

## X.

### THE SWISS PEASANT.

WHY is the mind of man so apt to be swayed by contraries? why does the imagination for ever paint the impossible in glittering tints, and the hearts of wayward mortals cling, with the greatest tenacity, to what, eel-like, is bent on escaping from their grasp? Why—to bring the matter home—is solitude abhorrent to me, now that I enjoy it in perfection? I have apostrophized the coy nymph in ball-rooms, when the bright lamps of heaven were shamed by brighter earth-stars, and lamented her absence at a picnic party, where the nightingale was silenced by the fiddle.

And now, O solitude! I abjure thee, in thy fitting temple—in Switzerland—among cloud-piercing mountains, by the resounding waves of the isle-surrounding lake. I am beside the waters of Uri—where Tell lived—in Brunen, where the Swiss patriots swore to die for freedom. It rains—magic word to destroy the spell to which these words give rise—the clouds envelop the hills—the white mists veil the ravines—there is a roar and a splash in my ears—and now and then the vapours break and scatter themselves, and I see something dark between, which is the hoar side of a dark precipice, but which might as well be the turf stack or old wall that bounded Cumberland's view as he wrote the *Wheel of Fortune*.

The sole book that I possess is the *Prisoner of Chillon*.

I have read it through three times within an hour. Its noble author composed it to beguile weary hours like these when he remained rain-bound for three days in a little inn on the shores of the Lake of Geneva; and cannot I, following with unequal steps, so cheat the minutes in this dim spot? I never, by the by, could invent the commonest incident. As a man of honour, of course I never lie; but, as a nursery child and school-boy, I never did; simply, as I remember, because I never could concoct one;—but a true tale was lately narrated to me by its very heroine, the incidents of which haunt my memory, adorned as they were by her animated looks and soft silvery accent. Let me try to record them, stripped though they must be of their greatest charm.

I was, but a week ago, travelling with my friend Ashburn in a *coupée*, in the district of Soubiaco, in the ecclesiastical territory. We were jolted along a rough ravine, through which the river Anio sped, and beetling mountains and shady trees, a distant convent and a picturesque cell on a hill, formed a view which so awoke the pictorial propensities of my friend, that he stopped the *coupée* (though we were assured that we should never reach our inn by nightfall, and that the road was dangerous in the dark), took out his portfolio, and began to sketch. As he drew, I continued to speak in support of an argument we had entered upon before. I had been complaining of the commonplace and ennui of life. Ashburn insisted that our existence was only too full of variety and change—tragic variety and wondrous incredible change. “Even,” said the painter, “as sky, and earth, and water seem for ever the same to the vulgar eye, and yet to the gifted one assume a thousand various guises and hues—now robed in purple—now shrouded in black—now resplendent with living gold—and anon sinking into sober and unobtrusive grey, so do our mortal lives change and vary. No living being among us

but could tell a tale of soul-subduing joys and heart-consuming woes, worthy, had they their poet, of the imagination of Shakespeare or Goethe. The veriest weather-worn cabin is a study for colouring, and the meanest peasant will offer all the acts of a drama in the apparently dull routine of his humble life."

"This is pure romance," I replied; "put it to the test. Let us take, for example, yonder woman descending the mountain path."

"What a figure!" cried Ashburn; "oh that she would stay thus but one quarter of an hour!—she has come down to bathe her child—her upturned face—her dark hair—her picturesque costume—the little plump fellow bestriding her—the rude scenery around"—

"And the romantic tale she has to tell"

"I would wager a louis that hers has been no common fate. She steps a goddess—her attitude, her looks, are all filled with majesty."

I laughed at his enthusiasm, and accepted his bet. We hurried to join our fair peasantess, and thus formed acquaintance with Fanny Chaumont. A sudden storm, as we were engaged conversing with her, came, driven down from the tempest-bearing hills, and she gave us a cordial invitation to her cottage.

It was situated on a sunny, yet sheltered slope. There was a look of cheerfulness and *aisance* about it, beyond what is usually met in that part of Switzerland, reminding me of the cottages of the inhabitants of the free States. There, also, we found her husband. I always feel curious to know on whom a woman, who bears the stamp of superior intellect, who is beautiful and refined—for peasant as she was, Fanny was both—has been induced to bestow herself.

