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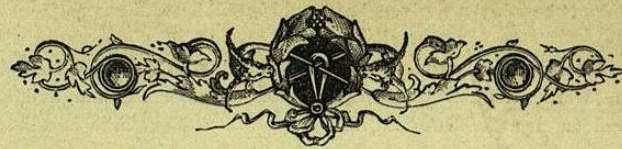
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ACERVO DE LITERATURA

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## THE GOLDEN LION OF GRANPERE.

### CHAPTER I.



Up among the Vosges Mountains in Lorraine, but just outside the old half-German province of Alsace, about thirty miles distant from the new and thoroughly French baths of Plombières, there lies the village of Granpere. Whatever may be said or thought here in England of the late imperial rule in France, it must, at any rate, be admitted that good roads were made under the Empire. Alsace, which twenty years ago seems to have been somewhat behindhand in this respect, received her full share of Napoleon's attention, and Granpere is now placed on an excellent road, which runs from the town of Remiremont on one line of railway, to Colmar on another. The inhabitants of the Alsatian Ballon hills and the open valleys among them seem to think that the civilization of great cities has been brought near enough to them, as there is already a dili-

gence running daily from Granpere to Remiremont; and at Remiremont you are on the railway, and, of course, in the middle of every thing.

And, indeed, an observant traveler will be led to think that a great deal of what may most truly be called civilization has found its way in among the Ballons, whether it traveled thither by the new-fangled railways and imperial routes, or found its passage along the valley streams before imperial favors had been showered upon the district. We are told that when Pastor Oberlin was appointed to his cure as Protestant clergyman in the Ban de la Roche, a little more than one hundred years ago—that was, in 1767—this region was densely dark and far behind in the world's running as regards all progress. The people were ignorant, poor, half starved, almost savage, destitute of communication, and unable to produce from their own soil enough food for their own sustenance. Of manufacturing enterprise they understood nothing, and were only just far enough advanced in knowledge for the Protestants to hate the Catholics, and the Catholics to hate the Protestants. Then came that wonderful clergyman, Pastor Oberlin—he was indeed a wonderful clergyman—and made a great change. Since that there have been the two empires, and Alsace has looked up in the world. Whether the thanks of the people are more honestly due to Oberlin or to the late Emperor, the author of this little story will not pretend to say; but he will venture to express his opinion that at present the rural Alsatians are a happy, prosperous people, with the burden on their shoulders of but few paupers, and fewer gentlemen—apparently a

contented people, not ambitious, given but little to politics. Protestants and Catholics mingled without hatred or fanaticism, educated though not learned, industrious though not energetic, quiet and peaceful, making linen and cheese, growing potatoes, importing corn, coming into the world, marrying, begetting children, and dying in the wholesome homespun fashion which is so sweet to us in that mood of philosophy which teaches us to love the country and to despise the town. Whether it be better for a people to achieve an even level of prosperity, which is shared by all, but which makes none eminent, or to encounter those rough, ambitious, competitive strengths which produce both palaces and poor-houses, shall not be matter of argument here; but the teller of this story is disposed to think that the chance traveler, as long as he tarries at Granpere, will insensibly and perhaps unconsciously become an advocate of the former doctrine; he will be struck by the comfort which he sees around him, and for a while will dispense with wealth, luxury, scholarships, and fashion. Whether the inhabitants of these hills and valleys will advance to further progress now that they are again to become German, is another question, which the writer will not attempt to answer here.

Granpere in itself is a very pleasing village. Though the amount of population and number of houses do not suffice to make it more than a village, it covers so large a space of ground as almost to give it a claim to town honors. It is perhaps a full mile in length; and though it has but one street, there are buildings standing here and there, back from the line, which make it seem to stretch beyond the narrow confines of a single thoroughfare. In most French villages some of the houses are high and spacious, but here they seem almost all to be so. And many of them have been constructed after that independent fashion which always gives to a house in a street a character and importance of its own. They do not stand in a simple line, each supported by the strength of its neighbor, but occupy their own ground, facing this way or that as each may please, presenting here a corner to the main street, and there an end. There are little gardens,

and big stables, and commodious barns; and periodical paint with annual whitewash is not wanting. The unstinted slates shine copiously under the sun, and over almost every other door there is a large lettered board which indicates that the resident within is a dealer in the linen which is produced throughout the country. All these things together give to Granpere an air of prosperity and comfort which is not at all checked by the fact that there is in the place no mansion which we Englishmen would call the gentleman's house, nothing approaching to the ascendancy of a parish squire, no baron's castle, no manorial hall—not even a château to overshadow the modest roofs of the dealers in the linen of the Vosges.

