

## THE WANDERING JEW.

BY HENRIE SUE.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

THE GO-BETWEENS.

A few days have elapsed since the conflagration of M. Hardy's factory. The following scene takes place in the Rue Clovis, in the house where Rodin had lodged, and which was still inhabited by Rose-Pompon, who, without the least scruple, availed herself of the household arrangements of her friend Philemon. It was about noon, and Rose-Pompon, alone in the chamber of the student, who was still absent, was breakfasting very gaily by the fireside; but how singular a breakfast! what a queer fire! how strange an apartment!

Imagine a large room, lighted by two windows without curtains—for as they looked on empty space, the lodger had no fear of being overlooked. One side of this apartment served as a wardrobe, for there was suspended Rose-Pompon's flashy costume of debardeur, not far from the boatman's jacket of Philemon, with his large trousers of coarse, grey stuff, covered with pitch (shiver my timbers!), just as if this intrepid mariner had bunked in the fore-castle of a frigate, during a voyage round the globe. A gown of Rose-Pompon's hung gracefully over a pair of pantaloons, the legs of which seemed to come from beneath the petticoat. On the lowest of several bookshelves, very dusty and neglected, by the side of three old boots (wherefore three boots?) and a number of empty bottles, stood a skull, a scientific and friendly souvenir, left to Philemon by one of his comrades, a medical student. With a species of pleasantry, very much to the taste of the student-world, a clay pipe with a very black bowl was placed between the magnificently white teeth of this skull; moreover, its shining top was half hidden beneath an old hat, set knowingly on one side, and adorned with faded flowers and ribbons. When Philemon was drunk, he used to contemplate this bony emblem of mortality, and break out into the most poetical monologues, with regard to this philosophical contrast between death and the mad pleasures of life. Two or three plaster casts, with their noses and chins more or less injured, were fastened to the wall, and bore witness to the temporary curiosity which Philemon had felt with regard to phrenological science, from the patient and serious study of which he had drawn the following logical conclusion: That, having to an alarming extent the bump of getting into debt, he ought to resign himself to the fatality of his organization, and accept the inconvenience of creditors as a vital necessity. On the chimney-piece stood uninjured, in all its majesty, the magnificent rowing club drinking-glass, a china tea-pot without a spout, and an ink-stand of black wood, the glass mouth of which was covered by a coat of greenish and mossy mold. From time to time, the silence of this retreat was interrupted by the cooing of pigeons, which Rose-Pompon had established with cordial hospitality in the little study. Chilly as a quail, Rose-Pompon crept close to the fire, and at the same time seemed to enjoy the warmth of a bright ray of sunshine, which enveloped her in its golden light. This droll little creature was dressed in the oddest costume, which, however, displayed to advantage the freshness of her piquant and pretty countenance, crowned with its fine, fair hair, always neatly combed and arranged the first thing in the morning. By way of dressing-gown, Rose-Pompon had ingeniously drawn over her linen, the ample scarlet flannel skirt which belonged to Philemon's official garb in the rowing-club; the collar, open and turned down, displayed the whiteness of the young girl's under garment, as also of her neck and shoulders, on whose firm and polished surface the scarlet shirt seemed to cast a rosy light. The grissette's fresh and dimpled arms half protruded from the large, turned-up sleeves; and her legs were half visible, crossed one over the other, and clothed in neat white stockings and boots. A black silk cravat formed the girdle which fastened the shirt round the wasp-like waist of Rose-Pompon, just above those hips, worthy of the enthusiasm of a modern Phidias, and which gave to this style of dress a grace very original.

