

sudden, dreadful; doubtless it must leave a long and painful remembrance in the sufferer's soul; but it was soon to pass, as it were, into that chronic state of pain-durance, which had become almost an integral part of her life. And then this noble creature, so indulgent to fate, found still some consolations in the intensity of her bitter pain. She had been deeply touched by the marks of affection shown by Angela, Agricola's intended; and she had felt a species of pride of the heart, in perceiving with what blind confidence, with what ineffable joy, the smith accepted the favorable presentiments which seemed to consecrate his happiness. Mother Bunch also said to herself: "At least, henceforth I shall not be agitated by hopes, or rather by suppositions as ridiculous as they were senseless. Agricola's marriage puts a term to all the miserable reveries of my poor head."

Finally, she found a real and deep consolation in the certainty that she had been able to go through this terrible trial, and conceal from Agricola the love she felt for him. We know how formidable to this unfortunate being were those ideas of ridicule and shame, which she believed would attach to the discovery of her mad passion. After having remained for some time absorbed in thought, Mother Bunch rose, and advanced slowly towards the desk.

"My only recompense," said she, as she prepared the materials for writing, "will be to entrust the mute witness of my pains with this new grief. I shall at least have kept the promise that I made to myself. Believing, from the bottom of my soul, that this girl is able to make Agricola happy, I told him so with the utmost sincerity. One day, a long time hence, when I shall read over these pages, I shall perhaps find in that a compensation for all that I now suffer."

So saying, she drew the box from the pigeon-hole. Not finding her manuscript, she uttered a cry of surprise; but what was her alarm, when she perceived a letter to her address in the place of the journal! She became deadly pale; her knees trembled; she almost fainted away. But her increasing terror gave her a fictitious energy, and she had the strength to break the seal. A bank-note for five hundred francs fell from the letter on the table, and Mother Bunch read as follows:

"MADEMOISELLE.—There is something so original and amusing in reading in your memoirs the story of your love for Agricola, that it is impossible to resist the pleasure of acquainting him with the extent of it, of which he is doubtless ignorant, but to which he cannot fail to show himself sensible. Advantage will be taken to forward it to a multitude of other persons who might, perhaps, otherwise be unfortunately deprived of the amusing contents of your diary. Should copies and extracts not be sufficient, we will have it printed, as one cannot too much diffuse such things. Some will weep—others will laugh—what appears superb to one set of people, will seem ridiculous to another; such is life—but your journal will surely make a great sensation. "As you are capable of wishing to avoid your triumph, and as you were only covered with rags when you were received out of charity into this house, where you wish to figure as the great lady, which does not suit your shape for more reasons than one, we enclose in the present five hundred francs to pay for your day-book, and prevent your being without resources, in case you should be modest enough to shrink from the congratulations which await you, certain to overwhelm you by tomorrow, for, at this hour, your journal is already in circulation.

"One of your brethern,
"A REAL MOTHER BUNCH."

The vulgar, mocking and insolent tone of this letter, which was purposely written in the character of a jealous lackey, dissatisfied with the admission of the unfortunate creature into the house, had been calculated with infernal skill, and was sure to produce the effect intended.

"Oh, good heaven!" were the only words the unfortunate girl could pronounce, in her stupor and alarm.

Now, if we remember in what passionate terms she had expressed her love for her adopted brother, if we recall many passages of this manuscript, in which she revealed the painful wounds often inflicted on her by Agricola without knowing it, and if we consider how great was her terror of ridicule, we shall understand her mad despair on reading this infamous letter. Mother Bunch did not think for a moment of all the noble words and touching narratives contained in her journal. The one horrible idea which weighed down the troubled spirit of the unfortunate creature, was, that on the morrow Agricola, Mdlle. de Cardoville, and an insolent and mocking crowd, would be informed of this ridiculous love, which would, she imagined, crush her with shame and confusion. This new blow was so stunning, that the recipient staggered a moment beneath the unexpected shock. For

some minutes, she remained completely inert and helpless; then, upon reflection, she suddenly felt conscious of a terrible necessity.

