

# CLAUDINE





Mellie Beckford

With best wishes  
from

Carrie Price







*Frontispiece.*

# CLAUDINE

OR,

*HUMILITY THE BASIS OF ALL  
THE VIRTUES.*

A Swiss Tale.

BY A MOTHER,

AUTHOR OF 'ALWAYS HAPPY,' 'WILLIAM TELL,' 'TRUE STORIES  
FROM ANCIENT, MODERN, AND ENGLISH HISTORY,' ETC.



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## CLAUDINE.



### CHAPTER I.

**I**T is now many years since one of the loveliest and most admired valleys of Switzerland, the rich and beautiful Val de Bagne, was the scene of an awful calamity.

In the spring of 1815, an immense avalanche (or rather a mass of ice, called a *pointe d'aiguille*, one of the towering points that rise amidst the seas of ice in the Valais) fell from its lofty site into a gorge of the mountain, and checked the flow of that branch of the river Drantz which meandered through the quiet and smiling Val de Bagne. The stream, continually fed by numerous rivulets of dissolving snow from the adjacent mountains, deprived of its accustomed outlet, soon spread itself over the neighbouring plains, and formed a deep and extensive lake, a league in length and three hundred feet in depth.

The size and strength of the enormous icy barrier may be imagined, when the vast mass of water it sustained is considered. The inhabitants of the valley, aware of the calamity that must ensue if the summer's sun should dissolve the mighty dam and give liberty to the imprisoned mass of waters, fled with rapidity to the adjacent mountains. The course of such a stream, rapid and powerful, could not fail to carry desolation whithersoever it rushed.

Time and habit, however, reconcile man to many things, which on the first glance appear terrible and insupportable. The peasants beheld the mighty mass sustain the pressing waters for so long a period, that they deemed it could sustain them for ever, and by degrees returned to their deserted cottages. They saw that the summer's sun had not injured the icy barrier, and, forgetful that other seasons might produce other effects, they concluded that all was safe, and resumed their former habits of life.

The Val de Bagne, close to Chamouni, and not far from the Lake of Geneva, had long been the favourite resort of travellers. But the recent alarming change deterred strangers from venturing as usual to the spot. This was an arrangement deeply regretted by the inhabitants; the visits of rambler had been a source of pleasure and profit to them for many years, and they found themselves deprived of these

advantages with no common feelings of sorrow. Were the new routes to be long pursued, the Val de Bagne would never again find a place in the itinerary of the exploring wanderer.

To obviate this apprehended evil, several skilful engineers were engaged to visit the spot, and to survey the state of this wonderful natural dam. After a minute and scientific investigation, they reported that it was as yet uninjured, and perfectly capable of much longer sustaining the accumulated waters; that what the summer's sun dissolved the winter's frost restored; and that this equal dissolution and restoration promised a continuance of many years of safety. These reports, ably drawn up, were printed and published at Geneva and the other neighbouring towns, and, on the faith of their accuracy, travellers again pursued their accustomed route in the Val de Bagne.

The sight of the new phenomenon offered a fresh incentive to curiosity; and the great accession of visitors more than compensated the frugal and thriving Valaisans for the losses of former years.

Another summer passed in safety and prosperity. The inhabitants ceased to think it possible that the avalanche could be shaken, and travellers crowded to their towns and villages.

In the year 1817,<sup>1</sup> an Englishman, mounted

<sup>1</sup> July 14th.

on his mule, and attended by his guide, had reached a spot on the side of the mountain where he could command a view of the far-famed lake and the long-admired Val de Bagne.

It was evening. The declining sun shed a rich light on woods and meads, and corn-fields and vineyards. The neat white *châlets* were scattered singly here and there in lonely dells, each surrounded by meadows and herds. The villages, embosomed in trees, were clustered each around its simple but picturesque church. The river, dwindled to a rivulet, wound like a silver line amidst the verdant pasturage. The purple hue of twilight was stealing over the distant mountains, while the departing sun shed a glorious flood of light upon the vale. All was hushed and silent, except the tinkling of the bells which marked where the herds wandered.

The Englishman gazed with the eye of taste and feeling on the lovely and magnificent landscape. The icy *pointes des aiguilles* glittered with effulgent light, and the snow-clad summits of the towering mountains waved like a light cloud floating between earth and heaven. All was beauty, grace, and sublimity. The gale of evening, rich in the fragrance of wild herbs and flowers, gave a new sense of enjoyment and luxurious indulgence. At this moment, from a cot in a sheltered nook below, a peasant issued, and, leaning carelessly on his vine-clad

door, touched the notes of his native pipe, and breathed the sounds of his national song. The soft plaintive air of the Ranz des Vaches floated upon the fragrant breeze, and awakened and regaled another sense.

Harmony! beauty! fragrance! Nature, perfect and lovely as was the hour, it was all thine own! The talents of man had little share in the enchantment, for it was the absence of all art that gave the herdsman's pipe its highest charm.—Nature, it was all thine own! Let no rational creature thus lose the cause in the effect. Nature indeed reigned sole and triumphant; but whence sprang the assemblage of loveliness and grandeur which we call Nature? Let the heart listen to its own pure dictates—let the mind attend to its emanations. Both will unite in whispering whence sprang the assemblage of loveliness and grandeur; and the senses, awakened to admire, will unite to adore.—

‘ These are Thy glorious works, Parent of good,  
Almighty!—Thine this universal frame,  
Thus wondrous fair, Thyself how wondrous then!’

It is natural for a feeling mind to desire to share its happiness!<sup>1</sup> The traveller eagerly sought for his drawing implements, to take a sketch of so imposing a view, that he might re-enjoy its beauties with those he loved. It was but for a moment that he turned away

<sup>1</sup> ‘ All who joy would win,  
Must share it—Happiness was born a twin.’—BYRON.

his eyes from the glorious scene ; but in that instant his mule precipitately rushed up the mountain's side, and, whilst he endeavoured to curb its rapid flight, he heard a sound, loud, deep, and terrible. It seemed to him as if the globe were rent asunder, and all nature wrecked. He turned to his guide for information. The man, with a pale and haggard countenance, pointed to the vale below.

What a scene !—The lake was gone, and the imprisoned water, rushing down a fall of one hundred and fifty feet, was pouring along the valley with the speed of lightning. In twenty minutes it swept along twenty-four miles. Everything fell beneath the mighty torrent,—trees, rocks, houses, churches !—A majestic wood of nine acres was upturned in an instant before the eyes of the astonished traveller. Large masses of granite were borne along as straws. A vast building, occupied as an iron-foundry, was levelled to the ground in an instant, and not a stone was left to tell where it had stood. Numerous villages were in a moment swept away before the irresistible stream. The whole of one side of the principal street of the town of Martigny was carried away ; the other side was saved as by a miracle,—a large tree having at that point stemmed the force of the current, and given it a new direction. To the town of Martigny the Englishman was bending his course. Had he set off an hour sooner, or

had he not paused to gaze on the lovely and sublime works of his Creator, he had been lost!

So rapidly flowed the impetuous torrent, that man himself—vigilant and active in self-defence and self-preservation—man could not escape its power. In one place seventy human beings, in another one hundred and forty, were swallowed up in the rolling flood. What a wreck of peace and comfort, and love and happiness! The bride was become a widow, and the happy husband a mourning widower; the father of a smiling and prosperous family found himself childless; and the babes that had been surrounded by parents, kindred, friends, now stood alone in the world,—without parent, kindred, friend!

Two infants were miraculously preserved. They were supposed to have been playing on some fallen trees that lay by the river-side at the moment of the fatal crisis; the branches of the trees had interlaced, and thus formed a rude kind of raft. On this precarious float the poor little tremblers had been borne for many leagues on the bosom of the foaming river, and were rescued from their perilous situation at a spot very distant from their supposed home. Scarcely conscious of their own names, they could not articulate those of their parents and their native village. As soon as it was possible, they were led back to the spot whence it was conjectured they had come. But alas! the

fearful change that had taken place had removed every well-remembered landmark of their native hamlet.—Where had been their ‘home’—the hut in which their mother raised them?—they sought for it in vain. Where was the church, to which their father had led them?—Where was their grey-haired grandsire’s sheltered vineyard?—Where the chestnut wood, in which they had so often wandered?—Even the oft-shunned school was sought for, and with tears lamented.—Nothing met their eager gaze but one wide scene of desolation,—the muddy current roaring in its newly-recovered bed, bordered by broad banks of slime and broken rocks—wrecks of household furniture—ruins of cottages and churches—tattered pieces of clothing—shattered limbs of mangled bodies!

Of the village not one memorial remained—not one stone was left upon another; not a post, a tree, a shrub, was to be seen to mark where once stood the smiling hamlet!—One terrible instant had sufficed for its entire annihilation!

The orphans wept, but their light tears were soon dispersed, and their rosy cheeks were wet with the shower of sorrows, whilst the cheek dimpled in smiles, and the lips uttered hope and joy! Among the crowd of unfortunates, they shared the gifts of the bountiful and the pity of the compassionate. A subscription was raised for the sufferers. The English, with



their accustomed liberality, contributed largely and promptly to the fund. When and where did an Englishman fail to support the national character of ready and generous sympathy and bounty?

But there was one class of sufferers, whom compassion could soothe, but whom bounty could not reach,—the class of wealthy land-owners, who, with feelings refined by education, and little accustomed to wrestle with adversity, found themselves by one stroke flung from opulence to penury; their houses swept away, their land rendered barren by being buried in sand, or sunk beneath the whelming waters.

Among these unfortunates was Weimar, the virtuous and happy father of a numerous family. The morning beheld him in his paternal mansion, the lands of his forefathers stretching out before him, rich in woods, and fields, and vineyards; the evening saw him on a lonely and jutting rock, with no other canopy for his uncovered head than the star-gemmed sky, whose light dimpled on the waters that were rushing over house, and woods, and pastures.

Wherefore, then, the cry of joy, the burst of exultation, the prayer of thanksgiving, that broke from the lips of Weimar? He was not alone upon the rock,—his wife and children were with him; in saving them, he felt as if he had saved everything.

The first terrible moments of agitation past,

Weimar soon made arrangements for the future. He had little power of choice. In the Val de Bagne all was irrecoverably gone!—he had there fulfilled the duties of a pastor, without accepting the remuneration of office. The ministry was now the only mode of subsistence within his selection. He sought and found a curacy in a distant village, to which he removed his family, and once again enjoyed the blessing of a home.





## CHAPTER II.

**T**HE new abode of the Weimar family was situated in one of the loveliest valleys of Switzerland; beautiful was the landscape that surrounded the modest mansion of the good pastor. Lofty mountains, capped with snow, rose in the distance; a clear stream flowed peacefully amidst the valley, its banks embellished with tufts of hawthorns, poplars, and willows; the majestic chestnut and the lofty walnut were scattered here and there in the meads and pastures; the hedgerows were marked by cherry-trees, and the vines were hanging in rich festoons; orchards of pear, plum, and apple trees surrounded every cottage; and small, neat gardens, full of flowers and vegetables, were thickly scattered. The simple little church raised its modest spire above every surrounding tenement, as if thus marking the superiority of religion to all worldly possessions.

On a precipitous rock that overhung the village were seen the ruins of an old fortress,

which seemed to rise proudly as the protector of the humble dwellings below. At present there were no enemies,—peace reigned around ; and the fortress was now only interesting as forming a striking object in the landscape. In the midst of a gay and smiling view, the ruins of a warlike edifice have something very impressive ; the contrast of images of existing peace and of extinguished war awakens sentiments which touch and soothe the soul. Oh that one could everywhere behold such contrasts !

Beyond the first chain of mountains the Lake of Geneva was dimly seen, with its blue waters, and fertile and populous banks. The city of Geneva, full of a thousand attractions, stood at the head of the lake, where the waves of the majestic Rhone mingle with those of the smooth expanse ; Lausanne, seated on its vine-clad hill, and embellished with numerous country-seats, rose on the western bank ; and innumerable hamlets decked every dell and bay.

The residence of Weimar was distinguished from those of his parishioners only by its more than ordinary neatness and order. Neatness and order are found in every Swiss cottage, and the pastor is known from his flock only by the greater degree of cleanliness and regularity which reign around him and his family. The ground floor of the vicarage was

occupied by the cattle and the implements of rustic labour, a deeply projecting roof forming around the abode a sheltered space. The first floor contained all the family apartments,—the neat little *salle-à-manger*, the pretty *salon* (the alcove of which held the bed of Madame Weimar), the sleeping-rooms for the children, and the kitchen.

Weimar, when he had furnished his humble cottage, and paid the expenses of establishing his eldest son in the army, had nothing left but the annual stipend of his curacy. But though he had lost his wealth, he had not lost his cheerfulness, or his aptitude to be pleased and contented with his lot, whatever it might be.

‘What have I lost?’ would he say to his wife and children: ‘have I not you all with me?’

‘Dearest Augustus, you have even more than that—you have yourself,’ would his wife reply. ‘What adversity can ruffle such a mind? what privation sadden such a heart?’

The health of Madame Weimar, never very strong, was rendered yet more delicate by the awful scene which she had so recently witnessed. Claudine, her eldest daughter, gay, obliging, and active, was equally proud and happy to fulfil every service in her power, and bustled through the business of their little household with considerable skill and alacrity.

The good father employed his leisure in teaching his little ones the useful branches of education,—reading, writing, and arithmetic. Madame Weimar taught her daughters to knit, to spin, and to sew. Claudine hastened to complete her own tasks and lessons, that she might relieve her mother of some of her care.

It was an interesting picture to behold this amiable girl surrounded by her brother and sisters, and with smiles and caresses giving her gentle commands.

‘My little Fanchon, you must neatly hem this handkerchief,—it is for our dear mother. Dear Justine, knit as well as possible,—these stockings, you know, are for papa. Maurice, when will your sum be finished?—these flowers shall then be yours.’ A few kisses, a tender embrace ; thus Claudine instructed the little circle.

But when the handkerchief was not hemmed, the knitting was not finished, what was to be done? Anger, violence, reproof? No ; in the evening, after all her own duties were performed, Claudine would take her little stool, and, placing it by her mother, busy herself in finishing the tasks of her sisters.

It is not by great efforts that love is gained ; it is by the continued small attentions and offices of kindness,—by words of tenderness, by looks of affection. Claudine, young, feeble, poor, had no means of exhibiting the more

splendid virtues. But every day she had the opportunity, and never did she want the will, of showing a good temper, a kind heart, a desire to please and to obey.

Ah! yes, a gracious God has so ordered this world, that the most feeble can assist the most powerful, the poorest can oblige the wealthiest. Let us consult our own hearts: whom is it that we love the best? It is not the most rich, the most powerful, the most elevated of our acquaintance. No; it is the poor servant who has nursed us; it is the humble neighbour who has served us; it is the tender mother who loves us; the faithful friend who instructs or protects us!

‘Why is our Claudine so charming?’ said all the villagers. ‘She is not pretty, she is not very learned: how comes it that we all admire and respect her?’

‘I will tell you,’ replied an aged peasant. ‘She is modest, she is industrious, she is submissive: therefore it is that we all love her.’

‘Besides all that, she is humble, she is without pride: truly it is for her gentle affability that we all love her,’ exclaimed a good old woman.

‘In my conscience,’ replied the old man, ‘I do believe that pride is the cause of every vice, and that humility is the foundation of all the virtues. Do you not remember what our worthy

pastor said in his last Sunday's discourse? " Friends, he who is puffed up in his own conceit, cannot believe he has any faults; therefore how can he amend them? how can he allow for the frailties of others? But he who is truly humble, knows and confesses his own errors, seeks to correct himself, and is willing to pardon his equally frail fellow-creatures."

In the bosom of this lowly but approving community, the life of Claudine passed in perfect tranquillity and in the purest innocence. Every morning she arose with the lark, to pursue her useful and happy course. Dressed neatly and quickly, she offered up the first aspirations of her refreshed and enlivened mind to the merciful Power who had bestowed on her a night of calm and invigorating repose; she then hastened to awaken and dress Maurice and her little sisters, and to lead them forth to their morning ramble.

How delightful is it to rove at early dawn, to gaze on the softened light of the rising sun, to gather herbs and flowers moistened with the cool, clear dew! In the distance is heard the tinkling of the bells of cows wandering along the vast deep valley, the airs sung by the young shepherdesses, and the bleating of young lambs seeking their sober dams. On the points of the rocky mountains, the kids are seen leaping from crag to crag, whilst the



youthful goatherd with his long pipe seeks to allure and collect them.

Claudine would occupy herself in making nosegays of lilies, honeysuckles, and violets for her sisters, and a garland of primroses for the rustic hat of Maurice; seldom did she think of herself, — her cares were all for those she loved. It was for this that she was beloved, it was for this that she was happy.

Did she put a rose in her own little black silk cap, and did Fanchon beg for the flower, in a moment it was in the hand of Fanchon. Perhaps she culled for herself a tuft of lilies; but if Justine admired and wished for it, it was instantly in the bosom of Justine.

But the church clock strikes the hour of breakfast; Claudine hastens to lead home her charge. She assists their only servant, the faithful Madeline, to cut the bread, to gather the fruit; she places Maurice on his little stool, and supplies him with his share; then she hands coffee to her parents. After all are served, she begins her own simple meal; under the shade of a lime tree, laughing and chatting, she eats her morsel of bread and portion of cherries. She repeats the shrewd sayings of Maurice, describes the amiable temper of Fanchon, recounts the traits of goodness in Justine; she forgets no virtue but her own, praises every one but herself.

When the breakfast is finished, Claudine

prepares her lessons, and begins her work. Is her mother sick (an event too common), she arranges the work of her sisters, threads the needles of Fanchon the idle, and looks for the scissors of Justine the careless. Maurice repeats to her his lesson,—with what indulgence she points out his mistakes! How different from the severity with which she judges her own! Her good father had early instilled into her mind this rule of action,—‘Be candid to others; be severe to yourself: you cannot tell what causes led to their errors, but you can distinctly know the extent of your own.’

In the morning Claudine is in the garden gathering peas and beans for dinner. Then, seating herself in an arbour of jasmine that shelters her from the heat of the sun, she busies herself in shelling them. How gaily she sings! what bright smiles play round her lips! She is conscious of well-doing: she is assisting her kind mother, she is pleasing her dear father!

Sometimes she goes with her little basket to the neighbouring town, to buy things for the house, or clothes for the children,—shoes, stockings, coffee. If by chance she has a few *batzen* of her own, so certainly these *batzen* are laid out for sweetmeats or toys for Maurice and Fanchon. Then, on her return, what kisses, what embraces!

‘My child,’ would her father say, ‘I thought

you hoarded this money with the intention of buying yourself a ribbon?’

‘So I did.’

‘The ribbon would have given you a great deal of pleasure, my love.’

‘Yes, papa, but it could never have pleased me half so much as these grateful kisses from my dear Maurice,—as those joyous looks of Fanchon.’

Very simple were their dinners,—some vegetables, cheese, eggs, a little soup, now and then some meat, very rarely any pastry or delicacies. But what did that signify? Everybody had a good appetite, and Madeline always carried away empty platters. Was there some little delicacy on the table, Claudine would not touch it. ‘It is for you, mamma; pray eat it.’

‘Not all, Claudine; see, your father and I have had enough.’

‘Give this then to Justine: you cannot think how much she likes it.’

‘And you, Claudine?’

‘Me, mamma! Oh do not think of me.’