We have said, that the breakfast of Rose-Pompon was singular. You shall judge. On a little table placed before her, was a wash-hand-basin into which she had recently plunged her fresh face, bathing it in pure water. From the bottom of this basin, now transformed into a salad-bowl, Rose-Pompon took with the tips of her fingers large green leaves, dripping with vinegar, and crunched them between her tiny white teeth, whose enamel was too hard to allow them to be set on edge. Her drink was a glass of water and syrup of gooseberries, which she stirred with a wooden mustard-spoon. Finally, as an extra dish, she had a dozen olives in one of those blue

glass trinket-dishes sold for twenty-five sous. Her de sert was composed of nuts, which she prepared to roast on a red hot shovel. That Rose-Pompon, with such an unaccountable savage choice of food, should retain a freshness of complexion worthy of her name, is one of those miracles, which reveal the mighty power of youth and health. When she had eaten her salad, Rose-Pompon was about to begin upon her olives when a low knock was heard at the door, which was modestly bolted on the inside.

"Who is there?" said Rose-Pompon.  
"A friend—the oldest of the old," replied a sonorous, jovial voice. "Why do you lock yourself in?"

"What! is it you, Ninny Moulin?"  
"Yes, my beloved pupil. Open quickly. Time presses."

"Open to you? Oh, I dare say!—that would be pretty, the figure I am!"

"I believe you! what does it matter what figure you are? It would be very pretty, thou rosiest of all the roses with which Cupid ever adorned his quiver!"

"Give me time to put on my gown, great plague that you are!" said Rose-Pompon, opening the door as she finished fastening her dress.  
"So! you have at last returned to the dove-cot, you stray bird?" said Ninny Moulin, folding his arms and looking at Rose-Pompon with comic seriousness. "And where may you have been, I pray? For three days the naughty little bird has left its nest."

"True I only returned home last night. You must have called during my absence?"

"I came every day, and even twice a day, young lady, for I have very serious matters to communicate."

"Very serious matters? Then we shall have a good laugh at them."

"Not at all—they are really serious," said Ninny Moulin, seating himself. "But, first of all, what did you do during the three days that you left your conjugal and Philemonic home? I must know all about it, before I tell you more."

"Will you have some olives?" said Rose-Pompon, as she nibbled one of them herself.

"Is that your answer? I understand! Unfortunate Philemon!"

"There is no unfortunate Philemon in the case, slanderer. Clara had a death in her house, and, for the first few days after the funeral she was afraid to sleep alone, and I was obliged to go and keep the poor girl company."

At this assertion, the religious pamphleteer hummed a tune, with an incredulous and mocking air.

"You think I have played Philemon tricks?" cried Rose-Pompon, cracking a nut with the indignation of injured innocence.

"I do not say tricks; but one little rose-colored trick."

"I tell you, that it was not for my pleasure I went out. On the contrary—for, during my absence, poor Cephyse disappeared."

"Yes, Mother Arsene told me that the Bacchanal-Queen was gone on a journey. But when I talk of Philemon, you talk of Cephyse; we don't progress."

"May I be eaten by the black panther that they are showing at the Porte-Saint-Martin if I do not tell you the truth. And, talking of that, you must get tickets to take me to see those animals, my little Ninny Moulin! They tell me there never were such darling wild beasts."

"Now really, are you mad?"

"Why so?"

"That I should guide your youth, like a venerable patriarch, through the dangers of the 'Storm-blown Tulip,' all well and good—I ran no risk of meeting my pastors and masters; but were I to take you to a Lent-Spectacle (since there are only beasts to be seen), I might just run against my saceristans—and how pretty I should look with you on my arm!"

"You can put on a false nose, and straps to your trousers, my big Ninny; they will never know you."

"We must not think of false noses, but of what I have to tell you, since you assure me that you have no intrigue in hand."

"I swear it!" said Rose-Pompon, solemnly, extending her left hand horizontally, whilst with her right she put a nut into her mouth. Then she added, with surprise, as she looked at the outside coat of Ninny Moulin, "Goodness gracious what full pockets you have got! What is there in them?"

"Something that concerns you," said Dumoulin, gravely.

"Me?"

"Rose-Pompon?" said Ninny Moulin, suddenly with a majestic air; "will you have a carriage? Will you inhabit a charming apartment, instead of living in this dreadful hole? Will you be dressed like a duchess?"