Louis Chaumont was considerably older than his wife; he was handsome, with brown lively eyes, curly chestnut hair, a visage embrowned by the sun, bearing every

mark of having led an active, even an adventurous life; there was, besides, an expression which, if it were not ferocity, resembled it, in his vivacious glances, and in the sternness of his deeply-lined forehead; while she, in spite of her finely-formed brow, her majestic person, and her large expressive eyes, looked softness and patience itself. There was something incongruous in the pair, and more strangely matched they seemed when we heard their story. It lost me my louis, but proved Fanny at once to be a fitting heroine for romance, and was a lesson, moreover, to teach the strange pranks love can play with us, mingling fire and water, blending in one harmonious concord the harsh base and melodious tenor of two differently stringed instruments. Though their child was five years old, Fanny and her husband were attached to each other with the tenderness and passion of early love; they were happy—his faults were tempered by her angel disposition, and her too melancholy and feeling-fraught spirit was enlivened and made plastic to the purposes of this world by his energy and activity.

Fanny was a Bernese by birth: she was the child of humble cottagers, one among a large family. They lived on the brow of one summit and at the foot of another. The snowy mountains were piled about them; thaw-fed torrents brawled around; during the night a sound like thunder, a crash among the tempest-beaten pines would tell of an avalanche; or the snowdrift, whirring past the lattice, threatened to bury the little fabric. Winter was the season of peace in the deep vales, not so in the higher district. The peasant was often kept waking by the soft-falling snow which threatened insidiously to encroach on, and to overwhelm his habitation; or a straying cow would lead him far into the depths of the stormy hills, and his fearful family would count in agony the hours of his absence. Perpetual hardship and danger, however, rather brutify than exalt the soul of man; and

those of the Swiss who are most deeply planted among the rocky wilds are often stultified and sullen.

Fanny opened her youthful eyes and observation on this scene. She was one of those lovely children whose beauty is heartfelt but indescribable: hers was the smooth candid brow, the large hazel eyes, half soft, half wild; the round dimpled cheek, the full sensitive mouth, the pointed chin, and (as framework to the picture) the luxuriant curly chestnut hair, and voice which is sweetest music. The exceeding beauty of little Fanny gained her the observation of the wife of the owner of the chateau which overlooked and commanded the district, and at ten years of age she became a frequent visitor there. Fanny's little soul was love, so she soon twined herself round the kind lady's heart, became a pet with her husband, and the favourite playmate of their only son.

One fête day Fanny had dined at the chateau. It had been fine warm spring weather, but wind and storm came on with the setting sun; the snow began to fall thickly, and it was decided that Fanny must pass the night in the chateau. She had been unusually eager to return home; and when the tempest came on, she crept near her protectress, and begged to be sent to her mother. *C'est impossible* — Fanny pressed no further, but she clambered to a window, and looked out wistfully to where, hidden by the hills, her parents' cottage stood. It was a fatal night for her: the thunders of frequent avalanches, the roaring of torrents, the crash of trees, spoke of devastation, and her home was its chief prey. Father, mother, brothers, and sisters, not one survived. Where, the day before, cottage and outhouse and flower garden had stood, the little lawn where she played, and the grove that sheltered her, there was now a monumental pile of snow, and the rocky path of a torrent; no trace remained, not one survivor to tell the tale.

From that night Fanny became a constant inmate of the chateau.

It was Madame de Marville's project to give her a bourgeois education, which would raise her from the hardships of a peasant's life, and yet not elevate her above her natural position in society. She was brought up kindly, but humbly; it was the virtues of her disposition which raised her in the eyes of all around her—not any ill-judged favour of her benefactress. The night of the destruction of her family never passed away from her memory; it set a seal of untimely seriousness on her childish brow, awoke deep thoughts in her infant heart, and a strong resolve that while she lived, her beloved friends should find her, as far as her humble powers admitted, a source of good alone—a reason to rejoice that they had saved her from the destruction that had overwhelmed her family.

Thus Fanny grew up in beauty and in virtue. Her smiles were as the rainbows of her native torrents: her voice, her caresses, her light step, her unalterable sweetness and ceaseless devotion to the wishes of others, made her the idol of the family. Henry, the only child of her protectors, was of her own age, or but a few months her senior. Every time Henry returned from school to visit his parents, he found Fanny more beautiful, more kind, more attractive than before; and the first passion his youthful heart knew was for the lovely peasant girl, whose virtues sanctified his home. A look, a gesture betrayed his secret to his mother; she turned a hasty glance on Fanny, and saw on her countenance innocence and confidence alone. Half reassured, yet still fearful, Madame de Marville began to reflect on some cure for the threatened evil. She could not bear to send away Fanny; she was solicitous that her son should for the present reside in his home. The lovely girl was perfectly unconscious of the sentiments of the young

seigneur ; but would she always continue so? and was the burning heart that warmed her gentle bosom to be for ever insensible to the despotic and absorbing emotions of love?

