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## ISOLINE DE VALMONT.

A SCENE IN THE PARIS REVOLUTION OF 1830.

By Mrs. Walker.

I WAS resident in Paris during the three days' Revolution of July, 1830. When the court and its consequences had been discussed in every bearing; when the shout of triumph, the song of victory, and the wail of bereavement, were hushing into silence; the tale and the anecdote of those who had striven and suffered succeeded to more exciting and absorbing topics. The journals teemed with *historiettes*, and every *soiree* had its *raconteur*, who appealed to our sympathies, and "beguiled us of our tears" with some new and touching narrative. Among those which my memory chronicled, the following arrested my attention forcibly, inasmuch as I had frequently met the daughter of de Valmont in society; and possibly it may not be found altogether devoid of interest to others.

In the gay salons of Paris, in the season of 1830, there were few *demoiselles* who attracted greater notice than Isoline de Valmont. It is a frequent remark that, though beauty is more generally distributed among the women of England than those of France, yet, when possessed by the latter, it is of a higher and more unquestionable character; as if Nature reserved all her gifts for her few and special favourites, and lavished her bounty upon them in prodigal profusion.

And certainly Isoline was one of these. The large dark blue eye, with its long silken fringe; the fair round cheek, to which emotion only lent a crimson glow; the waves of blackest shining hair; were combined with a form, taller and more exuberant than her countrywomen can usually boast, and features whose expression blended the innocence of infancy with that pure spiritualized loveliness, which expresses the depth and earnestness of the mind within. The admiration which her beauty challenged, her manners plainly confirmed: soft, tender, caressing, she gathered around her the sympathies of all classes, from her own community of feeling with their joys and sorrows. The circumstances of her birth and present position did not tend to lessen the interest which her appearance excited. Her mother—before marriage Mademoiselle de Montmorency—died in the same hour which gave her infant birth. The daughter of one of the proudest and noblest of the French aristocracy, she had left the convent where she had been educated but a few months, when, at the *chateau* of a maternal aunt, in Burgundy, where a large party were assembled to enjoy the vintage, she met with Monsieur de Valmont. Undistinguished by birth, unendowed with fortune, he yet possessed what to womanly calculation is of far greater worth—a noble person, and gentlemanly bearing. His admiration of Mademoiselle de Montmorency was ardent and undisguised. She listened to its expression until the feeling became reciprocal. A few weeks passed under the same roof consolidated the attachment; and a few months subsequently they were privately married. For a while the secret obtained not circulation. But the hour of discovery came at last, and brought with it misery and woe.

The obscurity of de Valmont had of itself presented a sufficient barrier to forgiveness, but a yet more alienating and exasperating cause existed in the fact that he was avowedly of the wildest republican principles, the descendant of a Regicide! Without a franc for a marriage dowry, with only the bitter and awful portion of a father's curses, his bride was cast forth from her proud ancestral halls to privation and poverty. But the discipline of adversity ill accorded with the gentle nature of Madame de Valmont: she lived but to bring her child into a bleak and pitiless world, and the first anniversary of the day which had witnessed her ill-fated, unsanctioned nuptials, beheld her laid in the quiet grave.

Then it was that the natural disposition of de Valmont fully developed itself. Fierce, morose, vindictive, he had been coerced, if I may so express myself, from his original nature into comparative mildness, by the presence of his meek devoted wife. This link to goodness and principle wrenched asunder, he stood forth at war with himself, his species, and his destiny. Idle by temperament, vain, and selfish, he flattered himself that in an alliance with the house of Montmorency he should find at once affluence and aggrandizement. Though thwarted in his expectations at the onset, by the declared hostility of his wife's parents, he yet trusted that time would mitigate resentment, and no distant hour see her reinstated in the affections and dignities which she had once enjoyed. This hope was for ever blasted; even the infant she had left they refused to see; and they rejected with haughty scorn every effort he made towards reconciliation and pardon.

