

me I opened the window and seized the outer handle of the door-lock.

"Was I determined?—between ourselves,

noticed her! Good heavens! where had my eyes been?

"She spoke simply, amiably, with the



"YOU ARE MAD, MONSIEUR."

not altogether, I think: but it appeared that I had the air of being so, for she instantly cried out:

"You are mad, Monsieur, you are mad!"

"The rug, or I throw myself out!"

She took the covering and in a softened tone said:

"But you, Monsieur—you will catch your death of cold."

"Do not be uneasy on my account, Madame, I am not in the least chilly—and even if I should feel cold, it will only be a just punishment for my unpardonable stupidity."

"Say your over-hastiness; for, as you have said, your motive was a good one. But how came you to mistake another lady for me?"

"Because she appeared to me charming."

"She smiled. The ice was broken—the ice of conversation, that is to say; for in other respects I was shivering with cold."

"But how quickly I forgot the cold, the journey—everything! She was delicious, exquisite, adorable! She possessed a cultivated mind, keen, gay, original! She loved travel, like myself. In literature, in music, in everything, in fact, we had the same tastes! And then, only imagine! we found we had a heap of acquaintances in common; she was intimate with the Saint-Chamas, with the Savenois, above all with the Mountbasons! Only to think that I had perhaps met her twenty times in their drawing-rooms without having

frankness I so much love. A slight, very slight provincial accent, almost imperceptible, a chirp rather, giving to her pronunciation something of the singing of a bird. It was intoxicating!

"But though I would have given all in the world not to appear cold—great heavens! how cold I was!

"At Dijon, (2.20) my right foot was half-frozen. We telegraphed to Tonnerre for the articles left behind."

"At Macon (4.30) it was the turn of my left foot. We received a message from Tonnerre saying that the luggage would arrive at Marseilles the next day."

"At Lyon-Perranche (5.48) my left hand became insensible; she forgot to demand her sleeping carriage."

"At Valence (8.8) my right hand followed the example of the left; I learned that she was a widow and childless."

"At Avignon (9.50) my nose became violet; I fancied she had never wholly loved her first husband."

"At Marseilles (12.5 a .m.) I sneezed three times violently; she handed me back my rug and said graciously: 'Au revoir.'

"'Au revoir!' Oh, I was mad with delight."

"I spent the night at the Hotel de Noailles—an agitated night, filled with remembrance of her. The next morning when I awoke, I had 'the most shocking cold in the head imaginable."

"Could I, in such a state, present myself to my friends, the Rombauds? There was no help for it; it was one of the accidents of travel; they must take me as I was, and to-morrow I would go and seek my cure in the sun of Nice."

"Oh, my friend, what a surprise! That good fellow Rombauid had invited a few friends in my honor, and among them was my charming fellow-traveller! My charmer!

"When I was presented to her, a smile passed over her lips; I bowed, and asked in a whisper:

"Tonnerre—your parcels?"

"I have them,' she replied in the same tone."

"We sat down to table."

"What a cold in the head you have got, my dear fellow!" cried Rombauid, sympathetically; 'where the deuce did you pick it up—in the railway carriage, perhaps?'

"Very possibly,' I said, 'but I don't regret it!'

"Nobody comprehended the sense of this veiled reply; but I felt the tender glance of my fellow-traveller reach me through the odorous steam of a superb tureen of soup majestically posed upon the table."

"What more have I to tell you? Next day I set off for Nice; a fortnight hence I am to be married."

