A VICTIM TO THE SEAL OF CONFESSION

A TRUE STORY BY THE REV. JOSEPH

CHAPTER XII. THE CROSS EXAMINATION.

At the close of the conversation re-ported in the preceding chapter, the two speakers had reached the door leading to the priest's apartments. There they found the landlord of the Golden Rose waiting to inform them that he had taken the liberty of preparing breakfast for them in an adjoining room. He felt sure that Mr. Bartholot must have left Aix too early to take anything before

his departure.
.. True, I had only time for a cup of coffee before starting," the magistrate replied, "and when our inquiry is ended, I shall be happy to avail myself of your invitation. But we must get forward with our work; that telegram to Aix cannot be despatched too soon," he added, to the mayor. However he allowed himself to be persuaded to take a glass of Madeira and some cold chicken, whilst Susan and old Jim were

The old man declared he had only come to ring the Angelus at noon, and had gone away immediately after; he had neither heard or seen anything unusual. He had seen nothing of the sacristan, and would take care how he did his work for him again, if it was to get him into trouble with the police.
Susan had to be brought up between

a couple of policemen, and on first ap-pearing before the magistrate not a ord could be got from her but tears All at once, however, she and sobs. All at once, nowever, the dried her eyes, and was voluble in her abuse of the mayor, the magistrate and all the officers of the law. What right had they, or any one to send the police for her, an old woman of seventy, against whom not a word could be said, as if she were a common thief. Perhaps they were going to accuse her of having murdered the poor old lady? No won-der if they did, if they could do such a erying wrong to a good and holy man like Father Montmoulin, as to charge him with the crime. Times were indeed changed! It all came of having a man changed: It all came of naving a man set over the community who did not ful fil his Easter duty, and who—well let them ask his wife what sort of a man he was! The old woman, having spent her wrath, relapsed into sobs and lamenta-tions.

The magistrate could scarcely repress a smile at this personal attack upon the mayor, and he made a sign to the latter to let it pass. He then reproved the mayor, and he made a sign to the latter to let it pass. He then reproved the police for having been discourteous in their treatment of so respectable a per-son. He told her that it was in order to clear the priest from suspicion that he had had her called to give evidence, so that for her master's sake she must answer the questions addressed to her. This pacified her somewhat, and she o'clock that he was unwell, and would not want her any more that day; that as she was going out of the house she met Mrs. Blanchard coming in, and heard and saw nothing of her till even-ing, when her little maid came running to say her mistress had not returned

home. "What did you answer the girl?" "I exclaimed, Good heavens, some misfortune must have happened to

ner!" What made you say that?" "Because his Reverence had told me she was coming to fetch a large sum of money for the new hospital."

money for the new hospital."
Did anyone else knew that Mrs. Blanchard was going at that time to

"The clock had just struck 10. She said good morning to me, and asked if he should find Father Montmoulin I said yes; his mother had just

left, and no one was with him."
"Had his mother a basket or bag in

her hand, when she left ?" her hand, when she lett?"
"Yes, she was carrying a little bag
which his reverence had given her, I it contained some linen that

wanted mending."
"Was the bag heavy or light?" "I cannot tell. I wanted to carry downstairs for her, but she would not

let it out of her hand. The magistrate and the mayor ex

changed a knowing glance.
"Do you know perhaps where the reverend gentleman's mother lives?" Yes, in the Rue de la Colombe in I do not know the number. has a little shop for woolen wares near

The magistrate made a note of the the market." address. "You are sure that your master was alone in the Convent when Mrs. Blanchard went to him, the sacri-

stan was not there?
"No the scoundrel took himself off on Sanday evening, and has not been back

Well. Susan, what is your opinion If Father Montmoulin was the only per-son in the house when the old lady met her fate, on whom does the suspicion

"How should I know? Certainly not upon his reverence, there is not a better or more saintly man than he! I would sooner believe the devil did it him or sent some rascal to kill the old lady in order to bring this trouble upon a good priest, and then carried him off.