And the scenery round Granpere is very pleasant, though the neighboring hills never rise to the magnificence of mountains, or produce that grandeur which tourists desire when they travel in search of the beauties of Nature. It is a spot to love if you know it well, rather than to visit with hopes raised high, and to leave with vivid impressions. There is water in abundance—a pretty lake lying at the feet of sloping hills, rivulets running down from the high upper lands, and turning many a modest wheel in their course, a water-fall or two here and there, and a so-called mountain summit within an easy distance, from whence the sun may be seen to rise among the Swiss mountains; and distant perhaps three miles from the village the main river which runs down the valley makes for itself a wild ravine, just where the bridge on the new road to Münster crosses the water, and helps to excuse the people of Granpere for claiming for themselves a great object of natural attraction. The bridge and the river and the ravine are very pretty, and perhaps justify all that the villagers say of them when they sing to travelers the praises of their country.

Whether it be the sale of linen that has produced the large inn at Granpere, or the delicious air of the place, or the ravine and the bridge, matters little to our story; but the fact of the inn matters very much. There it is—a roomy, commodious building, not easily intelligible to a stranger, with its widely distributed parts, standing like an inverted V, with its open side toward the

main road. On the ground-floor on one side are the large stables and coach-house, with a billiard-room and *café* over them, and a long balcony which runs round the building; and on the other side there are kitchens and drinking-rooms, and over these the chamber for meals and the bedrooms. All large, airy, and clean, though, perhaps, not excellently well finished in their construction, and furnished with but little pretense to French luxury. And behind the inn there are gardens, by no means trim, and a dusty summer-house, which serves, however, for the smoking of a cigar; and there is generally space and plenty and good-will. Either the linen, or the air, or the ravine, or, as is more probable, the three combined, have produced a business, so that the landlord of the Lion d'Or at Granpere is a thriving man.

The reader shall at once be introduced to the landlord, and informed at the same time that, in so far as he may be interested in this story, he will have to take up his abode at the Lion d'Or till it be concluded; not as a guest staying loosely at his inn, but as one who is concerned with all the innermost affairs of the household. He will not simply eat his plate of soup and drink his glass of wine, and pass on, knowing and caring more for the servant than for the servant's master, but he must content himself to sit at the landlord's table, to converse very frequently with the landlord's wife, to become very intimate with the landlord's son—whether on loving or on unloving terms shall be left entirely to himself—and to throw himself, with the sympathy of old friendship, into all the troubles and all the joys of the landlord's niece. If the reader be one who can not take such a journey, and pass a month or two without the society of persons whom he would define as ladies and gentlemen, he had better be warned at once, and move on, not setting foot within the Lion d'Or at Granpere.

Michel Voss, the landlord, in person was at this time a tall, stout, active, and very handsome man, about fifty years of age. As his son was already twenty-five—and was known to be so throughout the commune—people were sure that Michel Voss was fifty or thereabouts; but there was very little in his appearance to indicate so many years.

He was fat and burly, to be sure; but then he was not fat to lethargy, or burly with any sign of slowness. There was still the spring of youth in his footstep; and when there was some weight to be lifted, some heavy timber to be thrust here or there, some huge, lumbering vehicle to be hoisted in or out, there was no arm about the place so strong as that of the master. His short, dark, curly hair—that was always kept clipped round his head—was beginning to show a tinge of gray, but the huge mustache on his upper lip was still of a thorough brown, as was also the small morsel of beard which he wore upon his chin. He had bright, sharp brown eyes, a nose slightly beaked, and a large mouth. He was, on the whole, a man of good temper, just withal, and one who loved those who belonged to him; but he chose to be master in his own house, and was apt to think that his superior years enabled him to know what younger people wanted better than they would know themselves. He was loved in his house and respected in his village; but there was something in the beak of his nose and the brightness of his eye which was apt to make those around him afraid of him. And, indeed, Michel Voss could lose his temper and become an angry man.

