

A LITTLE SIMPLETON.

BY FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

SHE came in late, and looking hurried, and a little frightened, as she glanced at her mother, and slipped into her seat between the table and the wall. People stared at her, of course, as people at the table of a *pension*, or hotel, always do stare at a late arrival. But it was not the stares that frightened her; she was quite oblivious to them. She saw only that majestic matron, her mother, who transfixed her with a basilisk eye, and addressed her in that suppressed undertone of fearful politeness, which is so blood-curdling to a timid culprit.

"Will you oblige me by looking at your watch, Rosa?" she said.

"Yes, mamma," answered Rosey, and blushed furiously, and made an awkward effort to produce the article in question, which was of course entangled in something, and refused to be produced, and finally came out with a jerk, and brought some sous with it, said sous bouncing out and rolling, rattling on the floor, to Rosey's manifest agony:

"Tell him to let them remain where they are," said Mrs. Shandon, when Rosey's favorite waiter flew to pick them up. He was a susceptible young man, who adored her in secret, and evinced his affection by bringing her the choice outtings—"Madame" intended for the richest and most irascible of her guests.

Rosey obeyed in decidedly French-English. This was another of her daily tortures. The French she must speak upon all occasions, to the utter confusion and bewilderment of the parties addressed.

"It is half-past six, mamma," she ventured meekly, after referring to the watch.

"And I believe you understand Madame's dinner-hour to be six," observed Mrs. Shandon.

"I am very sorry," faltered Miss Rosey. "I think I forgot the time, mamma. It was rather stupid in me to go out after four as I did; and I met some little children I knew on the Champs Elysees; and I played with them some time; and after they were gone I meant to turn back, but I saw some other children—quite poor children—and they were looking at the goat-carriages so wistfully, that—that I could not help paying for a ride for them; and then I stopped to watch them. That was how I happened to have the

sous in my pocket. They were the change the woman gave me."

"That is enough," said her mother; "quite enough. I have no more to say. You went out alone after four, and you went to the Champs Elysees, and you 'played' with children. You, a young lady nineteen years of age!"

"I—only caught the ball and held Tito's balloon," gasped conscience-stricken Rosey. "It was not exactly playing, and it was in the very quietest part—quite far back."

Mrs. Shandon continued without condescending to acknowledge this protest at all.

"And not content with this, you remained to hire goat-carriages for other children—poor children—and watch them, and—that is quite sufficient. Be kind enough to eat your dinner or send it away."

Rosey said nothing more. She bent over her plate and tried to do as she was bidden, but her sense of iniquity choked her, and she was obliged to glance appealingly at Pierre, who darted to her assistance with unwise zeal, and removed the soup with a flourish.

"What a little fool that girl is!" remarked Madame's friend and factotum, who sat at her right hand, and had so sat ever since the *pension* had been a *pension*. "What a little fool!"

Madame shrugged her portly shoulders.

"Pouf!" she said. "It is almost a pity that she is so pretty. It is a waste of good looks."

"But the mether is the greatest simpleton of the two," exclaimed Mademoiselle Joseph, who was frank, if not fastidious, in her choice of straightforward phrases.

On the other side of the channel this lady would have been simple Miss Rebecca Joseph; in Paris, at 52 bis Boulevard Blanc, she was Mademoiselle Joseph, the friend of Madame, and a power in the establishment herself. She had the most comfortable room, and doubtless paid well for it, notwithstanding the friendship. She had the strongest coffee and the first attendance; the servants addressed her with awe and reverence; in short, she had the care of a guest and the importance of a head of the household. She was not an ill-natured person, however, though she was sharp and business-like. If she scolded, she was generous; and if she abused her antipa-

thies, it was usually with a certain brusque justice. Her contempt for Mrs. Shandon, and her pretensions, was a candid enough sentiment. She ignored her dignity, and sneered at her affectations: and as to the shrill venom of her polite ill temper, she had no patience with it. But she had no jeers for Rosey. In secret she was positively fond of the child. "She was a little simpleton," she had announced at the outset, but she could accuse her of nothing else. She had never yet found heart to agree with Madame, that her loveliness was a waste of good looks.

Just glance at this guilty young person, as she tries to eat her boiled fowl in such a manner as will not attract the attention of her mother. If she was an American, she would be a different young person altogether, though she could hardly be a sweeter little simpleton than she is. She is just nineteen, and up to her eighteenth birth-day the existence of three unmarried sisters kept her in the nursery, and limited her to social bread and butter. She has a sweet, undeveloped face, and a slight, undeveloped figure; too slender yet, and still with a certain reed-like grace about it. She has large, harebell-tinted eyes, and yellow-blond hair, very badly dressed close to her small head. In a few years she will be a bewilderingly beautiful woman if she learns discretion and is freed from thralldom; but at present she has the look of a school-girl, and is far too timid and sensitive to have her wits about her.

