

The Tree and the Sky.

A tall old tree on the Upland Farm
Withered, and bare, and dry.
Reached out his empty, yearning arms
And begged of the sky, with her thousand
charms
To smile of him lest he die!

THE MAIDEN MILLER OF AUNAY.

FROM THE FRENCH OF TH. BENTZEN.
The mill of Aunay is a fine mill,
active and cheerful, whose wheel
makes the stream foam from the clear
water of an affluent of the Brenne.

At least it is so to-day; for at the
time of which we speak, twenty years
ago, the capricious wheel frequently
came to a stop under the pretext that
repairs were necessary.
" What's necessary," he kept repeat-
ing, with deep sighs, " is a new and
modern wheel, one which will not
refuse to turn every time the river
falls—a turbine like that of the mill of
La Boisnerie, which is going to ruin
me. That mill is far from the village,
and it is troublesome to people to carry
their wheat there; but that doesn't
prevent them from learning the way,
and I'm gradually losing my custom-
ers."

To change the system of the old mill
would involve large expense, and John
Gosselin was already too much in debt.
Theresa, his daughter, having
always stood at the head of her class in
the primary school, he had taken it
into his head, or rather his wife had
persuaded him, to "push" her on.
She had been placed in a good board-
ing school at Tours, and at the age of
twenty was in possession of her diploma.

The father himself, notwithstanding
his confidence in the judgment of his
wife, who enjoyed the considerable
advantage over him of knowing how
to read, had often debated with him-
self the wisdom of training for city life
this growing country lass, sprightly
and stout-hearted.

When he gave timid utterance to
his thoughts Mrs. Gosselin repelled
him in quick metre:
" He reaps who sows," she quoted,
sententiously.

On a frosty afternoon toward the
close of December, John Gosselin was
returning from Vendôme, where he
had endeavored to negotiate a loan.
The banker, M. Sidoine, had received
him in a discouraging fashion:
" Shall I give you my opinion?" was
his sermon. " This money and much
more will be lost in the bottomless well
which you dug to engulf you all, and
the mill with you, on the day when
Mlle. Theresa entered the boarding
school. You do not know what threat-
ens you. For every disposable place
there are dozens of applicants who
must wait indefinitely. It's a craze
which to-day invites so many daugh-
ters of artisans to become teachers.
Your daughter will return melancholy,
vexed, always hoping for a situation,
which will doubtless elude her search.
Try to find her some good husband of
your acquaintance who has means and
who will aid you in your old age."

" You don't know my daughter,"
replied Gosselin, shaking his head.
She's not the person to despise her
father and mother, to love dress more
than duty, or to marry without affec-
tion. If you should see her—
" I know her without having seen
her. She is, I'll guarantee, proud of
her superficial and pretentious educa-
tion," said the banker to himself, ob-
stinate in his prejudices, while his
visitor, abashed and disappointed,
climbed into his cart again.

The north wind was very sharp,
forming a mournful accompaniment to
the reflections of the poor man, as he
jolted along in the ruts of the road,
and whipped up his old bay horse,
which was quite inclined to balk.

This valley of the Brenne, so smiling
in summer, although always somewhat
moist, had assumed that desolate
appearance which the severe days of
winter lend the landscape, when it
seems as though the beautiful season
had disappeared forever, and this death
of nature would know no resurrection.

John Gosselin felt the influence of
these surroundings. On both sides of
the road the trees, bending under the
force of the wind, mournfully mur-
mured the sad prophecy of M. Sidoine.
After so many sacrifices his daughter
would not find a place and would be
unhappy.

finally succeeding to the control of the
establishment.

Such was still her dream. The year
before she had been irritated when
Theresa said that she would be satisfied
with much less, and that this "less"
was not sure.

Theresa was gifted with a stock of
good common sense. She was neither
vain nor disdainful.

When her mother advised her to form
for the future valuable acquaintances
she replied merrily:
" Why everybody loves me now."

It was true. Her sunny disposition
attracted friends without effort. Void
of affection, she was never exposed to
the insolence visited on those who en-
croach or try to insinuate themselves.
She was equally impervious to flattery
or depreciation; but in the depth of
her soul she would have suffered from
the belief that any one could suspect
her of wishing to become a stranger to
the humble family circle, to the people
of her native village, to the objects of
her first affection.

So, on returning for a vacation, she
would hasten to share in the housework
with such animation as to draw from
Mrs. Gosselin this protest:
" You'd indeed be quite useful here,
handy and lively as you are. But these
things were not designed for you.
You'll spoil your hands. Think of
your piano."