Our landlord had been twice married. By his first wife he had now living a single son, George Voss, who, at the time of our tale, had already reached his twenty-fifth year. George, however, did not at this time live under his father's roof, having taken service for a time with the landlady of another inn, at Colmar. George Voss was known to be a clever young man; many in those parts declared that he was much more so than his father; and when he became clerk at the Poste in Colmar, and, after a year or two, had taken into his hands almost the entire management of that house—so that people began to say that, old-fashioned and wretched as it was, money might still be made there—people began to say also that Michel Voss had been wrong to allow his son to leave Granpere. But, in truth, there had been a few words between the father and the son; and the two were so like each other that the father found it difficult to rule, and the son found it difficult to be ruled.

George Voss was very like his father, with

this difference, as he was often told by the old folk about Granpere, that he would never fill his father's shoes. He was a smaller man, less tall by a couple of inches, less broad in proportion across the shoulders, whose arm would never be so strong, whose leg would never grace a tight stocking with so full a development. But he had the same eye, bright and brown and very quick, the same mouth, the same aquiline nose, the same broad forehead and well-shaped chin, and the same look in his face which made men know as by instinct that he would sooner command than obey. So there had come to be a few words, and George Voss had gone away to the house of a cousin of his mother's, and had taken to commanding there.

Not that there had been any quarrel between the father and the son; nor, indeed, that George was aware that he had been in the least disobedient to his parent. There was no recognized ambition for rule in the breast of either of them. It was simply this, that their tempers were alike; and when on an occasion Michel told his son that he would not allow a certain piece of folly which the son was, as he thought, likely to commit, George declared that he would soon set that matter right by leaving Granpere. Accordingly he did leave Granpere, and became the right hand—and, indeed, the head and backbone and best leg—of his old cousin, Madame Faragon, of the Poste at Colmar. Now the matter on which these few words occurred was a question of love—whether George Voss should fall in love with and marry his step-mother's niece, Marie Bromar. But before any thing further can be said of these few words, Madame Voss and her niece must be introduced to the reader.

Madame Voss was nearly twenty years younger than her husband, and had now been a wife some five or six years. She had been brought from Epinal, where she had lived with a married sister, a widow, much older than herself—in parting from whom on her marriage there had been much tribulation. "Should any thing happen to Marie," she had said to Michel Voss before she gave him her troth, "you will let Minnie Bromar come to me?" Michel Voss, who was then

hotly in love with his hoped-for bride—hotly in love, in spite of his four-and-forty years—gave the required promise. The said "something," which had been suspected, had happened. Madame Bromar had died, and Minnie Bromar, her daughter—or Marie, as she was always afterward called—had at once been taken into the house at Granpere. Michel never thought twice about it when he was reminded of his promise. "If I hadn't promised at all, she should come the same," he said: "the house is big enough for a dozen more yet." In saying this he perhaps alluded to a little baby that then lay in a cradle in his wife's room, by means of which at that time Madame Voss was able to make her big husband do pretty nearly any thing that she pleased. So Marie Bromar, then just fifteen years of age, was brought over from Epinal to Granpere, and the house certainly was not felt to be too small because she was there. Marie soon learned the ways and wishes of her burly, soft-hearted uncle—would fill his pipe for him, and hand him his soup, and bring his slippers, and put her soft arm round his neck, and became a favorite. She was only a child when she came, and Michel thought that it was very pleasant; but in five years' time she was a woman, and Michel was forced to reflect that it would not be well that there should be another marriage and another family in the house while he was so young himself. There was at this time a third baby in the cradle—and then Marie Bromar had not a franc of *dot*. Marie was the sweetest eldest daughter in the world, but he could not think it right that his son should marry a wife before he had done a stroke for himself in the world. Prudence made it absolutely necessary that he should say a word to his son.