"Where she has got her manner from, I do not know," Mrs. Shandon was wont to remark. "She blushes and stumbles over her dress, and stammers. Her sisters had more self-possession at sixteen. She is continually making blunders, and she has no more idea of propriety than a young savage. All caution and reproof are wasted upon her."

Certainly Rosey had had enough of both. Twenty years in the British army had fitted Mrs. Shandon for command. She had been a far more important personage in the regiment than the meek, bibulous Colonel himself. Nobody stood in awe of "Old Shandon," as he had been disrespectfully called; but even the boldest lost courage before the keen, chill eye, and the severe majesty of the Colonel's wife. For her three elder daughters, who had grown up tall, somewhat discouraging, but correct young women, Mrs. Shandon had struggled manfully. She had kept them free from foolish entanglements, and had looked sharply about her. She knew the exact extent of her capital, and speculated wisely. Cecilia had a fine figure; Jane had a clear complexion and good eyes; Emily possessed an excellent voice, and

was a thorough musician. So Cecilia exhibited her fine figure on horseback; Jane dressed and danced; and Emily entertained eligible musical visitors. It was a long battle, but it was well fought; and on Rosey's eighteenth birth-day, she was introduced to society as Emily's first bridesmaid; and after the wedding was over, Mrs. Shandon seated herself with a sigh of relief, and ejaculated, with an air of tragic devoutness,

"Thank Heaven!"

In secret, she felt great hopes of Rosey at the outset. Rosey was going to be more than ordinarily pretty. She was not like the other three. She was the kind of girl men are apt to rave about. The others had married comfortably, but Rosey would certainly be a success, if she was well managed. But in a month's time Mrs. Shandon's sentiments began to alter. Instead of a young lady of correct views, she had a stupid child on her hands, a child who was shy and timid, and absurdly ignorant of the Shandon proprieties; a child who flushed until the tears came into her eyes, and who would stop in the street to talk to a cripple, or pity a beggar baby. It was only when she committed some glaring impropriety that Rosey was unconscious and self-possessed.

"I think, sometimes," said Mrs. Shandon, sternly, once, "that you must be utterly depraved and hardened." And she had no pity for the poor little maiden, when she clasped her hands, and cried out in remorseful agony,

"Oh, mamma! mamma!"

To the end, Mrs. Shandon began to think that this remnant of her flock would be a greater trial to her than all the rest. Despairing of other remedies, she turned to foreign travel. She had been a widow now for three or four years, and her small property sufficed for her well regulated requirements. So she took Rosey and began with Paris. They would stay at least a year in Paris, and Rosey should improve her French accent. They established themselves at 52 bis Boulevard Blanc, on advantageous terms, and there Rosey's new trials began. She felt herself a criminal of the deepest dye, and yet her iniquities were always such sins as this afternoon's escapade with the children and the goat carriages.

She was weighed down with her sense of guilt, when she left the dinner-table. Mrs. Shandon walked into the salon, and securing a chair by the fire, produced some severe looking lace-work of geometrical pattern. Not knowing what else to do, Rosey would have joined her, but Mademoiselle Joseph stopped her.

"Come up stairs with me to my room," she said. "I have a fire there—and something else for good girls."

Perhaps the consciousness that she was already in disgrace, made Rosey bolder than she would otherwise have been. She smiled faintly, and hesitated.

"Tut!" said Mademoiselle Joseph, laying her hand on her shoulder, and giving her a good-natured little push forward. "One may as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb."

So Rosey allowed herself to stray from the path of rectitude, and went up stairs to the cosy room Mademoiselle had fitted up after her own taste-loving taste.

She sank into a low, deep, cushioned chair, Mademoiselle Joseph placed for her on the hearth-rug, and she glanced around with a sigh of pleasure.

"It is so nice here," she said. "Oh, Mademoiselle, how I wish I were you!"

Mademoiselle had just advanced towards her, with a gaily-painted bon-bon box in her hand, but hearing this, she stopped short, regarding the young face with quite a startled look.

"You do?" she exclaimed. "You? Wish you were an ugly old spinster of fifty? Chut, chut! That is worse than I thought. Don't you know I have not a soul on earth to care for me?"

"Yes," answered Rosey, innocently. "And that was why I——" But there she checked herself, with her usual frightened blush.

Mademoiselle Joseph pushed the bon-bon box on to her lap with a motherly tact and kindness which did her credit.

"Here, try these," she said. "There are none better in Paris. Those crystalized things are even better than they look. And you did not eat half a dinner. I will sit down and help you, too. I have a sweet tooth myself, if I am fifty."

There could have been no greater luxury to Rosey than such treatment as this. Much as she liked the bon-bons, she liked Mademoiselle Joseph far better. She felt that it would be possible to adore her brusqueness, and her blunt, inquisitive nose. Her own was the most exquisite of little aquiline noses; and she had rather objected to Mademoiselle Joseph's at the outset of their acquaintance, but now she thought it almost beautiful.