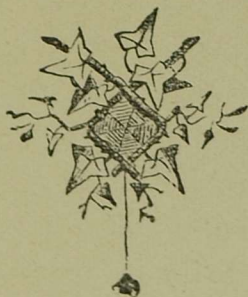
Afternoons always found Claudine at work with her needle: she mended her father’s stockings, and worked caps and frills for her mother. When she had a little leisure, it was lucky for the poor; Claudine could then make pretty caps and frocks for the new-born babies, and contrive warm jackets for the aged grandmothers.

When the setting sun marked the hour of supper, Claudine was always ready with her fresh salad and new brown bread. The repast is enlivened with chat, laughing, singing. Calm and tranquil is the hour! The occupations, the duties, the cares of the day are over; the moment of repose, of relaxation, is arrived; conscience whispers its secret approbation, and the heart, at peace with itself, yields to mirth. The day has been passed not only in duty, but in contentment and safety; neither sickness nor accident has afflicted any member of the group. What, then, ought to be the last duty of a family so fortunate? The heart of Claudine has no need of a monitor,—full of gratitude to the Almighty, to Him who gives life, and health, and every earthly blessing, before Him she prostrates herself; the little ones follow her example, Madeline kneels by her side; tears of gratitude moisten the eyes of the tender mother; the worthy father opens the sacred volume.

But let us not presume to intrude at such an hour into the hallowed privacy of innocence, virtue, and piety. Go, follow their example!

Sweet is the slumber of a poor, industrious, and innocent family. The labour that wearies, produces sleep that refreshes. The absence of wealth causes the absence of all those cares that wealth induces,—how to hoard, how to guard, how to spend. Conscience, calm and at peace,

courts repose. Gay and peaceful dreams restore to the soul the cheerful and tranquil sentiments that passed through it in the day. The quiet beams of the moon play on each composed and benign countenance. Should even dark clouds obscure the sky, and thunder rage around, the bolt and the flash appal not hearts meekly confiding in the mercy of a Father in heaven.





### CHAPTER III.

**T**HE various seasons of the year brought only change of occupation and amusement: all were equally welcome and equally busy. The spring found everybody engaged in the labours of agriculture,—sowing seeds in the fields and gardens, trimming the vines, and weeding the corn. The farmers were occupied in planting maize, wheat, oats, barley; whilst every kitchen garden was cropped with peas, beans, haricots, and other vegetables useful for food.

Claudine was delighted to watch the peasants cultivating the maize; she admired the towering stem of this graceful plant—its long and narrow leaves—its beautiful spike, so elegantly formed. Very often would she gather an ear of maize, and, seating herself on the turf with her brother and sisters, she would carefully unfold the closely entwining covering. At first appeared the pale green tender leaves that enwrapped the grain; next, the long and delicate filaments, soft as silk, surrounding the golden seed.

In the month of September, the poor peasants gather these ears, and, despoiling them of their covering, hang them in not ungraceful festoons upon the walls of their little cabins. The rich golden colour of the grain, and the large and beautiful form of each noble spike, render them a pleasing and gay ornament to the humble dwellings of the poor. Scarcely a peasant but cultivates a plot of this favourite plant, the grain of which furnishes delicious and wholesome food, the stem excellent fuel, and the leaves, well dried, a cleanly and comfortable stuffing for pillows and mattresses.

When the ears, by exposure to the sun and air, become perfectly dry, the grain is carefully ground ; and this flour, when boiled in water or in milk, and flavoured with salt or sugar, makes a kind of porridge very generally relished. In that part of France which borders on Switzerland, this mess is called '*des goudes.*' Claudine and the little ones liked it much for their breakfast ; therefore their kind father always cultivated some maize in a corner of his fields.

In summer much was to be done. The vine-dressers were trimming the vines, and the old women were removing the weeds that grew around these valuable plants. Then, too, the mower, with his sharp scythe, cut down the grass ; the haymakers followed his steps : everybody was industrious, everybody was gay. They work, they drink, they laugh, and talk, and sing.

The heat of the sun, the fresh, dry breeze, assist the labours of man, and in the heat of summer provision is made for the wants of winter.

Autumn passes in a charming variety of occupations. Besides the harvest, which furnishes the most agreeable of labours, there are many other pleasing duties. Then are gathered and stored apples, pears, walnuts, chestnuts. It is an interesting sight to behold the families of the poor peasants under the trees of their respective orchards. Sometimes the chestnut trees are scattered along the hedgerow, or here and there in the meadows. Here, with long poles, some of the villagers are beating down the pears and apples, which the little children hasten to gather into heaps, or to carry away in their baskets. There a sturdy rustic mounts a ladder, and shakes the branches of the walnut and the chestnut. The old men take off the husks, and then store away the valuable nuts in sacks and panniers. In some parts of Switzerland, chestnuts form a large portion of the food of the lower classes ; and in almost every southern province of that country, a few chestnuts, roasted, boiled, or otherwise prepared, constitute a daily dish.

But let us not forget the vintage ! The vintage ! How that name awakens images smiling and gay ! Then is the period in which easy and animating labour can be found for every age and every sex. The stout



country girls strip the white, and red, and purple branches of ripe and juicy grapes. The hardy peasant boys bear away the fruit in panniers, and throw it into large tubs, where their sturdy fathers crush the grapes with a sort of little rake, which, whilst pressing forth the juice, draws away the stalks. This operation is generally performed in the vineyard, and produces a scene of mirth and bustle highly interesting and picturesque. The clear juice is next poured into barrels, and conveyed to the nearest town in cars drawn by oxen.

The roads are covered by villagers in their best attire, going to visit the vineyards of their friends, and by the numerous rustics moving to and fro, engaged in the labours of this busy but festive season. Peasant girls are frequently seen driving the loaded carts, which are stopped at the gates of the town to pay a small tax on the cargo about to enter. The soldiers who guard the gate mix in the crowd of peasants: the whole forms a singular and charming picture.

The massy and venerable gate, with its dark and gloomy walls, its iron portcullis, and its drawbridge, shaking and sounding beneath the tread of many feet; the motley crowd in their best attire; the carts full of hogsheads of wine, drawn by the patient and submissive oxen, bowing their heads beneath their heavy wooden yoke; the peasant girl who drives them, of tall and robust stature, in her short blue petticoat

and smart red *corsage*, holding in one hand a long whip, and leaning her other arm on the head of her poor oxen ; the soldiers in their military attire, proudly pacing their accustomed walk ; the officers of the customs gauging the wine and receiving their dues, some mounted on the carts, some calculating accounts and signing permits ;—such is the picture often presented in autumn at the gates of the fortified towns in Switzerland.

Winter is not without its pleasures and its duties. During the very cold and stormy season, the good Weimar visited all his parishioners, and, to the extent of his power, gave to each the needed succour : medicine to the sick, food to the starving, consolation to the afflicted. It was not much that he possessed, but what he had he willingly shared with the unfortunate.

On New Year's Day there was always a little feast for his own family. The children sang artless verses to their tender parents ; small gifts were given and received. Each presented the others with sweetmeats and flowers. Neighbours and friends visited and congratulated one another.

On Twelfth-Day Madeline made a fine large cake, sweet and spicy ; a bean and a haricot were mixed among the sweetmeats that enriched it. Each had a noble slice ; whoever happened to have the bean was the king of the party ; the possession of the haricot marked the queen of the feast.

The confectioners, with the first smart frost, hastened to employ the peasants to fill their cellars with lumps of ice, which, stored away with care, served during summer to impart a delicious coolness to wine and other liquors, and to make sherbet and ices of various fruits.

But to our story. Claudine is awakened from her sweet slumbers by a gentle voice. It is her cousin, the gay Virginie, who arouses her. Ah, what a happy meeting! A twelvemonth has passed since these dear friends bade each other a mournful adieu in the Val de Bagne! But the bitterness of parting is compensated by the joyous moment of reunion. Surely there is no felicity so great as the meeting of tender and faithful friends! Claudine thought so when she beheld her cousin, when she again embraced her beloved Virginie, when she saw her large blue eyes filled with tears of sympathy and affection. 'Claudine!' 'Virginie!' These two were the only words that they were able to utter.

True felicity, like true love, has little need of language to express its motions. When two hearts rightly know and trust each other, a look, an exclamation, suffice, and all is understood.

Claudine knew well how to receive her friend. She strove to make her feel the familiarity of home amidst all the delicate attentions of a distinguished guest. She led her young sisters to follow her example and forward her wishes.

'Come, Fanchon,' said she, 'remember you

must give our Virginie whatever you think will please her, and not only obey but anticipate her orders.' But it was not by precept only that this amiable girl instructed : she set also an example of mild and obliging manners, of kind and complacent words, of courteous and friendly looks.

'How shall we amuse ourselves?' said Justine; 'for my part, I should like blindman's buff.'

'And I,' exclaimed Fanchon, 'choose cards.'

'And I,' exclaimed little Maurice, 'would prefer leap-frog.' Claudine was silent.

'You do not speak, dear Claudine,' said Virginie.

'No,' replied she, with a good-humoured smile; 'no, I do not speak, because I ought not to speak. I am at home : it is for you, dear Virginie, to choose our amusement.'

'But perhaps you will not like my choice.'

Claudine gave her friend a tender kiss, as she said, 'We have but one heart—we have but one taste. Choose—what is it you would prefer? Assuredly I shall prefer it also.'

'Well, then, let us dance.'

'With all my heart;' and Claudine was instantly ready for the dance.

Fanchon was disappointed and cross; Justine was sulky; Maurice put himself into a passion. Claudine, with perfect patience, mildly addressed the little rebels :

‘Everybody cannot choose a game at the same moment. Dance with us now, and by and by we will play with you.’ Maurice yielded to her remonstrance ; Justine did not stir.

Again Claudine spoke : ‘Come, Justine, give me your hand.—So, that’s right.—We have invited Virginie to our house, to please and make her happy,—have we not ? To contradict and oppose her is not the way to please her,—is it, Justine ?’ Justine sprang from her seat, and began the waltz. Claudine approached the little one : ‘Fanchon, my sweet, do you not love Virginie ?—Ah ! I know you do. Why then lose this opportunity of showing your love by obliging and obeying her ?’ Fanchon blushed, cast down her eyes, hesitated. Claudine knelt down, kissed her, and repeated her remonstrance. Fanchon threw her little arms around the neck of her amiable sister, and told her she was ready to do whatever she desired.

The merry dance began, and the mirthful party sang the airs to which they moved. At every pause in the figure some joyous exclamation was heard : ‘How happy we are !’—‘How delightful it is to waltz !’—‘Surely no amusement can be compared to dancing !’

All this pleasure was the effect of the good example and gentle precept of Claudine. Instead of the calm, tender, and affectionate mode of reasoning she had adopted, had she been

positive, violent, unkind, the little ones would probably have been obstinate; or if they had yielded, it would have been with so bad a grace, that nothing like pleasure would have resulted. Instead of mirth and frolic, a scene of contention and dispute would have ensued; and the hours intended for amusement might have been rendered gloomy by quarrels and even by fighting.

Whoever wishes for peace, contentment, and felicity, will do well to imitate the example of Claudine: and who does not desire peace, contentment, and felicity?

At dinner-time Claudine took care that her guest had the best place, was first served, and helped to the most delicate morsels. There happened to be but a small dish of peas on the table: Claudine helped her mother, her father, and her dear friend; what remained she divided between her brothers and sisters. When the dessert was served, the finest cherries were put on the plate of Virginie.

Claudine read well, but not so well as Virginie; she knew it; she acknowledged it, and besought her friend to instruct her to read better. 'Yet, my Claudine, you read very tolerably,' said her mother.

'But, mamma, I wish I could read better.— Ah, if I could but read as well as Virginie!'

'Try, then, my child.'

'Yes, I will try, and with all my heart.' She

applied herself so earnestly, that of course she improved rapidly; however, she never thought she could read so well as Virginie. Claudine admired all the superior talents of her cousin; she loved to talk of her good qualities, and was always speaking of her wit, her grace, her beauty. Ah, how charming it is to hear young people praise the attractions and accomplishments of their playmates and companions!

After a visit of some days, Virginie quitted the worthy pastor's house. After her departure, some neighbouring ladies visited Madame Weimar, and, among other topics, conversed about her late guest. 'She is pretty, to be sure,' said one lady; '*but* then she is so vain!'

'Certainly, too, she is clever,' observed another visitor; '*but* she is so self-conceited!'

'She has assuredly a good notion of dancing,' remarked a young lady; '*but* she is so giddy and careless!'

Claudine heard all these remarks. 'How the speeches of these ladies abound in *buts*!' thought she to herself. 'I do not like these *buts*.' 'Ladies,' said she, addressing them with a most animated countenance, 'Virginie deserves all your praise: she is indeed very pretty, very good, and very clever. How I love to hear you praise her! But you are very much mistaken, if you think she is really vain, and proud, and giddy. She is gay, certainly; but gaiety is not thoughtlessness,—and she is so very timid! It

is her timidity that you mistake for pride. And as for vanity,—pray, mamma, do mention with what humility she always speaks of herself.’

Madame Weimar embraced her child, and, when the ladies had retired, said to her, ‘Claudine, you render justice to your friend with much warmth.’


‘Yes, mamma, because she was absent, and could not defend herself. Papa says it is a duty to advocate the character of the absent, as well as to protect their property. If any one had taken away anything which I knew belonged to my cousin, would it not have been my duty to recover it for her? Well, then, it must be certainly a much more imperative duty to claim justice for her character. They were taking away all her merits: it was my business to reclaim her due.’ Claudine said all this with most perfect simplicity; she had no idea that the ladies had spoken from ill-nature or envy; she believed that they had been mistaken, and that she had given them pleasure when she undeceived them.

Claudine, when all this happened, was but a very young girl; yet by her amiable conduct she rendered herself and all around her happy. Her friends fearlessly trusted in her fidelity; her acquaintance confided in her sincerity and artlessness; every one was convinced that she always spoke the truth.





## CHAPTER IV.

NE, two years passed away ; the lovely girl was growing into the tall and amiable young woman, when a mournful and unexpected event obscured the happiness of the family of Weimar. Valence, the eldest son, a youthful soldier, aged twenty, had received a wound, which rendered it advisable for him to visit his home. When he arrived, one arm in a sling, and a pale and haggard countenance, sufficiently announced his past sufferings and his present weakness. Madame Weimar, at the sight of her son, wounded and feeble, fainted on the bosom of her husband ; the little ones began to cry and lament ; the young man, fatigued by his journey, and deeply agitated at the scene before him, sank on a chair, nearly overcome by his emotions.

Claudine alone remained firm and self-possessed ; her eyes were indeed filled with tears, her heart beat quick, and she could not speak ; yet she flew to the assistance of her brother,

supported his head in her arms, whilst she called Madeline to the aid of her mother. By a strong effort, conquering the flutter in her throat, she addressed the young children, and pacified their fears and agitation; she gave the necessary directions to Madeline for the relief of her mother, and talked tenderly and cheeringly to her brother, whilst she imprinted kisses on his forehead. He gratefully returned her embrace.

‘Ah, how happy I am!’ was his first exclamation.

‘And we — how happy are we, again to behold our dear, dear Valence!’

‘To behold me! a helpless cripple — who seem to have come only to bring care and trouble!’

‘Do not speak of trouble in this happy moment.’

‘Claudine, am I not a poor cripple?’

‘Well, there are enough of us to wait upon you. Maurice shall be your little valet; and I, I will be your nurse — your surgeon — your servant;’ and again her lips were affectionately pressed to the brow of her brother.

The young man, touched by her tenderness, and admiring her fortitude, roused himself to imitate her courage: he rose, dried up his tears, and, with a countenance more gay and serene, approached his parents. The good curate blessed God for having preserved the life of

his son, and Madame Weimar clasped him to her heart with transports of joy and gratitude. Claudine, though largely sharing the felicity of this beloved group, tore herself away from the pleasure of witnessing and sharing it, to attend to the homely duties which her new state imposed. She hastened to prepare a refreshing meal and a comfortable bed for the weary traveller. It would indeed have been more soothing to her feelings to have remained by his side, gazing with melancholy pleasure on his altered features, listening to the accents of his voice, and watching each look and movement; but Claudine never preferred pleasure to duty.

When all was arranged, she flew back with delight to a seat near her dear Valence. She congratulated her father, fondly embraced her mother, and drew all the little ones on her knee, or into her arms, that she might the more surely render them tranquil and obedient.

After their simple repast, which Valence called the most delicious meal he had ever tasted, Claudine set about dressing his wound. She made a fresh bandage, and, with a light and skilful hand, applied the necessary remedies. Afraid of increasing his suffering, she stopped repeatedly to say, 'Do I hurt you, dearest Valence?' The young soldier answered her question with a smile, and continued chatting gaily with his father.

Claudine led him to his chamber. When no longer in the presence of his mother, Valence again gave way to sighs and despondency.

‘Ah, Heaven! how weak and helpless I am! Alas! my dear Claudine, I, who ought to be your comfort and support, seem doomed to be your plague and trouble.’

‘Silence, impertinent!’ replied Claudine saucily. ‘I believe you doubt my skill—my strength; but, feeble and ignorant as I am, you shall see, valorous knight, that I have both will and power to serve and cure a gallant warrior.’ A parting kiss, a heartfelt ‘Good night,’ and Claudine had glided out of the chamber.

At an early hour of the morning she was again at the bedside of her brother, to inquire how he had slept, and what she could do for him. Clean linen well aired—shoes well cleaned—clothes well brushed,—all are ready.

‘Ah, yes, I see I am *at home*,’ cried Valence. ‘In what other dwelling should I have met with such attentions? Who but my Claudine could so fully understand and administer to my comfort? Ah, yes, I see I am *at home*!’

The severe pain which the wound of Valence often caused, occasionally rendered him irritable and discontented; and sometimes, when Claudine dressed his arm with the utmost care and tenderness, he would accuse her of awkwardness, and even speak to her harshly and

unkindly. Claudine bore his ill-humour with perfect good nature; regretted her clumsiness—entreated his pardon—and promised to try and do better in future. Her gentle looks, her humble words, pierced the heart of the sufferer: he felt his injustice, apologised for it, and besought his tender nurse to forgive his petulance. ‘But, indeed, my Claudine, the wound is sometimes so exquisitely painful,—my sufferings are sometimes so intense,—that I quite forget myself, and, what is worse, I forget the unbounded gratitude I owe to my unwearied and affectionate nurse!’

Such an address as this quickly removed every sign of sorrow from the brow of his sister; never did anger, never did reproach, issue from her lips. If any one accused her of a fault, she did not reply by recrimination or reproof: she very well knew that was not the way to become better and more amiable. She always hastened to acknowledge her errors, not as if the acknowledgment was all that was required, but as the first step to amendment; and most eager was she to correct and instruct herself. If she had confessed an act of carelessness, she followed up the confession by exerting herself to be more steady for the future; if she owned that she had been weak and childish, she would begin to consider how she might become more firm and discreet afterwards. She was too just to attempt to excuse any action that was inexcusable; she

was too honest to deny her own faults ; she was too noble not to apologise for them.

‘ Claudine, you have left those windows open, and the rain has destroyed the specimens of flowers which I was drying.’

‘ Ah, yes, dear papa ! how could I be so thoughtless ? Pray forgive me. I certainly must learn to be more attentive.’

And Claudine would be seen schooling herself for many days, to attain the steadiness in which she found herself deficient.

She scorned, above all things, to excuse herself by laying the blame on others, even when they deserved it.

‘ My dear sister,’ exclaimed Valence, ‘ do you know that among you I have been made very uncomfortable ?’

‘ How, Valence ?’