Madame Voss was certainly nearly twenty years younger than her husband, and yet the pair did not look to be ill sorted. Michel was so handsome, strong, and hale; and Madame Voss, though she was a comely woman—though when she was brought home a bride to Granpere the neighbors had all declared that she was very handsome—carried with her a look of more years than she really possessed. She had borne many of a woman's cares, and had known much of

woman's sorrows, before she had become wife to Michel Voss; and then when the babes came, and she had settled down as mistress of that large household, and taught herself to regard George Voss and Marie Bromar almost as her own children, all idea that she was much younger than her husband departed from her. She was a woman who desired to excel her husband in nothing, if only she might be considered to be in some things his equal. There was no feeling in the village that Michel Voss had brought home a young wife, and had made a fool of himself. He was a man entitled to have a wife much younger than himself. Madame Voss in those days always wore a white cap, and a dark stuff gown, which was changed on Sundays for one of black silk, and brown mittens on her hands, and she went about the house in soft carpet shoes. She was a conscientious, useful, but not an enterprising woman; loving her husband much, and fearing him somewhat; liking to have her own way in certain small matters, but willing to be led in other things so long as those were surrendered to her; careful with her children, the care of whom seemed to deprive her of the power of caring for the business of the inn; kind to her niece, good-humored in her house, and satisfied with the world at large as long as she might always be allowed to entertain M. le Curé at dinner on Sundays. Michel Voss, Protestant though he was, had not the slightest objection to giving M. le Curé his Sunday dinner, on condition that M. le Curé on these occasions would confine his conversation to open subjects. M. le Curé was quite willing to eat his dinner and give no offense.

A word, too, must be said of Marie Bromar before we begin our story. Marie Bromar is the heroine of this little tale; and the reader must be made to have some idea of her as she would have appeared before him had he seen her standing near her uncle in the long room up stairs of the hotel at Granpere. Marie had been fifteen when she was brought from Epinal to Granpere, and had then been a child; but she had now reached her twentieth birthday, and was a woman. She was not above the middle height, and might seem to be less, indeed, in that house, because her aunt and her uncle were tall; but she was

straight, well made, and very active. She was strong, and liked to use her strength, and was very keen about all the work of the house. During the five years of her residence at Granpere she had thoroughly learned the mysteries of her uncle's trade. She knew good wine from bad by the perfume; she knew whether bread was the full weight by the touch; with a glance of her eye she could tell whether the cheese and butter were what they ought to be; in a matter of poultry no woman in all the commune could take her in; she was great in judging eggs; knew well the quality of linen; and was even able to calculate how long the hay should last, and what should be the consumption of corn in the stables. Michel Voss was well aware before Marie had been a year beneath his roof that she well earned the morsel she ate and the drop she drank; and when she had been there five years he was ready to swear that she was the cleverest girl in Lorraine or Alsace. And she was very pretty, with rich brown hair that would not allow itself to be brushed out of its crisp half curls in front, and which she always wore cut short behind, curling round her straight, well-formed neck. Her eyes were gray, with a strong shade, indeed, of green, but were very bright and pleasant, full of intelligence, telling stories, by their glances, of her whole inward disposition, of her activity, quickness, and desire to have a hand in every thing that was being done. Her father, Jean Bromar, had come from the same stock with Michel Voss; and she, too, had something of that aquiline nose which gave to the innkeeper and his son the look which made men dislike to contradict them. Her mouth was large, but her teeth were very white and perfect, and her smile was the sweetest thing that ever was seen. Marie Bromar was a pretty girl; and George Voss, had he lived so near to her and not have fallen in love with her, must have been cold indeed.

At the end of these five years Marie had become a woman, and was known by all around her to be a woman much stronger, both in person and in purpose, than her aunt; but she maintained, almost unconsciously, many of the ways in the house which she had assumed when she first en-

tered it. Then she had always been on foot, to be every body's messenger—and so she was now. When her uncle and aunt were at their meals she was always up and about, attending them, attending the public guests, attending the whole house. And it seemed as though she herself never sat down to eat or drink. Indeed, it was rare enough to find her seated at all. She would have a cup of coffee standing up at the little desk near the public window when she kept her books, or would take a morsel of meat as she helped to remove the dishes. She would stand sometimes for a minute leaning on the back of her uncle's chair as he sat at his supper, and would say, when he bade her to take her chair and eat with them, that she preferred picking and stealing. In all things she worshiped her uncle, observing his movements, caring for his wants, and carrying out his plans. She did not worship her aunt, but she so served Madame Voss that had she been withdrawn from the household, Madame Voss would have found herself altogether unable to provide for its wants. Thus Marie Bromar had become the guardian angel of the Lion d'Or at Granpere.

