

should for the present take an apartment somewhere in the vicinity of the central post-office, as the letter was to be addressed to the *Poste restante*. Shortly, he took his departure with the boys, leaving Julia with her parents. The latter were somewhat surprised at the coldness betwixt their daughter, her husband, and children, but there was something in Julia's manner which forbade questioning, so they contented themselves with the pleasure of having her with them again, and made no remark.

M. Theodore called upon them the next morning, said he had been to the *Poste restante*, but found no letter there, and then bid Julia adieu for awhile, as her parents were going back to Saint Denis, and she with them.

This *r union* with their daughter, so long anticipated with the eagerest impatience, was a strange experience to the aged parents—an experience not without a secret mingling of wonder, disappointment, and sorrow. Twenty years before, when M. Bouvier, by a series of losses, became straightened in his means, she was taken by her uncle to accompany him and his children, her cousins, to America, she being then in her twelfth year. Ever since that time, one steady, long-sustained hope and desire, had formed the under-current of the daily thoughts of their tranquil lives, namely, the hope and desire of seeing her, of hearing her talk and sing, of being united to her again. And now, at length, she had come home. But her coming had produced no festival—either in deed or in sentiment:—it was a strange, incomprehensible disappointment. They could not understand her, nor tell the meaning or sympathise with her behaviour. Her life with them seemed to be a stifled agony: she was like one who, at the same time, loved and dreaded them. At times she half shrank from their endearments and caresses; at others, she would keep by her father's side with curious pertinacity, and be restless and fearful if he moved away from her, and court her mother's kind words, and nestle her spirit betwixt theirs like one in search of comfort and consolation. Day after day, she com-

plained how long it was to wait before a letter came from America, and that she should have no rest till Theodore had received one and brought it to her.

After some days spent in this painful manner, and growing constantly thinner and paler, she became exceedingly ill, and was obliged to be kept in her bedroom and nursed.

The Bouviers were greatly troubled, and knew not what to think or do. All was mysterious and sad. It seemed as if the development—the angry breaking forth of some inexplicable tragedy were at hand, betwixt Julia in her sick bed, Theodore in his apartment near the post-office, and the letter coming from America.

The remembrance of the stranger who had spoken of Julia at the railway terminus, came into M. Bouvier's mind. All at once he recollected the perturbed voice and look, the pallid face, and anxious eye, and the thought smote him that here was another link in the dark chain. But as yet, he said nothing, for he feared he might do no good in communicating the circumstances to his wife, and he had promised—there was something strange in that eagerly exacted promise!—to say nothing to Julia. On the other hand, the stranger had promised to come and see them, and, were it for weal or woe, that may do something towards the elucidation and settling of matters. As for Madame Bouvier, she was quite bewildered, but, in her own mind, believed that Theodore and Julia had lost their affection for each other,—that the former, to whom madame had taken a dislike at first sight, had behaved harshly to Julia, though Julia would say nothing about it,—that, in fact their union had become an unhappy one, and that the best thing they could now do, would be to separate,—he going back to America, or wherever he liked, and Julia remaining with them.

At length, however, M. Bouvier found the remembrance of his interview with the stranger rest so heavily upon his mind and heart, that he could keep silence no longer. To Madame Bouvier he confided all, even from the stranger's first recognising him by his likeness to Julia, to the