‘ It is very true ; for somebody—I fancy you—left the young kitten in my chamber last night, and the noise she made prevented all chance of sleeping.’

‘ That is vexatious, but it shall not happen again,’ said Claudine. But she did not say that she had particularly requested Madeline to keep the kitten out of her brother’s room ; no, she quietly took all the blame on herself, kindly reflecting that Madeline had many things to think of, and that she ought herself to have provided for her brother’s comfort.

A handsome looking-glass was broken—the

only handsome one in the house; the good Weimar had procured it for the toilet of his wife. Madame Weimar was seriously vexed.

‘Do you know, Claudine, that you have caused me the loss of this kind present of your dear father’s?’

‘I, mamma?’

‘Yes, you, child. I saw you bring Fido into my room this morning, and he has done the mischief.’ Madame Weimar continued to reprove, and Claudine to listen with gentleness and humility.

Her brother was reading in the room; the angry tone of his mother caught his attention; he turned from his book: ‘A glass broken by Fido!—when, how, mother?’

Madame Weimar explained.

‘I am by no means so certain, madam, that Claudine was the culprit,’ he exclaimed, smiling.

‘She certainly brought the dog into my room, Valence.’

‘And as certainly took him out again. It was I, luckless wight, who shut him in there, to prevent his following me to the village.’

‘And how could you be so very thoughtless? Shut up a dog in a room with a valuable mirror!’

‘I did not do it expressly that he might break your mirror, madam!’ answered Valence petulantly.

‘Behold the difference of your conduct and

that of your sister,' replied Madame Weimar. 'You attempt to justify a positive fault: she meekly submits to an unjust accusation.'

Though Claudine would not offer one excuse for herself, she urged half a dozen for her brother. 'Men never thought of looking-glasses; perhaps Valence did not know there was one in that room; certainly he did not know it was so valuable; besides, Fido was such a quiet little creature, he never broke anything before.'

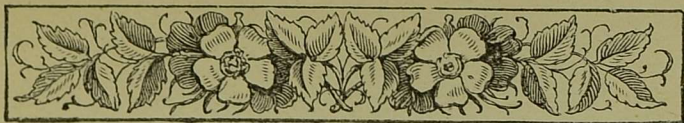
Valence felt the justice of his mother's reprimand; his sister's generous interference completed his self-recollection. How often does virtue produce virtue!

'Mother, forget my petulance,' cried the self-convicted Valence; 'it is indeed too true,—Claudine is more amiable than I.'

'My beloved son,' said Madame Weimar, 'I am the most fortunate of mothers! Yes, Claudine is amiable; and you, my Valence, you have just expressed a sentiment that renders you worthy of being her brother.'







## CHAPTER V.

**T**O complete the recovery of the invalid, the curate sent him on a visit to his uncle, the father of Virginie. Claudine accompanied her brother as nurse and travelling attendant, for his arm continued almost wholly useless. Virginie received her cousins in the most affectionate manner, and was delighted to pay Claudine the same friendly attentions which she had experienced at the vicarage.

Claudine was charmed with all she saw, and all that was done for her; her gay and innocent heart found joy, or caused it, under almost every situation. Modest and humble, she exacted no courtesy; obliging and considerate, she was ever prompt to please and to assist; grateful and feeling, she was sensible and thankful for even the smallest kindness; more alive to the wishes of others than to her own, she found her own happiness in promoting theirs.

Virginie had often unsuccessfully striven to

implant in the pure bosom of her cousin the opinions and notions which she herself entertained; but she never could teach Claudine to be *delicately alive* to affronts, or supposed affronts; to talk of supporting her dignity, to expatiate on her wounded consequence, and to complain of slights and rudeness. One day, especially, she sought earnestly to render Claudine angry with one of her acquaintance, who, she said, had spoken very unjustly and very disrespectfully of her friend.

‘I really am mortified that you should have been thus calumniated whilst under my father’s roof, and by such a saucy, insignificant girl as that Idalie.’

‘Do not torment yourself thus about such a trifle, dear Virginie,’ replied Claudine; ‘I do not believe the little Idalie had any intention to vex me.’

‘You do not believe? No, Claudine, you never do believe that anybody means ill.’

‘And am I not happy in my incredulity?’

‘Oh, but you ought to vindicate yourself!’

‘Certainly; but I must first be attacked.’

‘Idalie has said such things of you!’

‘Whoever repeated her sayings was much to blame; for, as I never gave her cause to satirize me, she must have spoken without thought.’

‘But ought one to speak thoughtlessly?’

‘Certainly not; but we are all so apt to do so, that we ought readily to overlook a fault

which all of us in turn commit. Idalie knows very little of me; she has mistaken my character,—that's all.'

'She said you were a prude and a pedant, and I don't know what besides.'

Claudine laughed heartily. 'I hardly understand the meaning of those words; certainly, therefore, Idalie is wiser than I.'

'An ill-natured little creature! You must never be friends with her again.'

'Virginie, you do not like Idalie, because she is ill-natured; and yet you desire me to follow her example.'

'How!'

'Should I show much good humour if I never noticed her again!' Virginie was silenced. Claudine continued: 'No, my dear cousin, I do not wish to live in enmity with any human being.—I never have been, I never will be, the first to quarrel with my fellow-creatures. I do so love peace, and unity, and concord, that I would rather bear small evils than risk that great evil—enmity.'

'Truly yours are new ideas and new modes of conduct.'

'Not so; these are the most ancient sentiments and systems, since they are those prescribed to us in the Holy Bible.'

'Oh, I read the Bible as a lesson, a task; I do not trouble myself to remember its grave, dull precepts.'

‘Dull precepts! Virginie, what is it you say? I find the Bible the most interesting and valuable book I possess. Papa tells me that we ought to read for instruction as well as amusement; he assists me to select and remember all the good and beautiful maxims that we find in the various books we read together.’

‘But what can the Bible offer to please and charm you?’

‘Oh, a thousand passages—a thousand affecting histories. What think you of the eventful life of Joseph? What a touching picture of a submissive and obedient son, a mild and affectionate brother, a faithful and virtuous friend!’

‘Why, yes, I do confess the story of Joseph is very pretty.’

‘Do you not admire also the sacrifice of Abraham, that tender and venerable father,—yielding his beloved and only child without a murmur?’

‘That chapter always makes me shed tears.’

‘Such tears, papa says, soften and amend the heart; and such I have shed at the touching interview between Jacob and his brother Esau. I am sure, if I ever were at enmity with any human being, after reading the affecting reconciliation between these brothers, I should hasten to throw myself

on the bosom of my foe, and pray for the blessing of harmony.'

'What ideas you draw from these narratives!'

'My dear Virginie! those ideas naturally arise from the subject, and certainly we cannot do better than fix them in our minds as rules of conduct. Papa always bids me do so.'

'Then every tale has its moral for you?'

'Certainly. I learn perfect submission from Abraham, unwearied efforts of well-doing from Joseph, brotherly attachment from the meeting between Jacob and Esau, and pure filial love and duty from the example of the faithful Ruth. How often do I repeat her affecting declaration, "Whither thou goest, I will go; where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God!"'

Virginie was touched; tears started into her eyes; she threw herself on the bosom of her friend. Claudine clasped her fervently to her heart, and these two affectionate girls, justly appreciating the charms of a virtuous and heroic firmness, enjoyed all the delight of an attachment equally pure and faithful.

'Oh, show me this precious book!' cried Virginie; 'let us read together those impressive histories; teach me to become as good as the tender Ruth.'

Claudine and her cousin read and re-read together the many admirable histories of Holy

Writ. The simple but sublime passages of the New Testament presented them with a yet higher treat.

‘You have opened to me a new and inexhaustible source of pleasure and instruction!’ exclaimed Virginie. ‘How much, how very much I owe you!’

The young cousins daily took long walks in the beautiful country that surrounded their abode, and every day varied the aim of their strolls. Sometimes they would wander among the meadows, heaths, and woods, to seek wild plants and flowers, with which to enrich their herbarium. How calm and soothing were these rambles! Valence would climb the rocks or dig into the soil; Claudine, on her knees upon the ground, would search in the hedgerows and sheltered nooks; whilst Virginie, carrying a small basket on her arm, would stand quietly by her side, to receive the specimens that her friends gathered. Now and then her little foot would put aside the moss and long grass to uncover the buds of the daisy, the beautiful leaves of the primrose, the fragrant flowerets of the violet. Buttercups and cornflowers embellished their collection; and many a charming bunch of lilies did Valence cull for them amidst the rocks. Every part of each plant,—roots, stems, leaves, seeds,—all were carefully picked, that each might be classed and arranged with true botanical precision.

The following day the friends would sally forth with the same basket,—but it was no longer empty, to receive the gifts of nature,—no, it was well filled, to dispense the gifts of charity. Virginie, as best knowing her neighbours and their several wants, would lead the way to the dwelling of sickness or want; she would enter the cottage, and throw herself on her knees by the bed of poverty and disease. It was then the turn of Claudine to stand by her side and hold the little basket. This she would open, not to receive pleasures, but to bestow comforts. A little wine, a basin of nourishing soup, a warm gown, two or three pieces of small coin, and, what surpassed all other gifts, a few kind and consoling words, sighs of sympathy, tears of compassion, looks of pity,—such was the list of their dispensations!

Claudine possessed true sensibility,—not that which exhausts itself in cries, and lamentations, and unmeaning professions, but that which rests in the heart, and expresses itself by useful acts and kind words. She shared the joy and the sorrow of all around her, and might be said to live only for social feeling; for she thought little of her own peculiar trials. Her manners were always mild, generally gay; and though she talked little of her emotions, her countenance beautifully expressed the deep interest she took in everything, whether good or evil, that befel those she loved.

Indeed, all human beings seemed to excite the sympathy of the affectionate Claudine. Her satirist, the young Idalie, suddenly experienced a very great change of fortune. She was a penniless orphan, protected by her worthy godmother, the former friend of her mother. A debtor of her father's unexpectedly came into possession of a large fortune, and very honestly resolved to pay all his debts. Idalie, as the sole heir of her parents, became rich by the payment of this long-forgotten claim. Claudine rejoiced sincerely at this event, and expressed her congratulations with the purity and cordiality with which she felt them. Virginie suggested that her honesty might be questioned. Claudine, equally incapable of jealousy and falsehood, could not understand at what her cousin hinted. It never entered her head or her heart to affect what she did not feel, or to suppose that others would think she did so. It is very difficult to feign so perfectly, that the deception is never discovered or suspected. Did I say difficult?—Surely it is impossible.

Idalie could not mistrust the air, the tone, the look of perfect sincerity, with which Claudine exclaimed, 'I am delighted, Idalie, at your good fortune!'—it was so different from the long formal compliments, the overacted rejoicing, of her other companions. Young as she was, she clearly observed the distinction between sincerity and affectation; from that moment she



ceased to speak ill of Claudine; she began to esteem her; she desired to obtain her friendship. Her other acquaintance now courted, and flattered, and besieged the once despised and neglected orphan. Claudine alone exhibited no change of manners: she had always been kind to the poor girl, and kind she continued to be.

It has been repeatedly said that it is more rare, and therefore more heroic, to rejoice with those who rejoice, than to weep with those who weep. This is a severe satire on human nature. Perhaps it is too true, and we ought all to try not to deserve it. The most virtuous are the most happy: pure disinterestedness is one of the noblest virtues. Let us then strive to possess this virtue, as the most certain means of enjoying the highest felicity.

‘Ah, Claudine! how I envy you your sweetness of disposition, your power of being happy and amiable under every situation of life!’

‘Indeed, my Virginie! I have very much to be grateful for: can I ever sufficiently thank a gracious God, who has given me a soul capable of so much enjoyment? How can I ever be sad, when every day I have the joy of beholding the happiness of some friend, or acquaintance, or relative?’

‘Dearest Claudine! what a sentiment! But it is worthy of you. Teach me your precious secret of thus being blessed in the bliss of

others—of thus turning everything you touch into pleasure. Believe me, it is an art more valuable than that of the alchemist !’

The young people attended a gay wedding entertainment given in the neighbourhood. Idalie was there, in a dress corresponding with the change in her fortune. Claudine greatly admired the taste displayed in her robe, and the arrangement of her hair. ‘The roses in her hair and on her petticoat are the most beautiful I ever saw: they seem as if just gathered from the bush—it is quite a pleasure to look at them!’ she exclaimed, as with delighted eye she gazed on Idalie.

Then the graceful attire of another of her acquaintance gratified her sight, and her bright eye wandered from beauty to beauty with quick and animated glances. Valence requested Virginie to waltz with him. ‘How can I leave your sister?’

‘Me! Oh, do not think of me!—I will sit quietly in this corner admiring you all.’

‘And won’t you dance?’

‘Certainly I will, if anybody will ask me,’ replied Claudine, laughing.

Her brother and cousin departed to join the waltzers; all the smart girls were busy noting down their various engagements with partners for the whole evening. Claudine, being a stranger, was not quickly engaged; but she enjoyed every dance in some degree, from the

interest which she took in the gaiety of others, and from the vivacity with which she listened to the music, and beat time to the steps.

At length a youth of her acquaintance begged her hand for the *contre-danse*; she gaily accepted his offer; and though she did not excel in this accomplishment, she acquitted herself with ease and simplicity. The dance finished, she requested her partner to tell her the names of several young ladies who struck her as being very pretty, or very graceful, or very well dressed. He smiled as he good-humouredly answered her questions, and listened to her animated admiration.

‘I confess,’ he said, ‘that Idalie’s dress shows excellent taste, that your cousin Virginie dances with singular lightness and elegance, and that my sister Clemence is the prettiest girl in the room. But do you know, mademoiselle, there is one other whom I admire more than all these?’

‘Who is that? Pray show her to me,—I dare say I shall admire her too,’ cried Claudine.

The young man archly answered, ‘The young lady who thinks of everybody, and admires everybody but herself.’

‘Sir!’ exclaimed Claudine, not at all suspecting what he meant.

He laughed and blushed, and Claudine had no time for farther inquiry. Virginie was before her, waiting to have her robe arranged; and

Idalie was requesting her to fasten the loosened roses in her hair.

A light supper summoned the dancers away from the ball-room, and music followed the supper. Virginie sang some Swiss airs with considerable skill, and the pretty Clemence proved that she possessed a voice of the first order.

‘How delightful! How very delightful!’ repeated Claudine to her partner. ‘Is not this a treat?’

‘It is indeed,’ he replied; ‘and such a treat as I never before enjoyed.’

‘Did you never before hear your sister sing?’

‘Yes, very often, and your cousin too, and I think they both sing very charmingly.’

‘Then what do you mean by saying this is a treat you never before enjoyed?’

‘You only could ask that question, for to you only it is not new to hear what I heard just now,—unenvying praise, warm from a generous heart.’

The young man spoke with considerable energy; Claudine looked at him with unfeigned surprise. ‘Again you are unintelligible,’ she at length said; ‘or rather, perhaps,’ added she, laughing, ‘again I am ignorant, and incapable of understanding you.’

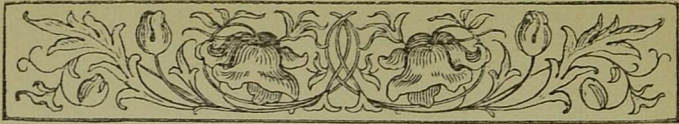
But her attention was at this moment called to the other side of the table. Valence and Virginie were preparing to sing a trio, and they

were desiring her to take her usual part, the tenor. Claudine had a weak but sweet voice; the part assigned to her was very easy and insignificant: she readily promised to do her best, and succeeded very happily. The company thanked her for her obliging promptitude.

‘Oh!’ said she, with a smile and a blush, ‘the least I could do was to be obliging; with so poor a voice as mine, it is only in accompaniment that I can presume to sing at all; to be obliging was the least I could do.’

‘And who could do more?’ said her partner, with delighted earnestness.





## CHAPTER VI.

**T**HE health and strength of Valence being perfectly re-established, he returned to his parents, accompanied by his sister. But Claudine saw with pain that the gaiety of Valence did not return with his health and strength. His arm was healed, his bodily vigour was revived, his countenance had again a ruddy bloom; but his eyes expressed a deep and settled gloom, and rarely was his face illumined by a smile.

The season was beautiful, the evenings were refreshing and balmy. The brother and sister often indulged in a twilight ramble, and, one evening at sunset, they found themselves on the banks of a tranquil stream, overshadowed by the trees of a neighbouring wood.

‘How quietly this current flows!’ exclaimed Claudine. Valence answered with a sigh. ‘Do not you admire this peaceful rivulet, dear Valence?’ continued she, after a short pause.

‘Yes, sister, I more than admire, I envy it.’

‘Why these sighs, brother? Wherefore regard with envy this rapid but tranquil stream?’

‘Because it is tranquil; and because I know, I feel, that tranquillity is far from my breast.’

‘What say you, brother?’

‘Claudine, I am unhappy.’

‘Unhappy! in the midst of so many blessings! Oh, Valence, is this a false sensibility? Is this gratitude?’—Valence was silent; his sister proceeded: ‘Your wound cured—your health restored—a tender mother, a kind father—a whole united family loving and cherishing you!’

‘If you love me, Claudine, be silent; do not detail the list of my blessings: the remembrance of them only serves to render me more wretched.’

Claudine repeated the word ‘wretched!’ and, with eyes full of tears, embraced her brother.

‘Sister, I am not worthy of your tenderness; I am not worthy of your tears.’

‘Valence, you afflict, you frighten me. Why this mystery? Why do you not pour your griefs into the bosom of your most attached friend?’

‘It is not of sorrows that I have to complain, it is of errors,—yes, Claudine, of grave and serious errors.’

‘Well, then, let us speak of your faults. What have you done? what errors have you committed?’

‘Claudine, I am confident of your friendship.’

I know you can advise, and I am sure you will serve me.' He stopped a moment ; then, covering his face with one hand, whilst with the other he encircled the slight form of his sister, he added, 'Do not look at me, Claudine ; I could not endure the expression of surprise and indignation which my narrative will produce on your countenance.'

'Begin ; my eyes are riveted on the turf we tread on.'

'You know, sister, that I have military pay ; you also know that my excellent father has frequently made me presents of money. *I* know that my pay ought to suffice for all my wants ; *I* know that my father can ill afford to make pecuniary gifts : how then shall I tell you that I am at this moment deeply in debt ?' He paused, and his sigh was echoed by his sister. 'This is my painful, my disgraceful secret. Alas ! I see it has overwhelmed you. You do not speak ; you are equally astonished and offended ! Condemn me, censure me, but forgive me.'

'Dearest Valence, I do not condemn you ! Assuredly inevitable causes have led to this embarrassment. No, I do not condemn you. I have but one thought,—how I can help and comfort you.'

'Good, amiable Claudine ! this kindness punishes me more severely than the keenest reproaches.'



‘I ought to spare you ; for indeed, brother, you do not seem inclined to spare yourself: in making your confession, you omitted nothing that could make it more self-accusing.’

‘Ah, Claudine ! you cannot guess my shame, my misery, my self-reproach. Your pure and innocent mind cannot comprehend the weakness, the folly, of mine.’

‘Oh, everybody sometimes errs ! and for the faults of youth and inexperience I surely ought to have compassion ; for I am young and without experience myself.’

‘Speak, then, dear Claudine ; advise and direct me, and be assured of my gratitude and obedience.’

‘The doctor must be made acquainted with the extent of the disease before he can presume to suggest a remedy,’ said Claudine, smiling kindly ; ‘and I must know the extent of your debts before I can venture to hint how they may be discharged. Take courage, Valence : tell me precisely, how much do you owe ?’

