

THE MISER'S DAUGHTER

By HONRE DE BALZAC

CHAPTER I.

In some towns there are houses more depressing to the sight than the dimmest cloister, the most melancholy ruins or the dreariest stretch of sandy waste. Perhaps such houses as these combine the characteristics of all the three, and to the dumb silence of the monastery they unite the gauntness of the ruin and the arid desolation of the waste. There is one particular house front in Saumur which possesses all these melancholy characteristics, standing at the end of a steep street. It was a venerable relic of a bygone age, built for the men and women of an older and simpler world, from which our modern France is farther and farther removed day by day. In a gloomy recess a doorway is dimly visible, the door of M. Grandet's house.

M. Grandet enjoyed a certain reputation in Saumur. There were still old people in existence who could remember former times and called M. Grandet "Goodman Grandet," but there were not many of them left, and they were rapidly disappearing year by year. In 1780 Grandet was a master cooper, in a very good way of business, who could read and write and cast accounts. When the French Republic confiscated lands in the district and proceeded to sell them by auction, the cooper was forty years of age, and had just married the daughter of a wealthy timber-merchant. As Grandet possessed at that moment his wife's dowry as well as some considerable amount of ready money of his own, he acquired some of the best vineyard in the neighborhood, an old abbey and a few little farms, for an old song. In the days of the Consulate he became Mayor, did prudently in his public capacity and did very well for himself. Times changed, the empire was established and he became Monsieur Grandet. He had a fair claim to the Cross of the Legion of Honor and he received it in 1806.

By this time M. Grandet was fifty-seven years old, and his wife about thirty-six. The one child of the marriage was a daughter, a little girl ten years of age. In this year he succeeded to three fortunes. Mme. Grandet's mother and her father soon followed her; the third in order was M. Grandet's grandmother on the mother's side. M. Grandet received a new distinction—he paid more taxes than any one else in the country around. He now cultivated a hundred acres of vineyard. In a good year they would yield seven or eight hundred puncheons. He had thirteen little farms, an old abbey and a hundred and twenty-seven acres of grazing land, in which three thousand poplars, planted in 1793, were growing taller and larger every year. Finally he owned the house in which he lived.

In these visible ways his prosperity had increased. As to his capital, there were only two people in a position to make a guess at its probable amount. One of these was the notary, M. Cruchot, who transacted all the necessary business whenever M. Grandet made an investment, and the other was M. des Grassins, the wealthiest banker in the town, who did Grandet many good offices which were unknown to Saumur. There was no one in Saumur who did not fully believe the report which told how, in a secret hiding place, M. Grandet had a hoard of louis, and how every night he went to look at it and gave himself up to the inexpressible delight of gazing at the huge heap of gold.

In matters financial M. Grandet might be described as combining the characteristics of the Bengal tiger and the bou-troustricr. He could lie low and wait, trouncing, watching for his prey, and make his spring unerringly at last; then the jaws of his purse would unclose, a torrent of coin would be swallowed down, and, as in the case of the gorged reptile, there would be a period of inaction. Like the serpent, moreover, he was cold, apathetic, methodical, keeping to his own mysterious times and seasons.

M. Grandet never bought either meat or bread. Part of his rents were paid in kind, and every week his tenants brought in poultry, eggs, butter and wheat sufficient for the needs of his household. Moreover, he owned a mill, and the miller, besides paying rent, came over to fetch a certain quantity of corn and brought him back both the bran and the flour. Big Nanon, the one maid-servant, baked all the bread once a week. Others of the tenants were market gardeners, and M. Grandet had arranged that these were to keep him supplied with fresh vegetables. Of fruit there was no lack. Indeed, he sold a good deal of it in the market. Firewood was gathered from his own hedges or taken from old stumps of trees that grew by the sides of his fields. His tenants chopped up the wood, carted it into the town and obligingly stacked his fagots for him, receiving in return—his thanks. So he seldom had occasion to spend money. His only known items of expenditure were for sittings in the church for his wife and daughter, their dress, Nanon's wages, renewals of the linings of Nanon's saucians, repairs about the house, candles, rates and taxes, and the necessary outlays of money for improvements. He had recently acquired six hundred acres of woodland, and had induced a keeper belonging to a neighbor to attend to it, promising to repay the man for his trouble. After this purchase had been made, fame appeared on the Grandets' table.

