

her charms, her grace, her beauty. But the next day, twenty people were expected at the chateau, and that would be the end of this dangerous intimacy. He would have the courage to stay away, to lose himself in the crowd; he would not see Bettina so often and so informally. Not to see her at all, that he could not think of! He would be Bettina's friend, since he must be only her friend. For any other thought never even entered Jean's mind; that thought would not only have seemed preposterous to him, it would have been monstrous. There was not a more honorable man than Jean in the world; and Bettina's money was a horror to him, a positive horror.

A crowd of people did indeed invade Longueval on the 25th of June. Mrs. Norton came with her son Daniel, and Mrs. Turner with her son Philip. Young Daniel and young Philip, were both of them members of the famous brotherhood of Thirty Four. They were old friends; Bettina had treated them as such, and had told them frankly that they were absolutely wasting their time; they were not discouraged, however, and formed the centre of a very anxious, assiduous court which surrounded Bettina.

Paul de Lavardens had made his appearance on the scene, and rapidly become a favorite with every one. He had received the brilliant and comprehensive education of a young man who devotes himself to pleasure. Was it a question, what they should do to amuse themselves? Riding, croquet, lawn tennis, polo, dancing, charades and theatricals, he was ready for all, he excelled in all. His superiority was startlingly impressive. By general consent, Paul became the organizer and leader of all the *fetes* at Longueval.

Bettina was not deceived for a moment; Jean presented Paul de Lavardens to her, and he had hardly gone through the necessary formalities, before Bettina leaning over to Suzie, whispered in her ear:

"The thirty-fifth!"

However, she accorded Paul a gracious welcome, so gracious that for several days he was foolish enough to misinterpret it. He thought that his own personal attractions had won for him such a pleasant, cordial reception. It was a great mistake. He had been presented by Jean; he was Jean's friend in Bettina's eyes, all his merit lay in that.

Mrs. Scott's chateau was an open house; her invitations were not for one evening, but for every evening, and Paul eagerly accepted every evening. His dream was realized. He had found Paris again at Longueval!

But Paul was neither a fool nor a coxcomb. Without doubt, Miss Percival made him the object of particular attention and favors. She was pleased to have long, very long, conversations with him, all alone but what was the continual, the inexhaustible subject of the conversations? Jean, Jean, always Jean! and Paul was flippant, giddy and frivolous, but he became serious as soon as Jean was mentioned; he knew how to appreciate him, how to love him.

Nothing was easier for him, nothing was sweeter to him than to praise the friend of his boyhood. And as he saw that Bettina listened to him with pleasure, Paul gave free rein to his eloquence.

But Paul—and it was his privilege—desired one evening to have the benefit of his chivalrous conduct. He had been talking with Bettina for a quarter of an hour; the conversation ended, he went to find Jean at the other end of the salon, and said to him:

"You left the field free to me, and I have thrown myself boldly at Miss Percival."

"Well! you have no reason to be dissatisfied with the result of your understanding. You seem to be the best friends in the world."

"Yes, certainly we are friends. I can go that far, but no further. Nothing can be more agreeable, more charming than Miss Percival; but, at least, I deserve some credit for acknowledging it—for, between us, she makes me play a distasteful and ridiculous role, a role which does not belong to one of my age. At my age one is a lover, not a confidant."

"A confidant?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, a confidant! That is the position they have given me in this house! You saw us just now; well, do you know what we were talking about? Of you, my dear fellow, nothing but you! and it is the same every evening. There is no end to the questions; You were brought up together? You both studied with the Abbe Constantin? He would soon be a captain? And after that?—commandant?—and after that?—colonel, *et cetera* . . . *et cetera* . . . Ah! Jean, my friend Jean. What a beautiful dream you might have, if you only would."

Jean was angry, almost in a passion. Paul was very much astonished at this sudden burst of anger.

"What is the matter with you? It seems to me that I have said nothing."

"I beg your pardon. I was wrong; but how could such an absurd idea enter your head?"

"Absurd? I do not think it absurd. I have had the same idea myself."

"Ah! you —"

"Why, 'ah! me?' If I have had it, you can have it, you are better than I."

"Paul, I beg of you?"

Jean's distress was evident.

"We will say no more about it; what I want to say, in brief, is, that Miss Percival finds me agreeable, very agreeable; but as for thinking seriously of me, such an idea never entered my head. Look here, Jean, I may amuse myself in this house; but I shall never make my fortune here."

Paul now devoted himself to Mrs. Scott; but the very next day he was surprised to encounter Jean, who began to take a place very regularly in Mrs. Scott's special circle—for she, like Bettina, had her own little court. Jean tried to find there, protection and a place of safety.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



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