She picked over the crystalized dainties, and grew flushed and charming in the glow of the fire. She was often chill enough in her mother's society. Mrs. Shandon had a theory of her own concerning fires and complexions.

"What is that tapping sound?" she asked, at

last. "I can hear it in my room. I hear it every day."

"It is in the apartment on the first floor," answered Mademoiselle Joseph. "The furnishers and carpenters are at work there. It is to be fitted up for a Monsieur Bertrand."

"But it does not belong to the *pension*," said Rosey, alarmed at once at the mention of a stranger.

"No, no," returned her friend; "it has nothing to do with us. It is an apartment of itself, a whole floor, and this gentleman rents it alone from the proprietor. He is very rich, they say—this Bertrand—and this is one of his caprices. He likes to have change, and so he flits from one quarter of Paris to the other. He is a gay bachelor, you see, and has no family. He does not know what to do with his money, it is plain, from the manner in which he is wasting it on this last folly."

"Is it so very beautiful?" asked Rosey, feeling interested. "Have you seen it?"

"The doors are open"—with a laugh—"and I strayed in. It will be perfection when it is complete. But what a fancy, for a man who has no wife to teach him caprices."

Rosey looked thoughtful.

"I wonder if he is a happy person?" she moaned, half in soliloquy.

Mademoiselle Joseph lifted her shoulders.

"They say not," she replied. "They tell odd tales about him. They say he is whimsical and misanthropic. When men are rich and lonely, and reach his age, it is often so. They have time to learn how the world balances them in the scale against their money, or with it."

"Poor man!" said Rosey. "Poor man!"

It was late before she went to her room, and she heard much of their new neighbor before she took her departure.

Mademoiselle Joseph had explored the place pretty thoroughly, and was inclined to be loquacious on the subject.

"I asked the workmen some little question," she said, candidly. "It is always as well to know things, and I am interested in the matter somehow. I have heard such queer things of the man, but I shall not tell them to you. Eat as many goodies as you can, my dear, and you shall have the rest to take to your room."

When Rosey stole up the third staircase with the bon-bon box on her arm, she was thinking quite excitedly of Monsieur Bertrand. She was interested, too, thanks to Mademoiselle Joseph. She felt a great longing to see the luxurious rooms, and she was conscious that she would like to see Monsieur himself, if she could take a

peep at him when she was quite sure that he would know nothing of her presence.

When she went out for her morning walk the next day, she glanced through the open door, as she passed it. There were rolls of carpet piled together near the entrance, and mysteriously-shrouded objects standing in corners.

"I wonder if he is very lonely?" thought Rosey, hurrying down the staircase, lest some one should see her.

The wife of the concierge, who stood at her glass-door, broom in hand, spoke to her as she went out. The good woman was a faithful admirer of hers, and made a point of praising her faltering French most volubly.

"We are somewhat disturbed, Mademoiselle sees," she said. "One has the broom in one's hand all day. What with straw and muddy feet, I shall be rejoiced when Monsieur has his preparations completed. Things are being carried in from morning till night—pictures, cabinets, carpets, and even marble women, such as we see in the galleries. Always something. Monsieur does not spare his purse."

So it happened that, on her return, Rosey stopped on the first floor again. It was so dull up stairs. There was nothing to do, and no one to talk to. Mrs. Shandon did not allow her to associate with strangers, and she knew only nobody but Mademoiselle Joseph. She stood upon the threshold sorely tempted.

"It could not be very wrong," she said, "or Mademoiselle Joseph would not have done it. The workmen have gone to their luncheon, and it would not take many minutes." And of course she ended by slipping inside. She felt terribly guilty, and her heart beat very fast at first, but as she became interested, she became hardened. She found the appointments even more beautiful than Mademoiselle Joseph had described them, and she was betrayed into wandering from one room to another, until she was very much farther from the staircase than she had intended going. The beauty and lavishness she saw fascinated and bewildered her. She was not used to luxury, particularly such luxury as this. And this was only a whim—one of many.

She had been half-an-hour in the place, without being conscious of the fact, when she reached a room, the door of which stood ajar, and showed her a rather small, mysterious-looking apartment, furnished in some strange, antique fashion: all its colors rich and sombre, and adding to the darkness caused by the heavy curtains being drawn across the window.

She pushed the door open, and advanced hesitantly.

"How dark it is!" she said, aloud. "I don't think I like this as well as the rest. It is too dark to be pretty."

Before she had fairly finished speaking, she was quite sure that her heart leaped into her throat. A large, dark object rose from a divan quite close to her, crossed the room to the window, and flung back the curtains with a strong, impatient arm.

The bright light flooded the apartment, and almost blinded her as she stood trembling. She could barely distinguish the figure of a large, powerfully-built man, who gave the purple drapery another push, and looked at her curiously.

"Tito!" he said, in a half-undertone. "A pretty child, who was curious." And then added, more loudly, "Do not alarm yourself, Mademoiselle. I only desired to see who honored me with a visit."