Claudine was right to bid her brother take courage, for there is no question that it requires more fortitude to answer truly and precisely, than the amount of a person’s debts.

Valence, blushing, murmured this answer : ‘I owe precisely two hundred francs.’

‘I have no right, brother, to ask how all this has happened.’

‘What have you not a right to ask ? and to

what is it not my duty to reply? Question fairly, and I will reply frankly. My dear sister, this evil has arisen from my imprudence.'

'How?'

'Yes, from my imprudence. I spent more than I ought; I lent money to those who are too inconsiderate to hurry themselves to repay me. I have thus lavished money which in fact did not belong to me.'

'What do you mean?'

'Claudine, instead of paying just debts for necessary articles, I indulged myself in foolish expenses; and, with false generosity, I lent money with which I ought honestly to have paid just demands.'

'Who are your creditors?'

'My tailor and shoemaker.'

'And these poor men want their money?'

'Yes, and have pressed me for it.'

'As you seem so fully aware of your error, it is not likely you will repeat it, so I need not moralize, and shall not scold.'

Claudine tenderly pressed the arm of her brother, as with an affectionate smile she pronounced these words. She presently added, 'We must have a little time to consider this affair. Let us walk here again to-morrow evening; meanwhile compose yourself; we are not wholly without resources.'

The next day, Claudine contrived to be alone with her father, and to turn the conversation on

the expenses of housekeeping. The worthy pastor, who never concealed his anxieties from his daughter, now recounted to her his secret cares :

‘My dear Claudine, the feeble and precarious health of your beloved mother renders me solicitous to save her every pang, and prevents my informing her of all the little vexations that continually oppress me. She feels too keenly, her heart is too tenderly alive to the interests of those whom she loves. Besides, as the mother of a family, she considers herself in some measure responsible for whatever disaster may occur, conceiving that her exertions and her foresight ought to prevent every calamity. You, my child, young, gay, and vigorous, can participate in my struggles without sinking under them. To you I dare speak without reserve, for I can rely on your good sense and fortitude. The long illness of your brother has proved very expensive: his surgeon’s bill and his late journey have absorbed all our savings.’

Claudine sighed deeply. ‘Do not sigh, my love,’ said her excellent parent; ‘for the present we have no expensive wants; and my principal motive for entering into these particulars, was because I wished you to explain to Valence why it will be impossible for me just now to make him my accustomed present. I know that whilst he is at home he has less need of money, and this assurance mitigates my regret.’

Poor Claudine! These words of her father's instantly put an end to all her hopes of assistance from him. Of course this was not the moment to inform him of the embarrassments of her brother; therefore, tenderly embracing him, she thanked him for this fresh mark of his confidence, promised secrecy, assured him that she would make every effort to economize in their little household, and then changed the conversation to a less painful subject.

When her father quitted the room, she hastened to shut herself up in her own. She opened her little secretary, and ransacked her purse,—one, two, three,—there were only three crowns; but in a corner of one of her drawers she found five francs wrapped in paper. She had put them aside as a gift for an aged servant of her father's, who, infirm and poor, needed the assistance of charity. Her tears now dropped on the packet designed for her venerable pensioner. 'It would have been indeed a treat to have sent it to him; but he knows nothing of my intentions—he will not be disappointed. I pity you, Antoine; but my brother's peace of mind,—it must not be sacrificed to my satisfaction. No; justice must always precede generosity.'

In the evening, Claudine showed her treasure to her brother. 'Here are twenty francs to make a beginning: perhaps your own purse is not quite empty?' She spoke gaily, for she

desired to cheer, not to agitate Valence: she would rather share her joys than her sorrows with him. She did not exclaim, with a sigh, 'Alas! take this—it is all I possess!' She chose to make light of the favours she conferred; she shrank from the idea of oppressing his heart with obligation; she loved to see the sparkle of joy rather than to hear the burst of gratitude.

Valence emptied his own purse into the hands of Claudine; she was delighted to see a louis-d'or and twelve francs. From the accumulated treasure she counted fifty francs, and joyously exclaimed, 'Ah! we have already a quarter of our debts.'

'Of *our* debts!' repeated Valence, touched to the heart by this expression of a tender and perfect sympathy.

Claudine laughingly told him she would permit him to keep the remaining two francs. 'Yes, take them, and remember that you must be very prudent, for that is all you can have for your pocket-money at present.'

'Claudine, dear Claudine!'

'Do not kill me with kisses.'

'But, Claudine, what said my father?'

'Oh, I hope we shall be able to arrange this matter without mentioning it to papa.'

'How?'

Claudine never gave unnecessary pain; but to give pain now was inevitable,—it might even

prove beneficial. 'No, my dear brother, if possible, papa must not be informed of your embarrassments: he is already much harassed with pecuniary difficulties, and will not even be able to make you his customary present.'

'Ah, Claudine, assuredly I will be silent; assuredly I will not trouble the peace of a parent so tender and so indulgent.'

'Hasten now, brother, to remit these fifty francs to your creditors, and promise them a farther payment next quarter.'

'But, sister, these twenty francs—they are yours.'

'Pardon me, they are now yours: when you are rich, and I am poor, you shall repay me.'

Claudine hastily quitted her brother, to return to her duties within doors, where she had much to superintend, arrange, and execute.





## CHAPTER VII.

**W**ITHIN a week after the foregoing conversation, Madame Weimar, whilst sitting at work by her daughter, complained of indisposition, and suddenly fainted away. The prompt and judicious efforts of Claudine gradually revived her, and when she was sufficiently recovered to converse, she confessed that her health and strength had been long sensibly declining. 'It is a truth I have desired to conceal, my child ; but from you I can no longer conceal it. Let us hope that I may yet amend ; but say nothing to your father. Alas ! he has already too much to struggle with. Why farther afflict this inestimable friend ?'

'But, mother, perhaps some remedy might be found ?'

'Time, my child—time will be my best friend ; patience, repose—these are my medicines.'

'And you have long uncomplainingly borne your inward sufferings ?'

'Because I knew that the knowledge of them would afflict you.'

‘Ah, mamma!’

‘My Claudine, fear nothing: my ailments threaten no immediate consequences, and there is an ever kind and all-powerful Providence’—

‘Who will guard in mercy a life so precious,’ exclaimed Claudine, throwing herself into the arms of her mother.

At this moment the good curate’s voice was heard as he entered the house. Madame Weimar put her finger on her lips by way of enjoining silence. Claudine overcame her emotion, and they both received the curate with a calm and even a cheerful air. He arrived, fatigued with a long walk, and harassed by a train of painful solitary musings. After every absence he gazed on his wife with looks of anxiety and disquietude. The serenity and cheerfulness with which he was now welcomed, hushed his fears and chased his despondency. Justly dear is that home which affords a certain haven of repose and peace! Precious are those friends who ever offer a smiling and gracious welcome! The worthy Weimar soon forgot his mournful thoughts and weary wanderings. Seated between his wife and child, his heart was filled with cheering and soothing emotions; and the trio, who had met in dejection, enjoyed together an evening of delicious hilarity.

Claudine, aware of her mother’s real state, became most anxious to spare her the least pain and trouble, and devoted herself with in-



creased earnestness to the duties of the household. She arose before any other member of the family, and never retired to rest till long after every one was asleep. Youth is the season for exertion and activity: then the peculiar vigour of the body is equal to almost every effort; then the energy of the mind overcomes all dejecting thoughts. Claudine—active, busy, and provident—had no time for complaint or lassitude. Madeline, their only servant, had, together with some good qualities, a peculiarity of temper which rendered her a source of frequent vexation to her employers. She was much offended at the active part that Claudine took in household affairs; she knew not the reason of this interference, and the young mistress durst not explain the cause, lest the truth should reach her father's ear. Madeline was often sullen; she muttered complaints of having two mistresses. 'I am not your mistress,' Claudine would reply, with a kind smile; 'no, Madeline, I am only your assistant.'

Madeline was touched with this gentleness,—she felt that she did not deserve it. She would even sometimes say, 'Oh, mademoiselle, you are too good.' But, like too many people, she satisfied herself with this acknowledgment of her faults, and took no pains to cure herself of them; so that almost every day she said or did something to give pain to Claudine.

But this amiable girl hid all these vexations

in her own bosom, and preserved an equanimity and cheerfulness of manner that rendered her the source of comfort to all her family. She had always enlivening prospects for her brother, consoling tidings for her father, soothing hopes for her mother. Behold her in a corner of the room, whispering gaily to Valence, 'I have news for you, brother: to-day I received a packet from Virginie, in which she has repaid me the crown I lent her during our visit; there it is,—it is yours. I fear, my poor bankrupt, you are sadly in want of cash for pocket-money; and, do you know, I had a happy thought last night. Do you not remember the large gold watch which my grandfather bequeathed to me? It does not go well; we had better sell it; and then— Ah, how glad shall I be to see the money in your hands!'

The curate called her towards him, to answer some question on domestic affairs. In a moment she was at his side, with her account-book in her hand. 'Look, papa, the last month we have expended less by twenty francs than in any former month. Must not Madeline and I be excellent managers?'

'Indeed, my love, you must, for we have lived with our usual comfort. These savings must be your reward, Claudine.'

Claudine spoke in a low tone: 'Papa, I thank you; but I have no wants. You could, if you pleased, give this money to Valence.'

M. Weimar put the francs into the hands of Claudine, and presented her hand so filled to his son. 'There, Valence, receive the savings of your sister and the gift of your father.'

The young man sprang from his seat; he respectfully kissed the hand of his father, and then clasped his sister in his arms. How fully did this moment overpay hours of vexation!

Madame Weimar seemed to revive, from the state of perfect tranquillity and repose which she now enjoyed. Whilst her daughter worked, she was left calm and free; she walked in the garden, she conversed with her husband, she amused herself with her children. Claudine was alternately housekeeper, nurse, and instructress; and, by indefatigable exertion, she contrived to perform her mother's part as well as her own.

In the evening, when the duties of the day were over, she would seat herself near her mother, and play her little mountain airs on her guitar, accompanying it with her voice. She had composed a few simple and pathetic lines to the favourite air of her country, *Le Ranz de Vaches*, and thus warbled them in her native language:

'O mon pays! O mon châlet!  
Doux objêts de mon regret!  
Ma femme, mon père,  
Mes enfans, ma mère,  
Doux objêts de mon regret!'

These tender cares, these calm and innocent pleasures, soothed the sufferings without curing the malady of Madame Weimar. Claudine observed that, in spite of all her efforts to conceal it, her mother was in great pain, and daily became weaker. One morning, being worse than usual, she could not leave her bed, and Claudine hastened to prepare for her some nourishing broth. Madame Weimar had often said that she never liked it so well as when it was made by her daughter. Madeline was enraged, and muttered, 'These are fine times, truly, when I, old as I am, cannot make a little broth to please my sick mistress! The world is finely changed. Only young damsels now-a-days know how to do anything!'

Claudine took no notice of these murmurs; she spoke mildly to Madeline, and did all in her power to silence her, and prevent her angry tones from being heard by her mother. In a moment of petulant rage, this woman cut her hand, and at the sight of her own blood she was alarmed, distracted; she prayed and lamented, but did nothing to stop the bleeding. When Claudine approached to assist her, she repulsed her rudely; but at length her fears overcoming her ill-humour, she yielded to the efforts of the generous Claudine. This good and sensible girl skilfully bound up the wound, and with the kindest words appeased the alarms of Madeline. It is hardly possible that the

human heart can resist the benevolent acts of virtue.

Madeline was softened, touched: she said nothing, but she pressed to her lips the gracious hand that had assuaged her pain, with an expression of contrition and gratitude. Claudine was deeply gratified by this mark of recovered temper and innate goodness,—she felt pleased and happy. Thus it is that good hearts are blessed by the effects of their own virtues; that, even in the hour of sadness, they can find or create their own consolations!





## CHAPTER VIII.

**H**ARDLY had Claudine surmounted this vexation, when the sight of Valence, pale and agitated, overwhelmed her with new fears and sorrows.—Her mother ill, Madeline capricious and helpless, Valence afflicted,—such was the sad list of that day's trials! Who does not know the weight of domestic evils? Claudine felt them most keenly; but now, as ever, she rallied herself, and received her brother with cheering looks.

'Ah, sister, I am distracted!'

Claudine thought of her mother. 'Speak low, dear Valence,—my mother is asleep; speak low, I implore you.'

He tried to lower his voice, as he said, 'According to your wishes, I forwarded the fifty francs to my two creditors;—see what answers I have received.'

He gave her a couple of letters. She read them through calmly and attentively, and then, smothering her emotions, addressed him: 'One of these letters is very consoling: this good

shoemaker has written with mildness and civility,—he seems disposed to wait your convenience for a farther payment. Unfortunately the other is not so forbearing.’

‘Forbearing!—he is a miscreant, a man whom I have repeatedly obliged and assisted. I have lent him money; I have recommended him to my friends: but he is a profligate, who spends more than he earns.’

‘And therefore must always be in want. He gives us an excellent lesson, brother, by showing us that those who spend beyond their resources can never be either just or generous.’

‘Oh, Claudine! that is a lesson I have now by heart. I have too severely felt the humiliating state of a debtor, readily to forget that justice is the first of our duties. But what is to be done?’

‘Calm yourself; it is not possible to think or act wisely while so agitated.’

‘But, Claudine.’

‘Hush! I hear the voice of my father. Go, let us meet in the garden: I will come thither the first moment I can.’

Valence hastened out of the house; the curate approached with quick steps. ‘Claudine, wherefore this noise so near the chamber of your mother?—Do you forget that she is ill? Do you forget that she is asleep?’

‘Forget! Ah! papa.’

‘Truly, child, it appears as if you did.’

The severe looks, the stern manner of M. Weimar, so new and so unusual (for sorrow had made him irritable), sensibly grieved his daughter. She looked at him with supplicating eyes: 'My dear father!'

'Wherefore this noise?—To whom did you speak?'

Claudine could bear undeserved blame, but she could not accuse her absent brother: she was silent, but her attitude was humble, her air imploring. Her father was softened by her meek and self-reproaching mien. 'It is so new a thing to find fault with you, Claudine!' She threw herself into his arms, and, agitated by various emotions, burst into tears. He tenderly kissed her forehead. Again a soothing moment, in the midst of all her trials, for the generous Claudine! In truth, I begin to think that it is not possible for the virtuous ever to be entirely miserable.

The moment she found herself alone, Claudine hastened to join her brother. She found him seated under a tree, heaving deep sighs, and looking most mournfully. When he saw her, he exclaimed, 'Come, Claudine, come; you are to me the goddess Hope. This divinity is always painted with the same blue eyes, the same charming smile, the same golden locks: you want nothing but her anchor.'

'You are my anchor, Valence; your manly virtues must be the prop of my weakness. But



silence, flatterer, nor with your sugared words dissipate my sober thoughts.'

Valence drew his sister towards him, and seated her on the turf at his side; and, whilst his hand played with the full light curls that hung on her forehead, he listened attentively to her advice. 'First take my watch,—sell it; not a word of thanks! Next, let me ask, have you spent the money which papa'—

'No, Claudine, no,—your brother is not so utterly unworthy of you. Here is every franc—twenty and two; no, not one batz<sup>1</sup> has been spent.'

'Excellent, Valence! How I admire this proof of your self-command! Behold one of the advantages of poverty,—it offers opportunities for displaying many a splendid virtue.'

'But this watch, Claudine, I do not like to sell this watch;—permit me rather to borrow money upon it.'

'As you please, brother. But is there any chance of our having money to redeem it?'

'If I knew any one who could lend me the sum I want!'

'Do not regret that you cannot borrow the money, Valence, because that would only be changing your creditor,—owing to one man instead of another. Borrowing money to pay a debt is removing the weight from one shoulder to another, but the pressure is still there.'

<sup>1</sup> A batz is worth about three half-pence English, or three cents American.

‘But this tailor is so urgent, so un pitying!’

‘That’s very true; but I hope we shall be able to collect sufficient to satisfy him.’

‘I must go to the nearest town, to find a pawnbroker. What pretext can I make to my father for this journey?’

‘Pretext! make no pretext. Simply say that you have business to transact.’

‘And if my father question me further, what am I to reply,—not the truth, Claudine?’

‘Not a falsehood, Valence.’

‘But some answer must be invented.’

‘No, no; by admitting the necessity of inventing, you authorize a suspicion that there is something to hide. You know that there is one certain way to avoid this disgraceful alternative—silence: when one cannot speak truth, one may be silent.’

‘My charming moralist, how easy and agreeable you render the path of virtue!’

‘Valence, the path of virtue is always easy and agreeable. It is in the labyrinth of vice alone that one encounters difficulties and dangers.’

At supper, Valence frankly announced his intention of visiting the town the next day.

‘For what purpose, my son?’ said M. Weimar.

‘I have a little commission, father.’

‘What is it?’

Valence coloured, and was silent. His mother repeated the question: ‘What business takes you to the town?’

‘Do not press him with questions, my love,’ said his father: ‘I know that I can rely on the truth and honesty of Valence.’

Claudine pressed the hand of her father, in sign of her gratitude. Valence replied with a modest confidence, ‘Father, I should be most unworthy, could I ever abuse this generous reliance.’

Thus touchingly passed a scene, to which truth alone gave birth. How different had been the emotions of Valence, had he, by any—the mildest—form of deception, deluded his parents! The praises which now were so soothing to his heart, would then have been bitter as gall. The noble answer, which now drew on him the strengthened love of all who heard him, could then never have been uttered; and shame, distrust, and sorrow, would have taken place of love, confidence, and joy! Valence, when he wished his sister good night, murmured softly, ‘How easy and agreeable is the path of virtue!’

Valence found a jeweller, who very willingly lent him money on the watch, but no one seemed inclined to buy it. He therefore accepted fifty francs as a loan, and, adding to this sum twenty-five francs from his purse, he sent this sum with a severe letter to his merciless creditor. He wrote also to his lenient and confiding claimant an epistle of warm and heartfelt thanks, with a positive promise of

the full payment of his demands in the course of a very few weeks. Perhaps this honest man experienced more pure and lasting pleasure from the approving and grateful letter which he now received, than did his unfeeling townsman at the sight of his seventy-five francs, accompanied as they were with a stern and well-merited rebuke.

His business completed, Valence hastened homewards. His walk, though long, was agreeable, because the emotions that attend the consciousness of having acted with honesty, justice, and energy, must always be pleasing. Claudine had strolled out to meet her brother.

‘Well, brother!’

‘Well, Claudine!’

‘Ah! that smile betrays you: your plans have succeeded,—you are no longer in debt.’

‘Pardon me; besides the good shoemaker, I am indebted to another.’

‘Another!’

‘Yes, and one whose claims I can never, never cancel.’

‘You frighten me! Whom do you mean?’

‘You, Claudine; you, sister. Ah! how can I ever discharge the vast, vast debt I owe to my best benefactress?’

Claudine smiled with glistening eyes, and, drawing her arm through her brother’s, enjoyed a delicious walk home.

Thus, amidst every variety of domestic vexa-

tion, Claudine enjoyed many moments of pure and unembittered felicity. Reversing the common system, she counted these blest moments with care, and only strove as quickly as possible to forget the hours of vexation and embarrassment.