It was with wonder, and a curious mixture of disappointed maternal pride and real gladness, that the lady at length discovered a passion dawning in fair Fanny's heart for Louis Chaumont, a peasant some ten years older than herself. It was natural that one with such high-wrought feelings as our heroine should love one to whom she could look up, and on whom to depend, rather than her childhood's playmate—the gay, thoughtless Henry. Louis's family had been the victim of a moral ruin, as hers of a physical one. They had been oppressed, reduced to poverty, driven from their homes by a feudal tyrant, and had come poor and forlorn from a distant district. His mother, accustomed to a bourgeois' life, died broken-hearted: his father, a man of violent passions, nourished in his own and in his son's heart, sentiments of hatred and revenge against the "proud oppressors of the land." They were obliged to labour hard, yet in the intervals of work, father and son would read or discourse concerning the ills attendant on humanity, and they traced all to the social system, which made the few the tyrants of the many.

Louis was handsome, bold, and active; he excelled his compeers in every hardy exercise; his resolution, his daring, made him, in spite of his poverty, a kind of leader among them. He had many faults; he was too full of passion, of the spirit of resistance and revenge; but his heart was kind; his understanding, when not thwarted, strong; and the very depth of his feelings made him keenly susceptible to love. Fanny, in her simple but majestic beauty, in her soft kindness of manner, mingled with the profoundest sensibility, made a deep impression on the young man's heart. His

converse, so different and so superior to those of his fellows, won her attention.

Hitherto Fanny had never given utterance to the secrets of her soul. Habitual respect held her silent with Madame, and Henry, as spirited and as heedless as a chamois, could ill understand her; but Louis became the depository of the many feelings which, piled up in secrecy and silence, were half awful to herself; he brought reason, or what he deemed such, to direct her heart-born conclusions. To have heard them talk of life and death, and all its shows, you would have wondered by what freak philosophy had dressed herself in youth and a peasant's garb, and wandered from the schools to these untaught wilds.

Madame de Marville saw and encouraged this attachment. Louis was not exactly the person she would have selected for Fanny; but he was the only being for whom she had ever evinced a predilection; and, besides, the danger of a misalliance which threatened her own son, rendered her eager to build an insurmountable wall between him and the object of his affections. Thus Fanny enjoyed the heart-gladdening pride of hearing her choice applauded and praised by the person she most respected and loved in the world. As yet, however, love had been covert; the soul but not the apparent body of their intercourse. Louis was kept in awe by this high-minded girl, and Fanny had not yet learned her own secret. It was Henry who made the discovery for them; — Henry, who, with all the impetuosity of his vivacious character, contrived a thousand ways to come between them, who, stung by jealousy to injustice, reviled Louis for his ruin, his poverty, his opinions, and brought the spirit of dissension to disquiet a mind entirely bent, as she imagined, on holy and pure thoughts.

Under this clash of passion, the action of the drama rapidly developed itself, and, for nearly a year, a variety



of scenes were acted among these secluded mountains of no interest save to the parties themselves, but to them fateful and engrossing. Louis and Fanny exchanged vows; but that sufficed not. Fanny insisted on the right of treating with uniform kindness the son of her best friend, in spite of his injustice and insolence. The young men were often, during the rural festivals, brought into angry collision. Fanny was the peacemaker: but a woman is the worst possible mediator between her rival lovers. Henry was sometimes irritated to complain to his father of Louis' presumption. The spirit of the French Revolution then awakening, rendered a peasant's assumptions peculiarly grating; and it required Madame de Marville's impartial gentleness to prevent Fanny's betrothed, as now he was almost considered, from being further oppressed.

At length it was decided that Henry should absent himself for a time, and visit Paris. He was enraged in the extreme by what he called his banishment. Noble and generous as he naturally was, love was the tyrant of his soul, and drove him almost to crime. He entered into a fierce quarrel with his rival on the very eve of his departure: it ended in a scene of violence and bloodshed. No great real harm was done; but Monsieur de Marville, hitherto scarcely kept back from such a measure by his wife, suddenly obtained an order for Louis (his father had died a year before) to quit the territory within twelve hours. Fanny was commanded, as she valued the favour of her friends, to give him up. The young men were both gone before any intercession could avail; and that kind of peace which resembles desolation took possession of the chateau.