"I beg pardon!" faltered Rosey, hurriedly, alarmed beyond all self control. "I do, indeed, Monsieur. I did not intend—I only—I am Rosey Shandon, and I live at the *pension*, on the next floor."

Her eyes positively implored him for mercy; she was red and white by turns, and she had not really the remotest idea what she was saying. She only knew that her voice shook, and her words tumbled over each other. She dropped the little parcels she had been holding, and bent down to pick them up. Suppose he should tell her mamma.

But he actually indulged in a half laugh, and spoke, as if to himself, again,

"She is Rosey Shandon, and lives at the *pension*, on the next floor," he said, as if her stupidity pleased him.

He stooped, and restored a stray package, with a bow.

"Pray, be seated, Mademoiselle," he said.

Rosey thought the suggestion cruel. The tears started to her eyes.

"Monsieur," she said, "I did not mean to do anything wrong. I only came in because Mademoiselle Joseph told me everything was so beautiful, and—and it is so dull up stairs, and I was lonely."

"Dull?" he echoed, smiling stealthily at the simplicity of her poor little protest. "Dull in Paris? And lonely also?"

"I am always dull," said Rosey. "And it is worse in Paris than anywhere else; but I will not come here again, and I am very sorry I was so rude and foolish. Good morning, Monsieur—if you please."

But he was not ready to let her go. She amused him, and he was not often amused.

"Nay," he said, "that will never do. Mademoiselle will not come here again? That is ill news. I am unfortunate."

Rosey's eyes fell, and she almost dropped her parcels again. She thought of Mrs. Shandon, and her soul quailed within her.

"If mamma knew I had come," she said, "she would never forgive me. Oh! Monsieur, if—if you would only promise not to tell her," her dread getting the better of her. "She would never forgive me—never."

"Not to tell her?" cried Bertrand—of course it was Bertrand. "Not to tell the mamma—Madame Shandon?" And he bit his bearded lip, the better to restrain his mirth. He had seen Madame Shandon, and the idea of his mounting the staircase, to request a personal interview with her, to report her daughter's misdeeds, was a joke not without a piquancy of flavor. But Rosey was quite in earnest.

"I do so many wrong things," she answered. "and I am so stupid and troublesome, that she is always angry; at least, I am always trying her patience."

"Mademoiselle," said Bertrand, gravely, "let us make a compact. If you will promise to come here, and look at my books and pictures whenever the caprice seizes you, I will promise not to tell your mamma."

Rosey hesitated.

"You are *very* good, but——" she began.

"I am rarely here," he interrupted. "It was mere chance that brought me to-day, and—stay, I have a brilliant idea. When I intend coming, I will send you a little bouquet by way of warning."

"Oh, please, no!" cried Rosey. "Mamma——"

"I will not send it to Madame Shandon," he returned. "You will find it in the room of your friend, Mademoiselle Joseph."

Anything for freedom, thought Rosey, and so she faltered a reluctant compliance.

"I will come sometimes—perhaps," she said, "if I may go now. And, indeed, you are very kind to forgive me so."

She fairly flew down the passages, and up the stairs, to her own room. She shut the door, and sat down on the edge of her bed, panting. One of her parcels was missing, after all. But she was safe, and nobody had seen her.

Monsieur Bertrand found the three-inch package in his room, and opened it, and took out a small roll of dark-blue ribbon, laughing to himself.

"Just the shade for that child-blond hair," he said. "I will keep it, and I will not tell

mamma. What an adventure, to be sure, for a little simpleton!"

On her way from breakfast the next morning, Rosey was stopped by Mademoiselle Joseph, who opened her door and called her in.

On the table stood a light Venetian vase, holding a bouquet of pure white and deep-blue flowers, one large pink rose in their centre.

Rosey stood still, with fear-opened eyes.

"Look at them," said Mademoiselle Joseph, "and then tell me who they are from. I must know, or I will not take them. I will have no little simpleton's folly on my hands. There is a note—under the rose."

Rosey looked, and found it, and read it despairingly.

"Mademoiselle need not fear," it ran. "This is a bouquet of greeting, not of warning. I go to Cannes to-day, and trust Mademoiselle is well, and will remember her promise. Adieu.

"BERTRAND."

"Well?" demanded Mademoiselle Joseph.

Rosey sank into a chair, and clasped her hands.

"What would mamma say!" she exclaimed.

"What *would* mamma say?"

Mademoiselle Joseph began to feel slightly alarmed.

"What have you been doing?" she asked.

"Tell me, quickly."

"Oh, Mademoiselle!" cried Rosey. "Read it yourself. It is from Monsieur Bertrand, and I do not know what to do."

Then she told the whole story. When she had finished, something she saw in Mademoiselle Joseph's face gave her a sense of relief.

"Was it very wrong?" she asked. "Was it all my fault?"

"Tut!" answered her friend. "You may keep your flowers. You have only acted like an innocent. He sees you are a child, and laughs at you. It is only a joke to him."