Everyone present smiled at the old servant's very original alternative, cer-But she was highly displeased: "What is there to laugh at in that?" she con-"Everyone knows the devil tinued. "Everyone knows the devin has his own instruments, and it is noth-ing wonderful for him to carry anyone off. It should make a good Christian tremble, instead of laughing. And you take care, Mr. Mayor; you may profess not to believe in the devil, but I should not be surprised if he came to fetch you

ha, well done, Susan!" exlaimed the stout doctor, who

entered the room during Susan's per-oration, and caught her last words.
"Well done! Give it the old sinner hot and strong! I would not have given you credit for such elequence! The clericals ought to return you to Parliament. I believe you would like the devil to carry off all these scamps of Liberals!—All in good part, gentle-men. I have the honor to place my services at the disposal of the repre-a ntatives of the law."

"This is our medical practitioner, Dr. Corbillard," said the mayor by the Dr. Corbillard, said the mayor by the way of introduction to strangers present, while the witness was told she might withdraw, "I think, doctor, you might have had the civility to come a

little sooner-"Not a single moment! I always act on the principle: first see to the living, because you may do them some good; it does not matter to the dead good; it does not matter to the dead how long they wait. Just when your message came I was called to see a sick man four miles away among the hills; I have only just returned and am at your

The post-mortem examination then took place. Father Montmoulin's knife was found to be the instrument with which the wound was inflicted. The candlestick which Charles had, as will be remembered, let fall in his fright at the sight of the skull and crossbones, was found and recognized as the property of the priest. || This the magistrate considered as a corroboration of his theory that he had lured his victim down the sacristy under the pretext of the money being there, thinking the winding staircase would afford the best facilities for the execution of his hide-

ous project. " Now we have the whole connected chain of evidence," he said with no small satisfaction. "We will let the accused feel all the force of it at once, and I shall be very much surprised if he does not confess forthwith."

So saying, Mr. Barthelot re-entered the priest's sitting-room and taking his seat at the table with the clerk, he ordered the accused to be brought

Father Montmoulin slept the sleep of the worn out until, soon after day-break, he was roused by the unusual commotion outside the convent-walls, caused by the concourse of villagers who had flocked thither in ever increasing numbers. When first he opened his eyes he thought he had had a bad dream and was thankful to think it was over. But the next moment he caught sight of the constable who sat watching him, and of the basin of water in which he had tried to cleanse his cassock, and he knew that it was no phantasy of one night that weighed upon him, but stern and terrible reality. All the events of and terrible reality. All the events of the preceding night crowded in upon his mind—Loser's confession, the search throughout the house, the discovery of the body and the blood stained knife. The future then rose up before him in darkest colors. He had been taken into custody under strong suspicion of hav-ing committed a horrible murder with robbery, presently he would be taken to prison like an ordinary criminal be-fore the eyes of all his parishioners. He already heard their voices belo his window. What a terrible scandal what a disgrace for him ! would be brought to trial, and be impot-ent to do anything except assert his own innocence of the crime whereof he was accused. Would he be believed He did not dare to hope that such would be the case. The jury would pronounce his guilty, and the judge would pass sentence upon him. And then the guillotine stared him in the

Father Montmoulin would have been ore than human had not this dread ful prospect affected him profoundly. "No indeed, do you imagine that I am such a tattler? I did not say a word about it to any living soul."
"You say you met Mrs. Blanchard coming to the Convent. What time was it then?"

"You say you met Mrs. Blanchard coming to the Convent. What time was it then?" If this terrible doom would fall

Loser's confession, although inspired by nothing but fear, was yet, as he could not but admit, made object of obtaining sacramental absolu tion, and consequently a confession which he was bound under all circumstances to keep secret. He dare no even let it be known that Loser went to him to confession the evening before, for that, under the existing state of affairs, would almost amount to an ac-cusation against him. He had, it was rue, seen him before he knew that he came with a view to confession, and the mere fact that he had seen him had nothing to do with the confession. Besides, it was evident that if he were to declare that he had seen Loser it would be a strong evidence in his own favor. But Father Montmoulin bad already been asked whether he had seen the man since the afternoon of Sunday, and had answered in the nega tive, because, as he told himself, Loser had only come to him for the sake of confession, and to admit that he had been there at all seemed to him likely to endanger his sacred obligation to preserve silence. Therefore he de-cided to abide by what he had already cided to abide by what he had already said, since he could not well retract his statement without indirectly giving rise to the supposition that Loser had been to confession to him, and everyone would suspect what his confession had