Sometimes, after a busy day, occupied in the affairs of the house, in the duty of nursing her mother, and instructing her sisters and young Maurice, she would treat herself with a short ramble in the garden, in the twilight of the evening. At such an hour, how sweet and refreshing was all nature! To her tranquil and self-approving mind, every object had peculiar charms. The softly-perfumed breeze, the cloudless sky, the bright twinkling stars, the dew-besprinkled flowers, the distant sheep-bell, and the short bark of the watchful village dog,—all was beauty, melody, and grace! Here she stopped to gather a rose, and inhale its rich fragrance; there she paused to listen to the warbling of some peasant girl, whose rustic song came to her ear softened by distance. Now she would mark the glow-worm, emitting its pale light amidst the dark turf; and now, gazing on the brilliant orbs that gemmed the arch of heaven, her soul would ascend in prayer to the Author and Giver of all good. All was felicity to a spirit disposed to be blest; all was holy to a heart which saw and worshipped God in all His works.



## CHAPTER IX.

**A**T length Valence quitted the paternal roof, and rejoined his regiment. The children wept bitterly; Claudine restrained her own sorrow, to calm the lamentations of Justine and Fanchon, and to silence the sobs of Maurice. To Claudine most especially was this separation painful; yet was she so engrossed in soothing the regrets of her family, that she had not time to feel all the poignancy of her own. Thus her generous efforts for the tranquillity of others were, in the end, the cause of her own consolation.

But suddenly Madame Weimar sank into a state of alarming weakness. The anguish of parting with her son, which she endured in silence, which she had kept locked up in her own bosom, not only preyed upon her mind, but exhausted her bodily powers,—she became dangerously ill.

Her husband was wild with despair; he had not the means of paying a physician, for all his little savings had been expended on the outfit

of Valence. He mourned bitterly, and exclaimed to his daughter, 'Claudine, Claudine! all other afflictions I have borne with patience, but the loss of thy mother'—

'Dearest father, we are not without hope: mamma is only weak,—let us pray to God to strengthen and support her.'

'My child, secondary means are sometimes permitted to avail. If we could call in a physician!'

'And why not, papa?'

'Because, alas! because, small as is the fee, I have not the money to pay it. I have not even anything I could sell, or pledge, to obtain the money: the physician lives far off! Alas! my Claudine.'

His daughter thought of the watch, and almost feared that her father might recollect it too. After a moment's reflection, she said, 'M. Montluc is the first physician in the neighbourhood; he is also the best of men: permit me to go and ask his assistance.'

'As a beggar?'

'No, as a human being, imploring his assistance to relieve the sufferings of a fellow-creature.'

The curate was struck with the firm tone with which Claudine uttered these words. He looked at her with eyes full of admiration and tenderness. 'A beggar!—no, Claudine, in this moment thou hast not the air of a beggar. Go,

my beloved, and may the Power that inspired thy thought bless thee with success !'

Claudine departed early next morning for the town, accompanied by Madeline ; her father remained at home, to nurse and attend the invalid. It was with great emotion that Claudine found herself in the town, and her heart throbbed violently as she approached the house of the physician ; her hand trembled as she rang the door-bell. The door opened. 'What would you, mademoiselle ?'

'Is M. Montluc at home ?'

'He is.'

'Can I see him ?'

'Certainly ; pray come in.'

Desiring Madeline to wait for her in some neighbouring shop, Claudine followed the servant into the house. M. Montluc received her with great humanity, and kindly offered her a seat.

'You seem to have had a long walk, mademoiselle, for you appear greatly fatigued.'

'I am more afflicted than tired, sir.'

'Are you ill ?'

'No, sir ; but I have a dear mother at home, so ill, so very ill !'

'And you are come hither for my advice ?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Come, then, my child, if your mother is so ill, we must not lose time.'

'But, sir'—



‘What would you say?’

‘We live at some distance: my father is the curate of a small village.’

‘Well, then, I will order my *char-à-banc*, that we may arrive more quickly at your house.’

‘One moment, sir!’

The good physician stopped, and looked fixedly at Claudine. She was standing, and, raising her eyes towards him, she said, with a firm and modest air, ‘I will not deceive you, sir. My father is not rich,—alas! at this moment he is poor. If you will have the kindness to visit my mother, we can pay you only with our prayers.’ She was silent; big tears rolled down her cheeks.

M. Montluc, surprised, touched, charmed, could not immediately answer. Claudine, alarmed at this silence, clasped her hands as in the act of supplication. ‘Charming girl!’ cried M. Montluc, ‘do not supplicate—command. Your courageous frankness—your noble humility—elevate you above all ordinary rank. Come, amiable girl, let us hasten; and may a gracious God permit me to save your mother!’

M. Montluc assiduously attended the poor sufferer. He became the friend, as well as the physician, of Madame Weimar: he strengthened her constitution by his prescriptions, and soothed her anxieties by his good sense. M. Weimar thanked him with fervency; Claudine and the little ones knelt down and prayed for blessings

on the preserver of their mother. M. Montluc by accident beheld this touching spectacle, and he felt that he had never before been so well paid.

As his wife daily regained health and strength, the good pastor, full of joy and gratitude, repeatedly embraced his heroic child.

‘Claudine, to you I owe all my happiness: without you, my daughter,—without your heroic firmness,—I should now have been the most miserable of men! Observe, I beseech you, that there are circumstances in life under which a modest self-confidence may be most serviceable.’

Many months passed away, and it was the middle of winter. In one of those days, too frequent in Switzerland,—stormy, dark, and intensely cold,—a general spirit of dissatisfaction pervaded the inhabitants of the vicarage. Madame Weimar was frightened with the tempestuous wind; the children loudly complained of the excessive cold; the pastor thought of his poor parishioners, and lamented his inability to rescue them from suffering; Madeline grumbled, because the days were short and dark.

On all sides Claudine heard nothing but sighs and murmurs, saw nothing but sad and discontented faces. She alone looked and spoke with her accustomed cheerfulness and serenity; she alone seemed disposed to enliven and amuse the

circle. She sang lively airs as she worked, and persuaded the little ones to dance to her music, that thus they might be warmed and amused at the same time. She reminded her mother, half gaily, half seriously, how many years their lowly cottage had withstood the rudest storms of winter; that there is an ancient saying, which declares 'that whatever is violent is not of long duration;' and that, therefore, the present tempest could not last long. For her father also she had a soothing recollection, for she reminded him that this was the very week when the Seigneur of the village distributed his usual Christmas gift of meat and bread to his necessitous tenantry.

As for Madeline, it was no easy matter to please her. In vain Claudine assisted her in her household labours; in vain she admired the cleanliness of her kitchen, or the excellence of her management,—the sullen Madeline would not smile. Claudine began to fear that her mother would see and be pained by this ill-humour, or be inconvenienced by its effects. She remembered hearing her father say that he wished he could make some present to Madeline, for her attention to her mistress during her late illness,—a present at this moment might sweeten her temper, for selfishness was predominant in her character,—but what to give her!

Claudine ransacked her little wardrobe: of

the necessary linen there, nothing could be spared. At length she remembered having received a present of a handsome sash from her godmother, a few weeks before; it had never been worn, and, with her mother's permission, she now offered it to Madeline. It was accepted with transports of joy; for Madeline loved finery, and a pink ribbon for her Sunday cap was sufficient to fill her head with pleasing images, and chase from her bosom all petulance and discontent. Smiling, talkative, and obliging, she flew to obey her mistress, and to perform, with fresh diligence and alacrity, the various duties of the day. Behold how well a ribbon may be employed! Behold the invaluable use to which Claudine directed all the resources of her active and intelligent mind!

At the hour of supper, Claudine arranged everything with redoubled care. She put fresh faggots on the fire, and made a cheerful blaze; she treated the young children with baked apples well sugared; she contrived a nice ragout for her parents. Her mother was surprised. 'Where did you procure this delicate rabbit, my love, which is so excellently cooked?'

'Oh! I happened to have a franc of my own, and our neighbour's son offered me this rabbit, which he had killed a day or two ago.'

'And will you not eat some of it, my love?'

'No, thank you, mamma; there is just enough for you and papa.'

Whilst they supped, she seated herself on a stool near them, and, chatting, laughing, and playing with the young ones, she ate her own simple repast, a bit of dry bread and an apple.

Nothing is more common than to complain of the wearisome sameness of life, the dull monotony of our days. Is this complaint well founded? Are any two days in a person's existence precisely like one another? Yesterday was marked with very different events from those of to-day, and to-morrow will bring with it new incidents.





## CHAPTER X.

**H**AVEN in the calm and equable life of Claudine varieties occurred, and sometimes very extraordinary and unexpected events. This very evening, as she was seated at her humble meal, a loud knock was heard at the door, and presently afterwards Madeline entered, to say that the landlord of the village inn begged to speak with the curate.

He was instantly admitted.

‘What do you want, my good friend?’

Baptiste, making a low bow, replied, ‘Sir, a carriage has just arrived at my house. Almost all our rooms are engaged,—I fear we cannot find beds for the new-comers; and they are gentry—ladies much fatigued with travelling.’

‘This is terrible weather for travellers, Baptiste.’

‘Indeed it is, your reverence; but, as I understand it, these are some English going to a dying relative at Geneva.’

‘Alas!’ said Madame Weimar, ‘we will do our best to help you to accommodate them.’

‘How many beds do you want?’

‘Worthy sir, if you could receive two females into your house,—one of them seems sadly unfit to put up with such a mean chamber as I have to offer her, and the other finds fault with everything and everybody.’

The curate smiled. ‘A hopeful prospect for us! But it must not deter us from doing our duty. Go home, Baptiste; we will arrange matters for the best; and do you conduct our guests hither.’

‘A thousand thanks to your reverence. This delicate dame must be content here, though she so cruelly abuses me, and my best apartment, and my best supper.’

Baptiste spoke as if not a little piqued and offended; the good pastor laughed heartily as he answered, ‘We have no delicacies here for saucy damsels; but beggars must not be choosers. These ladies must be contented for one night with the fare which renders us thankful and happy all the year round.’

Baptiste departed, highly thankful for his pastor’s ready kindness, and much pleased with the affable and gracious manner in which it was expressed. It is a common custom in Switzerland for the landlords of small inns, in villages and secluded hamlets, when their own apartments are occupied, to seek accommodation for their guests at the houses of the ministers. To the credit of the clergy of that

country, it is well known that their prompt hospitality is never refused to the weary stranger.

Claudine besought her mother to retire to rest, because she was yet too feeble to be equal to any great exertion of strength and spirits. Madame Weimar consented to this request, and, having arranged to give up her own bed to one of the expected guests, and the chamber of Valence to the other, the family was provided for in the remaining apartments.

As all hands were engaged in making the necessary preparations, in less than an hour everything was arranged. Madame Weimar and her young children retired to bed; M. Weimar retreated into his own little cabinet; Claudine remained to receive the travellers. As she herself hastened to open the door, and held the light to show the way, they took her for a servant. 'Ma'mselle, here are the ladies,' said Baptiste, and, having thus introduced them, and put down their small packages, he departed. As, in France and Switzerland, all *femmes-de-chambre* are called ma'mselles, this designation did not undeceive the visitors. Perhaps, had they closely observed the modest air, the mild yet graceful manners, the pure accent of Claudine, they would easily have discovered that she was polished and well informed above the rank of menials, but these dames were thinking only of themselves.



They entered the apartment. 'Is this the best room you can give us?'

'Yes, madame.'

'Bless me, it is monstrous small.—Pray what will you give us to eat?'

'The very best of all we have.'

'Be quick, then, child, for we are sadly tired and sleepy.'

Madeline now appeared, and laid the cloth; then placed on the table eggs, honey, apples, bread, butter, cream, cheese, nuts, chestnuts, wine, and kirschwasser.<sup>1</sup>

'What miserable fare! Everything cold but the eggs! Pray, good woman, is this all you have in the house?' Madeline stared.

'Seigneur! is not this enough? Certainly, we have more.'

'Well, bring us what more you have.'

Madeline retired, and soon returned with more bread, eggs, honey, cream, butter, cheese, nuts, walnuts, apples, wine, and kirschwasser.

'Fool!' cried the talkative stranger.

'*Plait-il?*' said Madeline.

'*Sotte!*' more loudly exclaimed the fair dame; and Madeline flung out of the room in a rage.

Claudine could not help smiling at this ridiculous scene. The other traveller now addressed her: 'My child, could we not have

<sup>1</sup> Kirschwasser, or cherry-water, a favourite liqueur of the Swiss.

a chicken, some pigeons, or some other little dainty, for supper ?’

‘Madame, we have none of these delicacies ; but if you will wait a few minutes, I will endeavour to give you a nice omelet.’

In a quarter of an hour, Madeline entered with the omelet : she looked very sullen, and quickly retired. Claudine came in to attend her guests ; she soon discovered that the one who spoke with so much haughtiness, and who was so delicate and refined, was the waiting-maid ; and that the other, who had so courteously addressed her, was the mistress.

The waiting-maid continued her impertinent remarks :

‘This omelet is detestable ! No flavour, no richness ! How different from those made at *our* house by *our* cook !’

‘Softly, softly, Demarle,’ said her mistress. ‘I think this omelet very good, and the wine is truly excellent. But, my good girl, let me know to-night what we must pay for our beds and suppers ;’ and she drew out her purse.

‘Nothing, madame,’ replied Claudine, shrinking back from the offer of payment.

‘Nothing, child !’

‘My father, madame, is always happy to receive travellers, and to do his best for their accommodation.’

‘And who is your father ?’

‘The master of this house, the curate of this little village.’

‘And he has a numerous family?’

‘Yes, madame, five children.’

‘And all at home?’

‘All, with the exception of my eldest brother, who is with his regiment.’

‘And you—what is your name?’

‘Claudine, madame.’

‘Well, my charming Claudine, I thank you very gratefully for all your kindness, and beg you to assure your parents that I should be charmed to have an opportunity of serving them as deeply as they have served me.’

‘Oh, madame, neither I nor my parents ask either thanks or reward,—we have only done our duty.’

‘That is a sentiment worthy of the daughter of a Christian minister, and expressed with the simplicity befitting the purity of the speaker and her doctrine. Claudine, in this humble abode you display more virtue, and I do not doubt enjoy more happiness, than the splendid dames of courts and cities.’ As she thus spoke, the stranger sighed, and her eyes filled with tears.

‘Oh, madame, is it possible that you can be unhappy?’

‘My good child, it is but too true.’ The lady was young, handsome, elegant, tastefully and richly dressed. Claudine was surprised at

her melancholy air, and thought within herself, 'Fie on it! How often I have wished for wealth! This amiable stranger possesses it, and yet is not blessed! I see plainly that neither money nor beauty can ensure happiness. God be thanked, I am neither rich nor pretty!'

Very early the next morning, the strangers departed, quitting with admiration the hospitable mansion of the good pastor. The day after their departure from the village, Claudine received a small packet from the stranger lady. On opening it, she found a beautiful little purse, full of English gold coin.

By this time the stranger was so far on her journey that it would have been impossible to return the present. Madame Weimar congratulated her daughter on the possession of so large a sum. 'You can now, my love, purchase for yourself a black silk frock for Sunday wear.'

Claudine laughed heartily: 'Indeed, mamma, I am not of your opinion. I do not wish for a black silk frock; no, I intend to be avaricious, and hoard up all this money with especial care.'

'You will hoard up all this money, Claudine! Is that the use of wealth?' exclaimed her father.

'Wherefore not keep it, papa? If I penuriously save it now, perhaps I shall spend it extravagantly one of these days.'

'Well, my child, it is your own, you can do just what you please with it.'

‘It is not more mine than yours, papa ; it was meant for us all, only it happened to be directed to me.’

‘Claudine,’ answered her father very gravely, ‘this money is yours, and only yours. At this moment we have no particular wants : I insist, therefore, that you expend what your own merits have obtained for you.’

‘Papa, you shall be obeyed. I will spend this sum exactly according to my own whims and fancies.’





## CHAPTER XI.

**T**IME rolled on, the health of Madame Weimar was essentially invigorated, and early the following spring her affectionate husband was desirous of celebrating her birthday and her recovery. He consulted Claudine on this important affair, and he found her perfectly disposed to undertake the arrangement of it. Behold Claudine in a new character, the directress of a birthday feast! Virginie was summoned to assist her friend, and by her participation to double and refine every pleasure. The two happy cousins began their preparations by inviting all their neighbouring friends, acquaintances, and relations: all gladly accepted the cordial invitation, personally given by the smiling managers.

It was in the month of April, when mild breezes began to mark the advances of spring, but the season was yet sufficiently cool to render a *soirée dansante* a very agreeable entertainment. Claudine knew that neatness and perfect simplicity best accorded with the rank

and present fortune of her father; she knew that an affectation of pomp and magnificence would be worse than ridiculous.

‘Well, then,’ cried she, ‘far from us be all pretensions to style and elegance,—far from us be all attempts at grandeur: it will be sufficient for us to be happy.’

Their pretty little saloon, ever clean and neat, was now arranged with increased nicety and cleanliness: the curtains were of muslin, white as snow, and the bed of Madame Weimar, which occupied a recess at one end, was covered with a quilt embroidered by the hands of her daughters. Large bunches and garlands of freshly-gathered flowers were profusely placed on all sides, and decked the chimney-piece, as well as the tops of the secretary and drawers. There, in rich variety, were seen the blue hyacinth, the pale primrose, the modest snow-drop, the perfumed violet, the rose-coloured blossom of the almond, and the hepatica, the scented briar, and the opening buds of the woodbine. The most elegant bouquet was on the light pedestal that held the basin and ewer, where every diversity of tint and every soft perfume profusely mingled.

The saloon opened from a hall, which was appropriated for the dancers; the worthy pastor played the violin with skill and taste; Maurice could accurately beat the tambourine; and Claudine touched the guitar with no vulgar

finger. Ah, this guitar! how many cheerful and soothing emotions did it not awaken and inspire in the bosoms of parents and friends, when, in the long evenings of winter, or in hours given to society, Claudine sang her simple native airs, as she touched the strings of this artless instrument! To please—to soothe—to amuse—to enliven those she loved, was her only aim; nor ever once did she suppose that this or any accomplishment could have any other object. Self-exhibition, happily, never entered her thoughts; if it had, she would probably never have played again: what higher aim can talents have than that of dispensing pleasure!

The curate inquired what had been prepared for the collation. Claudine hastened to show her stores. M. Weimar was enchanted with the good taste that reigned in all the arrangements: she had made pretty baskets of green paper, of different shades, which she had filled with dried fruits, and various little cakes of her own making. She had also made tarts of apples and preserves, which she had adorned with flowers; and had prepared plenty of the sweetmeat called *resinca*, composed of grape juice boiled to the consistence of clear jelly. Then there was abundance of the various delicate little rolls and buns, which are so well known in Switzerland. There were tea and coffee—the light wines of the country—the favourite beverage,



kirschwasser—and a store of lemons and brandy for punch, sometimes called there *limonade à l'Anglaise*.

At length the desired day arrived, and Claudine was all joyous activity. Madeline, as if unwilling to permit any one within her power to be happy, was in a sullen fit, and opposed all the plans of her young mistress. Under pretence of forgetfulness or mistake, she disobeyed all her commands, handed her a spoon when she asked for a knife, neglected many a trivial but necessary duty, and set on the teaboard wine-glasses instead of cups.

‘How intolerable is this woman!’ cried Virginie: ‘do reprove her for her provoking airs.’

‘No, no,’ answered Claudine; ‘I must not scold her on mamma’s birthday,—nobody must be vexed on mamma’s birthday.’

‘But she is vexing you without mercy.’

