

were all essentially womanly; and so far from making their position at the cost of their womanhood, they exalted their sex by showing that intellectual greatness is not incompatible with modesty, nor power necessarily dissociated from sweetness."

"I suppose you have a very high ideal of woman," said Margaret, half-scornfully, half in earnest.

"Of course I have."

"But you won't admit she is the equal of man."

"Not in your sense, Miss Raven. I believe some women are a great deal finer than their husbands or brothers; of course a man isn't better than a woman just because he is a man, but I do believe, though I know you'll be dreadfully angry with me, that the finest man you can conceive of would be a greater creature than the finest woman."

"Ridiculous," said Margaret; "it's just a matter of taste. You might as well say that the finest red rose is more beautiful than the finest white rose. But some people prefer white roses."

"Speaking of roses," said Michael, seeing the discussion was not leading anywhere in particular, "let us go and buy some. Oh, are you afraid of the sun for your complexion. Oh, I forgot, you are above minding freckles. Madame, Miss Raven and I are going, with your permission, to buy some roses. Do you prefer them white or red?"

"Oh, Monsieur Anstruther," said Madame, delighted; gifts of flowers came rarely to her nowadays; "but that is indeed kind of you. If I may make a choice, I prefer that there shall be a few of each."

"Madame, you see, has much wisdom," said Mike to Margaret. Then turning to the old lady he added, "You won't mind if I keep Miss Raven out some little time, will you? I will take great care of her. We should like to look at the shops together, and I think she would enjoy an ice."

"Oh, no," said Madame, who though she thought it most improper for them to go about unaccompanied, since in her opinion even engaged couples ought not to do so, had been obliged to give in to Margaret's scorn and Mrs. Raven's indifference, and perhaps had discovered that the walks, at the pace, which the young people enjoyed, for Margaret strode along as fast as any man, were beyond her power to indulge in. "Only, Mr. Anstruther, you must not be very long if Miss Raven wishes me to take her to the entertainment at the V—this evening."

"Oh, that's all right, Madame," said Margaret, not looking at Mike. "I am not going. Mr. Anstruther says his mother would be shocked."

And, with her head erect, as if to prove that she had made no sacrifice of her own dignity in this concession to the opinions of a lady unknown to her, Miss Raven went to put on her hat.

Madame smiled.

"You have much influence over her," she said to Mike when they were alone. And she thought to herself, "I wonder

if then they already understand one another, as she considers the views of his mamma. But it is for Margaret a good match. She is a girl amiable and clever; but so charming a husband, and his father a man of title is much to obtain."

Michael never cared to be left long alone with Madame Duclos. He liked her very much, and when their intercourse was confined to looks and smiles it was all very well, but he had never quite conquered the inability which he had experienced at their first meeting of understanding what she said. Presumably she had not always been unintelligible, but even Margaret had to be very attentive when Madame was speaking. Privately she attributed the indistinctness to the fact that Madame did not open her mouth wide enough for the words to come out, and therefore she had to follow them. And the reason why she did not open her mouth, although Margaret did not betray it to Michael, he guessed to be, that the rows of small pearly teeth which art had substituted when nature failed were not altogether sure of their position.

Michael and Margaret set out in very good spirits, prepared to enjoy their half-holiday. Margaret did not care much for shops as a rule, and had none of the usual feminine eagerness to pick up bargains at the Printemps or the Bon Marché. Even the diamonds of the Palais Royale palled upon one who had no desire ever to possess any, and the wonderful things in hats and bonnets that would have sent Mrs. Swannington into ecstasies, left her utterly unmoved. But she enjoyed the sense of life and warmth and motion that even on this hot July afternoon made the boulevards delightful. The purchase of Madame's roses too in the shop which was a paradise of lovely flowers was very pleasant. Margaret loved flowers, but she never wore any. She considered they had been created for something else besides the gratification of man and had a right to enjoy their little lives.

To shorten even that of a violet by putting it against the heat of her body and deprived of water was contrary to her code. She informed Mike as they loitered among the tube roses and carnations and lilies of the valley, that she believed it was with these things as with birds and animals, that though they were for men's use and delight, men were supposed to have enough love and reverence for them not to abuse or let them suffer. And she much shocked the kind-hearted shopwoman, who, seeing the way she lingered among the flowers, obligingly showed her some lovely blossoms which had just arrived and were to be mounted for some young ladies to wear at a ball that night, by remarking that she thought it was perfectly wicked of them, and that she looked upon them as little short of flower-murderers, to take these exquisite frail things which might give so much pleasure and kill them in an hour with heat and crushing.

"But, Mademoiselle," cried the woman, horrified, "if all had your notions where should we be? *Que*

*voulez vous?* It is often the flowers that make the costume."

And she took it quite seriously when Margaret said to Mike in French, that she thought she should start a society to protect flowers. "We have one to prevent cruelty to children, and one to prevent cruelty to animals, and one to prevent cruelty to birds, why not one to prevent cruelty to flowers?"

Mike laughed.

"I do not think Mademoiselle will take the bread out of your mouth yet," he said to the shopwoman. "And after all we don't all buy flowers to kill them, do we? These roses will be taken care of, I am sure; and I think that plant would please Mademoiselle if you would kindly send it to this address."

The woman reassured, laughed too, and begged Margaret with true French graciousness to accept a little nosegay which she quickly put together for her.

"Now let us go and have an ice," said Mike. "I suppose you have no theories against their consumption."

"If I have," said Margaret, "I will waive them, considering that I am very thirsty. But on the whole I think an ice fulfils its destiny by being eaten, and that is all I contend for. I hate waste, you see, and especially waste of beauty, and that's why I am angry with the vain creatures who spoil the flowers."

"They wear them to add to their beauty, don't they?"

"I can't argue," said Margaret. "Strawberry or vanilla? Well, I think, like madame, if I may make a choice I prefer there shall be some of each. I always notice one can eat a whole ice if it is two kinds, and there is just too much if it is one."

"And again, you would avoid waste if you could."

"Certainly," said Margaret promptly, and the appearance of her plate when the ice was despatched did not seem to point to the likelihood of her ever coming to that woeful want which is said to be the result of a wilful squandering of good things.

The ice and the tea which followed it and the purchase of some Marquis chocolate made Margaret feel very well disposed towards the world in general. She made Mike very angry by wishing to pay for her own refreshments on the "equality and fraternity" principle, but Mike maintained that her idea of "liberty" was to infringe his, and he insisted on paying. However, when the quarrel was at its height, Margaret was suddenly crushed by the discovery that she had left her purse at home, and could only settle her debts by borrowing of Michael, which of course he would not permit, and triumphed accordingly.

"I don't like your spending money on me," said Margaret, severely, when they had left the shop.

"What nonsense," said Mike, rather crossly. "A few francs like that."

"But there was the plant as well."

"Well, that is nothing. I thought we were friends enough for that."

"So we are, I suppose. But the giving shan't be all on one side. I must give you something."

"I have no objection," said Mike.