All the various grounds of suspicion which told so strongly against him lay heavy on Father Montmoulin's heart. He knew that the embarrassment which he had been unable to conceal on the occasion of the mayor's entrance and the discovery of the body, must place him in a very unfavorable light. Could he not explain this unfortunate Could he not explain this unfortunate circumstance by saying: Yes, I knew of the crime that had been perpetrated, but only through the confessional. So long as no particular individual was brought under suspicion, or into a position of difficulty, this could not be a wighting of the scal of confession. Yet violation of the seal of confession. Yet

it might lead to it. No one except Loser had been to confession to him, or had been are him at all, after the murder, and if through the inquiries of the police, or by any accident, the fact that Loser had been to him that same night were discovered, his admis-

sion that he had heard of the crime sion that he had heard of the crime from the lips of a penitent would be equivalent to an accusation against the man; the only penitent who came to him, the only person he saw in the convent was Loser, therefore he was the murderer. No, there was no doubt; nothing in the world should induce him to evaluate himself by accurate to exculpate himself by saying that he was told of the fatal deed in the confes sional. Thus no means of escape was

left him.

Another idea occurred to him. The sacristan had come upon him by sur-prise whilst he was ccunting the money on Sunday afternoon. Might he not at least mention this fact to the magistrate, since it was wholly unconnected with the confessional, and it was cer-tainly calculated to throw suspicion on tainly calculated to throw suspiction on the right person. If Loser had not been to confession subsequently, Father Montmoulin would certainly have spoken of the circumstance, but now he deemed it more advisable not to give this hint as to the real criminal, this hint as to the real criminal, justifiable as it undoubtedly was.

"After all," he said to himself, "it may be conjectured that it was through his confession that I was able to detect the criminal. No, I will do nothing that will cause him to be suspected, lest I should even in the remotest de gree occasion doubt to arise as to the inviolability of the seal of confession. I would rather die than appear not to have guarded it most faithfully!" have guarded it most was the heroic resolution the con-

his breviary and began to say the The constable whose duty it was to keep his eye on the priest, was not a little astonished to see with what tranquility and resolution he performed his orisons, while from the courtyard below the uproar grew louder, and some voices openly denounced the priest and called for his death. "It is an odd thing," the man said to himself, " if I had not seen that bloody knife, I should declare the fellow was innocent. How ever I have often heard it said that the clergy are all of them consummate hypocrites." So saying he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and proceeded to

scientious priest formed, and when all hesitation was at an end, peace re-

turned to his soul. He calmly recited

his morning prayers, and then

fill it afresh.
About 10 o'clock Father Montmoulin as summoned to appear before the magistrate. He was received courteous magistrate. He was received controlled ly, and given a seat opposite to his interrogator. After the usual questions as to name, birth, etc., which the clerk duly noted down, the magistrate said: It is unnecessary to say a word about the unfortunate occurrence which obliges me to examine you, reverend sir-you are only too well acquainted with the circumstances already. must, however, lay before you the

whelming evidence against you which the preliminary investigation has brought to light, and which have led to a charge being brought against you, from which I do not see how you can clear yourself. Let me advise you in your own interest to make a clean breast of it—it is the only means of escaping a capital sentence."

Father Montmoulin politely thanked the magistrate and assured him that he was innocent of the crime imputed to

"It will avail you but little to assert your innocence in the face of the facts we have here," Mr. Barthelot continued more sternly. "It is proved that Mrs. Blanchard came to you yesterday about 10 o'clock, for the purpose of fetching a considerable sum of money that was in your hands; she was foully murdered at a time when there was no other person under the roof with her beside yourself. How do you account for this?
"Is it proved that I was the only person under the roof with her?"

"Undoubtedly. The only person old servant, and you took the pre caution of dismissing her, saying that you would not require her services until the next morning."

