



CHAPTER XIII.

ON the next morning Michel Voss and his son met in the kitchen, and found Marie already there. "Well, my girl," said Michel, as he patted Marie's shoulder and kissed her forehead, "you've been up getting a rare breakfast for this fellow, I see." Marie smiled, and made some good-humored reply. No one could have told by her face that there was any thing amiss with her. "It's the last favor of the kind he'll ever have at your hands," continued Michel, "and yet he doesn't seem to be half grateful." George stood with his back to the kitchen fire, and did not say a word. It was impossible to him even to appear to be pleasant when such things were being said. Marie was a better hypocrite, and, though she said little, was able to look as though she could sympathize with her uncle's pleasant mirth. The two men had soon eaten their breakfast and were gone, and then Marie was left alone with her thoughts. Would George say any thing to his father of what had passed up stairs on the previous evening?

The two men started, and when they were alone together, and as long as Michel abstained from talking about Marie and her prospects, George was able to converse freely with his father. When they left the house the morning was just dawning, and the air was fresh and sharp. "We shall soon have the frost here now," said Michel, "and then there will be no more grass for the cattle."

"I suppose they can have them out on the lowlands till the end of November. They always used."

"Yes, they can have them out; but having them out and having food for them are different things. The people here have so much stock now that directly the growth is checked by the frost the land becomes almost bare. They forget the old saying, 'Half stocking,

whole profits; whole stocking, half profits! And then, too, I think the winters are earlier here than they used to be. They'll have to go back to the Swiss plan, I fancy, and carry the food to the cattle in their houses. It may be old-fashioned, as they say; but I doubt whether the fodder does not go further so." Then, as they began to ascend the mountain, he got on to the subject of his own business and George's prospects. "The dues to the Commune are so heavy," he said, "that in fact there is little or nothing to be made out of the timber. It looks like a business, because many men are employed, and it's a kind of thing that spreads itself, and bears looking at. But it leaves nothing behind."

"It's not quite so bad as that, I hope," said George.

"Upon my word, then, it is not much better, my boy. When you've charged yourself with interest on the money spent on the mills, there is not much to boast about. You're bound to replant every yard you strip, and yet the Commune expects as high a rent as when there was no planting to be done at all. They couldn't get it, only that men like myself have their money in the mills, and can't well get out of the trade."

"I don't think you'd like to give it up, father."

"Well, no. It gives me exercise and something to do. The women manage most of it down at the house; but there must be a change when Marie has gone. I have hardly looked it in the face yet, but I know there must be a change. She has grown up among it, till she has it all at her fingers' ends. I tell you what, George, she is a girl in a hundred—a girl in a hundred. She is going to marry a rich man, and so it don't much signify; but if she married a poor man, she would be as good as a fortune to him. She'd

make a fortune for any man. That's my belief. There is nothing she doesn't know, and nothing she doesn't understand."

Why did his father tell him all this? George thought of the day on which his father had, as he was accustomed to say to himself, turned him out of the house because he wanted to marry this girl who was "as good as a fortune" to any man. Had he, then, been imprudent in allowing himself to love such a girl? Could there be any good reason why his father should have wished that a "fortune" in every way so desirable should go out of the family? "She'll have nothing to do of that sort if she goes to Basle," said George, moodily.

"That is more than you can say," replied his father. "A woman married to a man of business can always find her share in it if she pleases. And with such a one as Adrian Urmand her side of the house will not be the least considerable."

"I suppose he is little better than a fool," said George.

"A fool! He is not a fool at all. If you were to see him buying, you would not call him a fool. He is very far from a fool."

"It may be so. I do not know much of him myself."

"You should not be so prone to think men fools till you find them so, especially those who are to be so near to yourself. No; he's not a fool by any means. But he will know that he has got a clever wife, and he will not be ashamed to make use of her."

George was unwilling to contradict his father at the present moment, as he had all but made up his mind to tell the whole story about himself and Marie before he returned to the house. He had not the slightest idea that by doing so he would be able to soften his father's heart. He was sure, on the contrary, that were he to do so, he and his father would go back to the hotel as enemies. But he was quite resolved that the story should be told sooner or later—should be told before the day fixed for the wedding. If it was to be told by himself, what occasion could be so fitting as the present? But, if it were to be done on this morning, it would be unwise to harass his father by any small previous contradictions.

