

'Dear demoiselle, may God take pity on your pain! I see plainly, by your way of speaking, that you are not of our country. You come from a distance, no doubt?'

'Oh! yes, madame, very far, very far. I frequently thought that I should never arrive.'

'And you go?'—

'Where my mother, before dying, bade me to go. I knew, in setting out, that once at Neuville-les Bois, I should find easily the way to Valtravers.'

'You are going to Valtravers?'

'Yes, madame.'

'To the chateau?'

'Exactly.'

'You have lengthened your way, made-moiselle; the driver ought to have let you get out at the neighbouring town. It is the same—you have before you only three little leagues, and moreover you will be able, by going through the woods, to gain time. If you will allow him, my nephew Pierrot will guide you; but the heat is oppressive, and I am certain, my dear little one, that you have eaten nothing to-day. Come to our farm-house; you shall taste the milk of our cows, and, to set out again, you will wait the freshness of the evening.'

'Thank you, madame, thank you. You are good; but I do not need anything. I should like to set out immediately, and if it is not abusing the good nature of M. Pierrot—'

'Here, Pierrot!' cried the farmer's wife.

At this invitation, made in a tone which suffered no reply, a little imp separated from the crowd, and came forward with the cringing air of a dog that feels that his master calls him only to beat him. Pierrot, who, since morning, had been nursing the delicious prospect of taking, after vespers, his share in the play upon the church square, appeared only moderately flattered by his aunt's proposition. She repeated it in such a way that he judged it prudent to consent. She put the little bun-ble of the stranger under his arm, then, pushing him by the shoulders: 'Go through the woods, and be sure not to walk too fast for this young demoiselle, who has neither your feet nor your legs.' Thereupon Pierrot started with a sudden air, while Neuville-les-Bois, commencing to recover from its stupor, was lost in comments upon the events of this great day.

We suspect this village of Neuville-les-Bois to have been so named by antiphrasis. For Neuville (green), it is perfectly correct; but for les bois, (the woods), it is another affair. For my part, I know nothing more deceitful or more fallacious than these names of places,

or of persons that have a precise signification, and are as well formal pledges. I have notice that, in such cases, persons and places rarely furnish that which they promise, and that, in general, what is lacking is precisely that quality which christening has given them. I have known Angelines who possessed none of the attributes of an angel, and Blanches black as little crows. As to places, without going further, Neuville-les-Bois, since we are here, has not a clump of elms, or poplars, or aspens to shield it from the winds of the north or the heat of the south. The circumjacent country is as bare and as flat as the sea coast, and in its vicinity, within the radius of a half-league, you would not find the shade of an oak. However, at Fontenay-aux-Roses they show a few sorry rose bushes.

But, as the young girl and her guide withdrew from the dusty road and penetrated into the country, the landscape gradually assumed greener and more joyous aspects. After two hours' walking, they perceived the woods of Valtravers undulating at the horizon. In spite of the recommendations of his aunt, Pierrot went at a brisk pace, without thinking of his companion. The possibility that he foresaw of being able to return to take part in the play, gave wings to this scam. Although she had light feet and fine limbs, at intervals the poor child was forced to ask mercy, but the abominable Pierrot deafened his ear and piteously pursued his course. Going post-haste, he regarded with a mournful eye the shadow of the trees, that the sun began to lengthen enormously upon the surrounding sward; in the bitterness of his heart he did not dissemble that if he went as far as Valtravers it was an end to his Sunday joys. Once upon the edge of the forest an infernal idea passed through the mind of this young shepherd.

'There I' said he resolutely, putting upon the grass the bundle that he held under his arm. 'You have only to follow this wide avenue, which will lead you right to the chateau. In a quarter of an hour you will have your nose at the gate.'

Then this rascal prepared to escape; a motion retained him. Having detached from her girdle a little purse which did not appear very heavy, the young girl drew from it a little white piece that she courteously offered to M. Pierrot, thanking him for his trouble. At this trait of generosity, upon which he was not counting, Pierrot felt troubled. He hesitated; and perhaps he might have given way to this cry of his conscience if he had not discovered in the distance, on the plain, the steeple of Neuville-les-

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