Aware of the part she had taken in encouraging Fanny's attachment to her peasant-lover, Madame de Marville did not make herself a party to the tyranny of her husband; she requested only of her protégée to

defer any decisive step, and not to quit her guardianship until the return of her son, which was to take place the following year. Fanny consented to such a delay, although in doing so she had to resist the angry representations of her lover, who exacted that she should quit the roof of his oppressors. It was galling to his proud spirit that she should continue to receive benefits from them, and injurious to his love that she should remain where his rival's name was the constant theme of discourse and the object of interest. Fanny in vain represented her debt of gratitude, the absence of Henry, the impossibility that she could feel any undue sentiment towards the young seigneur; not to hate him was a crime in Louis' eyes; yet how, in spite of his ill-conduct, could Fanny hate her childhood's playmate—her brother? His violent passions excited to their utmost height—jealousy and the sense of impotent indignation raging in his heart—Louis swore to revenge himself on the Marvilles—to forget and to abhor his mistress!—his last words were a malediction on them, and a violent denunciation of scorn upon her.

“It will all be well yet,” thought Fanny, as she strove to calm the tumultuous and painful emotions to which his intemperate passion gave rise. “Not only are storms the birth of the wild elements, but of the heart of man, and we can oppose patience and fortitude alone to their destructive violence. A year will pass—I shall quit the chateau; Louis will acknowledge my truth, and retract his frightful words.”

She continued, therefore, to fulfil her duties cheerfully, not permitting her thoughts to dwell on the idea, that, in spite of her struggles, too painfully occupied her—the probability that Louis would in the end renounce or forget her; but committing her cause to the spirit of good, she trusted that its influence would in the end prevail.

She had, however, much to endure ; for months passed, and no tidings reached her of Louis. Often she felt sick at heart ; often she became the prey of the darkest despair ; above all, her tender heart missed the fond attentions of love, the bliss of knowing that she bestowed happiness, and the unrestrained intercourse to which mutual affection had given rise. She cherished hope as a duty, and faith in love, rather than in her unjust and cruelly neglectful lover. It was a hard task, for she had nowhere to turn for consolation or encouragement. Madame de Marville marked with gladness the total separation between them. Now that the danger that threatened her son was averted, she repented having been influential in producing an attachment between Fanny and one whom she deemed unworthy of her. She redoubled her kindness, and, in the true Continental fashion, tried to get up a match between her and some one among her many and more prosperous admirers. She failed, but did not despair, till she saw the poor girl's cheek grow pale and her vivacity desert her, as month after month passed away, and the very name of Louis appeared to be forgotten by all except herself.

The stirring and terrible events that took place at this time in France added to Fanny's distress of mind. She had been familiarized to the discussion of the theories, now attempted to be put in practice, by the conversations of Chaumont. As each fresh account brought information of the guilty and sanguinary acts of men whose opinions were the same as those of her lover, her fears on his account increased. In a few words I shall hurry over this part of her story. Switzerland became agitated by the same commotions as tore the near kingdom. The peasantry rose in tumult ; acts of violence and blood were committed ; at first at a distance from her retired valley, but gradually approaching its precincts, until at last the tree of liberty was set up in the neighbouring

village. Monsieur de Marville was an aristocrat of the most bigoted species. In vain was the danger represented to him, and the unwarlike state of his retinue. He armed them—he hurried down—he came unawares on the crowd who were proclaiming the triumph of liberty, rather by feasting than force. On the first attack, they were dispersed, and one or two among them were wounded; the pole they had gathered round was uprooted, the emblematic cap trampled to the earth. The governor returned victorious to his chateau.

This act of violence on his part seemed the match to fire a train of organized resistance to his authority, of which none had dreamt before. Strangers from other cantons thronged into the valley; rustic labours were cast aside; popular assemblies were held, and the peasants exercised in the use of arms. One was coming to place himself at their head, it was said, who had been a party in the tumults at Geneva. Louis Chaumont was coming—the champion of liberty, the sworn enemy of M. de Marville. The influence of his presence soon became manifest. The inhabitants of the chateau were besieged. If one ventured beyond a certain limit he was assailed. It was the resolve of Louis that all within its walls should surrender themselves to his mercy. What that might be, the proud curl of his lip and the fire that glanced from his dark eyes rendered scarcely problematic. Fanny would not believe the worst of her lover, but Monsieur and Madame de Marville, no longer restrained by any delicacy, spoke of the leveller in unmeasured terms of abhorrence, comparing him to the monsters who then reigned in France, while the danger they incurred through him added a bitter sting to their words. The peril grew each day; famine began to make its appearance in the chateau; while the intolligence which some of the more friendly peasants brought was indicative of preparations for a regular attack of the most formidable nature. A

summons at last came from the insurgents. They were resolved to destroy the emblem of their slavery—the feudal halls of their tyrants. They declared their intention of firing the chateau the next day, and called on all within to deliver themselves up, if they would not be buried in its ruins. They offered their lives and free leave to depart to all, save the governor himself, who must place himself unconditionally at the mercy of their leader. “The wretch,” exclaimed his lady, “who thirsts for your blood! Fly! if there is yet time for flight; we, you see, are safe. Fly! nor suffer these cruel dastards to boast of having murdered you.”