They were now up among the scattered,

prostrate logs, and had again taken up the question of the business of wood-cutting. "No, George; it would never have done for you; not as a main-stay. I thought of giving it up to you once, but I knew that it would make a poor man of you."

"I wish you had," said George, who was unable to repress the feeling of his heart.

"Why do you say that? What a fool you must be if you think it! There is nothing you may not do where you are, and you have got it all into your own hands, with little or no outlay. The rent is nothing; and the business is there ready made for you. In your position, if you find the hotel is not enough, there is nothing you can not take up." They had now seated themselves on the trunk of a pine-tree, and Michel Voss, having drawn a pipe from his pocket and filled it, was lighting it as he sat upon the wood. "No, my boy," he continued, "you'll have a better life of it than your father, I don't doubt. After all, the towns are better than the country. There is more to be seen and more to be learned. I don't complain. The Lord has been very good to me. I've had enough of every thing, and have been able to keep my head up. But I feel a little sad when I look forward. You and Marie will both be gone; and your step-mother's friend, M. le Curé Gondin, does not make much society for me. I sometimes think, when I am smoking a pipe up here all alone, that this is the best of it all. It will be when Marie has gone." If his father thus thought of it, why did he send Marie away? If he thus thought of it, why had he sent his son away? Had it not already been within his power to keep both of them there together under his roof-tree? He had insisted on dividing them, and dismissing them from Granpere, one in one direction and the other in another; and then he complained of being alone! Surely his father was altogether unreasonable. "And now one can't even get tobacco that is worth smoking," continued Michel, in a melancholy tone. "There used to be good tobacco, but I don't know where it has all gone."

"I can send you over a little prime tobacco from Colmar, father."

"I wish you would, George. This is foul

stuff. But I sometimes think I'll give it up. What's the use of it? A man sits and smokes and smokes, and nothing comes of it. It don't feed him nor clothe him, and it leaves nothing behind—except a stink.”

“You're a little down in the mouth, father, or you wouldn't talk of giving up smoking.”

“I am down in the mouth—terribly down in the mouth. Till it was all settled I did not know how much I should feel Marie's going. Of course it had to be, but it makes an old man of me. There will be nothing left. Of course there's your step-mother—as good a woman as ever lived—and the children; but Marie was somehow the soul of us all. Give us another light, George. I'm blessed if I can keep the fire in the pipe at all.”

And this, thought George, is in truth the state of my father's mind! There are three of us concerned who are all equally dear to each other—my father, myself, and Marie Bromar. There is not one of them who doesn't feel that the presence of the others is necessary to his happiness. Here is my father declaring that the world will no longer have any savor for him because I am away in one place and Marie is to be away in another. There is not the slightest real reason on earth why we should have been separated. Yet he—he alone has done it; and we—we are to break our hearts over it! Or, rather, he has not done it. He is about to do it. The sacrifice is not yet made, and yet it must be made, because my father is so unreasonable that no one will dare to point out to him where lies the way to his own happiness and to the happiness of those he loves! It was thus that George Voss thought of it as he listened to his father's wailings.

But he himself, though he was hot in temper, was slow, or at least deliberate, in action. He did not even now speak out at once. When his father's pipe was finished he suggested that they should go on to a certain run for the fir logs, which he himself, George Voss, had made—a steep grooved inclined plane by which the timber, when cut in these parts, could be sent down with a rush to the close neighborhood of the saw-mill below. They went and inspected the

slide, and discussed the question of putting new wood into the groove. Michel, with the melancholy tone that had prevailed with him all the morning, spoke of matters as though any money spent in mending would be thrown away. There are moments in the lives of most of us in which it seems to us that there will never be more cakes and ale. George, however, talked of the children, and reminded his father that in matters of business nothing is so ruinous as ruin. “If you've got to get your money out of a thing, it should always be in working order,” he said. Michel acknowledged the truth of the rule, but again declared that there was no money to be got out of the thing. He yielded, however, and promised that the repairs should be made. Then they went down to the mill, which was going at that time. George, as he stood by and watched the man and boy adjusting the logs to the cradle, and listened to the apparently self-acting saw as it did its work, and observed the perfection of the simple machinery which he himself had adjusted, and smelled the sweet scent of the newly made sawdust, and listened to the music of the little stream, when, between whiles, the rattle of the mill would cease for half a minute—George, as he stood in silence looking at all this, listening to the sound, smelling the perfume, thinking how much sweeter it all was than the little room in which Madame Faragon sat at Colmar, and in which it was, at any rate for the present, his duty to submit his accounts to her from time to time, resolved that he would at once make an effort. He knew his father's temper well. Might it not be that though there should be a quarrel for a time, every thing would come right at last? As for Adrian Urmand, George did not believe—or told himself that he did not believe—that such a cur as he would suffer much because his hopes of a bride were not fulfilled.