" I was not well." "One would imagine that to be reason for wishing her to remain in the ouse."
"I was tirea out, and only needed

"And yet you were up and about between 10 and 11 at night! But we will let that pass. At any rate the woman was not here at the time of the murder. Nor was the sacristan, since you granted -or perhaps offered?-him leave of absence the evening before. You yourself allowed that he did not

ne back to your knowledge." "He might have com The answer: back without my knowledge," rose to the priest's lips, but his fear of ever approaching the secret he had to keep, prevented him from uttering this pertectly justifiable reply. Instead of that he contented himself with the vague remark that some one else might per haps have gained admittance to the

building. "The crime is not one which any tramp could have committed," pursued the magistrate. "The criminal must have had an accurate acquaintance with the house, and above all, must have known that Mrs. Blanchard was going at an appointed time to fetch a large sum of money from you, and that she would go down that dark winding staircase with it in her possession, unaccom-panied by you—that is, if your account f the matter is correct; I take th liberty of imagining the facts of the case to be somewhat different. Now

tell me: How could a stranger possibly have obtained the necessar; information? Did you tell anyone tha the lady would go out that back way between 10 and 11 with the money in her pocket ?"
"I did not know it myself," the

priest exclaimed. "And you would have me believe

some stray tramp knew it! or have you grounds for suspecting any in-dividual?"

If Loser had not been to confession to him, Father Montmoulin would probably have replied that the sacristan might very well have come back from his pretended journey, laid in wait for his victim, and struck her down. He

only remarked that he would not

only remarked that he would not venture to bring an accusation against any person in particular.

"And how can you explain your knife, your tandkerchief—both stained with blood—and the poor lady's basket being found in your kitchen? You will perhaps say the murderer put them there in order to cause you to be will perhaps say the murderer put them there in order to cause you to be suspected. But he would have attained his end had he merely made use of your knife, and left it lying by the corpse. A stranger would hardly think it safe to carry knife, cloth and basket up to your kitchen, where you or anywhe else. your kitchen, where you or anyone else might have caught him, instead of mak

ing off instantly with his booty."
"I cannot explain why, but certain

ly it was done."
"You cannot satisfy justice with these evasive answers. Now look here; do you know where this candlestick comes from?" And Mr. Barthelot suddenly produced the candlestick which poor little Charles had let fall.

which poor little Charles had let fall.

"Certainly I do," Father Montmoulin answered, "It is one of the
candlesticks that I use at Mass; I
missed it yesterday morning."

"Just like the knife! Perhaps you
do not know where that was found?
Under the body of the murdered

woman! Father Montmoulin turned pale. He felt that the weight of evidence against him was heavier than he had supposed. nim was heavier than he had supposed. His eyes grew moist, and he could scarcely control his voice as he answered: "Appearances are indeed against me, that no one can deny. Nevertheless I am innocent of the crime; God is my witness."

"It would be far wiser on your part to make a full conferming of this fatal

to make a full confession of this fata act, as I told you before, instead of attempting to impose on me by maunder-ing and posturising, said the magis-trate angrily. I hate scenes; once more I ask you, will you acknowledge your guilt or no?"

"I can only repeat that I am perfectly innocent. My God! Whatever do you imagine would have induced me to

mmit such crime?"
"That is a psychological problem, of which perhaps the solution is not so very far to seek. Why, you are poor, you are in want of books, as the poverty-stricken appearance of your bookshelves does the order for the book seller which was found lying on your desk. You wanted to furnish rooms for your mother. I am told she has a struggle to make both ends meet; here was an opportunity to help her, and perhaps others too, and the temptation was too much for you. You see the idea that you did it for your mother's sake makes me more lenient in regard to what is in itself a dreadful crime, and I promise you, that every extenuating circumstance shall be urged in your favor and your mother's, and you shall not suffer the full rigor of the law, if

not suffer the full rigor of the law, if you will frankly confess your guilt."
"My mother!" Father Montmoulin exclaimed. "How can my mother possibly be implicated in this afair?"
"I feel convinced that your mother carried the money away in the little handbag she had with her, if we fail, the shad it concealed on these

that is, to find it concealed on these premises. At all events, your mother vill be arrested as accessory to the