This hospitable mansion, where she had found a sure refuge after so many misfortunes, must be left for ever. The trembling timidity and sensitive delicacy of the poor creature did not permit her to remain a minute more in this dwelling, where the most secret recesses of her soul had been laid open, profaned, and exposed no doubt to sarcasm and contempt. She did not think of demanding justice and revenge from Mdlle. de Cardoville. To cause a ferment of trouble and irritation in this house, at the moment of quitting it, would have appeared to her ingratitude towards her benefactress. She did not seek to discover the author or the motive of this odious robbery and insulting letter. Why should she, resolved, as she was, to fly from the humiliations with which she was threatened? She had a vague notion (as indeed was intended), that this infamy might be the work of some of the servants, jealous of the affectionate deference shown her by Mdlle. de Cardoville—and this thought filled her with despair. Those pages—so painfully confidential, which she would not have ventured to impart to the most tender and indulgent mother, because, written as it were with her heart's blood, they painted with too cruel a fidelity the thousand secret wounds of her soul—those pages were to serve, perhaps served even now, for the jest and laughing-stock of the lackeys of the mansion.

The money which accompanied this letter, and the insulting way in which it was offered, rather tended to confirm her suspicions. It was intended that the fear of misery should not be the obstacle of her leaving the house. The workgirl's resolution was soon taken, with that calm and firm resignation which was familiar to her. She rose, with somewhat bright and haggard eyes, but without a tear in them. Since the day before, she had wept too much. With a trembling, icy hand, she wrote on a paper, which she left by the side of the bank note: "May Mdlle. de Cardoville be blessed for all that she has done for me, and forgive me for having left her house, where I can remain no longer."

Having written this, Mother Bunch threw into the fire the infamous letter, which seemed to burn her hands. Then, taking a last look at her chamber, furnished so comfortably, she shuddered involuntarily as she thought of the misery that awaited her—a misery more frightful than that of which she had already been the victim, for Agricola's mother had departed with Gabriel, and the unfortunate girl could no longer, as formerly, be consoled in her distress by the almost maternal affection of Dagobert's wife. To live alone—quite alone—with the thought that her fatal passion for Agricola was laughed at by everybody, perhaps even by himself—such were the future prospects of the hunchback. This future terrified her—a dark desire crossed her mind—she shuddered, and an expression of bitter joy contracted her features. Resolved to go, she made some steps towards the door, when, in passing before the fireplace, she saw her own image in the glass, pale as death, and clothed in black; then it struck her, that she wore a dress which did not belong to her, and she remembered a passage in the letter, which alluded to the rags she had on before she entered that house. "True!" said she, with a heart-breaking smile, as she looked at her black garments; "they would call me a thief."

And, taking her candle, she entered the little dressing-room, and put on again the poor, old cloths, which she had preserved as a sort of pious remembrance of her misfortunes. Only at this instant did her tears flow abundantly. She wept—not in sorrow at resuming the garb of misery, but in gratitude; for all the comforts around her, to which she was about to bid an eternal adieu, recalled to her mind at every step the delicacy and goodness of Mdlle. de Cardoville; therefore, yielding to an almost involuntary impulse, after she had put on her poor cloths, she fell on her knees in the middle of the room, and, addressing herself in thought to Mdlle. de Cardoville, she exclaimed, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs: "Adieu! oh, for ever, adieu!—You that deigned to call me friend—and sister!"

Suddenly, she rose in alarm; she heard steps in the corridor, which led from the garden to one of the doors of her apartment, the other door opening into the parlor. It was Florine, who (alas! too late) was bringing back the manuscript. Alarmed at this noise of footsteps, and believing herself already the laughing-stock of the house, Mother Bunch rushed from the room, hastened across the parlor, gained the courtyard, and knocked at the window of the porter's lodge. The house-door opened, and immediately closed

(Continued on page 5.)

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