

you for a year, there have been some handsome, agreeable ones; and it is certainly a little strange that none of them—

"None! dear Suzie, absolutely not one! Why I should not tell you the truth! Is it their fault? Have they been awkward? Would they, had they been more skilful, have found the way to my heart? Or, is it my fault? Can this road to my heart be, perhaps, a horrible, steep, stony, inaccessible road, by which no one can pass? Can I be a wicked little creature, hard and cold, and condemned never to love?"

"I do not think so."  
"Nor I, either; I have never felt anything which resembles love. You laugh—and I can guess why you laugh. You are saying to yourself, 'Look at this little girl who pretends to know what it is to love!' You are right, I do not know; but I can imagine a little. To love, dear Suzie, is it not to prefer a certain person to every one, to all the world?"

"Yes, it is much like that."  
"And not to be tired of seeing that person and hearing him? Is it not to cease to live when he is no longer here, and to begin to live again as soon as he reappears?"

"Oh! oh! that would be a very great love!"  
"Ah! well! that is love as I dream of it."

"And that is the love that never comes?"

"Oh! yes, it does. And yet the person preferred by me, to every one else—do you know who it is?"

"No! I do not know, but I have a slight suspicion."

"Yes, it is you, my darling, and perhaps it is you, my naughty sister, who makes me so insensible and cruel. I love you too much. All my love—you have all my love—there is no room for any one else. To prefer some one to you! To love some one better than you—I never can!"

"Oh, Yes —"  
"Oh, no! To love in another way, perhaps, but better, no. He need not expect it, the man I am waiting for and who does not come."

"Do not fear, dear Betty. There will be room in your heart for all whom you should love—for your husband, for your children—and that, too, without making me, your old sister, lose anything. The heart is very little, but it is very large."

Bettina kissed her sister tenderly, then leaning her head coaxingly on Suzie's shoulder:

"If, however, you are tired of keeping me here with you, if you are in a hurry to be rid of me, do you know what I will do? I will put the names of two of these gentlemen in a basket and draw lots. There are two, who, strictly speaking, would not be positively disagreeable to me."

"Which two?"  
"Guess."  
"The Prince Romanelli!"  
"He is one! and the other?"  
"M. de Montesson."  
"Two. The very two. Yes, these two would be acceptable—but only acceptable, and that is not enough."

This is why Bettina awaited with extreme impatience, the day of their departure for Longueval. She was tired of so much pleasure, of so much success, and so many offers of marriage. The whirlpool of Paris life had drawn her in, from the day of her arrival, and would not release her. Not an hour of rest, or quiet. She felt the need of being left to herself, alone with herself, for a few days at least: to consult and question herself, at her leisure, in the quiet and solitude of the country, to belong to herself again at last.

So Bettina was very merry and glad when they took the train for Longueval on the 14th of June at noon. As soon as she found herself alone with her sister;

"Ah!" she cried, "how happy I am. We can take breath. To be alone with you for ten days for the Nortons and the Turners do not come until the 27th, do they?"

"No, not until the 27th."  
"We will spend our time on horse-back and driving in the forests, in the fields. Ten days of freedom. And during all the ten days, no lovers! no lovers! and all these lovers, oh! dear, what are they in love with? With me, or my money! That is the mystery, the impenetrable mystery."  
(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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