Theresa would laugh and return to
her work in the kitchen, the mill, even
in the garden.

This willingness touched the heart of
her father, but distressed Mrs. Gosselin,
who would have preferred to see
her more attentive to her toilet, and
assuming genteel attitudes, with, for
instance, a piece of embroidery in her
hands. The villagers would thus have
better understood that the miller's
daughter was now a person that they
must no longer treat with familiarity.

As a compensation Mrs. Gosselin
put on grand airs and made herself
enemies.

The pecuniary difficulties of the
family had somewhat leaked out.
They were not much pined, and the
outcome was awaited with curiosity.
How would Theresa manage to relieve
them? Not that the most ill-dressed
wished for the prepossessing daughter
anything but happiness. It was the
arrogance of the mother that deserved
a lesson.

Mrs. Gosselin, far-sighted enough
when not blinded by vanity, had
noticed this covert hostility, and was
ruminating with bitterness on what
she called "the jealousy of the world."

When she watched for the return of
her husband, the knitting, which she
had taken up from habit, had fallen on
her knees. She was gazing into the
fire vacantly.

Seven o'clock struck.
" Bless me! what has happened to
Gosselin?"
And once more she went out into the
yard. This time the cart was just
entering.

" Here you are at last, my poor
husband! What has kept you so
long?"
" Nothing good," answered the
miller, slowly alighting. " The bearer
of bad news always comes soon
enough."

Without adding a word he unhar-
nessed the horse, led him to the stable,
and filled the rack, before going in for
supper himself.

His wife remarked that he was much
exhausted.
" I don't feel well," he replied; " and
there's a reason. My poor Francis,
M. Sidoine refuses to advance a penny.
I must see that rascal Greau again,
who lends at such high interest."

" I don't know. The doctor hasn't
seen him yet. I think it's only a
slight cold."

" If it were only a cold, my father
would be here himself," said the anx-
ious Theresa. " I thank you all the
same, Madame Sage. Let's set out at
once. I feel in haste to reach home."

" My young lady, you don't ask
about Peter?"
" In my solicitude I was forgetful.
How is Peter?"

" When he was here on furlough you
would have found him the handsomest
fellow in the country," answered the
fond mother.

Peter Sage, residing in the immedi-
ate vicinity, had been Theresa's earli-
est companion. He had always taken
pleasure in meeting her and recalling
the time when they made mud pies, or
hunted gold-finches' nests, or gathered
hazelnuts together.

At school Peter had earned the fool's
cap often than a prize, and he had
not since made much intellectual pro-
gress; but his mother nursed the idea
of a marriage between him and
Theresa when he should have com-
pleted his military service.

Why not? The Sages were as good
as the Gosselins. The farm of Mare-
fleurie yielded more than the mill of
Aunay, and he was certainly more
comely as a man than she as a girl.

Of what account was it that she could
read a good many books, while he con-
tinued to write his name in a big
childish hand? It would indeed be
necessary for Theresa to earn some
money first, but she was doubtless lay-
ing up a little during her absence.

" Here," said Mother Sage, with an
alluring smile on her toothless mouth.
" I've brought Peter's goatskin; you
can put it round you in this weather—
it's not to be despised."

" Much obliged, but I have no need
of robes; I'm not delicate," replied
Theresa, with an inward satisfaction
at feeling herself proof against the in-
clemency of the weather, notwithstand-
ing the enervating effect of a long so-
journ in the city.

" Get along!" called out Mother Sage
to the donkey.

Then, without need of solicitation
from her young companion, she re-
harnessed the news of the neighborhood.
An English family had hired the
Castle of Menardiere. The beautiful
Madame de Rouvre, the countess, had
yellow hair now; so it must be sup-
posed that at Paris black hair, instead
of whitening in old age, took that
color.

All the lands of Monsieur de la Saul-
nerie had been let to a foreign farmer,
M. Rameau, who was paying a rent of
twenty thousand francs; it would cer-
tainly be his ruin. He was one of
those persons who set up for gentlemen
of learning and shrewdness—better
than other folks. He made use of
chemical composts instead of good old
produce of the barnyard, and bought
thrashers and mowers—machines for
swallowing money. The end of his
proud would soon be reached. With his
rage for new inventions he would be
come the laughing-stock of all the
people about. What an idea, that the
wheat had waited for all this tonfology
before learning how to grow well!