"Laughs at me!" echoed Rosey, ruefully. "I do not like people to laugh at me."

But she could not help admiring her flowers, and at last even summoned up courage to make a little blue and white breast-knot, and fasten it on her pink cravat.

"I do not think he laughs at me," she said to herself; "and he was very kind to send the flowers."

She did not visit the first floor, however, during the week that followed. When she went out she hurried past the door, and never felt safe until she reached the street. And yet she thought very often of her acquaintance. She did not find

it easy to forget him, in fact. He was an imposing fellow, this Bertrand, and had fascinated, even while he alarmed her. He had fine eyes, and a deep, rich voice, and the gay grace of a man who had seen the great world, and who possessed more than ordinary natural gifts. Sometimes Rosey blushed and started when she remembered the smile with which he had regarded her, but then when did Rosey not blush and start? She would have blushed quite as deeply if he had frowned.

It was the middle of the third week before she heard anything more of him, and then, coming in to breakfast one morning, she found Madame's guests in a commotion of interest.

"There will be no more tap-tap-tapping all day, then, if he is in such a strait as that," remarked a red-faced gourmand, whom Rosey hated. "He will have to give up his fine whims since he has not money to indulge in them."

"Nothing has been brought in for several days," said Madame herself. "And the concierge tells me the people have ceased work."

"He is not a man of family," condescended Mrs. Shandon, frigidly.

"A bachelor," answered Mademoiselle Joseph. "And a fine match he would have been thought three weeks ago."

"Let us hope," enunciated Mrs. Shandon, "that there are no sentimental entanglements."

"He is not a sentimental man, Monsieur Bertrand," returned Mademoiselle Joseph; and as she said it she glanced at Rosey, and wondered rather impatiently what ailed the child.

The fact of the matter was, that Rosey was tender little simpleton enough to be suffering a keen pang for the sake of a man who she had only seen once, and from whom she had run away as if he had been a plague. The beautiful rooms were never to reach their full beauty. In some mysterious way all the wealth and power had vanished, and Monsieur Bertrand had been reduced to the rank of some work-a-day mortal. Ah, how sorry she was for him! How dreadful it must seem to him! What would he do? If he had been unhappy before, how wretched he must be now. She did not know that an honest bread and butter struggle is sometimes the best of remedies for the melancholy of one order of uisanthropist. She lost her appetite, poor child, in her sympathy for Monsieur Bertrand.

"Is it true?" she whispered to Mademoiselle Joseph, as soon as the chance presented itself.

"It seems so," answered Mademoiselle. "We hear it at last. There has been a great crash in the city, and they say he has suffered immense losses."

"Is he in Paris?"

"No—it is said not. One of the workmen told the concierge that he telegraphed from Cannes simply the words, 'Stop your work.' Pouf, child! You look as if it hurt you."

"It does hurt me," said simple Rosey. "I am so sorry for him."

She thought of him all the morning, and grew so sad at heart, that she even shed a gentle tear or so. Her small head was full of the fall of Monsieur Bertrand when she went out for the dreary constitutional Mrs. Shandon considered necessary for the preservation of her complexion; and when, after an hour's absence, she returned to the *pension*, she mounted the stairs in no better spirits than she had descended them. Arriving at the first landing, she was surprised to find the entrance-door standing open.

"I wonder why," she said, "since he is not in Paris, and they are not at work. But, perhaps, the concierge has had orders to do something to the rooms."

Thus it was that a certain wistful longing to see the beautiful things once again took possession of her. She was not afraid of the concierge, and then, also, she remembered the promise she had so reluctantly made and had not kept.

"I will go in and say good-bye," she decided, at length. "It is odd that I should care to say good-bye to Monsieur Bertrand, but I do. It is because I am sorry, I think—and, perhaps, because he remembered to send me the flowers."

She felt so certain of finding her friend, the concierge, somewhere, that she was not afraid as she had been the first time. She heard footsteps in one of the farther rooms, and followed the sound. It led her toward the very apartment where she had met with her adventure, and she advanced the more eagerly, because she knew that the good-natured little door-keeper would be quite willing to talk of the sensation of the hour.

But it was not the voice of the concierge she heard when she reached the door. It was the voice of a man who spoke as if to himself, and his words were accompanied by a sharp metallic click, repeating itself two or three times.

"So," he said, "it works well. There will be no blundering. Pah! Let it be clean, short work, since it is to be done. Every man to his taste, but to mine a bullet is the best of all."

Something in the bitter half-laugh following the words struck terror to Rosey's trembling heart. She knew the voice well, though it did not sound as it had done when she heard it last. Scarcely aware what she did, she stepped forward and stood upon the threshold.

The curtains were drawn across the windows, as they had been on her first visit, but they were not drawn quite so closely, and one beam of sunlight streamed in between the folds of the purple, and fell upon Monsieur Bertrand; and a certain terrible shining something he held in his hand—a shining something Rosey's first glance told her was a pistol.