M. de Marville yielded to these entreaties and representations. He had sent for a military force to aid him—it had been denied. He saw that he himself, as the detested person, was the cause of danger to his family. It was therefore agreed that he should seek a *châlet* situated on a mountain ten leagues distant, where he might lie concealed till his family joined him. Accordingly, in a base disguise, he quitted at midnight the walls he was unable to defend; a miserable night for the unfortunate beings left behind. The coming day was to witness the destruction of their home; and they, beggars in the world, were to wander through the inhospitable mountains, till, with caution and terror, they could unobserved reach the remote and miserable *châlet*, and learn the fate of the unhappy fugitive. It was a sleepless night for all. To add to Madame’s agony, she knew that her son’s life was in danger in Paris—that he had been denounced—and, though yet untaken, his escape was still uncertain. From the turret of the castle that, situated high on a rock, commanded the valley below, she sat the livelong night watching for every sound—fearful of some shout, some report of firearms, which would announce the capture of her husband. It was September; the nights were chill; pale and trembling, she saw day break

over the hills. Fanny had busied herself during these anxious hours by preparing for their departure; the terrified domestics had already fled; she, the lady, and the old lame gardener were all that remained. At dawn she brought forth the mule, and harnessed him to the rude vehicle which was to convey them to their place of refuge. Whatever was most valuable in the chateau had already been sent away long before, or was secreted; a few necessaries alone she provided. And now she ascended the turret stairs, and stood before her protectress, announcing that all was ready, and that they must depart. At this last moment, Madame de Marville appeared deprived of strength; she strove to rise—she sank to the ground in a fit. Forgetful of her deserted state, Fanny called aloud for help, and then her heart beat wildly as a quick, youthful step was heard on the stairs. Who could he be? would *he* come to insult their wretchedness—he, the author of their woe? The first glance changed the object of her terror. Henry flew to his mother's side, and, with broken exclamations and agitated questions, demanded an explanation of what he saw. He had fled for safety to the habitation of his parents—he found it deserted; the first voice he heard was that of Fanny crying for help—the first sight that presented itself was his mother, to all appearance dead, lying on the floor of the turret. Her recovery was followed by brief explanations, and a consultation of how his safety was to be provided for. The name of Chaumont excited his bitterest execrations. With a soldier's haughty resolve, he was darting from the castle to meet and to wreak vengeance on his rival. His mother threw herself at his feet, clasping his knees, calling wildly on him not to desert her. Fanny's gentle, sweet voice was of more avail to calm his passion. "Chevalier," she said, "it is not thus that you must display your courage or protect the helpless. To encounter yonder infuriated

mob would be to run on certain death ; you must preserve yourself for your family—you must have pity on your mother, who cannot survive you. Be guided by me, I beseech you."

Henry yielded to her voice, and a more reasonable arrangement took place. The departure of Madame de Marville and Fanny was expected at the village, and a pledge had been given that they should proceed unmolested. But deeply had the insurgents sworn that if the governor or his son (whose arrival in the chateau had been suspected) attempted to escape with them, they should be immediately sacrificed to *justice*. No disguise would suffice—the active observation of their enemies was known. Every inhabitant of the castle had been numbered—the fate of each ascertained, save that of the two most detested—the governor, whose flight had not been discovered, and his son, whose arrival was so unexpected and ill-timed. As still they consulted, a beat to arms was heard in the valley below : it was the signal that the attack on the empty castle walls would soon begin. There was no time for delay or hesitation. Henry placed himself at the bottom of the charrette ; straw and a variety of articles were heaped upon him ; the two women ascended in trepidation ; and the old gardener sat in front and held the reins.

In consequence of the disturbed state of the districts through which they were to pass,—where the appearance of one of the upper classes excited the fiercest enmity, and frightful insult, if not death, was their sure welcome,—Madame and her friend assumed a peasant's garb. And thus they wound their way down the steep ; the unhappy lady weeping bitterly ; Fanny, with tearless eyes, but with pale cheek and compressed lips, gazing for the last time on the abode which had been her refuge when, in helpless infancy, she was left an orphan—where kindness and benevolence had waited on her, and where

her days had passed in innocence and peace. "And he drives us away!—him, whom I loved—whom I love!—O misery!"