From ridicule of M. Rameau she
passed abruptly to the threatening suc-
cess of Gosselin's rival, the miller of La
Boisnerie.

This was all new to Theresa, her
parents having taken great pains to
conceal such a cause of trouble. It
distressed her to learn that a costly
change of the mill-wheel would be
necessary to meet the competition.
" Novelties!" sneered the old retro-
grade miller of Marefleurie—" novel-
ties still. Bless me! Some may be
useful. Only they are costly. But,
darling, you'll bring some money to the
family, as is quite the thing."

Theresa was silent. Her heart was
beating quickly.

" At Marefleurie everything goes
smoothly," continued the old woman.
" I feel myself grow old, and I miss
Peter since he has become a soldier.
When he returns I shall seek for him a
good wife, who is not foolish and has
some little means. To marry young,
you know, my daughter, is the best
way."

" That depends on circumstances,"
replied Theresa, on her guard.

The last time she had seen Peter was
at a village gathering when he was
shamefully tipsy, and she had no in-
clination to espouse a drunkard.

" Which means that you do not think
of marriage for yourself."

" No thought of it. I choose to be
a teacher."

" How proud it renders you ladies
to be so learned. A fine gentleman is
necessary, the son of a king," said
Mother Sage, ironically.

" The son of a king would have less
chance than another, since I'm only a
country-girl," was Theresa's good-
natured repartee.

" If you're only a country girl why
don't you marry your like, a country
lad?"

Theresa, without answering, began
to laugh. She did not feel herself the
equal of a fine city gentleman, nor of
a clownish toper like Peter.

At this moment the donkey had a
fit of obstinacy, to which he was sub-
ject. He stopped to nibble a thistle at
the side of the road, and neither coax-
ing nor whipping would make him
budge. His mistress would have been
obliged to get out but for the aid of a
man who was passing, wit a stick in
his hand, and who wore high gaiters, a
long vest which reached to the ears,
and a sealskin cap. He took Master
Martin by the nose and put him back
in the right path; then bowed politely
and passed on.

" Monsieur Rameau, the new farmer
of Monsieur de la Saulnerie," whispered
Madame Sage, nudging Theresa on the
elbow. " An original if there ever

was one. He lives like a wolf in the
tower of the old chateau, which he has
had fitted up for a dwelling. He must
be handsome there all alone. Good-bye,
hoping to meet you soon again," she
cried, five minutes after, while Theresa,
thanking her, leaped nimbly to the
ground at the cross-path which led to
Aunay.

Theresa found her father very sick,
and her mother in a state of agitation
which allowed little opportunity for
caresses.

" Well," asked the latter, almost
before embracing her, " have you
secured that place at last?"

" The poor child shook her head. " No,
the matter is not settled. Another dis-
appointment."

" Bless me! You don't succeed at
anything," exclaimed Mrs. Gosselin
in rather a reproachful tone. " What
do you intend to do now?"

" I don't know. While waiting for
the employment which was promised I
taught a class at the school gratuitously."

" Any way, my good daughter, it's
best to keep that," feebly interrupted
the invalid, pressing her hands between
his own, which were burning with
fever. " It's best to keep that. It's
bread at least."

" But, poor papa, that opportunity
is gone. As my engagement was only
temporary, and I was to leave on the
1st of January, Madame engaged
another assistant."

" The last feather on the camel's
back," cried Mrs. Gosselin. " Every-
thing comes at once."

" Mother, haven't you a little satisfac-
tion in seeing me again?" cried
Theresa, throwing her arms around
her. " If I should rest a little from my
regular employment, if I should take
a hand in the housework, would there
be occasion for despair?"

" You're a good girl," interposed the
father, " and if anything consoles me
for so much trouble it would be to have
you here. Let me have a little milk,
I am dying of thirst."

A violent fit of coughing seized him,
and Mrs. Gosselin discovered with
consternation that there was no more
milk in the jug. Having lost her head,
as she said, she had neglected to milk
the cow at the usual hour.

" I'll go and milk her," Theresa
offered, cheerily. " I've been anticipat-
ing a treat in seeing our good
Rousette again."

Putting a large apron over her
tucked-up dress, she ran to the stable.
Seated on a wooden stool by the cow,
which seemed to recognize her and
freely permitted her to milk, she
tasted real pleasure in resuming home-
work.

The hens at twilight, so brief at this
season, had come in for the night and
were huddled on the top of the rack
which served for their roost.

" If I lived here I would fix up a
good poultry-house. They wouldn't
have to lay their eggs here and there,
to thought the young milkmaid."