They staid for an hour at the saw-mill, and Michel, in spite of all that he had said about tobacco, smoked another pipe. While they were there, George, though his mind was full of other matter, continued to give his father practical advice about the business—how a new wheel should be supplied here, and a lately invented improvement in-

troduced there. Each of them at the moment was care-laden with special thoughts of his own, but nevertheless, as men of business, they knew that the hour was precious, and used it. To saunter into the woods and do nothing was not at all in accordance with Michel's usual mode of life, and though he hummed and hawed, and doubted and grumbled, he made a note of all his son said, and was quite of a mind to make use of his son's wit. “I shall be over at Epinal the day after to-morrow,” he said, as they left the mill, “and I'll see if I can get the new crank there.”

“They'll be sure to have it at Heinman's,” said George, as they began to descend the hill. From the spot on which they had been standing the walk down to Granpere would take them more than an hour. It might well be that they might make it an affair of two or three hours, if they went up to other timber cuttings on their route; but George was sure that as soon as he began to tell his story his father would make his way straight for home. He would be too much moved to think of his timber, and too angry to desire to remain a minute longer than he could help in company with his son. Looking at all the circumstances as carefully as he could, George thought that he had better begin at once. “As you feel Marie's going so much,” he said, “I wonder that you are so anxious to send her away.”

“That's a poor argument, George, and one that I should not have expected from you. Am I to keep her here all her life, doing no good for herself, simply because I like to have her here? It is in the course of things that she should be married, and it is my duty to see that she marries well.”

“That is quite true, father.”

“Then why do you talk to me about sending her away? I don't send her away. Urmand comes and takes her away. I did the same when I was young. Now I'm old, and I have to be left behind. It's the way of nature.”

“But she doesn't want to be taken away,” said George, rushing at once at his subject.

“What do you mean by that?”

“Just what I say, father. She consents to be taken away, but she does not wish it.”

“I don't know what you mean. Has she been talking to you? Has she been complaining?”

“I have been talking to her. I came over from Colmar when I heard of this marriage on purpose that I might talk to her. I had at any rate a right to do that.”

“Right to do what? I don't know that you have any right. If you have been trying to do mischief in my house, George, I will never forgive you—never.”

“I will tell you the whole truth, father; and then you shall say yourself whether I have been trying to do mischief, and shall say also whether you will forgive me. You will remember when you told me that I was not to think of Marie Bromar for myself.”

“I do remember.”

“Well—I had thought of her. If you wanted to prevent that, you were too late.”

“You were boys and girls together—that is all.”

“Let me tell my story, father, and then you shall judge. Before you had spoken to me at all, Marie had given me her troth.”

“Nonsense!”

“Let me at least tell my story. She had done so, and I had given her mine, and when you told me to go I went, not quite knowing then what it might be best that we should do, but feeling very sure that she would at least be true to me.”

“Truth to any such folly as that would be very wicked.”