"For Heaven's sake have pity on her! It will be her death," cried But the magistrate showed no priest. sign of relenting. "Confess your guilt, and your mother shall be treated with the utmost consideration. Otherwise I shall order her to be arrested. And you too shall be taken in a closed carriage to Aix; but if you persist in as riage to Aix; but it you persist in as-serting your innocence, you will be dealt with as a common criminal. Do you imagine that your profession will entitle you to any indulgence; a clergyman who can perpetrate such a deed deserves to be put to public shame ten

times more than a vulgar murderer."

'I can do nothing more than assert
my innocence, and leave the rest to
God," Father Montmoulin responded calmly. The magistrate shrugged his shoulders and passed the protocol, after it had been read over by the clerk, to the accused for signature. The unfor tunate man felt as if he were signing his own death-warrant. Then Mr. Bar-thelot called in the police and gave him into custody. The prisoner held out his hands without a murmur, yet he could not restain a shudder as the handcuffs closed on his wrists. He raised his eyes to the cruciffx, and was enabled to maintain outward composure. mayor and the other Government offic-

ials then re entered the room.
"Our task is ended for the present," said the magistrate. "The police officers, with the assistance of the mayor to whose prompt and sagacious action we owe the speedy discovery of the murder, will complete the search of the house, and take possession of the prison-er's papers. He shall be removed at once to the prison at Aix, and we must see that his mother does not escape the hand of the law. It is not necessary to provide a closed conveyance for the prisoner; he certainly is not deserving of such an attention, and it is just well to show that the law is impartial in its treatment of the clergy."

"I am quite of your opinion sir,"

plied the mayor, with a low bow. then gave the required orders to his subordinates. In vain the good hearted Dr. Corbillard endeavored to obtain me relaxation on behalf of the prisoner "I am no friend of priests," he said,
but I must in common justice testify
that our pastor here has always shown
himself most kind and charitable in
regard to the sick, and I find it very
difficult to believe in his guilt, strongly as circumstances witness against him.

treated as a convicted criminal. Perhaps you will have the goodness to leave it to me to decide what treat ment he is to receive, and whether his guilt is to be considered as proved or not," the magistrate replied haughtily. "That is what it is!" rejoined the doctor, in a tone of annoyance. "This is but a fresh manœuvre in the plan of campaign against the Clerical party

Besides, his guilt is not yet proved and until it is, he ought not to be

ments. The doctor turned to leave the room, muttering under his breath.

Just as he got to the door, he paused, and addressing the prisoner, said: have not attended your sermons Father, nor have I troubled you in the Father, nor have it touched you in the confessional; yet I have always respected you as a kind and good man, and I do not believe you to be capable of any wickedness. Keep up your courage! If their is a God in heaven

courage! If their is a Got in and the will interfere in your behalf."
"Thank you, doctor," Father Montmoulin replied. "He will make my innocence clear as the day before His own judgment seat, if He does not do own judgment seat, if He do so before an earthly tribunal.

TO BE CONTINUED

HER SON.

A train of three coaches drawn by two engines toiled up the steep Rocky Mountain pass. Below, a shining track showed whence it had come; above, snowed whence it had come; above, another—far up the mountain—foretold where it would go. How it was to get there no man could tell.

Mrs. Etheridge sat drinking in the

glory of it all. Her unstinted enthusiasm touched the pride of the local

The train glided over a trestle and a vista opened on the other side. Mrs. Etheridge was on her feet instantly. The Colorado woman opposite leaned oward her.

Your first trip over the pass?" "Yes. Isn't it magnificent!"
The woman took her traps and moved

back of the other.
"I'll give you my seat, too," she said, in the kindly Western fashion. said, in the kindly Western fashion.
"The view's on both sides." It was easy afterward to fall into conversation. Going far?" asked the Colorado

woman. "Yes, to visit my son."

"Aha! Is he married?" "No. I sometimes wish he were." "I don't know," said the woman houghtfully. "It will be an awful thoughtfully. "It will be an awful trial to you when you have to give him up. I know. My eldest son was married last year. It nearly killed me. And I've got my husband and two children left, too."