"Now for some more nonsense! Come, will you eat the olives? If not, I shall eat them all up. There is only one left."

Without answering this gastronomic offer, Ninny Moulin felt in one of his pockets, and drew from it a case containing a very pretty bracelet, which he held up sparkling before the eyes of the young girl.

"Oh! what a sumptuous bracelet!" cried she, clapping her hands. "A green-eyed serpent biting his tail—the emblem of my love for Philemon."

"Do not talk of Philemon; it annoys me," said Ninny Moulin, as he clasped the bracelet round the wrist of Rose-Pompon, who allowed him to do it, laughing all the while like mad, and saying to him, "so you've been employed to make a purchase, big apostle, and you wish to see the effect of it. Well! it is charming!"

"Rose-Pompon," resumed Ninny Moulin, "would you like to have a servant, a box at the Opera, and a thousand francs a month for your pin money?"

"Always the same nonsense. Get along!" said the young girl, as she held up the bracelet to the light, still continuing to eat her nuts. "Why always the same farce and no change of bills?"

Ninny Moulin again plunged his hand into his pocket, and this time drew forth an elegant chain which he hung round Rose-Pompon's neck.

"Oh! what a beautiful chain!" cried the young girl, as she looked by turns at the sparkling ornament and the religious writer. "If you chose that also, you have a very good taste. But am I not a good-natured girl to be your dummy, just to show off your jewels?"

"Rose-Pompon," returned Ninny Moulin, with a still more majestic air, "these trifles are nothing to what you may obtain, if you will but follow the advice of your old friend."

Rose began to look at Dumoulin with surprise, and said to him, "what does all this mean, Ninny Moulin? Explain yourself; what advice have you to give?"

Dumoulin did not answer, but replunging his hand into his inexhaustible pocket, he fished up a parcel, which he carefully unfolded, and in which was a magnificent mantilla of black lace. Rose-Pompon started up, full of new admiration, and Dumoulin threw the rich mantilla over the young girl's shoulders.

"It is superb! I have never seen anything like it! What patterns! what work!" said Rose-Pompon, as she examined all with simple and perfectly disinterested curiosity. Then she added, "your pocket is like a shop; where did you get all these pretty things?" Then, bursting into a fit of laughter, which brought the blood to her cheeks, she exclaimed, "Oh, I have it! These are the wedding-presents for Madame de la Sainte-Colombe I congratulate you; they are very choice."

"And where do you suppose I should find money to buy these wonders?" said Ninny Moulin. "I repeat to you, all this is yours if you will but listen to me!"

"How is this?" said Rose-Pompon, with the utmost amazement; "is what you tell me in downright earnest?"

"In down right earnest!"

"This offer to make me a great lady?"

"The jewels might convince you of the reality of my offer."

"And you propose all this to me for some one else, my poor Ninny Moulin?"

"One moment," said the religious writer, with a comical air of modesty, "you must know me well enough, my beloved pupil, to feel certain that I should be incapable of inducing you to commit an improper action. I respect myself too much for that—leaving out the consideration that it would be unfair to Philemon, who confided to me the guardianship of your virtue."

"Then, Ninny Moulin," said Rose-Pompon, more and more astonished, "on my word of honor, I can make nothing of it."

"Yet, 'tis all very simple, and I—"

"Oh! I've found it," cried Rose-Pompon, interrupting Ninny Moulin; "it is some gentleman who offers me his hand, his heart, and all the rest of it. Could you not tell me that directly?"

"A marriage? oh, laws, yes!" said Dumoulin, shrugging his shoulders.

"What! is it not a marriage?" said Rose-Pompon, again much surprised.

"No."

"And the offers you make me are honest ones, my big apostle?"

"They could not be more so." Here Dumoulin spoke the truth.

"I shall not have to be unfaithful to Philemon?"

"No."

"Or faithful to any one else?"

"No."