Grandet's manners were distinctly homely. He did not say very much. He expressed his ideas as a rule in brief, sententious phrases, uttered in a low voice. He had other peculiarities. He habitually drowned his ideas in a flood of words more or less incoherent; his singular inaptitude for reasoning logical-

ly was usually set down to a defective education; but this, like his unwelcome fluency, the trick of stammering and various other mannerisms, was assumed, and for reasons which, in the course of the story, will be made sufficiently clear.

He never paid visits, never dined away from home, nor asked any one to dinner. His movements were almost noiseless. He seemed to carry out his principles of economy in everything—to make no useless sound, to be chary of spending even physical energy. His respect for the rights of ownership was so habitual that he never displaced nor disturbed anything belonging to another. And yet in spite of the low tones of his voice, in spite of his discretion and cautious bearing, the cooper's real character showed itself in his language and manners, and this was more especially the case in his own house, where he was less on his guard than elsewhere.

As to Grandet's exterior, he was a broad, square-shouldered, thick-set man, about five feet high. He had a bullet-shaped head a sun-burned face, scarred with the smallpox, and a narrow chin. He possessed a set of white teeth, eyes with an expression of stony avidity in them, a deeply furrowed brow on which there were prominences not lacking in significance, hair fast turning gray. On his nose, which was broad and blunt at the tip, was a variegated wen; gossip affirmed, not without some appearance of truth, that spite and rancor was the cause of this affection. There was a dangerous cunning about this face, although the man, indeed, was honest according to the letter of the law; it was a selfish face; there were but two things in the world for which its owner cared—the delights of hoarding wealth, in the first place, and, in the second, the only being who counted for anything in his estimation—his daughter Eugenie, his only child.

A few townspeople, six in all, had the right of entry to Grandet's house and society. First among these in order of importance was M. Cruchot's nephew. Ever since his appointment as president of the court of first instance, this young man had added the appellation "de Bonfons" to his original name; in time he hoped that the Bonfons would efface the Cruchot, and was at no little pains to compass this end. Already he styles himself C. de Bonfons. The magistrate was about 23 years of age, and the owner of the estate of Bonfons. In addition to this he had prospects; he would succeed some day to the property of his uncle the notary, and there was yet another uncle besides, the Abbe Cruchot of Tours; both relatives were commonly reported to be men of substance. The three Cruchots, with a goodly number of kinsfolk, connected, too, by marriage with a score of other houses, formed a sort of party in the town, but they had their rivals.

Mme. des Grassins, the mother of a son 23 years of age, came assiduously to take a hand at cards with Mme. Grandet, hoping to marry her own dear Adolphe to Mademoiselle Eugenie. She had a powerful ally in her husband the banker, who had secretly rendered the old miser many a service. The three des Grassins had likewise their host of adherents, their cousins and trusty auxiliaries.

The Abbe, well supported by his brother the notary, closely disputed the ground with the banker's wife; they meant to carry off the wealthy heiress for their nephew the president. The struggle between the two parties for the prize of the hand of Eugenie Grandet was an open secret; all Saumur watched it with the keenest interest. Some solved the problem by saying that M. Grandet would give his daughter to neither. The old cooper, said they, was consumed with an ambition to have a peer of France for a son-in-law, and he was on the lookout for one who, for the consideration of an income of three hundred thousand livres, would find all the past, present and future barrels of the Grandets no obstacle to a match.

Those whose memories went farther back said that the Grandets were too prudent to let all that property go out of the family. Mlle. Eugenie Grandet, of Saumur, would be married one of these days to the son of the other M. Grandet, of Paris, a rich wholesale wine merchant. To these both Cruchots and Grassinists were wont to reply as follows:

"In the first place, the brothers have not met twice in thirty years. Then M. Grandet, of Paris, is ambitious for that son of his. He himself is Mayor of his division, a deputy, a colonel of the National Guard, and a judge of the Tribunal of Commerce. He does not own any relationship with the Grandets of Saumur, and is seeking to connect himself with one of Napoleon's dukes."