‘Indeed she shall not do that,’ exclaimed Claudine, laughing. ‘When all I love are well and happy around me, I should be a very silly girl to allow the ill-temper of a foolish servant to disturb my enjoyment.’ And she sprang forward to rectify Madeline’s mistakes, and supply her omissions.

All being arranged in the saloon, Claudine proceeded to dress the little ones. Ah, what joy! what astonishment!—Maurice, equipped by the hands of his sister in a charming new

dress of blue cloth, with such shining buttons! —the two little girls attired in frocks of snowy muslin, and sashes of pink satin! Happy as are the little creatures, what is their joy compared to the felicity of the donor of their habiliments! Maurice ran to his father to show his new suit, but he found his father as much enchanted as himself.

‘Ah, Maurice, my boy, whence came this new suit of clothes which I found here in my cabinet?’

‘From Heaven, to be sure, papa, whence all good things come,’ exclaimed the delighted boy.

M. Weimar was silent for a moment, and then exclaimed, ‘You are right, my child; these are indeed the gifts of Heaven, for they are bestowed by an angel!’

‘By Claudine, papa!’

The good curate, too much affected to be able to say more, embraced his son, dressed himself in his new clothes, and, attended by Maurice, proceeded to the apartment of his wife. He found her bathed in tears.

‘My love, my dear Eugenie! what is the matter? wherefore these tears?’

‘Calm yourself, my friend; these are not the tears of sorrow,—no, my Auguste, they are drawn from me by joy. Look—see what is here!’

In a moment she spread out before him a

gown of purple silk, and next showed him a neat cap formed of clear fine muslin, ornamented with a single white rose. They gazed but for a moment on these things, but their glances turned long on each other, and, bursting into a fresh gush of tears, Madame Weimar threw herself into the arms of her husband.

At this moment the two little girls appeared, forcibly leading in their half-reluctant sister. All the family encircled Claudine; her mother sobbed upon her bosom; and her father, pressing her to his heart, exclaimed, 'Beloved child!' These were the only words pronounced, but how much did they express!

Claudine felt them at the bottom of her heart: she tried to smile—her emotion was too powerful—she burst into tears. The pious father of the group, as he folded in his arms the happy and virtuous object of his tenderest love, raising his eyes to heaven, exclaimed, 'God of mercy, deign to accept my thanks!'

Early in the evening, the social circle was formed. The elder visitants assembled in Madame Weimar's apartment, where whist and *écarté* amused some members, and conversation the rest. The young people merrily joined in the *contre-danse*<sup>1</sup> and waltz, and every now and then indulged in what they were pleased to call '*la contre-danse à l'Anglaise*,'—a sort of wild romp, the chief merit of which consists in the

<sup>1</sup> The dances known in England by the name of quadrilles.

extraordinary swiftness with which it is performed. It resembles in nothing the English dance, except that at its commencement the dancers stand in two rows, each lady opposite to her partner. Madame Weimar was the mistress and Virginie the *belle* of the festivities.—What then was Claudine? In action everything—in title and pretension nothing.

She was at the inner house-door, ready to welcome the guests, and prompt to give every assistance in the readjustment of their dresses.—She was neither observed nor heard anywhere; yet was she noiselessly gliding everywhere, administering to every one's accommodation and pleasure, and promoting the courtesy and goodwill of all towards all. Though her thoughts were wholly directed to finding partners for the gay group, she rarely chanced to find herself without one.—Was there a young damsel too plain or too ill dressed to obtain a cavalier?—she was precisely the partner whom Claudine wished to select for herself. Was there a young beau too shy or too awkward to ask or to gain a fair dame?—Claudine, with mantling blushes, was sure to entreat him to stand up with her, till he could make a better choice. Occasionally she relieved her father, by filling the pauses of his violin with her guitar; and now and then she touched the tambourine for Maurice, that he might join the sprightly dance.

At a late, or rather early hour, the pleased

and obliged party dispersed; and its several members often amused themselves with recounting the gay delights of this gala. All felt that it had been given for the express purpose of bestowing gratification, and of having the satisfaction of beholding the pleasure of others. There was no display, no affectation of any kind of superiority, either of taste, or wealth, or dress, or talents.

Nobody spoke of Claudine as a prominent character of the evening; yet, when each recapitulated his or her adventures, it was found that there was no one whom Claudine had not served and obliged. Nobody talked either of the defects or the excellence of her dress, her talents, or her manners,—except that one young lady thought her frock too long-waisted, and another her mode of striking the tambourine singularly unfashionable; and that every young man, with a sentiment of respect, declared her to be ‘a charming unaffected girl.’





## CHAPTER XII.

**W**ITHIN a month after this refreshing social meeting, M. Weimar received a summons to attend a relation who was dangerously ill. The residence of the invalid was in a retired village situated amidst the Alps.

Claudine, when alone with her father, suggested to him the perils of travelling at such a season, among these snow-clad mountains. ‘Those terrible spring *lavanges*, papa!’

‘True, my love, there is certainly some risk; but I must not forget what this venerable old man has done for me; and should this illness prove fatal, my dear Claudine,—at all hazards I must go to him.’

Madame Weimar also had her fears, and besought her husband to remember that on his existence depended the very subsistence of herself and his children.

‘My dear Eugenie, the worthy man to whom I am summoned has held out to you other prospects; he, long since, informed me that at

his death my family should possess all his little property. Judge, then, if every claim does not urge my journey.'

Madame Weimar and her daughter knew that no entreaties could persuade the pastor to forego a duty: they therefore submitted quietly to his decision; and, unable to prevent the dreaded jaunt, Claudine busied herself in preparations and arrangements to render it as commodious and as little hazardous as possible.

M. Weimar departed, and performed his journey with ease and safety. He arrived just in time to close the eyes of his respectable relative. On the opening of the will, it was found that the property was indeed left to Weimar, but clogged with several requests, that considerably diminished its value. These requests, it was hinted, he need not regard, for they were not named in the body of the will, only expressed as wishes.

'The wishes of the virtuous dead are ever sacred,' replied the worthy pastor, and he fulfilled each to the spirit and the letter of the testator. When all was arranged, a very small sum remained; but the curate reflected upon it with a transport of gratitude, for it promised at least the necessaries of life for his wife and children.

Madame Weimar received a letter to inform her of this consoling event, as also to announce the speedy return of the writer. The day of his

intended arrival passed without any tidings of the expected traveller ; but as, in a mountainous and secluded district, travelling cannot be performed with the celerity and certainty known on high-roads and with public vehicles, the family were not alarmed. Another and another day passed on : Claudine was heart-sick with a thousand undefined fears, for, in her wildest agony, she could not give form and shape to what she feared.

At the end of a week of torturing suspense, the fortitude of Madame Weimar forsook her. Claudine, to calm her mother, despatched a messenger to obtain tidings. He went—returned—but brought no news. M. Weimar had not been heard of since his departure from the village.

‘Which road did he travel?’

‘The most frequented one, mademoiselle.’

‘And you, Henriques, which way did you pass?’

‘The shortest way, over the Alps ; for truly they told me the other path was impracticable.’

‘How ! Impracticable?’

‘Yes, mademoiselle, for an avalanche’—

Claudine shrieked, and sank senseless at the feet of the simple peasant. She had contrived to have this conversation in a room distant from her mother’s, for she dreaded what the man might have to recount. And now, when recovering her senses, her first movement was



to pat her finger on her lips, and murmur, 'Silence!'

Claudine as soon as possible despatched Henriques to obtain farther information, and, exerting all her fortitude, devoted herself to the support of her mother. Her situation was cruelly delicate and trying: she durst not encourage hope, yet, till a mournful certainty was acquired, she could less bear to suggest the awful probability. She therefore confined her efforts to soothing and calming the mind of Madame Weimar, and gradually preparing it for the worst: on the plea of supporting her strength to nurse her husband, should he be ill or hurt, she persuaded her frequently to take small portions of nourishing food; and by every act of love and tenderness she sought to awaken the affections of the mother, that they might be in full force to console the woes of the wife.

Henriques returned: their worst fears were realized. An avalanche had indeed fallen at a turn of the road along which M. Weimar and some other travellers were at that moment passing. The neighbouring peasantry beheld the tremendous accident, and flew to the aid of the sufferers. After several days of severe and indefatigable labour, they contrived to effect a passage through the immense mass of ice and snow. Henriques reached the spot at this instant. M. Weimar was alive, but nature was nearly exhausted by abstinence and watching.

He begged to be carried to his home ; a sort of litter was constructed, and he survived to behold his wife and children.

Madame Weimar, frantic with despair, was removed to the house of a friend ; another neighbour received and comforted the weeping and lamenting little ones. Claudine alone, pale, trembling, silent, but self-possessed, was capable of administering to the wants of the feeble and lacerated sufferer. For two days and nights she watched with unremitting assiduity beside his bed, cherished with care every little spark of reviving life, and administered every aid that medicine or kindness could suggest. All was vain : he became gradually worse ; and, feeling his approaching dissolution, he seized every moment of comparative ease and strength to communicate to his daughter his latest wishes and commands.

‘ Claudine, you have been through life my dearest comfort ; on my bed of death you are my sweetest consolation. Your exertions will soothe your beloved mother with the assurance that all that *could* be done *was* done. Let this also be your consolation, my own precious child.’

He would then at intervals talk of their future plans, and inform Claudine of his pecuniary affairs. The property left to him by his relation would produce a small but certain annual income.

Claudine listened with deep attention to every word uttered by her beloved father, and soothed his anxious breast by assuring him that she understood and would fulfil all his requests. On the morning of the third day, M. Weimar was evidently worse; the marble hand of Death was fixing his features, and a cold dew gathered on his pale brow. He was conscious of the change, and drew Claudine closer to him: she saw that the fatal moment was at hand, and, mustering all her powers, she threw herself on her knees by his side.

He spoke with difficulty, and at short intervals: 'I thank God for all His mercies—for this precious one of dying in the bosom of my family. Let your innocent prayers, my Claudine, rise with mine, to implore pardon for my many faults and deficiencies. My whole life has been one continued preparation: may a gracious God be pleased to accept this imperfect homage, through the intercession of Jesus Christ, our blessed Redeemer!' He paused for a few moments; then, fervently clasping his hands, exclaimed, 'Almighty God! into Thy hands I commit my desolate wife and children.'

He ceased to speak; Claudine sprang nearer to him, and, throwing her arms around him, pillowed his head on her bosom; she pressed her lips upon his cold forehead, and listened in speechless agony to his gasping breathings. He turned his eye upon her with a look full of

tenderness and compassion ; he smiled, as if, by the last token in his power, he desired to inspire her with the hopes that were then sustaining his struggling spirit. He sighed, and closed his eyes. Claudine bent wildly over his face, and with every straining sense sought to observe a movement or hear a moan. Alas ! she had heard the last ;—a long, unbroken, awful silence succeeded.

God of mercy ! has life another moment so terrible as when the distracted heart listens in vain for the breathings of the beloved friend ?—Claudine fainted on the lifeless body of her father.

Let us pass over in silence the agony that mocks description—the agony of the widow and the fatherless ! The parishioners of every class pressed forward to offer every respect to the memory of their revered and departed pastor, and every kindness to the wretched survivors.

Claudine exerted all her fortitude to silence her own woe, that she might the better fulfil her dying father's commands, and soothe her agonized mother's distraction. Madame Weimar recovered from a brain fever, but life alone was preserved : her mind was irrecoverably disordered, and an extraordinary debility almost entirely deprived her of the use of her limbs.

After the first terrible moments of affliction, Claudine felt how much depended on herself,

and prayed to Heaven for assistance to fulfil the various claims now pressing on her,—her helpless mother, her orphan sisters, her poor little Maurice! Valence was with his regiment in a garrison far distant from his home, and on the very frontiers where the war was raging. To quit his post was impossible. But he wrote to his sister a letter replete with tenderness and affection; promised every aid and kindness in his power; hoped the next year to forward pecuniary assistance; lamented that he could not do so now, not having just then a louis-d'or at his command.

How precious was this letter to the broken-hearted Claudine! A hundred louis unaccompanied by such expressions of love and sympathy would have been valueless in the comparison;—she carried it in her bosom. It seemed like an ægis, that would defend her from all external evils.





## CHAPTER XIII.

**T**HE arrival of the new curate showed Claudine the necessity of quitting the vicarage, and seeking another abode. On the first knowledge of her affliction, Virginie had hastened to her cousin to offer her sympathy and help.

Claudine wept bitterly in her arms. 'Alas! you are now my only friend,—I who was lately so rich in friends!—My father dead; my mother deprived of reason; my brother absent! But, O merciful God! pardon my despair—pardon these murmurs! If I have much to suffer, I have much to perform. Be my duties henceforth my pleasures, and may Thy will be done!' It was thus that, in the bitterest moment of her life, Claudine experienced some consolation from the very acts of devotion and resignation.

In the village where Virginie resided, Claudine had heard that there was an humble cottage to let, which she thought would precisely suit her little family. Virginie did not approve this arrangement. 'This cabin is so small, so mean; indeed, dear cousin, you must select some other.'

‘My best Virginie, the moment to choose is past—I have no longer a right of selection; for the future I must do what I *can*, not what I *will*.’

‘But, Claudine, remember your connections; do not shame us by your future arrangements.’

‘Perhaps I am wrong in thus wishing to live near my best, alas! now my only friends; but I thought that their society might soothe my mother, their protection might benefit my little ones; for should I chance to die’—

‘Hush! dearest Claudine, forgive my pride. Is it possible to be ashamed of such a relative as you—you, so dignified and respectable in the midst of poverty and distress?’

Claudine wrote to her uncle; unfortunately, the old man was even prouder than his daughter; but, feeling his meanness even when suffering himself to be guided by it, he concealed his real motives under the veil of affected kindness. He informed his niece that the cottage she alluded to was unhealthily situated, was ill built, and damp; and that he would strongly recommend her engaging a pretty little cabin situated in a village nearer to her own abode, which had been offered to him on very low terms.

Claudine was herself so incapable of every form of dissimulation, that she had no idea of its existence in others. Behold one of the advantages attached to the virtuous,—they are exempt from the pains and penalties arising

from mistrust and suspicion! Claudine gratefully thanked her uncle for his considerate suggestion, and hired the cottage he recommended.

The new curate begged that the family of his predecessor would remain as long as it was convenient at the vicarage. This courtesy was most welcome to Claudine, since, with all her exertion, she could not complete her arrangements for a removal before the latter end of autumn. The best of the furniture was sold. Claudine kept only such things as were absolutely necessary. She parted with Madeline, as she found she could no longer afford to pay the wages of a servant. The income of M. Weimar expired with him, and nothing was left to his widow but the interest of the small property recently bequeathed.

The costs of her father's modest funeral, and of mourning for the family, with the inevitable expenses attending a change of abode, nearly absorbed all the ready money that Claudine had accumulated, and she quitted the curacy with very few louis in her pocket. But she had paid every debt; she left behind her no creditor to reproach the memory of her revered parent: these reflections solaced her heart, and she prepared to depart, calm and grateful.

A little cart carried the few articles of furniture which yet remained to this unfortunate family. Madame Weimar was mounted on a stout pony,



and one of the little ones by turns was placed behind her. Claudine walked by her side, and guided her horse.

The poor widow, insensible to present and past events, was rather pleased at what was passing around her; whilst Claudine wept bitterly at seeing her faded mother borne from an abode once so dear to her: she herself was very willing to depart, and even smiled as she gazed on the busy cavalcade. That smile was as a poisoned dart to the bosom of Claudine; yet she mentally reproved her emotion. 'Ah, why should I mourn unconsciousness of events, since it brings with it unconsciousness of misery!'

The villagers were kindly attentive to serve and oblige Claudine to the last moment she remained among them; and her heart warmed towards her fellow-creatures, when she found them thus clinging to her in the hour of her adversity. Perhaps there is no commonplace that can be more fairly disputed than the one which asserts 'that in sickness and sorrow the sufferer is shunned and deserted.'

Let us recall our past trials, and few of us but will with them recall the memory of the compassion, the assistance, the sympathy, that we then experienced. Surely it cannot be denied that at the first burst of any severe affliction, acquaintance and associates press around in the spirit of benevolence. It may be

true that this ardour cools with time ; but that is perhaps only a merciful consequence of our constitution, since it is graciously ordained that time shall soften the keenest regrets. Let us not then censure an effect which is permitted for the best purposes.

The travelling party moved so slowly, that it was late in the evening when they reached the new abode. It was a little lonely cot on the edge of a common, and near an extensive wood ; the neighbouring village was seen at a short distance. Precipitous mountains rose behind it, and a gurgling stream murmured in front. The deep shadows cast from the mountains and the thick forest gave a sombre and mournful aspect to the place. How different from the laughing beauty of their late dwelling !

But Claudine checked all useless retrospection. The party stopped at the closed door : alas ! there was no friend within to open it—no anxious kindred, no pitying neighbour, to bid them welcome !—all was silent, gloomy, and mournful ! The whistling wind that swept across the bending trees scattered around the withered leaves, and added to the sense of desolation.

Claudine was nearly overwhelmed with the depressing scene : the thoughts of the father who had so tenderly protected her, the home where she had ever experienced so many ardent welcomes, pressed on her heart. A few deep

sobs burst from her bosom—a few big tears rolled down her cheeks. The plaintive voice of her mother recalled her fortitude: she rallied herself, and hastened to fulfil the present duty. The key of the lone cottage was found at the nearest neighbour's—the door was opened. The dim twilight rendered the first glimpse of the unfurnished abode peculiarly forbidding: the children wept, and clung to their sister. This agitated sister dried her own tears, that she might the better calm their terrors.

‘Be patient, my dears,’ said she; ‘we shall soon have a light and a good fire, and then we shall be comfortable.’

The kind neighbour who had brought the key heard these words, and, unbidden, hastened to fetch a blazing piece of wood from her own hearth. Again we see the promptitude of human beings to aid each other. Can it be said that the good neighbour's promptitude was singular?

A fire was soon lighted, the children began to smile and huddle around it. Madame Weimar also smiled. Claudine lighted a candle, which she had brought with her in a basket containing a few necessary articles, and the remains of their provision. Having placed her mother near the blazing faggot, in the first chair that could be unpacked, and charged the little ones to caress and amuse her, she proceeded to superintend the unloading of the cart. As the

peasant girl who had driven it unpacked each article, Claudine received and placed it in the cottage.

In an hour all was safely housed. Claudine paid the driver of the cart, and offered a small gift to the kind neighbour.

‘No, mademoiselle,’ said the honest creature, ‘do not pay me for so small a service: I did it with all my heart,—it is our duty to help one another. My husband and I are your nearest neighbours: he will come home from his work presently, and then he shall set up your bedsteads for you.’

Just at this moment the expected husband came singing along, after a hard day’s labour. As soon as his wife told him of the new-comers, he doffed his hat and coat, and began anew to toil. The bedsteads were soon put up; for in that country they are generally composed of sacking stretched on a couple of crossing moveable legs. Again Claudine offered some compensation—again it was declined.

‘Ah, mademoiselle! my wife has told me how amiable and unfortunate you are; and I see she has only told the truth. We will come again to-morrow, and perhaps then can do something for you. Good night, mademoiselle.’ He bowed, and departed with his wife.

How did the kind words, the friendly actions, of this worthy pair soothe and sustain the sinking heart of poor Claudine! They chased

that desolating feeling of friendlessness and strangeness which was oppressing her so heavily; she felt that she was not alone in the world. Sweet is it to be aided by the benevolent and sympathizing!—Who cannot so aid? Are we not all children of the same heavenly Father? Why, then, are we not always occupied in such gracious acts? Why do we not all eagerly seize every chance of performing or accepting them? For graciously accepting is the next best office to graciously bestowing.