Rising with care that she might not
frighten them, she crossed the old
house, who shared the stable with the
cow:

" How do you do, Cossack?"

Her heart expanded. She was meet-
ing old friends again.

When she returned to the sick-bed
the doctor was there, feeling the pulse
of the patient, and listening anxiously
to his breathing and the beating of
his heart. He prescribed a blister and
some medicines, and to save time pro-
posed sending the whole by his servant.

Prompt and energetic treatment was
necessary.

Theresa saw that he considered the
case serious, and, when he went out,
followed him to his gig.

" It's pneumonia," he said; " and
as your father's heart has been in bad
condition for a long time, he's in great
danger. If we get him out of this
notch he will need care the whole
winter, and perhaps will never be the
same man as before."

" Thanks for telling me," replied
Theresa, courageously. It confirms
a plan I have formed. My presence
is more necessary here than anywhere
else. I have often regretted that I was
not a boy," she continued, with a sorry
smile; " but I wish to act as one, and
take father's place at the mill while
mother looks after him. The trade is
not difficult. For anything that
requires strength we have a willing
helper. Besides, I have solid arms."

" You're white, they retained their
vigor."

" Yes, yes," assented the old physi-
cian, who had known her from her
birth. " Your hands are quite equal to
the struggle for existence. And your
heart is firm also," he added, and
struck by the heroism with which his
warning had been received.

" We'll act for the best," remarked
Theresa.

And in truth she did act for the best
during the days which followed, work-
ing in the mill from morning to even-
ing with young Blaise, an inexperi-
enced assistant, and watching a part
of the night with the patient, that her
mother might be able to rest. She was
calm and indefatigable.

" You have both a daughter and a son,"
she said to her father, heaping on him
little attentions which Mrs. Gosselin
would not have thought of. " Why do
you repine?"

" I pity you, my child, for being
only a miller's maid and nurse," replied
the poor man. " I wish some happier
employment for you. But that'll come,
won't it?" he asked, catching by
degrees the contagion of her serenity.

" Yes, it will come," repeated Ther-
esa; " but you must get well first."

When her father was out of danger,
she resumed her talk about the future
with the old physician.

" I assure you," she kept repeating,

" that the milling work is not labori-
ous. To put the wheat in the hopper
when the bell gives warning that it's
empty, and to fill the bags with flour
is not disagreeable. I feel better than
when I came home, notwithstanding
the care father's illness has occasioned.
Active work is a necessity for me; I
was made to handle a spade or a mat-
tock rather than a pen."

She spoke to her father in the same
strain.

" Since the mill stops so often why
not get more good from our kitchen
garden on the side where it is so well
sheltered? We always have green
peas and potatoes before any of our
neighbors. As well carry vegetables to
market early in the morning."

" Doctor," bewailed Mrs. Gosselin,
" how children fail to appreciate the
trouble taken for them. We've spent
our poor living to make her a lady,
and you see she's taste only for the
land."

" Bless heaven for not permitting her
to be spoiled," exclaimed the doctor,
seriously. " Your Theresa is a treasure
from which I would not wish to be
separated, were she mine. However,
as you are desirous, I'll endeavor to
find a place for her in some villa of
the neighborhood. Perhaps among the
families that I visit there may be one
needing a governess."

" To live in other people's houses!
Such an arrangement was not very
attractive to the Gosselins. A gover-
ness! That seemed too much like being
a servant. No! They would prefer
that their daughter should preserve her
independence."

Theresa remarked that an assistant
teacher enjoyed but little of that.

" Only she becomes a principal in
the end," suggested her mother.

" Not always, mamma."

The Gosselins thanked the physician
without deciding absolutely.

A few days afterward the miller,
grown old in appearance and looking
like another man, was attempting a
few steps in his room leaning on
Theresa's arm, when Dr. Regnault
appeared with beaming countenance.

" Now I've found it," cried he at
first sight; " that English family who
hired the castle of Menardiere. There
are three little girls. They need an
instructress to commence their educa-
tion while traveling. At first, Theresa,
you'll go to England, then to Italy to
pass the next winter; perhaps later to
the Orient."

thing in the struggle of life, always
forgetting herself in overcoming ob-
stacles.

The intervals of his visits grew
longer, for Gosselin was out of danger
though quite feeble.

" My business is not now with the
invalid," he remarked as he came in
one morning. " It's with mademoi-
selle."

And he placed his hand with pater-
nal affection on her shoulder.