They reached the foot of the eminence on which the chateau was placed, and proceeded along the road which led directly through the village. With the approach of danger, vain regrets were exchanged for a lively sense of fear in the bosom of the hapless mother, and for the exertion of her courage and forethought in Fanny's more energetic mind. They passed a peasant or two, who uttered a malediction or imprecation on them as they went; then groups of two or three, who were even more violent in gesture and menace; when suddenly the sound of many steps came on their ears, and at a turn of the road they met Chaumont with a band of about twenty disciplined men.

"Fear not," he said to Madame de Marville; "I will protect you from danger till you are beyond the village."

With a shriek, the lady, in answer, threw herself in Fanny's arms.

"Fear not, Madame—he dares not injure you. Begone, Louis! insult us not by your presence. Begone! I say."

Fanny spoke angrily. She had not adopted this tone, but that the lady's terror, and the knowledge that even then the young soldier crouched at their feet, burnt to spring up and confront his enemy, made her use an authority which a woman always imagines that a lover dare not resist.

"I do not insult you," repeated Chaumont—"I save you. I have no quarrel with the lady; tyrants alone need fear me. You are not safe without my escort. Do not you, false girl, irritate me. I have ensured her escape; but yours—you are in my power."

A violent movement at the bottom of the charrette called forth all Fanny's terrors.

"Take me!" she cried; "do with me what you please;



but you dare not, you cannot raise a finger against the innocent. Begone, I say! let me never see you more!"

"You are obeyed. On you fall the consequences."

Thus, after many months of separation, did Fanny and her lover meet. She had purposed when she should see him to make an appeal to his better nature—his reason; she had meant to use her all-persuasive voice to recall him from the dangerous path he was treading. Several times, indeed, since his arrival in the valley, she had endeavoured to obtain an interview with him, but he dreaded her influence: he had resolved on revenge, and he feared to be turned back. But now the unexpected presence of his rival robbed her of her self-possession, and forced her to change her plans. She saw frightful danger in their meeting, and all her endeavours were directed to the getting rid of her lover.

Louis and his companions proceeded towards the chateau, while the charrette of the fugitives moved on in the opposite direction. They met many a ferocious group, who were rushing forward to aid in the destruction of their home; and glad they were, in that awful hour, that any object had power to divert the minds of their enemies from attention to themselves. The road they pursued wound through the valley; the precipitous mountain on one side, a brawling stream on the other. Now they ascended higher and now again descended in their route, while the road, broken by the fall of rocks, intersected by torrents, which tore their way athwart it, made their progress slow. To get beyond the village was the aim of their desires; when, lo! just as they came upon it, and were in the very midst of its population, which was pouring towards the castle, suddenly the charrette sank in a deep rut; it half upset, and every spoke in the wheel giving way rendered the vehicle wholly useless.

Fanny had indeed already sprung to the ground to examine what hope remained: there was none. "Grand

Dieu ! we are lost !” were the first words that escaped her, while Madame stood aghast, trembling, almost insensible, knowing that the hope of her life, the existence of her son, depended on these miserable moments.

A peasant who owed Fanny some kindness now advanced, and in a kind of cavalier way, as if to blemish as much as he could the matter of his offer by its manner, told them, that, for the pleasure of getting rid of the aristocrats, he would lend his car—there it was, let them quickly bestow their lading in it and pursue their way. As he spoke, he caught up a box, and began the transfer from one car to the other.

“No, no !” cried Madame de Marville, as, with a scream, she sprang forward and grasped the arm of the man as he was in the very act of discovering her son’s hiding-place. “We will accept nothing from our base enemies !—Begone with your offers ! we will die here, rather than accept anything from such *canaille*.”

The word was electric. The fierce passions of the mob, excited by the mischief they were about to perpetrate, now burst like a stream into this new channel. With violent execrations they rushed upon the unfortunate woman : they would have torn her from the car, but already her son had sprung from his hiding-place, and, striking a violent blow at the foremost assailant, checked for a moment their brutal outrages. Then again, with a yell, such as the savage Indians alone could emulate, they rushed on their prey. Mother and son were torn asunder, and cries of “A bas les aristocrats !”—“A la lanterne !” declared too truly their sanguinary designs.

