him, little Maurice.'

'Does he promise to become some day good and generous like his father?'

'Marry! he passes generally in this vicinity for a good enough devil. It is not I who should wish to say anything ill of him.'

'I feel that he will love me like a brother.'

'I can assure you that, on his part, he will be delighted to see you.'

At this instant they traversed a clearing, and behind the walls of a park, the gates of which opened upon the forest, appeared a beautiful castle whose windows were illuminated by the light of the setting sun.

## CHAPTER II.

### AN ARTIST AT WORK.

The same evening, at the same hour, the

old Chevalier de Valtravers was seated upon the perron, in company with the old Marquise de Fresnes, whose neighbouring chateau was perceived at the bottom of the valley, through the yet green foliage of the poplars which skirt the Vienne. They were both talking pleasantly of the days gone by, for at their age life is only illuminated by that pale and soft reflection called remembrance.

The friendship of the marquise and the chevalier dated from a remote period. At the first stroke of the tocsin sounded by the worn-out monarchy, the Marquis de Fresnes had judged it convenient to go with his wife to spend a few months upon the borders of the Rhine, were it only to protest against that which was passing in France and to give to the throne of Saint Louis an authentic testimony of respect and devotedness. M. de Valtravers had decided to accompany them. It is well known what happened to these travels of a few months, and how these little excursions, that were represented at first as pleasure parties, ended for the most part in a long and hard exile. Our three companions counted so surely upon a prompt return, that they had barely taken funds enough to supply their needs a year. These resources exhausted, the diamonds sold, the trinkets converted into money, they gained Nuremberg quietly; here they were installed in poor quarters; their only concern was to live. MM. de Fresnes and de Valtravers were indeed in deep dejection. So, as it always happens, it was the wife who showed the example of resignation, of courage, and of energy. 'We shall work,' answered Mme. de Fresnes simply to her two friends, who asked with anxiety what part remained for them to take. She drew gracefully with the crayon and painted miniatures, she gave lessons and made portraits. Her beauty, her grace and her misfortune, still more than her talent, acquired for her in a short time a select and numerous clientele. The two gentlemen who had commenced by declaring it derogatory, and raising their voices at seeing the marquise at work, ended, will or nill, in perceiving that they were passably provided for without doing anything, and that after all it was the marquise that, as the common saying is, brought the water to the mill. The marquis found no occupation; but M. de Valtravers comprehended that to remain thus with folded arms was to bid farewell to all pride and dignity. But what employment could he find for his faculties? To what industry could he apply his idle hands? The idea came to him to teach French; the necessity of preliminary self-instruction cut short this fine project. After studying and revolving all projects in

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