

I study them, with your language, incessantly. You shall rely on my discretion."

The Duke was a lover, but perhaps less selfish than lovers usually are; he thought the sad smile of Anne-Marie adorable; and her sympathy for others, in the midst of her own grief, touched him deeply.

"Chère madame," he said, with an impulsiveness not habitual to him, "forgive me, forgive me! I wonder how I can have dared to obtrude upon you just now wishes and hopes, that perhaps I must be content to indulge in silence for some time longer. I know too well that it was not at this moment I should have spoken."

"Ah, monsieur," she said, very simply and earnestly, "is it not then in her sorrow, that the little one has most need of consolation?"

"Would you then counsel me——?" he said, with diffident joy.

"To follow the impulses of your heart——? Mais oui, monsieur."

"And you think it possible that she—that she——"

Anne-Marie's smile, though sad still, was yet so expressive that he was minded to kiss her hand a second time, but refrained; for at that moment the door opened, and le petit Jean made his appearance with Jeanne.

Anne-Marie was merciful as she was sympathetic, and, with a perception very unusual to mothers, she inflicted the company of her idolised son upon the impatient lover for as short a time as possible,

Petit Jean did all that was required of him; he saluted M. le Duc; smiled all over his sunny handsome little face; and was finally borne away in the arms of the Marquise to look for chocolates in the dining-room.

"Jeanne," said the Duke, in hushed tones, "I have read the letter."

"And you understand?"