In the beginning of the year 1811 the Cruchots gained a signal victory over the Grassinists. The young Marquis de Frofond being compelled to realize his capital, the estate of Frofond, celebrated for its park and its handsome chateau, was for sale; together with its dependent farms, rivers, fish ponds and forests; altogether it was worth three million francs. M. Cruchot, President Cruchot, and the Abbe Cruchot, by uniting their forces, had managed to prevent a proposed division into small lots. The notary made an uncommonly good bargain for his client, representing to the young marquis that the purchase money of the small lots could only be collected after endless trouble and expense, and that he would have to sue a large proportion of the purchasers for it; while here was M. Grandet, a man whose credit stood high, and who was, more-

over, ready to pay for the land at once in hard coin. In this way the fair marquisite of Frofond was swallowed down by M. Grandet, who, to the amazement of Saumur, paid for it in ready money. The news of this transaction traveled far and wide; it reached Orleans, it was spoken of at Nantes.

CHAPTER II.

It was in the middle of November, in the year 1819, twilight was coming on and big Nanon was lighting a fire in the parlor for the first time. It was a festival day in the calendar of the Cruchots and Grassinists, wherefore the six antagonists were preparing to set forth for a contest in which each side meant to outdo the other in proofs of friendship. The Grandets' parlor was to be the scene of action. That morning Mme. and Mlle. Grandet, duly attended by Nanon, had repaired to the parish church. All Saumur had seen them go, and every one had been put in mind of the fact that it was Eugenie's birthday. Mr. Cruchot, the Abbe Cruchot, and M. C. de Bonfons, therefore, having calculated the hour when dinner would be over, were eager to be first in the field, and to arrive before the Grassinists to congratulate Mlle. Grandet. All three carried huge bunches of flowers gathered in their little garden plots, but the stalks of the magistrate's bouquet were ingeniously bound round by a white satin ribbon with a tinsel fringe at the ends.

In the morning M. Grandet had gone to Eugenie's room before she had left her bed, and had solemnly presented her with a rare gold coin. It was her father's wont to surprise her in this way twice every year. Mme. Grandet usually gave her daughter a winter and a summer dress, according to circumstances. The two dresses and two gold coins, which she received on her father's birthday and on New Year's Day, altogether amounted to an annual income of nearly a hundred crowns; Grandet loved to watch the money accumulating in her hands. He did not part with his money; he felt that it was only like taking it out of one box and putting it into another.

Eugenie wore her new dress at dinner, and looked prettier than usual in it; her father was in high good humor.

"Let us have a fire," he cried, "as it is Eugenie's birthday! It will be a good omen!"

"Mademoiselle will be married within the year, that's certain," said big Nanon, as she removed the remains of a goose.

"There is no one that I know of in Saumur who would do for Eugenie," said Mme. Grandet, with a timid glance at her husband, a glance that revealed how completely her husband's tyranny had broken the poor woman's spirit.

Grandet looked at his daughter, and said merrily, "We must really begin to think about her; the little girl is 23 years old to-day."

Neither Eugenie nor her mother said a word, but they exchanged glances; they understood each other. After the dinner, when the question of Eugenie's marriage had been raised for the first time, Nanon went up to M. Grandet's room to fetch a bottle of black currant cordial, and very nearly lost her footing on the staircase as she came down.

"Great stupid! Are you going to take to tumbling about?" inquired her master.

"It's all along of the step, sir; it gave way. The staircase isn't safe."

"She is quite right," said Mme. Grandet. "You ought to have had it mended long ago. Eugenie all but sprained her foot on it yesterday."

"Here," said Grandet, who saw that Nanon looked very pale, "as to-day is Eugenie's birthday, and you have nearly fallen downstairs, take a drop of black currant cordial; that will put you right again."

"I deserve it, too, upon my word," said Nanon. "Many a one would have broken the bottle in my place; I should have broken by elbow first, holding it up to save it."

"Poor Nanon!" muttered Grandet, pouring out the black currant cordial for her.

"Did you hurt yourself?" asked Eugenie, looking at her in concern.

"No, I managed to break the fall; I came down on my side."

"Well," said Grandet, "as to-day is Eugenie's birthday I will mend your step for you. Somehow, you women folk cannot manage to put your foot down in the corner, where it is still solid and safe."

Grandet took up the candle, left the three women without any other illumination in the room than the bright dancing firelight, and went to the bakehouse, where tools, nails and odd pieces of wood were kept.