" What I bring is perhaps not the
most desirable, but she's free to reject
it. Will it suit her to be a lady's com-
panion?"

It was first necessary to explain to
the parents wherein a lady companion
differed from a lady's maid.

Little attention must be rendered to
a lady who is growing old without
wanting to acknowledge it. This is
the only task. Besides she's kind. It
will be necessary to read to her, give
her a little music, act as her secretary,
direct her—"

" All that is not very difficult for one
having education," broke in Mrs.
Gosselin.

Her daughter looked rather skeptical,
as though she had a different opinion.

" It'll not be necessary to cross the
sea," inquired Gosselin.

" It will only be necessary to go to-
morrow half a league to Madame de
Rouvre, who is accustomed to pass the
summer on her estate of Villechauve
and the winter at Paris."

The miller clapped his hands.

" That'll answer! In that way we
shall keep our daughter near, and she
will have rank all the same."

Theresa thought that this rank
would be difficult to sustain without
ridicule in her own neighborhood, and
that it was not so simple to be at once
the companion of a fine lady and the
daughter of a miller. She foresaw the
chains of a gilded servitude, the
sneeries, the humiliations to which, so
far, she had been a stranger. All the
servants of Mme. de Rouvre were from
the vicinity, and were accustomed to
call her by familiar names. She must
be waited on by them and affect an ex-
treme reserve. That would be a suffi-
cient embarrassment to begin with.
She remained silent.

Mrs. Gosselin, on the other hand,
could not find terms for her gratitude.
Tears of joy welled up from her heart.

" The maiden does not utter a word,"
observed the doctor.

" Oh! you see that she does not care
for anything that incommodes her,
either dress or ceremony. But in the
end she'll come to it."

" Certainly, if you're desirous," re-
sponded Theresa, with a sigh.

In her own mind there loomed up a
vision of tedious hours spent in divert-
ing a woman perhaps difficult to be
amused. Mme. de Rouvre had some-
times attracted her attention at church
in extremely elegant attire, much
more suitable for a younger person
than for one on whose head, according
to rumor, had shone the suns of forty-
five summers. The lady was a rich
widow, surrounded with admirers, and
passed for quite a coquette.

" All is arranged," resumed Dr.
Regnault. " You'll be expected at
Villechauve to-morrow at two o'clock."

In the meantime Mrs. Gosselin was
building castles in the air. She was
enchanted with that which was the
cause of uneasiness to her daughter.
She would have servants under her;
would wear only silk dresses. When
she was passing in the carriage every-
one would say:

" That young lady, so well-dressed
that a countess treats her as an equal,
is Mlle. Gosselin, of Aunay."

After a while Mme. de Rouvre would
give her a settlement with some gentle-
man occupying an important position
for a husband; or she might prefer to
retain her as a companion for life and
leave her a part of her fortune.

Theresa would have been dull, in
deed, if she had not perceived that the
illusions of her parents were doing
them good—aiding them in forgetting
their present trials.

The invalid, moved by his wife's
eloquence, appeared much improved.

Mrs. Gosselin was beaming. Still
she kept scolding Theresa for not con-
cerning herself sufficiently with her
toilet. Had she new gloves? Would
her watered silk dress be stylish
enough? Ribbons must be added to
set it off a little. Some persons do not
like black.

" Oh, dear! I'll no longer have the
right to dress myself in my own way,"
thought Theresa while casting a grate-
ful look at her gray frock powdered
with flour.

After a moderate walk through the
woodland, in the midst of which arose
a new and magnificent mansion, the
companion-elect was introduced into
the parlor where Mme. de Rouvre was
reposing, stretched on a folding chair.

Although the winter day was dark,
blinds and double curtains prevented
the little sunlight which penetrated the
fog from reaching the countess.

Thanks to the precaution, she pro-
duced her full effect, leaning languish-
ingly on cushions, with her face sup-
ported by a white and delicate hand,
and her foot, which was perfect and
admirably clad in a little marten shoe,
peeping beyond the folds of her Japa-
nese morning gown.

The dark red hangings formed a background against
which her light Venetian hair was
depicted with a golden lustre—a head-
covering so beautiful that it was almost
impossible not to suspect its artificial
construction; while her dark brown
eyes, still retaining their brilliancy,
sparkled in a face whose complexion,
skillfully made up, vied with the
Bengal rose.

Mme. de Rouvre saw that Theresa
was dazzled, and for want of better
employment played the coquette with
perfect success, dwelling on her isola-
tion, her afflictions and her need of an