There must be a word or two more said of the difference between George Voss and his father, which had ended in sending George to Colmar; a word or two about that, and a word also of what occurred between George and Marie. Then we shall be able to commence our story without further reference to things past. As Michel Voss was a just, affectionate, and intelligent man, he would not, probably, have objected to a marriage between the two young people, had the proposition for such a marriage been first submitted to him, with a proper amount of attention to his judgment and controlling power. But the idea was introduced to him in a manner which taught him to think that there was to be a clandestine love-affair. To him George was still a boy, and Marie not much more than a child, and, without much thinking, he felt that the thing was improper.

"I won't have it, George," he had said.

"Won't have what, father?"

"Never mind. You know. If you can't get over it in any other way, you had better go away. You must do something for

yourself before you can think of marrying."

"I am not thinking of marrying."

"Then what were you thinking of when I saw you with Marie? I won't have it for her sake, and I won't have it for mine, and I won't have it for your own. You had better go away for a while."

"I'll go away to-morrow if you wish it, father." Michel had turned away, not saying another word; and on the following day George did go away, hardly waiting an hour to set in order his part of his father's business. For it must be known that George had not been an idler in his father's establishment. There was a trade of wood-cutting upon the mountain-side, with a saw-mill turned by water beneath, over which George had presided almost since he had left the school of the commune. When his father told him that he was bound to do something before he got married, he could not have intended to accuse him of having been hitherto idle. Of the wood-cutting and the saw-mill George knew as much as Marie did of the poultry and the linen. Michel was wrong, probably, in his attempt to separate them. The house was large enough, or if not, there was still room for another house to be built in Granpere. They would have done well as man and wife. But then the head of a household naturally objects to seeing the boys and girls belonging to him making love under his nose without any reference to his opinion. "Things were not made so easy for me," he says to himself, and feels it to be a sort of duty to take care that the course of love shall not run altogether smooth. George, no doubt, was too abrupt with his father; or perhaps it might be the case that he was not sorry to take an opportunity of leaving for a while Granpere and Marie Bromar. It might be well to see the world; and though Marie Bromar was bright and pretty, it might be that there were others abroad brighter and prettier.

His father had spoken to him on one fine September afternoon, and within an hour George was with the men who were stripping bark from the great pine logs upon the side of the mountain. With them, and with two or three others who were engaged at the saw-mills, he remained till the night was dark.

Then he came down and told something of his intentions to his step-mother. He was going to Colmar on the morrow with a horse and small cart, and would take with him what clothes he had ready. He did not speak to Marie that night, but he said something to his father about the timber and the mill. Gaspar Muntz, the head woodsman, knew, he said, all about the business. Gaspar could carry on the work till it would suit Michel Voss himself to see how things were going on. Michel Voss was sore and angry, but he said nothing. He sent to his son a couple of hundred francs by his wife, but said no word of explanation even to her. On the following morning George was off without seeing his father.

But Marie was up to give him his breakfast. "What is the meaning of this, George?" she said.

"Father says that I shall be better away from this—so I am going away."

"And why will you be better away?" To this George made no answer. "It will be terrible if you quarrel with your father. Nothing can be so bad as that."

"We have not quarreled. That is to say, I have not quarreled with him. If he quarrels with me, I can not help it."

"It must be helped," said Marie, as she placed before him a mess of eggs which she had cooked for him with her own hands. "I would sooner die than see any thing wrong between you two." Then there was a pause. "Is it about me, George?" she asked, boldly.

"Father thinks that I love you: so I do."

Marie paused for a few minutes before she said any thing further. She was standing very near to George, who was eating his breakfast heartily in spite of the interesting nature of the conversation. As she filled his cup a second time, she spoke again. "I will never do any thing, George, if I can help it, to displease my uncle."

"But why should it displease him? He wants to have his own way in every thing."

"Of course he does."

"He has told me to go; and I'll go. I've worked for him as no other man would work, and have never said a word about a share in the business, and never would."

"Is it not all for yourself, George?"

"And why shouldn't you and I be married if we like it?"

"I will never like it," said she, solemnly, "if uncle dislikes it."

"Very well," said George. "There is the horse ready, and now I'm off."