At this moment Louis appeared—Louis, whose fears for Fanny had overcome his indignation, and who returned to guard her ; while she, perceiving him, with a burst of joy, called on him to rescue her friends. His cry of “Arretez-vous !” was loud and distinct amidst the uproar. It was obeyed ; and then first he beheld his

rival, his oppressor, his enemy in his power. At first, rage inflamed every feature, to be replaced by an expression of triumph and implacable hatred. Fanny caught the fierce glance of his eye, and grew pale. She trembled as, trying to be calm, she said, "Yes, you behold he is here. And you must save him—and your own soul. Rescue him from death, and be blest that your evil career enables you at least to perform this one good action."

For a moment Louis seemed seeking for a word, as a man, meaning to stab, may fumble for his dagger's hilt, unable in his agitation to grasp his weapon.

"My friends," at length he said, "let the women depart—we have promised it. Ye may deal with the young aristocrat according to his merits."

"A la lanterne!" burst in response from a hundred voices.

"Let his mother first depart!"

Could it be Louis that spoke these words, and had she loved this man? To appeal to him was to rouse a tiger from his lair. Another thought darted into Fanny's mind; she scarcely knew what she said or did: but already knives were drawn; already, with a thrill of horror, she thought she saw the blood of her childhood's playmate split like water on the earth. She rushed forward—she caught the upraised arm of one—"He is no aristocrat!" she cried; "he is my husband!—Will you murder one who, forgetting his birth, his duty, his honour, has married a peasant girl—one of yourselves?"

Even this appeal had little effect upon the mob; but it strangely affected her cruel lover. Grasping her arm with iron fingers, he cried, "Is this tale true? Art thou married to that man—his wife?"

"Even so!"—the words died on her lips as she strove to form them, terrified by their purport, and the effect they might produce. An inexplicable expression passed over Chaumont's face; the fierceness that jealousy had

ongendered for a moment was exalted almost to madness, and then faded wholly away. The stony heart within him softened at once. A tide of warm, human, and overpowering emotion flowed into his soul: he looked on her he had loved, on her whom he had lost for ever; and tears rushed into his eyes, as he saw her trembling before him.

“Fear not,” at last he said; “fear neither for him nor yourself. Poor girl! so young, you shall not lose all—so young, you shall not become a widow. He shall be saved!”

Yet it was no easy task, even for him, to stem the awakened passions of the bloodthirsty mob. He had spent many an hour in exciting them against their seigneurs, and now at once to control the violence to which he had given rise seemed impossible. Yet his energy, his strong will overcame all opposition. They should pierce the chevalier’s heart, he swore, through his alone. He prevailed. He took the rein of their mule, and led them out of the village. All were silent; Fanny knew not what to say, and surprise held the others mute. Louis went with them until a turn in the road hid them from the view of the village. What his thoughts were, none could guess: he looked calm, as resigning the rein into the chevalier’s hands, he gently bade them “Farewell,” touching his hat in reply to their salutations. They moved on, and Fanny looked back to catch a last view of her lover: he was standing where they left him, when suddenly, instead of returning on his steps into the village, she saw him with rapid strides ascend the mountain-side, taking a well-known path that conducted him away from the scene of his late exploits. His pace was that of a man flying from pursuers—soon he was lost to sight.

Astonishment still kept the fugitives silent, as they pursued their way; and when at last joy broke forth, and

Madame de Marville, rejoicing in their escape, embraced again and again her son, he with the softest tenderness thanked Fanny for his life : she answered not, but wept bitterly.

Late that night they reached the destined ch<sup>â</sup>let, and found Monsieur de Marville arrived. It was a half-ruined miserable habitation perched among the snows, cold and bare ; food was ill to be obtained, and danger breathed around them. Fanny attended on them with assiduous care, but she never spoke of the scene in the village ; and though she strove to look the same, Henry never addressed her but she grew pale, and her voice trembled. She could not divine her absent lover's thoughts, but she knew that he believed her married to another ; and that other, earnestly though she strove to rule her feelings, became an object of abhorrence to her.

Three weeks they passed in this wretched abode ; three weeks replete with alarm, for the district around was in arms, and the life of Monsieur de Marville loudly threatened. They never slept but they dreaded the approach of the murderers ; food they had little, and the inclement season visited them roughly. Fanny seemed to feel no inconvenience ; her voice was cheerful : to console, encourage, and assist her friends appeared to occupy her whole heart. At length one night they were roused by a violent knocking at the door of their hut : Monsieur de Marville and Henry were on their feet in a moment, seizing their weapons as they rose. It was a domestic of their own, come to communicate the intelligence that the troubles were over, that the legal government had reasserted its authority, and invited the governor to return to Berne.