"It will soon be over," she heard him mutter. "A few moments—perhaps less. Adieu, life. Now——" And he raised his hand.

But it did not do its work. There was a cry and a rush of light feet, and Rosey was clinging to his arm and dragging it down.

"Monsieur!" she cried out, wildly. "Monsieur! Monsieur!"

She was unconscious enough now; all her shyness had vanished. She feared nothing but that she should not have strength to hold the powerful arm. She even shook its owner in her passion of childish emotional courage. Her fright made her strong.

But the man did not even try to free himself after the first unconscious struggle. He staggered back, and looked down in a dazed way at the white, young face and imploring eyes. The pistol hung loosely in his grasp.

"Mon Dieu!" he exclaimed. "What have we here?"

He strode to the window, taking her with him, and drawing her into the light.

"What?" he said. "It is she! The little English Mademoiselle, again!"

"Monsieur," said Rosey, "you would have killed yourself. You were going to kill yourself!" She would not let him go, but held him with all her might. "Give me the pistol!" she demanded. "You would have killed yourself!"

It was not wonderful that he should look unlike himself at such a crisis, but he looked very strange, indeed, as he handed her the weapon, and spoke in a slow, half-comprehending style. His face was flushed, and his eyes bloodshot.

"Yes," he said; "I would have killed myself." He put his hand up to his forehead, and made a weak, uncertain step forward. "Do not be alarmed," he said, smiling. "I trust I am too gallant a man to be guilty of such a breach of decorum in the presence of a lady.

"Monsieur," cried Rosey, alarmed again, "you are going to be ill. You must sit down. You——"

She was too late, however. Evidently feeling his strength failing him, he put out his hand, blindly, for a chair, missed it, and went down with the smile on his lips.

Rosey flung herself upon the carpet, and

made a frantic effort to raise him, which, of course, was a failure. He lay like a dead man, only that he breathed stertorously, and the half smile fused itself into such grimness.

"What must I do?" the poor child cried, wringing her hands. "Where can I find some one to help him?"

Then she thought of Mademoiselle Joseph, and sprang to her feet. But before she flew out of the room, she had the presence of mind to do one thing. She picked up the pistol, and pushed it far back into a drawer, and then locked the drawer.

In fifteen seconds she stood breathless at the door of Mademoiselle Joseph's room.

"Mademoiselle," she panted, when that lady answered her summons, and stood staring at her, "he has fallen down on the floor of the little black-oak room. And he looks as if he would die there. Come to him. Mademoiselle, it is Monsieur Bertrand, you know, and he may die before we get there."

"Monsieur Bertrand!" echoed Mademoiselle Joseph, but she had wit enough not to stop to ask questions. "Don't come with me," she said to Rosey. "Run down to the concierge and order a doctor. And then go and shut yourself in your room, if you don't want to get into trouble."

Rosey did as she was told; but somehow, in her interest in Monsieur Bertrand, she seemed to have lost much of her awe of her mother, and after speaking to the concierge, she went to her room, quite reluctantly. She almost felt brave enough to have gone back to the first floor, notwithstanding Mrs. Shandon.

She did not feel so courageous, however, when she saw that lady, and heard her discuss the matter afterwards.

"It appears it was Mademoiselle Joseph who discovered him," she said. "It is well that Mademoiselle Joseph is not a younger person. As it is, I desire you will check your intimacy with her somewhat, Rosa. A person whose curiosity leads her into the committal of such indiscretions, is hardly the companion for a young lady. For my part," with a stately shudder, "I have always found the woman obnoxious."

"But, mamma," stammered Rosey, the tips of her ears burning, "he would have died, if nobody had found him."

Mrs. Shandon transfixed her with a frigid glance.

"Are you interested in Monsieur Bertrand?" she asked. "If so, I will say no more."

Rosey had nothing to say. In her heart of hearts she knew she was interested, and her

knowledge of the fact overwhelmed her with confusion.

She saw nothing of Mademoiselle Joseph that day, nor even the next, and she did not dare to ask questions. She listened attentively, however, and gathered from the remarks she heard, that the kindly creature kept her place at the sick man's side staunchly, and intended so to keep it until he was out of danger, or his friends came forward.

"For," explained Madame, "whether it is that he is supposed to be out of Paris, or whether that he is of no particular value, since his misfortunes, not a soul has presented himself as yet, and he lies there alone, so to speak."

It was too much for Rosey to bear. Hers was the shrinking, timid nature which always gains strength at the knowledge of sorrow and pain. She was a foolish little coward before coldness and hard words. She was afraid of her mother and shy of strangers, under ordinary circumstances; but she could forget all fear in the cause of anything more helpless than herself—from a fallen foe to a frightened child, or a tortured animal.

On the evening of the third day, Mademoiselle Joseph answered a faint tinkle of the door-bell, and started back to find herself confronting a youthful figure, standing in the dusk of the staircase.

"Bless me!" she exclaimed. "Is it you, child? What are you doing here? Where is your mother?"