"And I should have nothing," said Mrs. Etheridge softly. "My husband is dead."

is dead."
The woman shook her head. "I hope he won't marry. He'll never be the same to you." Her eyes were full. "I—I feel as if I've lost mine."
I—I is strange how we sometimes drop into heart talks with strangers. Possibly the very fact that they are

bly the very fact that they are strangers makes us freer to lay bare our inner life. They know nothing about us, not even our names, perhaps; our paths will not cross again; for once may say just what we think

"You ought not to feel that way," said Mrs. Etheridge. "Try to feel instead that you have gained a daughter." It was one of those sweet platitudes with which people who have never had

a scar try to mollify gaping wounds. lost a son." The emollient had proved an irritant. "You'll feel just as I do some day.

"I hope not." Mrs. Etheride spoke earnestly. "I've been schooling myself all these years to meet this thing. I want my son to marry—when the right

woman comes."
The right woman, yes! But suppose your son should marry a woman that you didn't like, and couldn't—
"My son would never love anybody that I would not take to my heart as a

daughter," said Mrs. Etheridge. And she confidently believed it. Her companion looked at her with

"You're a good woman," she said.

"You deserve a good daughter-in law." But I hope he won't marry, just the The climb through

was a glorious one. Mrs. Etheridge felt lifted up spiritually. "With Robert and these mountains," she thought, "I can give up the rest."

can give up the rest."

She had not seen him for four years.

After he graduated in mine engineering he had an offer in Silver Crag. The separation wrung her heart, but she made no sign. "I will never be an engineering succession." made no sign. "I will never be an obstacle in the way of Robert's success," she had said. She did not know it, but "Robert's success" was dearer to her almost than her hope for heaven. It had become the ruling thought of her He had said to her at parting, "I'll

send for you, mother, when I get a start. We'll have a home together start. We'll have a home together yet." She had lived on that thought for four years. But the message had A month ago the high school in which

A month ago the high school in which she taught was burned. Mrs. Etheridge did some figuring that night. She had been teaching twenty-three years. It was a long time! She could see now the black robed figure going to school that first morning, holding tightly by the hand the little five year-old wh looked up to her as such a tower of strength — she who was in reality so faint hearted. He never knew. He always thought she was strong.

Her thoughts sped on through the grammar school days, when she was still the leader; to the high school, when she began to study to keep up with him.

she began to study to keep up with him.

They were companions through it all.

And then — why, then he went away from her — went as lar as the great ocean on the east. Only that? Nay, she might have followed him there. But he went sailing into the unknown waters of higher mathematics and physi-cal science, and her little bark must keep close to the shore. She might not go further with him. Well, if only Rob should make a success, an abundant success of life, she would be content.

Those years had been so very long! Somehow the student of technology seemed further away from her than the little lad who filled her stocking. She closed the book at last. "I'm going to Robert. I'll give my-

self one year of rest.' ' In her heart she was saying, "I will never leave him again. I will make a home for him."
Robert Etheridge met his mother at the train. He was a handsome young fellow. No wonder she was proud of

They walked up to the boarding

place. It was but a step, and she wanted to see the town. Such a queer looking place! It lay in a canyon, the walls of which were the sloping sides of the mountains. The canyon stream ran through the town and the main street was beside it. Other streets were dug out from the mountain side and the houses ranged in tiers one above the other.

above the other.
"How I shall enjoy all this!" Mrs.
Etheridge exclaimed, stopping to sur-

vey the town.
"How did you happen to give up

your place, mother?" her son asked as they started on. "I couldn't stay away from you any longer, laddie! But I did not give it up permanently—I could go back nex year if I wanted to. Do you dis approve of it?"