They descended from their mountain refuge, and the name of Louis hovered on Fanny's lips, but she spoke it not. He seemed everywhere forgotten. It was not until some time afterwards that she ascertained the fact

that he had never been seen or heard of since he had parted from her on the morning of their escape. The villagers had waited for him in vain; they suspended their designs, for they all depended upon him; but he came not.

Monsieur and Madame de Marville returned to their chateau with their son, but Fanny remained behind. She would not inhabit the same roof as Henry; she recoiled even from receiving further benefits from his parents. What could she do? Louis would doubtless discover the falsehood of her marriage, but he dared not return; and even if he communicated with her, even though yet she loved him, could she unite herself with one accused too truly of the most frightful crimes? At first, these doubts agitated her, but by degrees they faded as oblivion closed over Chaumont's name; and he came not, and she heard not of him, and he was as dead to her. Then the memory of the past revived in her heart; her love awoke with her despair; his mysterious flight became the sole occupation of her thoughts; time rolled on and brought its changes. Madame de Marville died—Henry was united to another—Fanny remained, to her own thoughts, alone in the world. A relation, who lived at Subiaco, sent for her, and there she went to take up her abode. In vain she strove to wean herself from the memory of Louis—her love for him haunted her soul.

There was war in Europe, and every man was converted into a soldier; the country was thinned of its inhabitants, and each victory or defeat brought a new conscription. At length peace came again, and its return was celebrated with rejoicing. Many a soldier returned to his home—and one came back who had no home. A man, evidently suffering from recent wounds, wayworn and sick, asked for hospitality at Fanny's cottage; it was readily afforded, and he sat at her cottage fire, and removed his cap from:

his brow. His person was bent, his cheeks fallen in ; yet those eyes of fire, that quick animated look, which almost brought the bright expression of youth back into his face, could never be forgotten. Fanny gazed almost in alarm, and then in joy, and at last, in her own sweet voice, she said, "Et toi, Louis—tu aussi es de retour."

Louis had endured many a sorrow and many a hardship, and, most of all, he had been called on to wage battle with his own fierce spirit. The rage and hate which he had sedulously nourished suddenly became his tormentors and his tyrants—at the moment that love, before too closely allied to them, emancipated itself from their control. Love, which is the source of all that is most generous and noble in our nature, of self-devotion and of high intent, separated from the alloy he had blended with it, asserted its undivided power over him ; strange that it should be so at the moment that he believed that he had lost her he loved for ever !

All his plans had been built for revenge. He would destroy the family that oppressed him ; unbuild, stone by stone, the proud abode of their inheritance ; he would be the sole refuge and support of his mistress in exile and in poverty. He had entered upon his criminal career with this design alone, and with the anticipation of ending all by heaping benefits and the gifts of fortune upon Fanny. The very steps he had taken, he now believed to be those that occasioned his defeat. He had lost her—the lovely and the good—he had lost her by proving unworthy, yet not so unworthy was he as to make her the victim of his crimes. The family he had vowed to ruin was now hers, and every injury that befell them visited her ; to save her he must unweave his pernicious webs ; to keep her scatheless, his dearest designs must fall to the ground.

A veil seemed rent before his eyes ; he had fled, for

he would not assist in the destruction of her fortunes; he had not returned, for it was torture to him to know that she lived, the wife of another. He entered the French army, but in every change his altered feelings pursued him, and to prove himself worthy of her he had lost was the constant aim of his ambition. His excellent conduct led to his promotion, and yet mishap still waited on him. He was wounded, even dangerously, and became so incapable of service as to be forced to solicit his dismissal. This had occurred at the end of a hard campaign in Germany, and his intention was to pass into Italy, where a friend, with whom he had formed an intimacy in the army, promised to procure him some employment under Government. He passed through Subiaco in his way, and, ignorant of its occupiers, had asked for hospitality in his mistress's cottage.

If guilt can be expiated by repentance and reform, as is the best lesson of religion, Louis had expiated his. If constancy in love deserve reward, these lovers deserved that, which they reaped, in the happiness consequent on their union. Her image, side by side with all that is good in our nature, had dwelt in his heart, which thus became a shrine at which he sacrificed every evil passion. It was a greater bliss than he had ever dared to anticipate, to find, that in so doing, he had at the same time been conducing to the welfare of her he loved, and that the lost and idolized being whom he worshipped founded the happiness of her life upon his return to virtue, and the constancy of his affection.