"Mademoiselle," said Rosey, "I want to know if it is true, that he has no friend but you? I could not sleep last night, Mademoiselle. It seemed so sad to think that after—after all these years—the tears rising in her sweet voice—"he should not have a single friend in all this gay, rich Paris, so full—so full of people."

"Step inside for a moment," answered her friend. "It won't do for you to stand out there."

When Rosey stepped in, she shut the entrance-door, and the light of the candle she held showed that she looked quite fagged out.

"See!" she said. "It is true, every word of it, and a miserable tale it is to tell. People are worse than I thought they were. No one has come to ask if he is a living man or a dead one; not a soul, though the doctor found out two or three of his fine friends, and told them how the matter stands. As to nurses, I sent for one, and when she came she gave him a side glance, and asked who was going to pay. I could have paid her myself, but I sent her about her business after that. The wife of the concierge is a good

little soul, and she is willing enough, but she has six babies on her hands, and a husband who is as bad as twelve; so I am going to stand it alone as long as I can. The man's haggard face has taken hold of me, somehow, and I mean to stand his friend, as there is no one better."

Rosey's excitement and sympathy got the better of her. She put out her hand and caught Mademoiselle Joseph's, and kissed it.

"Bless me!" cried Mademoiselle Joseph. "What does that mean?"

"It means that you are so good—so good!" cried Rosey. "And it means that I cannot help loving you. And I want to help you, if I may. Oh, please let me! No one will ever know, at all, and it cannot be wrong to want to help some one who has no friends. I will come down when every one is in bed, and I will do everything I can, and it can be a secret between us always."

Mademoiselle Joseph almost let her light fall.

"You would do that? You?" she gasped.

"Yes," said Rosey, "and not be afraid, at all."

"Well," said Mademoiselle, "I should not wonder if you would. And commend me to these simple little souls for cleverness, when the worst comes to the worst."

She opened the door, laid her hand on the girl's shoulder, kissed her, and pushed her gently outside.

"Go up stairs, and get a good night's rest, and come again to-morrow," she said. "You shall do your share, do not fear, even if it is something else."

"But, Mademoiselle—" began Rosey, feeling bewildered.

"Do as I tell you," was the answer she received. "And don't get me into trouble because I am fond of you. There, run away. I cannot wait longer." And she shut the door, and left Rosey in the shadow, uncertain whether her plan was an accepted one or not.

In fact, it was scarcely either accepted or rejected. Mademoiselle Joseph was as good as her word, and gave her plenty to do, in one way or another. There were purchases to be made, and various small tasks to be performed, and occasionally Rosey found herself allowed to pay a quiet visit to the sick-room, when Mrs. Shandon was satisfactorily disposed of.

"If you had a sensible woman for a mother, I should be ashamed of myself," said Mademoiselle, brusquely, "but if you had a sensible woman for a mother, she would have no objection to your doing your duty towards a suffering fellow-creature, and she would be here with you, helping you to do it."

Still it was perilous for Rosey. If the powerful and fortunate Monsieur Bertrand had made an impression upon her, how much more did the Monsieur Bertrand of the dark, haggard face, wearied with restless pain, touch her tender heart. She became accustomed to bearing his image in her thoughts night and day, and to being full of gentle sadness for him. She often wondered what she could do with herself when he was well enough to go away, and be quite lost to her in his great busy world.

It was almost a shock to her when Mademoiselle Joseph met her at the door, one morning, and told her that he was entirely conscious, and even strong enough to ask questions, and insist on being answered.

"Questions of all kinds," said Mademoiselle Joseph. "He is as determined and inquisitive as if he had never had a pain in his life."

"I am very glad," said Rosey, slowly. "I suppose you will not need me again, Mademoiselle; but I am very glad."

She went away wondering what questions he had asked, and whether he had remembered anything of their last meeting in the black-oak room. In fact, Monsieur had remembered it very clearly after the mists had cleared away from his brain; and after he had gathered divers facts from Mademoiselle Joseph, he had lain thinking gravely of the pitying eyes and sweet, frightened face, which had faded from his vision as he fell.

"And it is you whom I must thank for existence, Mademoiselle," he said, to Mademoiselle Joseph.

"You may thank me, and you may thank another," she answered; "but you must thank the other first."

Monsieur smiled a little.

"Mademoiselle," he said, "my last memory of this world is the memory of a face like a flower, and a pair of timid eyes, and some loose braids of hair, blonde, like a child's. Is that the other one?"

"I suppose I may as well confess that it is," she replied.

Monsieur smiled again, but this time with wonderful tenderness.

"And since then I have had fancies of this face," he proceeded, "and have listened longingly from time to time for a low, young voice I sometimes heard. Is it true that I sometimes heard this voice, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes," returned Mademoiselle Joseph, half-grudgingly, "it is true."

"And——" he began again.

Mademoiselle Joseph advanced to the bedside,

and regarded him with the steadfast look of a practical and honest woman.

