

"We shall all catch our death of cold," said Madame Voss.

"We needn't stay long, you know," said Michel. "And, Marie," said he, going into

the little office in which his niece was still seated, "Marie, mind you behave yourself."

"Oh, I will, Uncle Michel," she said. "You shall see."

CHAPTER XXI.

THEY all sat down together at supper that evening, Marie dispensing her soup as usual before she went to the table. She sat next to her uncle on one side, and below her there were vacant seats. Urmand took a chair on the left hand of Madame Voss, next to him was the curé, and below the curé the happy rival. It had all been arranged by Marie herself with the greatest care. Urmand seemed to have got over the worst of his trouble, and when Marie came to the table bowed to her graciously. She bowed in return, and then ate her soup in silence. Michel Voss overdid his part a little by too much talking, but his wife restored the balance by her prudence. George told them how strong the French party was at Colmar, and explained that the Germans had not a leg to stand upon as far as general opinion went. Before the supper was over Adrian Urmand was talking glibly enough; and it really seemed as though the terrible misfortunes of the Lion d'Or would arrange themselves comfortably after all. When supper was done the father, son, and the discarded lover smoked their pipes together amicably in the billiard-room. There was not a word said then by either of them in connection with Marie Bromar.

On the next morning the sun was bright and the air was as warm as it ever is in October. The day perhaps might not have been selected for an out-of-doors party had there been no special reason for such an arrangement; but seeing how strong a reason existed, even Madame Voss acknowledged that the morning was favorable. While those pipes of peace were being smoked overnight Marie had been preparing the hampers. On the next morning nobody except Marie herself was very early. It was intended that the day should be got through at any rate with a pretense of pleasure, and they were all to be as idle and genteel and agreeable as possible. It had been settled

that they should start at twelve. The drive unfortunately would not consume much more than half an hour. Then what with unpacking, climbing about the rocks, and throwing stones down into the river, they would get through the time till two. At two they would eat their dinner—with all their shawls and great-coats around them—then smoke their cigars, and come back when they found it impossible to drag out the day any longer. Marie was not to talk to George, and was to be specially courteous to M. Urmand. The two old ladies accompanied them, as did also M. le Curé Gondin. The programme for the day did not seem to be very delightful; but it appeared to Michel Voss that in this way better than in any other could some little halo be thrown over the parting hours of poor Adrian Urmand.

Every thing went as well as could have been anticipated. They managed to delay their departure till nearly half past twelve, and were so lost in wonder at the quantity of water running down the fall in the ravine that there had hardly been any heaviness of time when they seated themselves on the rocks at half past two.

"Now for the business of the day," said Michel, as, standing up, he plunged a knife and fork into a large pie which he had placed on a boulder before him. "Marie has got no soup for us here, so we must begin with the solids at once." Soon after that one cork might have been heard to fly, and then another, and no stranger looking on would have believed how dreadful had been the enmity existing on the previous day—or, indeed, how great a cause for enmity there had been. Michel himself was very hilarious. If he could only obliterate in any way the evil which he had certainly inflicted on that unfortunate young man! "Urmand, my friend, another glass of wine. George, fill our friend Urmand's glass; not so quick-

ly, George, not so quickly; you give him nothing but the froth. Adrian Urmand, your very good health. May you always be a happy and successful man." So saying Michel Voss drained his own tumbler.

Urmand at the moment was seated in a niche among the rocks, in which a cushion out of the carriage had been placed for his special accommodation. Indeed, every comfort and luxury had been showered upon his head to compensate him for his lost bride. This was the third time that he had been by name invited to drink his wine, and three times he had obeyed. Now feeling himself to be summoned in a very peculiar way—feeling also, perhaps, that that which might have made others drunk had made him bold, he extricated himself from his niche, and stood upon his legs among the rocks. He stood upon his legs among the rocks, and with a graceful movement of his arm waved the glass above his head.