So he went, starting just as the day was dawning, and no one saw him on that morning except Marie Bromar. As soon as he was gone she went up to her little room, and sat herself down on her bedside. She knew that she loved him, and had been told that she was beloved. She knew that she could not lose him without suffering terribly; but now she almost feared that it would be necessary that she should lose him. His manner had not been tender to her. He had, indeed, said that he loved her, but there had been nothing of the tenderness of love in his mode of saying so; and then he had said, no word of persistency in the teeth of his father's objection. She had declared—thoroughly purposing that her declaration should be true—that she would never become his wife in opposition to her uncle's wishes; but he, had he been in earnest, might have said something of his readiness to attempt, at least, to overcome his father's objection. But he had said not a word; and Marie, as she sat upon her bed, made up her mind that it must be all over. But she made up her mind also that she would entertain no feeling of anger against her uncle. She owed him every thing—so she thought, making no account, as George had done, of labor given in return. She was only a girl, and what was her labor? For a while she resolved that she would give a spoken assurance to her uncle that he need fear nothing from her. It was natural enough to her that her uncle should desire a better marriage for his son. But after a while she reflected that any speech from her on such a subject would be difficult, and that it would be better that she should hold her tongue. So she held her tongue, and thought of George, and suffered; but still was merry, at least in manner, when her uncle spoke to her, and priced the poultry, and counted the linen, and made out the visitors' bills, as though nothing evil had come upon her. She was a gallant girl, and Michel Voss, though he could not speak of it, understood her gal-

lantry, and made notes of it on the note-book of his heart.

In the mean time George Voss was thriving at Colmar—as the Vosses did thrive wherever they settled themselves. But he

sent no word to his father; nor did his father send word to him, though they were not more than ten leagues apart. Once Madame Voss went over to see him, and brought back word of his well-doing.

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## CHAPTER II.

EXACTLY at eight o'clock every evening a loud bell was sounded in the hotel of the Lion d'Or at Granpere, and all within the house sat down together to supper. The supper was spread on a long table in the saloon up stairs, and the room was lighted with camphene lamps—for as yet gas had not found its way to Granpere. At this meal assembled not only the guests in the house and the members of the family of the landlord, but also many persons living in the village, whom it suited to take, at a certain price per month, the chief meal of the day at the house of the innkeeper, instead of eating in their own houses a more costly, a less dainty, and probably a lonely supper. Therefore, when the bell was heard, there came together some dozen residents of Granpere, mostly young men engaged in the linen trade, from their different lodgings, and each took his accustomed seat down the sides of the long board, at which, tied in a knot, was placed his own napkin. At the top of the table was the place of Madame Voss, which she never failed to fill exactly three minutes after the bell had been rung. At her right hand was the chair of the master of the house—never occupied by any one else; but it would often happen that some business would keep him away. Since George had left him he had taken the timber into his own hands, and was accustomed to think, and sometimes to say, that the necessity was cruel on him. Below his chair, and on the other side of Madame Voss, there would generally be two or three places kept for guests who might be specially looked upon as the intimate friends of the mistress of the house; and at the farther end of the table, close to the window, was the space allotted to travelers. Here the napkins were not tied in knots, but were always clean. And, though the little plates of radishes, cakes, and dried

fruits were continued from one of the tables to the other, the long-necked, thin bottles of common wine came to an end before they reached the strangers' portion of the board; for it had been found that strangers would take at that hour either tea or a better kind of wine than that which Michel Voss gave to his accustomed guests without any special charge. When, however, the stranger should please to take the common wine, he was by no means thereby prejudiced in the eyes of Madame Voss or her husband. Michel Voss liked a profit, but he liked the habits of his country almost as well.

One evening in September, about twelve months after the departure of George, Madame Voss took her seat at the table, and the young men of the placé, who had been waiting round the door of the hotel for a few minutes, followed her into the room. And there was M. Goudin, the curé, with another young clergyman, his friend. On Sundays the curé always dined at the hotel at half past twelve o'clock, as the friend of the family; but for his supper he paid, as did the other guests. I rather fancy that on week-days he had no particular dinner; and, indeed, there was no such formal meal given in the house of Michel Voss on week-days. There was something put on the table about noon in the little room between the kitchen and the public window, but, except on Sundays, it could hardly be called a dinner. On Sundays a real dinner was served in the room up stairs, with soup and removes, and *entrées* and the *rôti*, all in the right place—which showed that they knew what a dinner was at the Lion d'Or; but, throughout the week, supper was the meal of the day. After M. Goudin, on this occasion, there came two maiden ladies from Epinal who were lodging at Granpere for change of air. They seated themselves near to Madame Voss, but