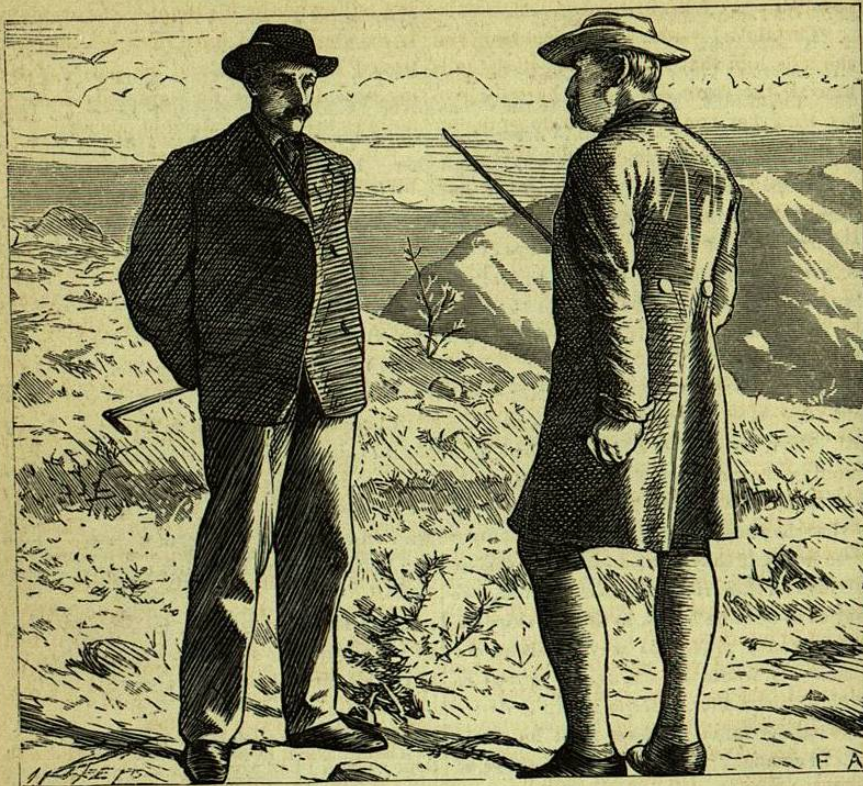
“At any rate I did nothing. I remained there month after month, meaning to do something when this was settled—meaning to do something when that was settled; and then there came a sort of rumor to me that Marie was to be Urmand's wife. I did not believe it, but I thought that I would come and see.”

“It was true.”

“No; it was not true then. I came over, and was very angry because she was cold to me. She would not promise that there should be no such engagement; but there was none then. You see I will tell you every thing as it occurred.”

“She is at any rate engaged to Adrian Urmand now, and for all our sakes you are bound not to interfere.”

“But yet I must tell my story. I went



"THEN I WILL PROTECT HER FROM YOU."

back to Colmar, and then, after a while, there came tidings, true tidings, that she was engaged to this man. I came over again yesterday, determined—you may blame me if you will, father, but listen to me—determined to throw her falsehood in her teeth."

"Then I will protect her from you," said Michel Voss, turning upon his son as though he meant to strike him with his staff.

"Ah, father," said George, pausing and standing opposite to the innkeeper, "but who is to protect her from you? If I had found that that which you are doing was making her happy, I would have spoken my mind indeed; I would have shown her once, and once only, what she had done to me—how she had destroyed me—and then I would have gone and troubled none of you any more."

"You had better go now, and bring us no more trouble. You are all trouble."

"But her worst trouble will still cling to

her. I have found that it is so. She has taken this man not because she loves him, but because you have bidden her."

"She has taken him, and she shall marry him."

"I can not say that she has been right, father; but she deserves no such punishment as that. Would you make her a wretched woman forever, because she has done wrong in striving to obey you?"

"She has not done wrong in striving to obey me. She has done right. I do not believe a word of this."

"You can ask her yourself."

"I will ask her nothing—except that she shall not speak to you any further about it. You have come here willfully minded to disturb us all."

"Father, that is unjust."

"I say it is true. She was contented and happy before you came. She loves the man, and is ready to marry him on the day fixed. Of course she will marry him. You

would not have us go back from our word now?"

"Certainly I would. If he be a man, and she tells him that she repents—if she tells him all the truth—of course he will give her back her troth. I would do so to any woman that only hinted that she wished it."

"No such hint shall be given. I will hear nothing of it. I shall not speak to Marie on the subject—except to desire her to have no further converse with you. Nor will I speak of it again to yourself: unless you wish me to bid you go from me altogether, you will not mention the matter again." So saying, Michel Voss strode on, and would not even turn his eyes in the direction of his son.