De Valmont had loved his wife passionately and profoundly. His grief at her death was vehement and sincere; but it was transient. With a desperation characteristic of his disposition and circumstances, he rushed from the house of mourning into riot and revelry, and sought, by plunging into every dissipation that offered, oblivion for his sorrows.

Having from early youth been addicted to gambling, he now adopted it as a profession. The excitement suited him not less than the possibility of unlaboured competence which it suggested. He became a systematic gamester, the most unvarying attendant at Frascati's, as well as habitually the most successful. How did it revolt the pure nature of Isoline, when years brought capacity to comprehend the degradation, that her father drew subsistence for himself and her from the plunder of the unwary, the ruin of the thoughtless! During the period of her education, the fact had not reached her; but, when called on to preside over his hearth and home, it was too soon revealed. She besought him earnestly, passionately, to abandon the path which he had chosen. But he heard her with a sigh, advanced the fixedness of long habit and his own inability now to acquire any profession as palliatives in her eyes, and left her to follow again his disgraceful career.

Isoline wept silently and bitterly; she loved her father with passionate fondness, and his love for her was akin to worship. She resolved to qualify herself for the support of them both, by the exercise of her musical talents, which were of first-rate power. Her voice, too, was one of remarkable beauty and compass. It was her intention, when duly prepared, to assist at private and public concerts, and seek, by industry and perseverance, to obtain a reputable, probably ample, livelihood for herself and her father. Wherever her purpose was confided, it met with ready and eager patronage and encouragement. The commiseration which the reckless character of her father, contrasted with her own unvarying rectitude excited; her singular loveliness, and the continued estrangement and hostility of her mother's family; all contributed to invest her with an extraordinary interest. With truth might it be said that she was the admiration of every circle, the idol of her own.

It was early in the morning of the ever-memorable 29th of July, the closing day of the Paris Revolution. One broad blaze of sunlight flooded the heavens and illumined the earth. It shone in on many a chamber of agony and suffering; and in every countenance that its beams irradiated were stamped in legible characters traces of anxiety and care. Few had retired to rest the two preceding nights; for, who could sleep while the dreary monotonous tocsin affrighted the ear with its mournful echoes, and the sharp shrill sound of musketry—for in many cases night did not avail to separate the combatants—came booming through the air? The dead on both sides lay yet unburied, and the issue of the warfare had not arrived to determine under what denomination the originators and abettors of the conflict should be classed—whether mourned as martyrs to liberty, with a nation's tears shed over their graves; or stigmatized as rebels to their king and country, and consigned to the dust, unlamented, unhonoured, and unsung.

The *drapeau blanc* still waved over the turrets of the Tuileries, for Charles X. still sat on a throne which, however, was now momentarily sinking from under him. The streets, broken up into barricades—alas! how many streaming with blood!—were, even at this early hour, filled with eager groups balancing the amount of yesterday's strife, or speculating on the events of the coming day. Excitement was at its height; and to those within, every moment brought some report of victory or defeat, often framed less in accordance with truth than the political bias of the party who uttered it. But it soon became evident that the time was fast approaching when the force adverse to the existing monarchy would triumph. It was a day of intense and breathless anxiety to all, to none more than to Isoline. With the ardent vivacity of her countrywomen, her every energy was enlisted in the cause of liberty. Restrained by her sex from participating in the contest, she shared with the Sisters of Charity the task of administering to the necessities of the wounded and dying at the Hotel-Dieu. And no voice was sweeter in cheering the sufferer, no hand tenderer in presenting the medicine-cup, or applying the bandage. She had obeyed the summons of humanity, when the artillery was rearing through the streets, and the path from her home to the hospital was beset with danger.

The evening of the 29th had arrived. Exhausted by the fatigue of the day, sickened with the sights of horror which everywhere

met her view, Isoline felt overpowered and faint. Her pale cheek and tottering frame attracting the notice of one of the physicians in attendance at the hospital, who was a personal friend, he warmly urged her to leave a scene where Death's darkening shadows, gathering over hundreds of victims, flung a gloom over the spirits of all, and to return to her home.