Claudine carefully prepared some nourishing food for the children and her mother. She had brought in her basket, eggs, bread, and a little wine. Madame Weimar, refreshed by her supper, but fatigued by her journey, desired to retire to rest. Two beds had been prepared in the adjoining apartment: in one of these Claudine placed her mother, and the two children in the other. A mattress on the floor served for Maurice.

‘But, Claudine,’ said madame, ‘I do not like to sleep alone.’

‘I know it, mother, and I mean to sleep with you.’

‘Good night, then, my child; I feel very comfortable this evening;’ and in a few minutes she was asleep.

The three little ones, pleased with the novelty of their situation, slept soundly, and Claudine found herself the only one awake in her humble cabin.

The desolation of her present state, the remembrance of her past happiness, were but too bitterly felt by Claudine. But she also felt that it is neither wise nor virtuous to yield to regrets, which only serve to weaken mind and body, and thus prevent any efforts to alleviate the ills endured. She knew that it is better to act than to lament; and as it was not yet very late, she instantly began to consider of her future arrangements.

She commenced by taking a survey of her new abode. It consisted of four apartments, all on the ground floor. The room in which she was seated she proposed to make the common sitting-room; the chamber at its side, and two small apartments at the back, were, the one neat enough to be converted into a chamber for Maurice, the other to serve as a place for wood and stores.

Claudine saw with pain that the rooms were all more or less dirty, the floor thickly covered with dirt, the walls with dust, and the roof hung with cobwebs. The Swiss are particularly neat and cleanly in the interior of their houses; and though their towns are, generally speaking, ill-built, and the streets narrow and dirty, yet the apartments of even the humblest mechanic display a beautiful cleanliness.

It was not wonderful, therefore, that the delicate mind of Claudine revolted at the appearance of so much disorder and dirt; yet

she pacified herself with the consideration that this was not an incurable evil, and that by patience and exertion it could be removed.

Another more serious annoyance assailed her: the old door admitted the cold wind through many a chink.—‘Alas! my beloved mother will suffer from this inconvenience; but I will try my skill in repairing these fractures, by pasting thick cloth or paper over them.’ The window did not shut close; but this inconvenience she hoped to remedy by hanging up a strong woollen curtain, which she recollected was among the furniture. She remembered also how much she was disappointed when she heard that this curtain had not been sold. ‘Thus it is,’ she mentally exclaimed, ‘that we deem vexatious what may prove salutary. Let this serve as a lesson to check my future murmurs!—Nor will I now complain; I see that, when put to rights, this will prove no despicable abode.’

In feeling her heart soothed by these reflections, she felt whence such calming thoughts emanated. She fell on her knees, and alone, in that solitary and rude hut, poured forth her soul to the Giver of all good! Above all, she blessed God for the cheering thoughts which He had graciously awakened in her mind. Her devotions being finished, she lay down to rest by the side of her mother, and soon fell into a peaceful and refreshing slumber.

While she sleeps, let us hazard a few remarks.

How many persons, circumstanced as our Claudine, would (like heroines of romance) have spent this mournful evening in doing nothing but mourning over their sad fate! To resemble such as these, Claudine should have spent the hours in exhausting her spirits by weeping and lamenting; she ought not to have slept during the whole night: and in the morning how would it have been?—She would have found herself in a state of weakness and dejection altogether *heroic*;—she would have been worse than useless, she would have been a source of new misery to her afflicted family.

Happily Claudine was not a heroine of romance: she was the heroine of real life; *she endured, and she submitted*,—not with loud lamentations to proclaim her merit, but with smiling patience to express that her resignation was to the decrees of Him who wounds in mercy, and who will not try us beyond our strength. Such is the mighty difference between true and false greatness of mind,—the one is the cause of felicity, the other destroys it.







## CHAPTER XIV.

**B**UT behold, the morning dawns, and Claudine awakes! Refreshed by sleep, the amiable girl hastened to commence her domestic duties. These she found at first difficult and disagreeable; for, with no one to instruct or assist her, she had to go through all the drudgery of household labour. But she encouraged herself by considering that use would render her more adroit, and custom reconcile her to these new toils. The fire lighted, and the apartments swept and arranged as neatly as circumstances would allow, she quitted the yet sleeping family, and, taking with her the key of the cottage door, she went out to procure some provision. Happily she found that she could purchase all the necessary articles of life at the neighbouring village, and returned home with her basket well filled.

It was not the work of a day to clean the cottage: Claudine had many other duties to perform, — her mother required much of her

time, and the daily household affairs occupied her attention a good deal. But she had too much patience and forbearance to permit her to give up unfinished a necessary labour; and by degrees she got through all she desired. Maurice and the younger girls sometimes helped her a little; for she thought it her duty to accustom them to occupation.

There was a small garden behind the cottage, which the good neighbour André promised to assist them to cultivate. 'And then, mademoiselle, you will have plenty of good vegetables.'

'Ah!' cried Maurice, 'we must have peas, and cauliflowers, and all sorts of nice things.'

'No, my dear brother, we must not attempt anything beyond the common and most useful vegetables, such as potatoes, cabbages, leeks.'

'And no flowers, Claudine?'

'Mamma loves flowers; therefore, in spring, we must transplant out of the woods and hedges the roots of primroses, cowslips, and lilies of the valley.'

'Ah! Claudine, that will be charming!'

'See, my dears, here is a pretty plot of ground before our cottage; we will fill it with these beautiful flowers, and we will also plant honeysuckles, and train them round the door and windows.'

'How I wish spring was come!'

'Have patience, Fanchon. Spring and summer

will come in due time ; meanwhile let us enjoy the present.'

In a month the humble abode was made perfectly clean, neat, and commodious ; and Virginie arrived on a short visit. She found her cousin in very plain attire, busied in household labour. Claudine received her guest with heartfelt joy, placed her near the blazing fire, and offered her the best of what she had in the house. Virginie threw many disdainful glances around her : 'And you are happy here, Claudine ?'

'I am contented : were my father alive, I should be happy !' Claudine's voice was interrupted by her tears.

'But surely you are not yet quite settled ? For I see many things deficient, and much yet to be done : for example, you sadly want a new curtain,—the colour of this is frightful !'

Virginie paused ; and when Claudine could dry her tears, she mildly said, 'My dear Virginie, we must do without novelties. I have the consolation to hope that, with economy, our slender income will suffice to supply necessaries ;' then, cheering up, she more gaily added, 'I have read in an excellent book, "*that if one cannot buy wine, one must drink beer ; and that if beer is too expensive, water must suffice.*"'

'But, for the reputation of your family, you ought to make a decent appearance at least.'

'I will do my best, Virginie, not to disgrace

my connections ; but more than that I cannot do. For if I were to run into great expenses, my friends would have to pay my debts. You see, therefore, cousin, that I am a little proud.'

'You proud!'

'Yes ; for you see I could not bear to be a burden to my friends.'

Virginie blushed, but it was not for her cousin : she was ashamed of her own mean sentiments. She muttered some apology.

Claudine, willing to relieve her self-humiliation, spoke again as if unobservant of her distress : 'I often recall the remarks of my beloved father, "that people ought not to be ashamed of poverty which is not caused by themselves."''

Again the tears started into the eyes of Claudine. Virginie tenderly embraced her, and departed full of respect and admiration for her noble demeanour.

With all her economy, Claudine found her little income inadequate to meet her expenditure. Madame Weimar, unconscious of their change of fortune, often asked for expensive delicacies ; and if Claudine, with the utmost tenderness, ventured to suggest that such things were dear and unattainable, the poor invalid would bitterly lament her disappointment. Claudine could not bear these complaints, however unjust. 'You shall have it, my dearest mother ; you shall have all you desire ;—do not

—do not weep ;’ and, embracing her fondly, she hastened to procure whatever was desired.

But it was necessary to find the means for making these extra purchases. Claudine saved all she could, and deprived herself of almost common necessaries ; many a day did she pass without eating anything but a morsel of dry bread and a few potatoes : and she feared lest her strength should fail, for on herself she knew that much depended.—She must then labour and earn money,—but how ?

It is terrible to reflect how many sufferers seek occupation and cannot find it. Can the wealthy perform a more acceptable service to society, than by giving employment to the necessitous ? Let rich ladies wear only the fabric of their own country,—laces, flowers, chip bonnets. Let the fashion of embroidered gowns, caps, and all the paraphernalia of female attire be a permanent fashion ; taste can always find new models for the trimmings of needlework. Let rich men plant woods, dig canals, construct roads, erect cots and mansions ; and thus, by occupation, save their tenantry from vice, and themselves from eventual inconvenience ! But to return from this digression.

Claudine at one time thought of trying a little day-school ; for, thanks to her excellent parents, she was mistress of various kinds of needlework, was conversant in arithmetic, and wrote a good hand. But the melancholy situa-

tion of her mother precluded her attempting this mode of improving her finances: Madame Weimar required constant attention, and, moreover, would have been incommoded by the presence of strange children in their only sitting-room.

The good neighbour Jeannette had often spoken of the many respectable families that inhabited this lovely valley; and Claudine, as her last resource, resolved to visit the ladies of these families, and ask them for some occupation in needlework. The wife of the curate received her tolerably well, because she knew her to be the daughter of a curate; but, forgetful that her own fortune depended on the life of her husband, and that one fatal moment might deprive her, as it had deprived Claudine, of all her prospects, she replied coldly to her solicitations, and somewhat abruptly told her she had no work to give.

Claudine, sighing, quitted the house of the minister, and hoped to meet with better luck at the mansion of the richest lady of the neighbourhood. She was a widow, young, pretty, and thoughtless: she spoke with great kindness, and without hesitation promised immediately to send some work to the cottage. Whilst Claudine quitted her presence full of hope and thankfulness, the lady, seizing a new novel, and weeping over the woes of its heroine, forgot Claudine's distresses and her own promises.

After waiting several days for the expected work, Claudine began to mistrust the promises of the pretty widow: 'I was more gratified by her soft and sugared words than the stern refusal of the curate's wife; but I was wrong,—the agreeable promise of the former has been the cause of my losing a great deal of time.'

Again, therefore, she went forth, and, passing the widow's door, proceeded to the house of the Seigneur of the village. His lady was too proud to admit her humble visitor into her presence, but sent her word by her valet to speak to her housekeeper; this message despatched, she began to sing pathetic airs, and accompany herself on a splendid harp. Where the head of a family is unfeeling and disdainful, the chances are that the menials have similar faults; for, by beholding, they learn to imitate the defects of their superiors. The housekeeper ordered Claudine to call again, for she had just then indispensable business to attend to: this indispensable business was sitting down to eat a comfortable hot luncheon.

Claudine, bursting into tears, turned from the rich man's door. The Seigneur himself accidentally met her. 'What is the matter with you, my good girl?' said he, in a tone of compassion.

She related her little history; the humane listener instantly offered her some money.—'Take this, my dear, and be comforted; I will not fail to visit your poor mother.'

‘Oh, sir, I thank you!—I thank you from the bottom of my heart; but I cannot receive your bounty.’

‘Wherefore, then, these thanks?’

‘Wherefore? Oh, for what is more precious to an afflicted heart than all the wealth in the world—for your compassionate looks and words—for your kind promise of visiting my unhappy mother.’

‘This is an extraordinary girl!’ said the Seigneur, addressing himself to a lady hanging on his arm; and they both had to dry the tears that glistened in their eyes. Then, turning to Claudine, he mildly said, ‘Perhaps you refuse the sum I offer, because it is too small?’

‘Pardon me;—it is too much, for I have not earned it.’

‘And you wish to work?’ inquired the lady.

‘Oh, yes, madame; that is all I desire.’

‘Well, then, my good girl, you shall go with me to my house,—it is not far distant,—and I will give you immediate occupation.’

‘That, indeed, will be kindness!’

‘But, my dear, you must take one crown from me,’ said the Seigneur.

‘Permit, me, sir, to refuse it. There are so many unfortunate persons who *cannot* work: keep your money for them. I am young and healthy,—I *can* work.’

‘Are you not a little proud, my child?’

‘No, no,’ exclaimed his companion, with



warmth: 'her sentiments are not those of pride; they are the effusions of a noble and elevated soul.'

The lady instantly returned to her house, attended by Claudine. In walking along, she chatted kindly to her, and was much pleased with the artless and intelligent character and the meek and modest manners of this amiable girl. After obliging her to take some refreshment, she gave her a large packet of needlework. She made neither promises nor professions, but all her words and actions evidently proved her desire and intention of being serviceable to her.

As Claudine walked cheerfully along with her bundle in her hand, she reflected much and gravely: 'This lady is neither young, nor pretty, nor gay, nor rich; she did not please me at first sight, because she is plain, and has rather a sad and serious air. How I was mistaken! Another time, I will not judge of people by their looks and features, but wait to hear their sentiments and observe their actions.' Claudine had a wise method of thus drawing rules for her own conduct from what she remarked in the conduct of others. This was an excellent plan, and one that ought to be followed by all young people.

It was a happy day for the family at the cottage; all were employed for the general good. The three girls were seated, hard at

work, round a little table. Madame Weimar, placed in her arm-chair by their side, was cheered and enlivened by seeing their animation. Maurice was reading aloud *The History of Switzerland*, the favourite book of their lamented father. Claudine, as she felt the comforts of the moment, said to herself, 'This is one of the bright hours of life. Heaven bless the excellent lady who has caused it!'

'If I were a rich lady,' exclaimed Justine, in one of the pauses in her brother's reading, 'I would take care to give plenty of work to my poor neighbours whenever they asked me for it.'

'You would thereby do a great deal of good,' replied Claudine.

'How agreeable it is to be busy!' said Fanchon.

'You are right, my love,' answered Claudine. 'Idleness is in itself an evil, and industry is in itself a good. But our present industry has double sweets: it bestows on us the pleasures of occupation, and ensures to us the means of independence.' It was thus that Claudine instructed her children, and with the precept gave the example.

The Seigneur paid the promised visit to Madame Weimar, and much gratified her by his respectful and obliging manners, as well as by his consoling language. The poor invalid was sensible of kindness, although almost with-

out recollection of the past. Sometimes she spoke of her husband as if unconscious of his death; at other times she would plaintively mourn over his absence. The afflicting state of her mother was indeed Claudine's greatest, severest trial; and she often, when alone, shed many bitter tears,—but in her presence she ever strove to maintain a serene if not a cheerful countenance.

M. Clement, the Seigneur, during his frequent visits, observed with attention the conduct of Claudine, and was charmed with all he saw. He found her submissive and affectionate to her mother, attentive and indulgent to her sisters and brother; in her dress simple, but perfectly neat; her cottage always clean, and herself always occupied. He admired her humble but valuable qualities, and took pleasure in making small presents to her family that would not wound her delicacy. Sometimes he sent fruit or poultry to Madame Weimar, sometimes he gave a book to Maurice, or a nice cake to his little sisters. In how many ways can the rich serve and oblige the poor, when they take the trouble of thinking about it!

Claudine thanked M. Clement with sensibility; and one day, whilst she was thus expressing her gratitude, he said to her with a smile, 'You see, Claudine, I dare not offer you a present, however small.'

'You dare not, sir!'

‘No, Claudine, I dare not: virtue inspires respect even in a cottage.’

‘But, sir, your bounties towards my family’—

‘I know it, Claudine—are to you. You see I am acquainted with your secret heart, and have discovered that to please you I must please those you love.’

When the needlework was finished, Claudine carried it to her benefactress. Madame Olier, this admirable friend, examined it with care, then assured Claudine she was quite satisfied with it, and, having proved that she could work well, she could now conscientiously recommend her to her acquaintance. ‘And how much have I to pay, Claudine?’

‘The usual price, if you please, madame.’

‘You are right, my love, and I will only pay you the usual price, because then you will be under no obligation. This money is strictly your due, for you have earned it by your labour.’

Claudine smiled as she said, ‘If, as you say, the money is mine because I have earned it, permit me at least, my dear madame, to thank you for your kindness,—that was a free gift on your part;’ and she respectfully kissed Madame Olier’s hand.

‘I believe my brother, M. Clement, was right,’ said the lady; ‘you are certainly no ordinary girl, Claudine.’

On her return home, Justine congratulated her sister on having got over this disagreeable affair.

‘Disagreeable, Justine! how so?’

‘I mean the humiliation of being paid. Did you not blush, sister, on receiving the money?’

‘Blush! no; wherefore blush? Had we not all worked hard to earn it? We had given our time and labour; the lady gave her money: it was a fair exchange. We had done our business neatly and quickly; she bestowed her cash graciously: here the obligation was reciprocal.’

‘What do you say—you are under no obligations to this lady?’

‘No, oh no, I do not say that! I only say that I received her money without a feeling of humiliation; for her affability, her sympathy, her goodness, I feel the warmest, liveliest gratitude.’





## CHAPTER XV.

**W**HILST Claudine was thus making every effort to prevent want and distress, and to perform every duty, the winter approached with rapid strides: the snow had already covered the earth, and a severe frost had commenced. Madame Weimar keenly felt the severity of the cold, and the children complained bitterly. Claudine clothed her mother in her warmest habiliments, and took care to supply with live charcoal the *chauffe-pied* on which, according to the custom of her country, she rested her feet as on a footstool. She persuaded the little ones to jump and dance, and thus by a brisker circulation of the blood to render themselves more warm.

A wood fire she found she could not afford, for it consumed an immense quantity of fuel; she was therefore compelled to deny her family the luxury of a cheerful blaze, and heated the apartment by means of a small stove. On the top of this stove she daily prepared *soupe maigre*; there she warmed milk, and in the wood ashes she roasted potatoes.

But, in spite of every precaution, on New Year's Day Madame Weimar was ill in one bed, and Fanchon in the other. By this time the snow had fallen to the depth of some feet, and, as a high wind drifted it into nooks and hollows, it had become dangerous to leave the cottage. But food must be had for the healthy, and medicine ought to be obtained for the sick. Claudine could not bear to leave the invalids. The good André, calling on his way home from the village, had related as the most recent news an event which tortured her heart with new inquietudes: a desperate attack had been made on the very fort where Valence was stationed. Fortunately Claudine was alone when she heard these cruel tidings, and she generously resolved to spare her family the anxious suspense which she herself endured.

After a restless night, she proposed to Justine to walk to the village, accompanied by Maurice, and inquire at the post-house for letters. She had long expected the quarterly instalment of their little income, and, besides, she wished to ask the advice of good M. Clement respecting the treatment of her mother's and Fanchon's ailments. 'And, Claudine,' said Maurice, 'we must have money to buy bread.'—Claudine, with a sigh, gave him her last franc.

After some hours the children returned; and Claudine, with a palpitating heart, asked, 'What news?'

‘No letter, sister ; and M. Clement is gone to Berne, and will not come back for two months ; —but here is the bread,’ said Maurice. Justine added, ‘We heard, sister, that our good Madame Olier is dangerously ill.’ What a trying moment for poor Claudine !

It is a common complaint that misfortunes come together, suddenly and unexpectedly, and that happiness arrives slowly and rarely. Does not this remark arise from the difference of our feelings under these opposite circumstances ? Are we not keenly alive to every the smallest evil, and do we not enjoy daily, hourly blessings without noting them ? How many weeks had Madame Weimar and Fanchon enjoyed perfect bodily health ! How many weeks had M. Clement remained their near neighbour and constant visitor ! How many weeks had Madame Olier been without ailment ! These advantages had not been daily recapitulated and gratefully acknowledged ; they were deemed natural events, and not valuable blessings. But, the moment these unheeded comforts were lost, their full worth was instantly felt—their temporary privation bitterly mourned. What surprise ! what regret ! what lamentation !