"Do you want any help?" Nanon called to him, when the first blow sounded on the staircase.

"No, no! I am an old hand at it," answered the cooper.

At this very moment, while Grandet was doing the repairs himself to his worn-out staircase, and whistling with all his might as memories of his young days came up in his mind, the three Cruchots knocked at the house door.

"Oh, it's you, is it, M. Cruchot?" asked Nanon, as she took a look through the small square grating, opening the door, and the glow of the firelight shone on the three Cruchots, who were groping in the archedway. "Oh! you have come to help us keep her birthday," Nanon said, as the scent of flowers reached her.

"Excuse me a moment, gentlemen," cried Grandet, who recognized the voices of his acquaintances; "I am your very humble servant! There is no pride about me; I am patching up a broken stair here myself."

"Go on, go on, M. Grandet! The charcoal burner is mayor in his own house," said the magistrate sententiously. Nobody saw the allusion, and he had his laugh all to himself. Mme. and Mlle. Grandet rose to greet them. The magistrate took advantage of the darkness to speak to Eugenie.

(To be continued.)

Women's Doings.

Should Wives Be Breadwinners?

Some weeks ago the newspapers discussed somewhat profusely the question whether a Chicago bank clerk ought to marry on less than \$1,000 a year. It was not difficult to see that the main question was how much work the bank clerk's bride would be willing to do, or be capable of doing. A kindred question has been discussed more recently by Prof. Simon N. Patten, of the University of Pennsylvania, who argues that the social problem of thousands of married couples would be solved were the wife to continue a wage-earner during the early period of marriage. When two young people who are earning \$10 or \$12 a week apiece marry, Dr. Patten would have both of them continue to be wage-earners until the husband's income increases to \$20 a week. Then, he thinks, it is better that the wife should give herself up to the home, and that both should live on the husband's income. It is desirable, thinks Dr. Patten, that persons of small wage-earning capacity should be married, provided both continue wage-earners. Dr. Giddings, of Columbia University, seems to have kindred leanings, for though he feels it to be desirable that after marriage the wife be relieved as far as possible from a money-earning occupation and have plenty of time to maintain the home, he points out that the middle-class Frenchman's wife is usually a shopkeeper or manages a restaurant, and that there is no better family life anywhere than in the middle classes of France. In this country he finds that the wife of a foreigner is nearly always a breadwinner, but that American women have no tendency to become wage-earners independent of their husbands.

The American prejudice against wage-earning by married women appears in the effort occasionally made to make the employment of teachers in the public schools terminate with marriage. But thousands of American married women do earn wages, thousands more would gladly do so if they could, and other thousands would be happier and better off if they did. The prejudice against it seems disadvantageous. American men, as a rule, prefer to support their wives if they can. If an American married woman works for pay, it is either because it gives her pleasure or because her husband's income is insufficient. She does not do it as a matter of course. How long she can keep it up depends upon what the work is, and upon other circumstances. If she has children, that, of course, interferes with her wage-earning, if it does not stop it altogether, and general acceptance of a custom which would restrict or discourage child bearing is not to the public advantage. Marriage tends, and should tend, to withdraw women from wage-earning, but it need not stop it per se and abruptly. To make marriage a bar to future wage-earning by a woman operates in restriction of marriage, and that is at least as much against public policy as restriction of child bearing.—Harper's Weekly.

Cheerful Mothers.

There are many conscientious fathers and mothers who make their children miserable by taking youthful follies too seriously. It is an innate propensity of a child possessed of average good health and spirits to make older people laugh with him; not at him, but at the things that seem amusing to his own sense. And the mother who has the blithe and ready humor to enter into his fun becomes the most fascinating companion.

He heads her rebukes and bends to her correction without ill feeling, while sternness would arouse his pride and ire, for he is assured that she is ready to share all his innocent pranks, and that her disapproval has no foundation in impatience or injustice.

And when the day arrives that "childish things are put away," and the grown men and women look backward to their early home, with what a throb of pleasure they say, when things happen; "Mother would appreciate this; she had the quickest sense of humor of any woman you ever saw!" And underneath these light words is the thought, "How happy that dear mother made me, and how I love her!"—Minneapolis Tribune.