Yielding to his intreaties, she left the Hotel-Dieu. By taking an obscure and circuitous route, she had reached in safety the Rue St. Honore. It was blocked up by the contending parties. To escape the balls whizzing around her, she turned into a retired street. Even thither did the assailants come. The air was rent with shouts of defiance, and thickened with the smoke of discharged musketry. Though thus prevented by the shades of evening and clouds of vapour from discerning objects very distinctly, she yet observed two combatants, who fought with a savage desperation, which told indeed that "true foes once met part but in death." She crept under a wall, and watched the contest with a sort of fascinated earnestness. By a sudden movement she obtained a nearer view of their faces. She looked again with a gaze which seemed to stretch her eye-balls to bursting, and recognized in one of the combatants—her father! opposed to, as she fatally fancied, a young officer in the *garde du corps* to whom she was secretly betrothed.

Without waiting to ascertain if her fears were correct, she rushed forward with frantic eagerness. At that moment her father's pistol was levelled at the heart of his adversary. She strove to wrest the weapon from his grasp. He turned sharply round; the pistol, by the suddenness of the movement, swerved from its aim, and exploded. Its contents lodged in the heart of Isoline! One deep groan, one low gasping sob, and with the life-blood welling from her innocent breast, she reeled towards her father, and fell dead at his feet!

Those who were near declare that the shriek was scarcely human, which rent the air when the wretched parent discovered that she, whose warm blood crimsoned his garments, whom he had been accessory in forcing from time into eternity, was his adored and gentle child. He refused at first to believe in her identity—then denied assent to the fact of her death. Pushing aside the clustering ringlets from her face—lovely even in the ashy aspect of death—he knelt by her side, kissed her, vehemently calling on her to come back to his arms and love. But, when silence was the only answer to his passionate intreaties—when compelled to believe that she was dead indeed—with a shrill piercing cry, which seemed to condense all human agony, he fell on her body in merciful unconsciousness.

The beautiful cemetery of Pere la Chaise seldom fails to obtain from strangers who sojourn in the French capital early inspection and unqualified admiration. The serious and the contemplative visit it, and find in the unbroken stillness of its verdant paths, in the mouldering decay of its consecrated sepulchres, food for solemn and holy meditation. The young and the sensitive visit it. They from whose lips bursts the loudest laugh of joyousness—yet who weep the readiest and the bitterest tears—they go thither to commune with the spirits of the gifted and lovely, who lie crumbling at their feet. Even the gay, the thoughtless, and the happy, on whom the touch of sadness never yet hath fallen—even they, the affluent in bliss—visit it to admire the tastefulness of its design, the splendour of its mausoleums, and to peruse its tender and affecting epitaphs, the offerings of lavish love to the cold dust, now deaf alike to the ban of censure and to the voice of praise. Why is it that persons differing in age, sex, and temperament, yet so generally unite in deriving a mysterious pleasure from a ramble in a churchyard? Is it that they hope to dive into the secrets of another world, by hovering over the last resting-places of perished humanity? Whatever the motive that leads us thither, the churchyard is usually the first object of a traveller's visit, the one in which he lingers longest.

The Sunday succeeding the termination of the Revolution was appointed for the obsequies of many of its victims. The inhabitants of Paris, obeying their national impulse, which has so justly won for them the appellation of a sight-seeking population, thronged the Boulevards, through which the cavalcade was to pass, in countless masses. And it would not have been very easy for a stranger at first sight to decide whether an occasion of joy or sorrow had congregated them together. So alien are any fixed habits of melancholy from the character of the French, that their grief, extravagant in its first outbreak over the death-bed of their kindred, frequently has expended itself and settled down into comparative indifference before the grave has closed over a