

He said nothing more, but followed me in silence; just as we were about to ascend the front door steps, however, he stopped me, and said: "Remember, that if you forsake me I shall kill myself."

Then, but only then, I realized that I had gone too far, and thenceforth I became more reserved with him. One day, as he reproached me for having changed toward him, I replied: "You are too big to jest with now, and not yet old enough for serious love. I shall wait till you are."

I thought that this would end it all.

In autumn he was sent to a boarding school. When he returned the following summer I was engaged. He understood immediately how matters stood, and for eight days went about with so thoughtful a mien that I became alarmed.

The ninth day, as I left my bed in the morning, I noticed a small folded paper that had been slipped under my door. Picking it up and opening it I read: "You have forsaken me; you know what I told you. You have condemned me to death. As I do not wish to be found by any one but you, go into the park, to the spot where I told you last year that I loved you, and look up."

I felt that I was going crazy. I dressed myself in all haste and ran so fast to the designated spot that I was out of breath when I reached it. His little school cap lay on the ground in the mud. It had been raining all night. I looked up and perceived something swinging about among the leaves, for it was windy, very windy, that morning.

I don't know what happened after that. I must have screamed and fainted dead away afterward, for when I came to my senses I found myself in bed, with my mother at my side.

I thought that I had dreamed all this—that I had had a horrid nightmare. I stammered: "Where, where is Gontran?" No one answered. 'Twas true, then!

I did not dare to go to look at him; but I begged for a lock of his hair. This—this—is it.

And with a look of poignant despair the old lady held out her trembling hand.

She blew her nose several times, dried her eyes and continued: "I broke off my marriage—without saying why. And I—I have ever remained—the—the widow of that child 13 years old." Then, dropping her head, she sobbed aloud and wept bitterly for a long while.

As we went up to our rooms to rest, a burly hunter, whose peace of mind her narrative seemed to have unsettled, whispered to his neighbor:

"Isn't it unfortunate that a person should be so confoundedly sentimental as that?"—Translated for The Times-Democrat from the French of *Madame de Santeze*.

understand." I would laugh and kiss the child that was so much attached to me.

Often, also, after dinner, he would sit on my mother's knees. "Now, aunty," would he say, "tell me some love stories." And mother, for fun, would relate to him all the legends of his family, all the passionate adventures of his forefathers, and of these there were not a few—thousands and thousands of them were spoken of, true as well as false. It was the reputation of these men that destroyed them. Their minds would get worked up, and then they gloried in keeping up the family fame.

The little fellow would become animated over these tender or terrible narratives, and at times he would clap his hands as he would repeat over and over: "I, too, know how to love, and better than any of them."

And then he began courting me in a timid and tender manner that made everybody laugh, so odd did it seem. Every morning I received a bunch of flowers that he had gathered for me, and every night, before going up to his room, he would kiss my hand and murmur: "I love you!"

I was wrong, very wrong, and I still weep over my folly. All my life I have done penance on account of it, and I have remained an old maid, or rather I have lived as a widowed betrothed, his widow. I would amuse myself with this childish affection; I even encouraged him; I was coquettish and bewitching, just as I might have been with a man. I made the child dote upon me. It was fun for me and an amusing pastime for his mother and for mine. He was 12 years old. Just think; who would ever have imagined that this atom's love was serious? I would kiss him whenever he asked me to; I would even write him tender notes which our mothers would read, and he would answer me with letters full of passion, which I still preserve. Believing himself a man he supposed that our love was kept secret. We had all lost sight of the fact that he was a *de Santeze*!

Things went on in this way for a year or so. One evening in the park he fell at my feet, and kissing the hem of my dress, he cried out passionately: "I love you, I love you, I love you to death. If you ever deceive me you understand what I am saying; if you ever forsake me for another, I shall do as did my father." And he added in a deep voice that sent a chill through me: "You know what he did."

Then, as I stood motionless, dumfounded, he rose, and standing on tiptoe so as to reach my ear, he whispered my name, "Genevieve!" in so sweet, so pretty, so tender a tone that I could not help trembling all over.

I stammered: "Let us return home."