

to the father's neglect. She was wholly engrossed with the care of Louise—in guarding her health, forming her mind, and implanting the germ of that fervent piety which so distinguished the house of Lorraine. But this strong affection, almost bordering on passion, rendered her often unjust to those who did not thus idolise her pupil. Mademoiselle de Montvert, under-governess to the young princess, added to this by flattery, so that the excellent disposition of Louise alone saved her from being ruined by indulgence. But if natural good qualities pass unscathed through this ordeal, still the sweetest temper is not proof against prejudice imbibed from those whom we love and revere.

The Comte de Vaudemont, having no son, thought of a second marriage. It was soon known that he had demanded the hand of Jeanne de Savoie, sister of the Duc de Nemours. This intelligence grieved the kind heart of Madame de Champy. 'The poor child will then have a stepmother,' cried she. 'Ah! Heaven have mercy on her!' and without considering the effect of her words on a girl four years old, she repeated them continually; and when the child questioned her on this fearful misfortune, she replied that it was meet to submit to the will of Heaven. So the fears of the princess were lulled.

'What is a stepmother?' said she one day to Mademoiselle de Montvert.

'It is a monster who brings ruin on families,' answered the under-governess.

'Ah!' cried Louise in terror, 'it is then a woman who beats little children?'

'Too often so,' replied Mademoiselle de Montvert; but then repenting having so said, she tried to weaken the effect of her expressions by adding that all stepmothers were not cruel—that some were very kind to their husband's children. But the impression was made; and on the marriage-day, when the Comte de Vaudemont desired Louise to embrace her second mother, the child fled away weeping, and nothing could induce her to receive the caresses of her stepmother. Troubled at this estrangement, yet considering it natural, the comtesse took the part of Louise, and opposed her being sent to a convent, as the Comte de Vaudemont had angrily decided.

Two years passed, and still the dislike of Louise to her stepmother remained unconquered. This sentiment, first roused by the lamentations of Madame de Champy, had become invincible; and the comtesse, despairing of winning the love of Louise, saw her no more, except at family solemnities.

At the age of seven, the princess was seized with small-pox, and was in the greatest danger. She was immediately sent to the chateau of Nomein. Madame de Champy shut herself up with the sick child, quitted her neither night nor day, and became so distracted with grief when the physicians declared the crisis had arrived, that she was borne fainting to her chamber, where she was confined for some time with fever and delirium. Mademoiselle de Montvert had left the chateau through fear at the first symptoms of the disease. Who was there to care for and watch over the poor little princess?

The malady affected her eyes; for four days she was unable to open them; and when reason returned, she called her 'dear kind friend,' *sa bonne amie*, for so she entitled Madame de Champy.

'Why is she not here?' said the child sobbing.

'Because she is very ill herself,' said a sweet affectionate voice, 'and she needs repose. But I am here to tend you as carefully as she, my dear child. Do not disquiet yourself, but drink this; it was she who desired me to intreat you to obey me.' This request was spoken in so winning a tone, that, in spite of her repugnance, Louise swallowed the potion which touched her lips.

'Who then are you?' asked she.

'A new nurse, who will replace your governess until she recovers.'

'Ah! you will not remain with me all night, as she did?'

'Yes, my child, I will stay with you night and day until you are strong and well, and then we will try to amuse you. You will love me a little then, will you not?'

'Yes, yes,' answered Louise, seeking with her burning hand that of the person who spoke. 'I see now that it is *ma bonne amie* who sent you. You love little children? you are not a stepmother?'

The hand which Louise held was drawn slowly away; a long silence ensued. 'What is your name?' asked the sick girl.

'Jeanne,' was the reply.

'Well then, Jeanne, do you know any pretty stories, such as

Madame de Champy tells me, where there are handsome knights of Lorraine, and tournaments, and hermits?'

'Certainly, I know some very interesting ones, which will send you to sleep as soon as hers.' She began, and in a short time Louise slept; and this quiet slumber dispelled her fever. Two days after, she was considered out of danger, but the effect of the disease on her face was dreaded. The physicians declared that she would be disfigured if she touched the spots which covered her features, and proposed to fasten her hands. The idea of being so restrained made the little invalid desperate; but her new nurse engaged to watch her so carefully, as to prevent her touching her face. Louise wished to embrace her; and Jeanne feared not to take the grateful child in her arms, nor to remain day and night, her eyes fixed on the little sufferer. Invalids are often capricious and wilful. Louise, disliking the camphor odour of a lotion with which her eyes were bathed, refused to have it applied. Neither intreaties nor declarations that she would always remain blind could move her; and the physician departed, saying, 'If she will not be saved from blindness, I can do no more.'

'Who is weeping there?' asked Louise.

'It is I,' said Jeanne. 'How can I but be troubled, since you will be blind through your own fault?'

'Well, then, do not weep,' answered Louise in a softened voice; 'come and bathe my eyes. I will do all you wish; only do not weep.'

Jeanne took the liquid and bathed the child's eyes, praising her for her docility.

'Oh,' cried Louise with delirious joy, 'I can see! I can see clearly!' In truth her eyelids had half-opened, but the broad daylight caused them to shut quickly again.

Jeanne rushed to the window, drew close the thick damask curtains, and the partial obscurity thus obtained enabled the young princess to look around her.

'Jeanne, Jeanne!' said she, 'come, that I may see thee.' But Jeanne hid herself behind the curtains at the foot of the bed. 'Where art thou, Jeanne? Ah! it is no longer night! How happy I am! It is thou who hast cured me! Come, and let me thank thee: come, dear Jeanne! Art thou not happy also?'

'Yes, I am very happy,' replied Jeanne, advancing to take the hand which Louise extended to her. But the child, struck with sudden terror, cried out, 'Oh Heaven! the comtesse!' and fell back almost insensible on her pillow.

'No, no, it is thy mother,' said Jeanne of Savoy, bathing the wasted arms of Louise with her warm tears. 'See what thou makest her suffer! Awake, and console her!'

The tones of her voice recalled to the child's heart all the care of this tender nurse, and her fears vanished. 'You do love me, then?' said she. She was answered by fond embraces.

Thus love and confidence were established between the kind stepmother and her daughter. Louise, repenting her unjust prejudice against her, promised her the affection and submission of a child. This promise, springing from gratitude, was easily fulfilled, for the comtesse became the best of mothers to the young princess.

Louise de Lorraine grew up a lovely girl; and her stepmother conducted her to the court of the Duc Charles, to be placed with the Duchesse Claude, daughter of Henri II. and Catherine de Medicis. There Jeanne of Savoy applied herself in developing all the good and amiable qualities of Louise, and in giving her that refinement and grace of manner which the Duchesse Claude had introduced from France into the court of Lorraine.

But the princess was called soon to deplore the loss of this second mother, so worthily beloved. The comte married again. His third choice was Catherine de Lorraine, daughter of the Duc d'Anjou; a haughty and jealous woman, hating Louise on account of her great beauty. The life of the princess was now as bitter as it had before been sweet. Each day she received fresh unkindness from her stepmother; and, to obtain a few hours' peace, she asked permission of her father to go on a weekly pilgrimage to the shrine of San Nicolas. History tells us that she went thither dressed as a peasant girl, accompanied by her maids of honour, a gentleman, and a lacquey; giving away in alms the twenty-five crowns she received as her monthly allowance.

One evening, returning much wearied, she was about to retire to rest, although it was still early. Catherine de Lorraine entered her apartment, saying ironically, 'What, mademoiselle! are you about to retire at this hour, and steal away from the admiration which awaits you always? Are you not the star of the court of