"Oh, no. Only the times are so hard out here that we feel when one has a good place he'd better stick to it. But you can go back next year, you say?"
"Yes. I can go back—next year."
She did not herself notice the change

of tense. They walked on a little distance and then Mrs. Etheridge topped. .. How different the effect upon one of being right in the mountains," she said. "At a distance they are so in-

spiring. But here—they seem to shut one in. Do you notice it, Robert?" "It's the altitude. You are a little thort of breath." "I think that must be it," she said slowly. "Yes-I'm sure that it is."
At the door of his boarding house

"You mustn't expect to find things here as they are back home, mother," he said uneasily. "Mrs. Skidmore is a plain woman, but they have been kind to me." Robert Etheridge stopped.

to me."
"If they have been kind to you,
"If they have been kind to you,

"If they have been kind to you, laddie, that is enough!" And Robert hopefully ushered her in.

Mrs. Skidmore was sitting in a red and gold plush rocker in agitated consideration of a blue aibum of the same material. She ran to plush. Her red hands were just from the dish water, and her conscious manner belied the studied leisure of her attitude.

Robert Etheridge presented his

Robert Etheridge presented his " Pleased to know you," observed

Mrs. Skidmore with some stiffness.
Mrs. Etheriege shook hands cordially. "My son has told me of your kindness to him, Mrs. Skidmore, and I feel that I knew you already."

She could not help seeing in one com-

prehensive glance the tawdry furnishings, the staring family photographs (erlarged) in cheap white frames, and the inappropriateness of Mrs. Skid-more's dress. But gratitude is like charity, it covers a multitude of in-harmonious colors and kindness to one's on in a strange land is more to be de sired than immaculate taste.

Mrs. Skidmore looked more at ease.
"Thanks," she said, "We've tried to make him feel at home, and I guess we've succeeded pretty middlin' well;

hain't we, Rob?' Mrs. Etheridge drew within herself as swiftly and silently as a turtle whose outstretched head discovers within uncomfortable distance an alien to his uncomfortable distance an anen to his kind. She felt convicted of over-effusiveress. He had probably paid his board! "Rob," indeed!

In her room she took herself to task.

What did she expect? Robert had told her they were plain. In her heart she was protesting, "She is not just plain. Plainness can be forgiven. She is vulgar and-familiar."

gar and—lamiliar.

At supper she met the daughter, who came in after they were seated. She wore a sweeping tea gown trimmed with cheap lace. Mrs. Etheridge had seldom seen a more radiantly beautiful

face. " Miss Skidmore, Mis' Etheridge," pronounced the mother, and Miss Skidmore responded in the family formula.
"Pleased to know you," adding succinctly in an aside to Robert, who greeted the smart gown with a low

whistle, "Oh, shut up!"
Mrs. Etheridge's spirits dropped to zero during that meal. Was this the atmosphere that Robert had been in for four years?
"What do you think of the girl?"

he asked when they were upstairs.
"She is beautiful!" his mother exclaimed enthusiastically. The most perfect features and coloring I ever His face glowed.
"But, Robert, her manners are atrocious! Why, she talked in an un-

dertone to you half the time. "Of course she hasn't had many advantages," he said, apologetically. proceeded to unpack.
"I've brought some of the new books

with me, Rob. I'm looking forward to our reading together this winter."

"It will be nice," he said. But he did not ask what the books were. And here are the chessmen. Do

you enjoy chess as much as ever ?''
"Haven't had a game since I've been here." You haven't? Well, we'll have

one to night."

He looked uneasy. "I'm afraid I can't to-night. I promised to go to a party before I knew you were coming. I'm awfully sorry. I really couldn't get out of it."

"Why, that's all right," she said. "I shay, 'the longsome. Do you take a "I shan't be lonesome. Do you take a young lady?"—with interest. His friends were always hers.
"Yes." He tried to look indifferent, her lovely.

but he was watching her closely.
"Miss Skidmore."

She was hanging up a dress skirt. She was hanging up a dress skirt. She pinned the band together, carefully matching the loops, then undid it and pinned it again, smoothing out the folds after it was on the book. "Do you take her out often?"

Do you take her out often?" Her tone was very even and quiet.

'No, not very. I don't go to parties nuch.'

" Is she received in the best society here?" Her voice seemed to cut the air. "I don't know. Yes—I guess so—if there is any best. This party is at the

hall. " Oh-h !"

When they went of Mrs. Etheridge