He strode on, making his way down the hill at the fastest pace that he could achieve, every now and then raising his hat and wiping the perspiration from his brow. Though he had spoken of Marie's departure as a loss that would be very hard to bear, the very idea that any thing should be allowed to interfere with the marriage which he had planned was unendurable. What! after all that had been said and done, consent that there should be no marriage between his niece and the rich young merchant! Never. He did not stop for a moment to think how much of truth there might be in his son's statement. He would not even allow himself to remember that he had forced Adrian Urmand as a suitor upon his niece. He had had his qualms of conscience upon that matter, and it was possible that they might return to him. But he would not stop now to look at that side of the question. The young people were betrothed. The marriage was a thing settled, and it should be celebrated. He had never broken his faith to any man, and he would not break it to Adrian Urmand. He strode on down the mountain, and there was not a word more said between him and his son till they reached the inn doors. "You understand me," he said then. "Not a word more to Marie." After that he went up at once to his wife's chamber, and desired that Marie might be sent to him there. During his rapid walk home he had made up his mind as to what he would do. He would not be severe to his niece. He would simply ask her one question.

"My dear," he said, striving to be calm, but telling her by his countenance as plainly as words could have done all that had passed between him and his son—"Marie, my dear, I take it for—granted—there is nothing to—to—to interrupt our plans?"

"In what way, uncle?" she asked, merely wanting to gain a moment for thought.

"In any way. In no way. Just say that there is nothing wrong, and that will be sufficient." She stood silent, not having a word to say to him. "You know what I mean, Marie. You intend to marry Adrian Urmand?"

"I suppose so," said Marie, in a low whisper.

"Look here, Marie: if there be any doubt about it we will part, and forever. You shall never look upon my face again. My honor is pledged—and yours." Then he hurried out of the room, down into the kitchen, and without staying there a moment went out into the yard, and walked through to the stables. His passion had been so strong and uncontrollable that he had been unable to remain with his niece and exact a promise from her.

George when he saw his father go through to the stables entered the house. He had already made up his mind that he would return at once to Colmar without waiting to have more angry words. Such words would serve him not at all. But he must if possible see Marie, and he must also tell his step-mother that he was about to depart. He found them both together, and at once, very abruptly, declared that he was to start immediately.

"You have quarreled with your father, George," said Madame Voss.

"I hope not. I hope that he has not quarreled with me. But it is better that I should go."

"What is it, George? I hope it is nothing serious?" Madame Voss as she said this looked at Marie, but Marie had turned her face away. George also looked at her, but could not see her countenance. He did not dare to ask her to give him an interview alone; nor had he quite determined what he would say to her if they were together. "Marie," said Madame Voss, "do you know what this is about?"

"I wish I had died," said Marie, "before I had come into this house. I have made hatred and bitterness between those who should love each other better than all the world." Then Madame Voss was able to guess what had been the cause of the quarrel.

"Marie," said George, very slowly, "if you will only ask your own heart what you ought to do, and be true to what it tells you, there is no reason even yet that you should be sorry that you came to Granpere. But if you marry a man whom you do not love, you will sin against him, and against me, and against yourself, and against God." Then he took up his hat and went out.

In the court-yard he met his father.

"Where are you going now, George?" said his father.

"To Colmar. It is better that I should go at once. Good-by, father," and he offered his hand to his parent.

"Have you spoken to Marie?"

"My mother will tell you what I have said. I have spoken nothing in private."

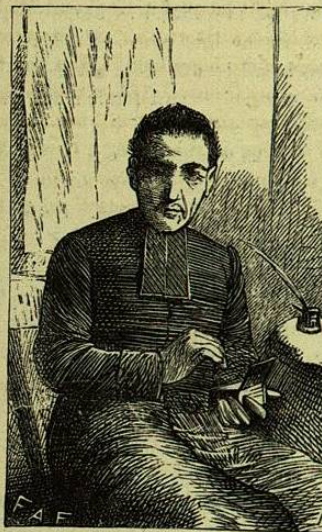
"Have you said any thing about her marriage?"

"Yes. I have told her that she could not honestly marry the man she did not love."

"What right have you, Sir," said Michel, nearly choked with wrath, "to interfere in the affairs of my household? You had better go, and go at once. If you return again before they are married, I will tell the servants to put you off the place." George Voss made no answer, but having found his horse and his gig, drove himself off to Colmar.



CHAPTER XIV.