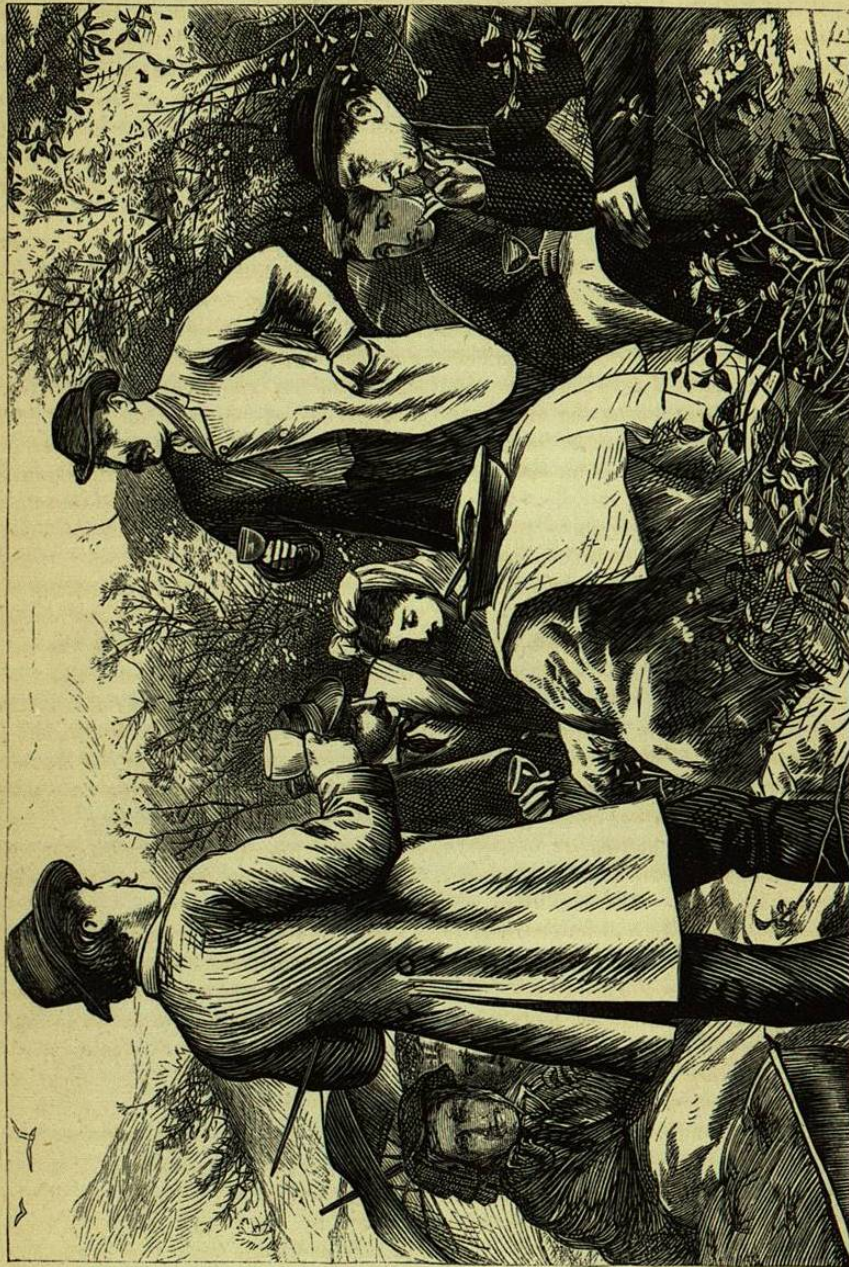
"We are delighted to have you here among us, my friend," said Michel Voss, who also, perhaps, had been made bold. Madame Voss, who was close to her husband, pulled him by the sleeve. Then he seated himself, but Adrian Urmand was left standing among them.

"My friend," said he, "and you, Madame Voss, particularly, I feel particularly obliged to you for this charming entertainment." Then the innkeeper cheered his guest, whereupon Madame Voss pulled her husband's sleeve harder than before. "I am indeed," continued Urmand. "The best thing will be," said he, "to make a clean breast of it at once. You all know why I came here, and you all know how I'm going back." At this moment his voice faltered a little, and he almost sobbed. Both the old ladies immediately put their handkerchiefs to their eyes. Marie blushed and turned away her face on to her uncle's shoulder. Madame Voss remained immovable. She dreaded greatly any symptoms of that courage which follows the flying of corks. In truth, however, she had nothing now to fear. "Of course I feel it a little," continued Adrian Urmand. "That is only natural. I suppose it was a mistake; but it has been rather trying to me. But I am ready to forget and forgive, and that is all I've got to say."

