

"A little dark-haired woman appeared in the doorway, and instantly started back as if in alarm.

"There are two gentlemen in it!"

"Good heavens, Madame! I can't give you a whole carriage to yourself!"

"Very well, then; I will not go!"

"As you please. The train is off—I am going to give the signal."

"Stay, Monsieur, stay. I must absolutely go, and since there is only this coupe—but you'll let me have a sleeping compartment at the first station we come to?"

"Yes, Madame."

"You'll telegraph for it?"

"Yes, yes, Madame."

"You promise me?"

"Yes, Madame."

"You are sure?"

"Yes, yes, yes, Madame!"

"The door was thrown open wide, and the little brown-haired lady, surrounded by half a carriage load of parcels and wraps, entered the coupe, a shrill whistle, and, we were off.

"Gallantly the administrative gentleman seated himself by my side, so as to leave the opposite seat entirely at the service of the new arrival.

"Without even turning her eyes towards

us, flustered and red with anger, she arranged her parcels around her with the ordinary haste of persons who have long hours to pass in a railway carriage.

"She had one bag, two bags, three bags, and, as to wraps—!

"Out of the corner of my eyes, I watched these little proceedings, and I observed with pleasure that she was a charming little personage. I say with pleasure; for, in truth, it is always more agreeable to have a pretty woman for a travelling companion than an ugly one.

"It was very cold. The country, covered with snow, and lit up by a very pale-faced sun, flew rapidly by on either side of the carriage. The little lady, muffled up to her chin in rugs and other wraps, turned her gaze obstinately out of the farther window; the administrative gentleman put his papers, yellow, green and blue, with printed headings, in order, and read them attentively; as to myself, comfortably installed in a corner, with my feet on the foot-warmer, I watched through the file of newspapers I had bought at the station to pass the time.

"1121; Laroche. The train stopped. The administrative gentleman gathered up his papers, rose, bowed and descended from the carriage. His feet had hardly touched

doing it could I find? The classic resources of putting up or down the windows, in such a state of temperature, were non-available. What was there to do?—launch a commonplace remark of some kind? Better a hundred times keep silent than do that. My companion, I had seen at a glance with my Parisian eyes, was a woman of the best society. To speak to her brusquely, without being known to her, would have made me appear in her eyes no better than a vulgar commercial traveller. The only way of drawing her into conversation would be to find something strikingly original to say to her; but what?—what? I sought laboriously, but did not find.

"I was still continuing that search, when the train stopped suddenly, thanks to the powers of the new brake—so good against accidents, but so bad for passengers.

"Tonnerre!—twenty-five minutes' stoppage!" cried a porter, opening the carriage door.

"My companion arose, threw off her rugs, which, with her three bags, she left in the carriage, and descended on to the platform. It was noon. Hunger had begun to make itself felt. She moved toward the buffet on the left, across the line.

"I followed her. I was then enabled to admire at my ease the elegance of her figure, well set off by a long fur mantle. I remarked also that she had a pretty neck, a grey felt hat and very tiny feet.

"At the entrance to the buffet stood the manager. Wearing a velvet cap and bearing a striking resemblance to Napoleon III., he pointed out with his hand and with a napkin a long table to be taken by assault.

"I entered with a crowd of travellers—ruffled, hurried; in short, that stream of persons essentially grotesque and derogatory to human beauty, of an express train, bent all on devouring food of some sort.

"I seated myself and hastily swallowed the succession of dishes set before me; my lady traveller took some soup at a separate table.

"I was amongst the first to rise, and went out on the platform to smoke a cigarette. The twenty-five minutes—reduced to twenty according to rule—were quickly spent. The passengers came in groups from the refectory and returned to their places in the carriages. I reinstalled myself in mine. My fellow traveller did not appear.

"I perceived her at the little bookstall on the opposite side of the line looking over the volumes displayed. Although I could see nothing of her but her back, I easily recognized her by her pretty figure, her otter-skin mantle, and her gray hat. Her hair seemed to be a little less dark than I had imagined it to be: but that was the effect of distance, no doubt.



"SHE ARRANGED HER PARCELS."

the platform before he was received by the station-master, who called him 'Mr. Inspector.' The lady leaned out of the door:—

"Mr. Station-master!"

"Madame?"

"They were to telegraph you from Paris for a sleeping carriage."

"They have done so, Madame, and I have sent on the message."

"Sent it on! Am I not to have a sleeping-carriage at once, then?"

"Impossible, Madame; we have no carriages here. They can only furnish you with one at Lyons."

"At Lyons! At what o'clock?"

"At 5.45, Madame."

"At the end of the journey! But, Monsieur, I can't remain in this coupe until

that time! Impossible—I won't!"

"Take care, Madame, the train is starting!"

"It started."

"She threw herself into her corner again, in a furious pet, without casting a glance at me. I plunged once more into the contents of my newspapers—into the contents of the tenth, that is to say.

"Shall I confess it! That paper took me longer to read than its nine predecessors. Twenty times I began the same line; I believe that at least for some time the paper was upside down. Hang it, one can't be shut up for a long journey with a pretty woman without feeling some sort of emotion!"

"I greatly wanted to enter into conversation with her, but what pretext for