GEORGE VOSS, as he drove back to Colmar and thought of what had been done during the last twenty-four hours, did not find that he had much occasion for triumph. He had, indeed, the consolation of knowing that the girl loved him, and in that there was a certain amount of comfort. As he had ever been thinking about her since he had left Granpere, so also had she been thinking of him. His father had told him that they had been no more than children when they parted, and had ridiculed the idea that any affection formed so long back and at so early an age should have lasted. But it had lasted, and was now as strong in Marie's breast as it was in his own. He had learned this at any rate by his journey to Granpere, and there was something of consolation in the knowledge. But, nevertheless, he did not find that he could triumph. Marie had been weak enough to yield to his father once, and would yield to him, he thought, yet again. Women in this respect—as he told himself—

were different from men. They were taught by the whole tenor of their lives to submit, unless they could conquer by underhand, unseen means, by little arts, by coaxing, and by tears. Marie, he did not doubt, had tried all these, and had failed. His father's purpose had been too strong for her, and she had yielded. Having submitted once, of course she would submit again. There was about his father a spirit of masterfulness which he was sure Marie would not be able to withstand. And then there would be, strong against his interests, George thought, that feeling so natural to a woman, that as all the world had been told of her coming marriage, she would be bound to go through with it. The idea of it had become familiar to her. She had conquered the repugnance which she must at first have felt, and had made herself accustomed to regard this man as her future husband. And then there would be Madame Voss against him, and M. le Curé, both of whom would think it infinitely better for Marie's future welfare that she should marry a Roman Catholic, as was Urmand, than a Protestant such as was he, George Voss. And then the money! Even if he could bring himself to believe that the money was nothing to Marie, it would be so much to all those by whom Marie would be surrounded that it would be impossible that she should be preserved from its influence.

It is not often that young people really know each other; but George certainly did not know Marie Bromar. In the first place, though he had learned from her the secret of her heart, he had not taught himself to understand how his own sullen silence had acted upon her. He knew now that she had continued to love him; but he did not know how natural it had been that she should have believed that he had forgotten her. He

could not, therefore, understand how different must now be her feelings in reference to this marriage with Adrian from what they had been when she had believed herself to be utterly deserted. And then he did not comprehend how thoroughly unselfish she had been; how she had struggled to do her duty to others, let the cost be what it might to herself. She had plighted herself to Adrian Urmand not because there had seemed to her to be any brightness in the prospect which such a future promised to her, but because she did verily believe that, circumstanced as she was, it would be better that she should submit herself to her friends. All this George Voss did not understand. He had thrown his thunder-bolt, and had seen that it had been efficacious. Its efficacy had been such that his wrath had been turned into tenderness. He had been so changed in his purpose that he had been induced to make an appeal to his father at the cost of his father's enmity. But that appeal had been in vain, and, as he thought of it all, he told himself that on the appointed day Marie Bromar would become the wife of Adrian Urmand. He knew well enough that a girl betrothed is a girl already half married.

He was very wretched as he drove his horse along. Though there was a solace in the thought that the memory of him had still remained in Marie's heart, there was a feeling akin to despair in this also. His very tenderness toward her was more unendurable than would have been his wrath. The pity of it! The pity of it! It was that which made him sore of heart and faint of spirit. If he could have reproached her as cold, mercenary, unworthy, heartless, even though he had still loved her, he could have supported himself by his anger against her unworthiness. But as it was, there was no such support for him. Though she had been in fault, her virtue toward him was greater than her fault. She still loved him. She still loved him—though she could not be his wife.

Then he thought of Adrian Urmand and of the man's success and wealth, and general prosperity in the world. What if he should go over to Basle and take Adrian Urmand by the throat and choke him? What if he should at least half choke the successful man,

and make it well understood that the other half would come unless the successful man would consent to relinquish his bride? George, though he did not expect success for himself, was fully purposed that Urmand should not succeed without some interference from him—by means of choking or otherwise. He would find some way of making himself disagreeable. If it were only by speaking his mind, he thought that he could speak it in such a way that the Basle merchant would not like it. He would tell Urmand, in the first place, that Marie was won not at all by affection, not in the least by any personal regard for her suitor, but altogether by a feeling of duty toward her uncle. And he would point out to this suitor how dastardly a thing it would be to take advantage of a girl so placed. He planned a speech or two as he drove along which he thought that even Urmand, thick-skinned as he believed him to be, would dislike to hear. "You may have her, perhaps," he would say to him, "as so much goods that you would buy, because she is, as a thing in her uncle's hands, to be bought. She believes it to be her duty, as being altogether dependent, to be disposed of as her uncle may choose. And she will go to you, as she would to any other man who might make the purchase. But as for loving you—you don't even believe that she loves you. She will keep your house for you; but she will never love you. She will keep your house for you—unless, indeed, she should find you to be so intolerable to her that she should be forced to leave you. It is in that way that you will have her—if you are so low a thing as to be willing to take her so." He planned various speeches of such a nature—not intending to trust entirely to speeches, but to proceed to some attempt at choking afterward if it should be necessary. Marie Bromar should not become Adrian Urmand's wife without some effort on his part. So resolving, he drove into the yard of the hotel at Colmar.