Misfortune is generally unexpected, because it is never desired ; but we think that happiness comes seldom and slowly, because we are always ardently wishing for it. One event suffices to plunge us into misery : many circum-



stances must concur to preserve to us our felicity.

Claudine received with a trembling hand the last loaf she had money to buy. Disappointed of her accustomed remittance, and too much occupied by her invalids to have leisure for needlework, want stared her in the face. Valence, too, was a source of unrelieved anxiety. What might be his situation!

Claudine now seemed to be oppressed with almost every form of domestic evil; and, in the evening, when her little family were all in bed, and she found herself alone by her solitary stove, having no longer a powerful inducement to restrain her grief, she sat down and wept bitterly. Her breaking heart, as it mustered up all her causes for sorrow, burst forth into this pathetic apostrophe: 'And I have no friend to pity me!' Let every bosom sensible to the touch of humanity commiserate the woes of this child of sorrow. Hers were positive calamities, and had been borne with fortitude till nature was compelled to yield.

'And I have no friend to pity me!' As Claudine in the agony of her soul uttered these words, she clasped her hands and looked upwards. The movement was propitious: in a few moments her features assumed a calmer expression, and 'I have a Friend who pities me' was the thought that glided into her bosom, but she did not utter it. Her quivering lips were

unable to articulate a word ;—she fell on her knees, and, burying her face in her hands, yielded her full heart to the inspiration of prayer.

Long did Claudine hold communion with the ever-present, ever-pitying Father of the widow and the orphan. Her sobs were gradually hushed—her tears assuaged. She rose from her knees with a mind revived to hope, and spirits invigorated for thought and exertion. Again she seated herself by her solitary stove and dim lamp, but how changed was the tone of all her reflections ! Before, all was despair ; now, all was hope.

‘Valence ! oh, he had escaped ; for if it had been otherwise, she must ere this have received the fatal tidings. What a mercy that her mother’s and Fanchon’s complaints, though lingering, were not painful, and threatened no dangerous consequences. Any day’s post might bring the desired remittance, and to-morrow her purse might be once more filled.’ Calmed, fortified, grateful, Claudine retired to bed, and enjoyed many hours’ refreshing sleep.

One, two, three days passed ;—no letter, no cheering tidings from any quarter. There was no bread in the cottage, and their little hoard of potatoes was nearly exhausted. What was to be done ? Claudine had not a single sous, and, moreover, owed some batzen to the farmer’s wife for milk. She frankly described her embarrassments to André, when he made his almost daily

visit of inquiry. He was too poor to help her with money, but he helped her with her own funds.

‘Mademoiselle, you pay for everything so regularly, that I am sure everybody will trust you; so, now you have no money, you must live upon your good name.’

He smiled as he spoke, left her for a short time, and on his return informed her that the baker would trust her for what bread she wanted; and the farmer for as much milk and as many potatoes as she chose to have, and that he would every day fetch her what she needed of these articles; ‘and, mademoiselle, you can pay when you will.’

‘Ah, my good André, I will pay when I can.’

This arrangement calmed all Claudine’s fears of absolute want, and with renewed energy she devoted herself to her duties. Night and morning she prayed for Valence,—it was all she could do for him; but what more could the richest do? One, two, three weeks passed heavily on,—no change had taken place. Madame Weimar continued feeble and complaining, Fanchon was still ailing and weak. Bread, milk, potatoes, composed the only food of the sick, as well as of the healthy. Little was M. Clement aware of the cruel change caused by his absence. How endless are the evils entailed upon tenantry and poor neighbours by the absence of the wealthy proprietor from his mansion and demesnes!

At length a letter arrived—it was in the handwriting of Valence!—with what transport it was torn open!

‘MY DEAREST CLAUDINE,—We have gained a battle,—and your brother has lost a leg. But do not afflict yourself,—I am wonderfully well. They have cut off my leg, and it is going on properly. I write to you in haste, because my name is in the list of wounded; and as news never loses by travelling, perhaps some kind friend will tell you I am dead; but don’t believe them, for I am alive and hearty, and mean to continue so. My heart is with you all.

‘VALENCE WEIMAR.’

This was the long-expected, warmly-welcomed letter! So desperately wounded, and in a distant camp, far from friends and kindred! The blow fell heavily on Claudine, and almost stupefied her.

The feeble voice of her mother calling for her, aroused her as if from an oppressive dream. She sighed heavily, and, holding her throbbing temples, tried to reflect on what was best to be done. Again Madame Weimar called, and Claudine, deciding to conceal the event, hastily threw the letter into the fire, and attended the summons with as calm a countenance as she could command.

‘Did I not hear the voice of André, and something about a letter?’

‘Yes, dear mamma, a letter from Valence.’

‘Give it to me.’

‘Ah, mamma, forgive me,—somehow it slipped from my hands into the fire, and is burnt.’

‘That was sad carelessness, Claudine; but tell me, how is my boy?’

‘He says he is wonderfully well: those are precisely his words.’

‘God be praised!’ murmured Madame Weimar; ‘this news has done me good already.’

Claudine stifled her sobs, and sought to dwell chiefly on these consoling words of her mother’s.

Claudine wrote a calm and soothing letter to her brother: she gave the best account she could of her mother and the family; besought him to be very careful of himself; pointed out to him the importance of his life to her and those around her; and, in short, said all that affection and good sense could dictate. Alas! this was all she could do for the beloved brother, whose ease and health she would gladly have purchased by the loss of her own.

The knowledge of Valence’s misfortune, and the uncertainty of its consequences, seemed to give the last blow to the suffering heart of Claudine; but she neither wept nor complained,—a sigh, a moment of melancholy abstraction, were the only external signs of her bosomed wretchedness. But she neither forgot nor neglected the smallest of her duties, and often

spent an hour in cheerful conversation with her mother ; and still oftener she seated herself by the bed of Fanchon, and lulled the poor little invalid to sleep by singing plaintive airs and ditties.





## CHAPTER XVI.

**A**NOTHER week passed in this state of anxiety and exertion, and André brought word that heavy falls of snow had rendered the roads impassable. The post then could not be expected, and Claudine could not receive any remittance of her quarterly payment, or any letter from her wounded brother.

She now deemed her cup of bitterness full to the brim ; and was, one evening, struggling with her sorrows, and striving to reason herself into composure, when a peasant boy, opening the cottage door, put a note into her hand. It was from the bailiff of M. Clement, demanding the payment of a quarter's rent, due at Christmas. How could she pay this money,—she who had not a single franc in the house ?

The next day the bailiff himself appeared.—Claudine stated her present inability, and her future certainty of being able to discharge this and all her debts. This man was one of those unfeeling upstarts who love nothing so well as

showing authority ; and as he could only do so in the absence of his employer, he took these opportunities of being doubly tyrannical, to indemnify himself for the forbearance which M. Clement, when at home, compelled him to show. Here, again, we see how many and terrible are the evils entailed on a peasantry by the absence of their protecting landlord.

After indulging in all the airs of office, the bailiff informed Claudine that he was going on a similar errand a few miles farther, and on his return would call for the money. He would not be put off with any excuses ; if the cash were not ready, there was such a place as a prison for debtors ; and Madame Weimar— He went away muttering his brutal threat.

Claudine stood transfixed with horror ; Maurice and Justine began to weep and lament ; their sister, whose presence of mind never forsook her, pointed to the chamber of her mother as a signal for silence. The frightened children threw themselves into her arms : ‘ Sister, dear sister, save us from this horrible man ! ’

Claudine shuddered. ‘ How can I save you, dear innocents ? I, feeble, distracted, without friends, without succour, without hope ! No,’ added she, after a pause, and looking up meekly to heaven, ‘ no, not without hope ! ’ She sank on her knees ; the children, yet clinging to her,



knelt with her; she took their little hands in her own, which trembled, and holding them up thus joined together, she exclaimed in a low and faltering voice, 'God of mercy, have pity on us!' She was silent; but her soul continued in secret prayer.

In a few minutes she arose; the beating of her heart was calmed, her respiration was more free, an air of serenity was on her countenance,—it was the image of humble resignation. She wept as she tenderly embraced the two dear little sharers of her affliction.

'My dears,' said she, 'calm yourselves; remember that the unhappy have always a gracious and compassionate Father in heaven. He will inspire me with good thoughts. Let us commit ourselves fearlessly to His merciful protection.' The children listened with reverence; and, cheered by the composure which appeared in the looks of their beloved sister, they dried their tears.

Claudine, profiting by this moment of recovered tranquillity, turned over in her mind every possible mode of obtaining the sum desired. One only way offered itself: she resolved to try it; and, recommending her mother and sick sister to the best care of Justine and Maurice, she prepared to walk to the village.

'Whither are you going, sister?'

'Not far; and assure yourselves, I will

be with you before the return of this cruel bailiff.'

'But it snows—it blows!'

'Tis nothing, Justine, for one accustomed as I have been to brave all weathers. I am going to fulfil a duty, and hope to bring back succour. Meanwhile be very good and attentive to our beloved mother and our dear little Fanchon.'

She set out, and walked with rapid steps upon the hardened snow, the keen wind driving the sharp sleet into her eyes, until she was almost blinded. But she never stopped till she reached the house of the handsome and wealthy widow: she knocked at the door; she begged to see the lady, and was admitted.

The gay widow was alone in her *boudoir*, laughing over the witty scenes of one of Molière's best comedies. Claudine, as young, as well born and as well bred, but sad, pale, trembling, stood before her. What a contrast! The lady looked up, and her smiles disappeared; she arose, she approached Claudine.

'My good girl, what is the matter?'

'Madame, I am a beggar; I am come to implore your charity. My mother, my little sister, are ill in bed; my brother has been wounded in battle. The bailiff insists on the payment of our rent, and I have not a batz in the world.'

She spoke in a wild and hurried manner; her words were interrupted by her quick breathings; she paused a moment, then added, in a less assured and timid voice, 'Will you, will you lend me a little money, to save my mother from a prison?' She remained standing, with an earnest look, as if despair had lent her force.

The widow was inexpressibly surprised and affected; she took the hand of Claudine: 'My child, compose yourself; be assured of my best aid.' At these kind words Claudine began to feel her weakness: she trembled, faltered, tried to speak, but could not. The widow again addressed her: 'Dear, hapless girl! your present state too fully proves your past sufferings; but if my purse can remove them, they shall soon cease.'

Claudine caught the hand of her benefactress, and held it to her palpitating heart. 'It is here, it is here,' she cried, 'that I thank you.'

The eyes of the widow overflowed as she presented her purse: 'Will this be enough!'

'Enough? Oh, too much—too much!'

'What do you require?'

'Thirty francs.'

The purse contained many louis. The widow started. 'O Heaven! all this agony for such a trifling sum! How often have I thrown away twice thirty francs on a bauble, a whim!'

Claudine received the money with transports of gratitude,—the widow blushed in presenting it.

‘Dearest lady,’ cried Claudine, ‘the money shall soon be repaid, but the obligation will go with me to the grave.’

Claudine flew homewards. The bailiff was at the cottage door when she reached it, and the alarmed Justine was remonstrating with him. Claudine presented the money. He took it in silence, gave the usual receipt, and departed.

Claudine again found herself without money ; but she was also without fears, and she began to breathe more freely. She looked around her,—all was calm and tranquil ; she no longer listened with dread to the slightest noise, lest it should be the step of the merciless bailiff. She approached the bed of her mother : Madame Weimar was sleeping peacefully. ‘Ah, my mother ! my beloved mother ! This calm slumber cannot now be interrupted by the intrusion of any cruel, unfeeling bailiff !’

Blessed conviction ! Claudine long enjoyed it, as she stood gratefully listening to the soft breathing of her mother. She then kissed the little Fanchon, who smiled, and said she was better, much better. Justine, in imitation of her sister, had made all the necessary arrangements for the evening.

‘Mamma and Fanchon have had their supper,

and here is yours quite ready for you.' How delicious was the hot milk and brown bread to the hungry and fatigued Claudine! How infinitely precious is a moment of peace, after a day of distressful agitation!





## CHAPTER XVII.

**T**HE silent progress of time gradually improved the condition of the cottagers. The severest rigours of winter passed away—the days lengthened—the roads became passable, and the remittance safely arrived.—What happiness! Claudine could now buy more delicate and nourishing food for her mother. For two months the family had subsisted wholly on bread, milk, and vegetables. If Claudine had not known the misery of want, she would not have felt with such intenseness the joy of this reverse. It is thus that our very misfortunes sometimes serve to heighten our pleasures.

Before she made a single purchase, Claudine hastened to pay the good farmer and baker; she thanked them for their patience and generous confidence. These are the sweet moments of existence. Claudine was happy in the power of being just, and in the recollection of having been obliged and trusted. On

their parts, the worthy people were charmed with her honesty, and were delighted to have served and pleased so amiable a young person. Here we see virtue obviously proving its own reward,—first, in inspiring good actions, and, secondly, in causing these good actions to be the source of agreeable emotions.

Claudine next visited the friendly widow. This gay lady had as entirely forgotten the debt, as she had formerly forgotten the promise of supplying some work. Claudine repeated her thanks, and warmly expressed her gratitude. She painted the misery she had saved her from, the comfort she had ensured,—thus in every possible way enhancing the favour which she acknowledged. She then put the thirty francs on the table: ‘This money can be repaid, dear madame, but never can your kindness to a desolate family be repaid. I shall never attempt to repay it. Oh no, that is a debt of gratitude which I shall treasure up in my bosom, which will warm my heart whenever I reflect upon it!’ She kissed the hand of her benefactress, and quitted her before the latter had time to say a word.

Soon afterwards, André brought accounts of the recovery of Madame Olier; and at the end of February, to the joy of his tenantry, M. Clement returned to his country seat. This excellent gentleman soon visited the cottage; he found Madame Weimar in her usual state of

mental alienation, and saw that he was not recognised by her.

Claudine expressed the anxiety she was suffering for her brother, from whom she had received no second letter; and then gave an artless recital of her past sufferings. The worthy Seigneur heard her narrative with the liveliest emotion, and after severely reprobating the cruel conduct of his tyrannical bailiff, he added, 'My good girl, you have most nobly supported the trials of adversity: may you be rewarded by future prosperity.'

'Ah, sir, my brother!' murmured Claudine, bursting into tears.

M. Clement soothed, consoled, fortified her. As he spoke, a fresh burst of tears overwhelmed her. 'Whence this emotion, Claudine?'

'Your goodness, your consolation, your advice, remind me so keenly of my beloved father. Oh, it seems as if I were no longer an orphan!'

'Dearest girl, you can never want a father, for the God of mercy is the father of the virtuous; but if in this world, Claudine, you need the tenderness of a parent, come to me. Never, never shall I forget Claudine Weimar!'

'Who speaks of my husband?' exclaimed Madame Weimar, on hearing this cherished name.

'Ah, mother,' cried Claudine, shuddering at this touching association of her affections and



ideas; 'ah, my dear mother!' and she fell weeping on the bosom of her mother.

'Who speaks of my husband?' repeated the widow, gazing wildly around her.

'The best of our friends; the protector, mamma,—the father of your children.'

'May God bless him!' said Madame Weimar with affecting earnestness; 'may God bless him! Tell me his name, that I may mingle it with my prayers.'

'M. Clement, mother.'

'Clement,—good! I will place it in my heart next to the name of my Weimar.'

Early in April the arrival of a letter chased away the last of Claudine's anxieties. It was from Valence:—

'MY BELOVED SISTER,—I am cured—I am perfectly well;—but, alas! I am a cripple for the rest of my life. No, I will not say alas! for I have no just cause of complaint. Claudine, I am cured, and I am retired from the service. My sister, will you receive a poor wounded soldier into your humble cottage? But again I am wrong, for I am not poor. Besides my half-pay, I have a pension of two hundred francs for having been wounded in the service. Thus I shall have an income of eight hundred livres;<sup>1</sup> and I have two arms and a heart ready to serve you. I will cultivate your little garden, I will

<sup>1</sup> About £32 English.

instruct our young Maurice. I shall be always near you, to obey you—serve you—love you. In the month of May, expect your affectionate brother,

‘VALENCE WEIMAR.’

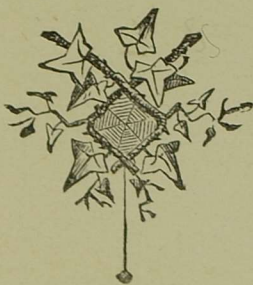
Claudine read this letter with varied emotions. ‘Lame for life,’ and she sighed ; ‘always near you,’ and she smiled. Madame Weimar was now so much revived, that Claudine ventured cautiously to break to her the state of her brother. The tender mother was too much absorbed in the joyful hope of soon seeing her son, to dwell so keenly as she would otherwise have done on his disaster. This was what Claudine anticipated, and she congratulated herself that she had been able to administer a healing balm, at the same time that she had been compelled to inflict a wound. The health of Fanchon was gradually re-established as the spring approached ; and the arrival of the next quarter’s remittance permitted the happy family to make a few preparations for the comfortable reception and accommodation of the young soldier.

He arrived. Once more the family of Weimar was united ! He alone was not there ; but every heart was with him, and his blessed spirit was in the midst of them !

Madame Weimar shed joyous tears on the bosom of her beloved son. The little ones hung

around his knees. Claudine, leaning on his shoulder, turned her glistening eyes to heaven, and, with quivering lips, repeated the first touching words of the Christian's prayer,—

‘Our Father, which art in heaven!’





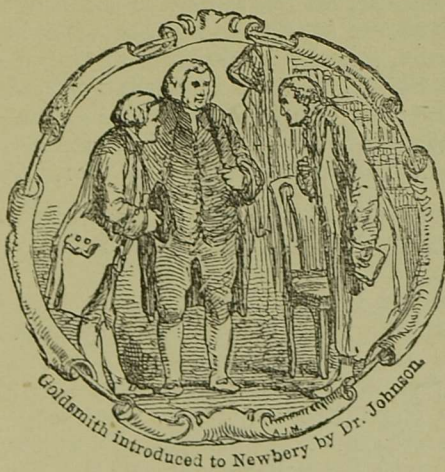
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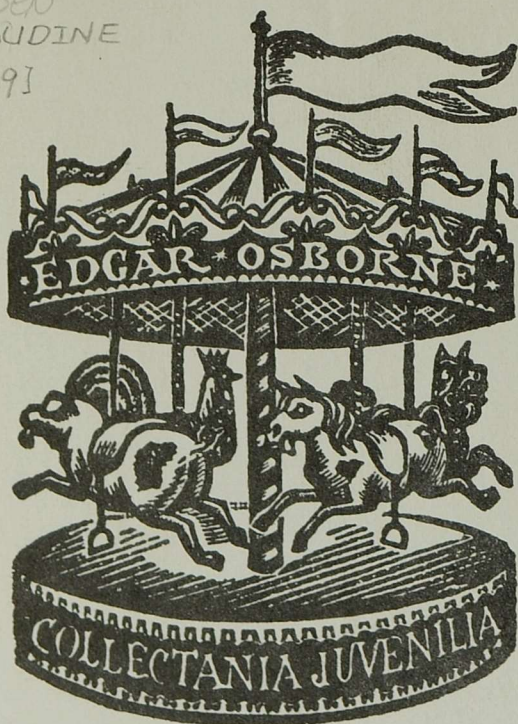
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