Woman and Literature.

There is at least a difference of opinion in regard to the alleged distaste of women for severe and systematic reading. One critic in the National Review asserts that neither for pleasure nor on principle do they study books which would cultivate their minds and give them broad and stable views of life. Another makes the comforting statement that the good, or, as they are called, the "solid," books taken by women from the English circulating libraries are in the proportion of two to five—a very creditable average. M. Ernest Quentin Bauchart has shown

us, in "Les Femmes Bibliophiles," that many rare and beautiful volumes were for two centuries collected and treasured by French ladies, from Margaret of Valois to Marie Antoinette. How far the pleasures of a collector merge into the pleasures of a student is always a delicate point to decide, but Mr. Andrew Lang is of the opinion that some of these ladies loved their libraries even to the reading point. "Books and art," he says, with happy tolerance, "were probably more to Mme. de Pompadour's liking than the diversions by which she beguiled the tedium of Louis XV.; and many a time she would rather have been quiet with her plays and novels than engaged in conscientiously conducted but distasteful revels." La Duchesse de Montpensier—"La Grande Mademoiselle"—liked only serious and scholarly books. The frivolous ones, she used to say, wearied and plagued her. La Grande Mademoiselle was by no means the wisest of women; but the choice does credit to her taste for amusement. The romances of her age were a shade less diverting than mathematics.—Harper's Bazar.

Telling Troubles.

Is nobody, then, to confide a trouble to anyone else? And are we never to be sympathetic to those who are unhappy, gentle to unruly children, gracious to the awkward, kind to the uncouth? What folly to suppose so! A trouble that one never confides is a trouble that grows, says The Delineator. Get rid of it before it swamps you completely. Throw it overboard. Refuse to let it remain, undermining your nature or poisoning the very well-springs of your character. But when you wish to discuss it, discuss it only with those who are strong enough to help you. If instead of counsel you make what you call sympathy the object of your search, you will find that the desire for this sympathy grows by what it feeds upon. It is like an intemperance, and will end by destroying your moral system. Examine yourself, therefore, and see whether it be not true that instead of sympathy, you have really been searching after condolence. Sympathy is helpful. It is understanding. In it are included both knowledge and a power to comprehend and set straight in the path again. Condolence is another affair. It soothes, but it does not sustain. It may wet with tears and warm with caresses, seem very precious, very sweet, but courage is never quickened by it nor is hope reborn. Seek understanding, then, not condolence. Go to be helped in your trouble, not extolled in your martyrdom; go to be guided through your dilemma, not to be flattered for your patience; go to have your eyes opened, opened about yourself, not to have them blinded by what ill-judged affection, out of the fullness of a loving heart, may have to offer you in condolence. Seek the helpful friend as you would the wise doctor, not the quack.—Philadelphia Evening Bulletin.

The Trials of a Too-Tall Girl.

Her tragedy was ridiculous—that was the worst of it. Anyone recognizing it must laugh. Agatha herself laughed—fornorly, perhaps, and even with wet cheeks at times—but she never forgot its absurdity. If the fate that had forced the length of a young giant upon her had given her a giant's spirits as well, it would have been easier. But into her long frame had been thrust the heart of a little woman, all that was gay and caressing and dependent, that had been laughed back in vain since the days when they began to call her Jumbo and to admonish her that she was too big for "that." "That" was everything her instincts prompted. So poor Agatha learned to laugh and to go through life looking on—looking down, rather; for there were few men who did not wince and hastily find her a chair when they were left standing by her side. As a rule she was even quicker at finding the chair, than they were—poor Agatha, to whom "just as high as my heart" was the sweetest description of a sweetheart ever penned.—Juliet Wilbor Tompkins, in Lippincott's Magazine.

Fads for Smart Girls.

The smart girls of to-day have a new way of greeting you. It is quite in accord with their picturesque, charmingly feminine, quaint gowns. They never think of shaking hands with you in their own homes in the conventional old-time way. They greet you with both hands, and their manner of putting their little hands into yours assures you a hearty welcome.

The superstitious girl has a substitute for the lucky penny, and by the way, it's the eye of the peacock-feather which heretofore has been associated only with ill luck. In place of her lucky penny she carries a peacock's eye mounted in glass.—Woman's Home Companion.