As soon as he entered the house Madame Faragon began to ask him questions about the wedding. When was it to be? George thought for a moment, and then remembered that he had not even heard the day named. "Why don't you answer me,

George?" said the old woman, angrily. "You must know when it's going to be."

"I don't know that it's going to be at all," said George.

"Not going to be at all! Why not? There is not any thing wrong, is there? Were they not betrothed? Why don't you tell me, George?"

"Yes; they were betrothed."

"And is he crying off? I should have thought Michel Voss was the man to strangle him if he did that."

"And I am the man to strangle him if he don't," said George, walking out of the room.

He knew that he had been silly and absurd, but he knew also that he was so moved as to have hardly any control over himself. In the few words that he had now said to Madame Faragon he had, as he felt, told the story of his own disappointment; and yet he had not in the least intended to take the old woman into his confidence. He had not meant to have said a word about the quarrel between himself and his father, and now he had told every thing.

When she saw him again in the evening, of course she asked him some further questions. "George," she said, "I am afraid things are not going pleasantly at Granpere."

"Not altogether," he answered.

"But I suppose the marriage will go on?" To this he made no answer, but shook his head, showing how impatient he was at being thus questioned. "You ought to tell me," said Madame Faragon, plaintively, "considering how interested I must be in all that concerns you."

"I have nothing to tell."

"But is the marriage to be put off?" again demanded Madame Faragon, with extreme anxiety.

"Not that I know of, Madame Faragon: they will not ask me whether it is to be put off or not."

"But have they quarreled with M. Urmand?"

"No; nobody has quarreled with M. Urmand."

"Was he there, George?"

"What, with me! No; he was not there with me. I have never seen the man since I first left Granpere to come here." And

then George Voss began to think what might have happened had Adrian Urmand been at the hotel while he was there himself. After all, what could he have said to Adrian Urmand, or what could he have done to him?

"He hasn't written, has he, to say that he is off his bargain?" Poor Madame Faragon was almost pathetic in her anxiety to learn what had really occurred at the Lion d'Or.

"Certainly not. He has not written at all."

"Then what is it, George?"

"I suppose it is this—that Marie Bromar cares nothing for him."

"But so rich as he is! And they say, too, such a good-looking young man."

"It is wonderful, is it not? It is next to a miracle that there should be a girl deaf and blind to such charms. But, nevertheless, I believe it is so. They will probably make her marry him, whether she likes it or not."

"But she is betrothed to him. Of course she will marry him."

"Then there will be an end of it," said George.

There was one other question which Madame Faragon longed to ask; but she was almost too much afraid of her young friend to put it into words. At last she plucked up courage, and did ask her question after an ambiguous way.

"But I suppose it is nothing to you, George?"

"Nothing at all. Nothing on earth," said he. "How should it be any thing to me?" Then he hesitated for a while, pausing to think whether or no he would tell the truth to Madame Faragon. He knew that there was no one on earth, setting aside his father and Marie Bromar, to whom he was really so dear as he was to this old woman. She would probably do more for him, if it might possibly be in her power to do any thing, than any other of his friends. And, moreover, he did not like the idea of being false to her, even on such a subject as this. "It is only this to me," he said, "that she had promised to be my wife before they had ever mentioned Urmand's name to her."

"Oh, George!"

"And why should she not have promised?"

"But, George—during all this time you have never mentioned it."

"There are some things, Madame Faragon, which one doesn't mention. And I do not know why I should have mentioned it at all. But you understand all about it now. Of course she will marry the man. It is not likely that my father should fail to have his own way with a girl who is dependent on him."

"But he—M. Urmand; he would give her up if he knew it all, would he not?"