Rose-Pompon looked confounded. Then she rattled on: "Come, do not let us have any joking! I am not foolish enough to imagine that I am to live just like a duchess, just for nothing. What, therefore, must I give in return?"

"Nothing at all."

"Nothing?"

"Not even that," said Ninny Moulin, biting his nail-tip.

"But what am I to do, then?"

"Dress yourself as handsomely as possible, take your ease, amuse yourself; ride about in a carriage. You see, it is not very fatiguing—and you will, moreover, help to do a good action."

"What! by living like a duchess?"

"Yes! so make up your mind. Do not ask me for any more details, for I cannot give them to you. For the rest, you will not be detained against your will. Just try the life I propose to you. If it suits you, go on with it; if not, return to your Philemonic household."

"In fact—"

"Only try it. What can you risk?"

"Nothing; but I can hardly believe that all you say is true. And then," added she, with hesitation, "I do not know if I ought—"

Ninny Moulin went to the window, opened it, and said to Rose-Pompon, who ran up to it, "Look there! before the door of the house."

"What a pretty carriage! How comfortable a body'd be inside of it!"

"That carriage is yours. It is waiting for you."

"Waiting for me!" exclaimed Rose-Pompon; "am I to decide as short as that?"

"Or not at all."

"Today?"

"On the instant."

"But where will they take me?"

"How should I know?"

"You do not know where they will take me?"

"Not I"—and Dumoulin spoke the truth—"the coachman has his orders."

"Do you know all this is very funny, Ninny Moulin?"

"I believe you. If it were not funny, where would be the pleasure?"

"You are right."

"Then you accept the offer? That is well. I am delighted both for you and myself."

"For yourself?"

"Yes; because, in accepting, you render me a great service."

"You? How so?"

"It matters little, so long as I feel obliged to you."

"True."

"Come, then; let us set out!"

"Bah! after all, they cannot eat me," said Rose-Pompon, resolutely.

With a skip and a jump, she went to fetch a rose-colored cap, and, going up to a broken looking-glass, placed the cap very much cocked on one side on her bands of light hair. This left uncovered her snowy neck, with the silky roots of the hair behind, and gave to her pretty face a very mischievous, not to say licentious expression.

"My cloak!" said she to Ninny Moulin, who seemed to be relieved from a considerable amount of uneasiness, since she had accepted his offer.

"Fie! a cloak will not do," answered her companion, feeling once more in his pocket, and drawing out a fine cashmere shawl, which he threw over Rose-Pompon's shoulders.

"A cashmere!" cried the young girl trembling with pleasure and joyous surprise. Then she added with an air of heroism: "It is settled! I will run the gauntlet." And with a light step she descended the stairs, followed by Ninny Moulin.

The worthy greengrocer was at her post. "Good morning, mademoiselle; you are early today," said she to the young girl.

"Yes, Mother Arsene; there is my key."

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

"Oh! now I think of it," said Rose-Pompon, suddenly, in a whisper, as she turned towards Ninny Moulin, and withdrew further from the portress, "what is to become of Philemon?"

"Philemon?"

"If he should arrive—"

"Oh! the devil!" said Ninny Moulin, scratching his ear.

"Yes; if Philemon should arrive, what will they say to him? for I may be a long time absent."

"Three or four months, I suppose."

"Not more?"

"I should think not."

"Oh! very good!" said Rose-Pompon. Then turning towards the greengrocer, she said to her, after a moment's reflection: "Mother Arsene, if Philemon should come home, you will tell him I have gone out—on business."

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"And that he must not forget to feed my pigeons, which are in his study."

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"Good-bye, Mother Arsene."

"Good-bye, mademoiselle." And Rose-Pompon entered the carriage in triumph, along with Ninny Moulin.

"The devil take me if I know what is to come of all this," said Jacques Dumoulin to himself, as the carriage drove rapidly down the Rue Clovis. "I have repaired my error—and now I laugh at the rest."

To be Continued.