This speech, which astonished them all exceedingly, remained unanswered for some few moments, during which Urmand had sunk back into his niche. Michel Voss was not ready-witted enough to reply to his guest at the moment, and George was aware that it would not be fitting for him, the triumphant lover, to make any reply. He could hardly have spoken without showing his triumph. During this short interval no one said a word, and Urmand endeavored to assume a look of gloomy dignity.

But at last Michel Voss got upon his legs, his wife giving him various twitches on the sleeve as he did so. "I never was so much affected in my life," said he, "and upon my word I think that our excellent friend Adrian Urmand has behaved as well in a trying difficulty as—as—as any man ever did. I needn't say much about it, for we all know what it was. And we all know that young women will be young women, and that they are very hard to manage." "Don't, Uncle Michel," said Marie, in a whisper. But Michel was too bold to attend either to whisperings or pullings of the sleeve, and went on with his speech. "There has been a slight mistake, but I hope sincerely that every thing has now been made right. Here is our friend Adrian Urmand's health, and I am quite sure that we all hope that he may get an excellent, beautiful young wife, with a good dowry, and that before long." Then he too sat down, and all the ladies drank to the health and future fortunes of M. Adrian Urmand.

Upon the whole the rejected lover liked it. At any rate it was better so than being alone and moody and despised of all people. He would know now how to get away from Granpere without having to plan a surreptitious escape. Of course he had come out intending to be miserable, to be known as an ill-used man who had been treated with an amount of cruelty surpassing all that had ever been told of in love histories. To be depressed by the weight of the ill usage which he had borne was a part of the play which he had to act. But the play when acted after this fashion had in it something of pleasing excitement, and he felt assured that he was exhibiting dignity in very adverse circumstances. George Voss was



"HERE IS OUR FRIEND ADRIAN URMAND'S HEALTH."

probably thinking ill of the young man all the while; but every one else there conceived that M. Urmand bore himself well under most trying circumstances. After the banquet was over Marie expressed herself so much touched as almost to incur the jealousy of her more fortunate lover. When the speeches were finished the men made themselves happy with their cigars and wine till Madame Voss declared that she was already half dead with the cold and damp, and then they all returned to the inn in excellent spirits. That which had made so bold both Michel and his guest had not been allowed to have any more extended or more deleterious effect.

On the next morning M. Urmand returned home to Basle, taking the public conveyance as far as Remiremont. Every body was up to see him off, and Marie herself gave him his cup of coffee at parting. It was pretty to see the mingled grace and shame with which the little ceremony was performed. She hardly said a word; indeed, what word she did say was heard by no one; but she crossed her hands on her breast, and the gravest smile came over her face, and she turned her eyes down to the ground, and if any one ever begged pardon without a word spoken, Marie Bromar then asked Adrian Urmand to pardon her the evil she had wrought upon him. "Oh yes, of course," he said. "It's all right. It's all right." Then she gave him her hand, and said good-by, and ran away up into her room. Though she had got rid of one lover, not a word had yet been said as to her uncle's acceptance of that other lover on her behalf; nor had any words more tender been spoken between her and George than those with which the reader has been made acquainted.

"And now," said George, as soon as the diligence had started out of the yard.

"Well, and what now?" asked the father.

"I must be off to Colmar next."

"Not to-day, George."

"Yes, to-day; or this evening at least. But I must settle something first. What do you say, father?" Michel Voss stood for a while with his hands in his pockets and his head turned away. "You know what I mean, father."

"Oh yes; I know what you mean."

"I don't suppose you'll say any thing against it now."

"It wouldn't be any good, I suppose, if I did," said Michel, crossing over the courtyard to the other part of the establishment. He gave no further permission than this, but George thought that so much was sufficient.

George did return to Colmar that evening, being in all matters of business a man accurate and resolute; but he did not go till he had been thoroughly scolded for his misconduct by Marie Bromar. "It was your fault," said Marie. "Your fault from beginning to end."

"It shall be if you say so," answered George; "but I can't say that I see it."

"If a person goes away for more than twelve months, and never sends a word or a message or a sign, what is a person to think, George?" He could only promise her that he would never leave her again even for a month.

How they were married in November, and how Madame Faragon was brought over to Granpere with infinite trouble, and how the household linen got itself marked at last with a V instead of a U, the reader can understand without the narration of further details.