To this George made no instant answer; but the idea was there, in his mind, that the linen-merchant might perhaps be induced to abandon his purpose if he could be made to understand that Marie wished it. "If he have any touch of manhood about him he would do so," said he.

"And what will you do, George?"

"Do! I shall do nothing. What should I do? My father has turned me out of the house. That is the whole of it. I do not know that there is any thing to be done." Then he went out, and there was nothing more said upon the question. For three or four days there was nothing said. As he went in and out Madame Faragon would look at him with anxious eyes, questioning herself how far such a feeling of love might in truth make this young man forlorn and wretched. As far as she could judge by his

manner he was very forlorn and very wretched. He did his work, indeed, and was busy about the place, as was his wont. But there was a look of pain in his face, which made her old heart grieve, and by degrees her good wishes for the object which seemed to be so much to him became eager and hot.

"Is there nothing to be done?" she asked at last, putting out her fat hand to take hold of his in sympathy.

"There is nothing to be done," said George, who, however, hated himself because he was doing nothing, and still thought occasionally of that plan of choking his rival.

"If you were to go to Basle and see the man?"

"What could I say to him if I did see him? After all, it is not him that I can blame. I have no just ground of quarrel with him. He has done nothing that is not fair. Why should he not love her if it suits him? Unless he were to fight me, indeed—"

"Oh, George, let there be no fighting."

"It would do no good, I fear."

"None, none, none," said she.

"If I were to kill him, she could not be my wife then."

"No, no; certainly not."

"And if I wounded him, it would make her like him, perhaps. If he were to kill me, indeed, there might be some comfort in that."

After this Madame Faragon made no further suggestions that her young friend should go to Basle.



CHAPTER XV.

DURING the remainder of the day on which George had left Granpere the hours did not fly very pleasantly at the Lion d'Or. Michel Voss had gone to his niece immediately upon his return from his walk, intending to obtain a renewed pledge from her that she would be true to her engagement. But he had been so full of passion, so beside himself with excitement, so disturbed by all that he had heard, that he had hardly waited with Marie long enough to obtain such a pledge, or to learn from her that she refused to give it. He had only been able to tell her that if she hesitated about marrying Adrian, she should never look upon his face again; and then, without staying for a reply, he had left her. He had been in such a tremor of passion that he had been unable to demand an answer. After that, when George was gone, he kept away from her during the remainder of the morning. Once or twice he said a few words to his wife, and she counseled him to take no further outward notice of any thing that George had said to him. "It will all come right if you will only be a little calm with her," Madame Voss had said. He had tossed his head and declared that he was calm—the calmest man in all Lorraine. Then he had come to his wife again, and she had again given him some good practical advice. "Don't put it into her head that there is to be a doubt," said Madame Voss.

"I haven't put it into her head," he answered, angrily.

"No, my dear, no; but do not allow her to suppose that any body else can put it there either. Let the matter go on. She will see the things bought for her wedding, and when she remembers that she has allowed them to come into the house without remonstrating, she will be quite unable to object. Don't give her an opportunity of objecting." Michel Voss again shook his head, as though his wife were an unreasonable woman, and swore that it was not he who had given Marie such opportunity. But he made up his mind to do as his wife recommended. "Speak softly to her, my dear," said Madame Voss.

"Don't I always speak softly?" said he, turning sharply round upon his spouse.

He made his attempt to speak softly when he met Marie about the house just before supper. He put his hand upon her shoulder and smiled, and murmured some word of love. He was by no means crafty in what he did. Craft, indeed, was not the strong point of his character. She took his rough hand and kissed it, and looked up lovingly, beseechingly, into his face. She knew that he was asking her to consent to the sacrifice, and he knew that she was imploring him to spare her. This was not what Madame Voss had meant by speaking softly. Could she have been allowed to dilate upon her own convictions, or had she been able adequately to express her own ideas, she should have begged that there might be no sentiment, no romance, no kissing of hands, no looking into each other's faces, no half-murmured tones of love. Madame Voss believed strongly that the every-day work of the world was done better without any of these glancings and glimmerings of moonshine. But then her husband was, by nature, of a fervid temperament, given to the influence of unexpressed poetic emotions; and thus subject, in spite of the strength of his will, to much weakness of purpose. Madame Voss perhaps condemned her husband in this matter the more because his romantic disposition never showed itself in his intercourse with her. He would kiss Marie's