"Stay, Monsieur," she said. "The pretty face is the face of a child, as yet; and I must know more of you before I answer any further questions."

But Monsieur did not appear at all baffled.

"Sit down, Mademoiselle," he said, "and ask of me what you like. I am a man of the world, but I am ready to answer."

He was so plainly in earnest, that Mademoiselle Joseph obeyed him. Perhaps she rather enjoyed the prospect of satisfying her curiosity. And Monsieur was so frank that she did satisfy it. She could have told her friends of the *peccation*, a whimsical enough story, before an hour was over; that is, if she had so chosen, and the final incident was more whimsical than all the rest.

"I had made up my mind," said Monsieur, "that when I next crossed the threshold it would be when I was carried forth a dead man. The world and my solitariness had wearied me, and, with the fever working in my brain, I was not sane. It was not the loss of the money. I fancy I am not so nearly ruined as my kind friends imagine, but I was morbid and half-mad. And I held the pistol in my hand, thinking the last moment had come. What a fool I see myself, now that my blood has cooled! And she sprang forward, this pretty child, and clung to my arm, and cried out to me in her clear, anguished voice. And so I was saved. And I lie here to-day," he added softly, after a moment's pause. "I lie here to-day, and think of her with passionate gratitude."

After this, he dictated to Mademoiselle Joseph a letter to his lawyer, and it was sent out at once by the concierge. This being done, Monsieur composed himself to sleep, and slept long and peacefully.

"I wish to recover as rapidly as possible," he said. "I am a strong man, and I have an object in view. I shall take a seat on that chair by the fire in ten days at the latest."

He was awake when his lawyer arrived, and was strong enough to bear a lengthy interview, and to ask more questions, and even to give divers directions concerning his affairs.

"And as to his being ruined," said Mademoiselle Joseph, when she took her place at the table two days after, "that is all folly and nonsense. His losses are a mere bagatelle, and a pleasant affair it is for those gay friends of his. He is no more ruined than I am. And he has a jest of his own, too, for fashionable Paris. He is a wit which does not spare."

"And you thought him well enough to leave him?" asked some one.

Mademoiselle Joseph nodded significantly.

"I can trust him with a nurse now," she said. "You should hear him give his orders when he has a whim. The creature would sooner lose the tip of her tongue than disobey him."

Accordingly, Monsieur recovered; and when, during his gradual convalescence, he appeared silent and preoccupied, and Mademoiselle Joseph regarded him inquiringly, he answered her, with a smile,

"I think, Mademoiselle, of my hopes."

Every morning there was left at the door a bouquet for Rosey, and, astonishing to relate, Mrs. Shandon made no remark.

One evening, however, she came into Rosey's room, and advancing with her most majestic air of maternal affection, kissed the girl's forehead.

"My dear Rosa," she said, "you have my permission to go down to the salon of Monsieur Bertrand, and I will add that your conduct has been most praiseworthy."

"Mamma!" exclaimed Rosey.

"Go at once, my dear Rosa," said Mrs. Shan-

don, waving her hand. "I am perfectly satisfied."

The door of the salon, opening slowly a few minutes later, caused Monsieur Bertrand to stop in his pacing to and fro, and advance to greet the approach of the sweet, distressed face.

"Monsieur," faltered Rosey, "I—I am very glad you are better, and—and thank you for the flowers."

She was so overwhelmed with shyness, that the eyes she raised to his were suggestive of tears.

"I am very glad you are better, Monsieur," she began again, and ventured to hold out her little hand.

But Monsieur seemed stirred by some emotion, too deep for ordinary words.

"Mademoiselle," he said—"Rose—you do not fear me—you who have saved me—you? You will not send me from you—since I love you."

He held out his hands.

"I—" whispered Rosey, hanging her pretty head. "Monsieur—I—"

But she went to him, obeying his tender gesture, and he folded her—softly, as if she had been a child—to his heart.

MIGNONETTE.

BY ANNIE ROBERTSON NOXON.

SWEET and faint
Steals the perfume from the South;
See, dear saint,
Flowers bloom on in rain or drouth.
Music falls,
Through the vines all dewey, wet—
O'er the walls
Where we planted Mignonette.
Happy flowers!
Thus to careless spring and fade;
Through the hours,
Sweet alike in sun or shade.

Long I wait,
Does my heedless love forget?
Strange how fate—
Links me to thee, Mignonette!
Meek and fair
Rise these blossoms from the mould
Should I care
If the night grows dark and cold?
Suns shall rise
After all these suns shall set;
In love lies
Hope for all things, Mignonette!

THE HAPPIEST HOUR.

BY MARY W. M'VICAR.

GAYLY sing, my happy bird,
Let thy sweetest song,
With its tenderest trills be borne
By the breeze along,
Till upon the busy street
One home coming it may greet.
Laugh and shout, my bonnie boy,
For the hour has come,
Gayest, gladdest, happiest hour,

Which brings papa home;
Hour more dear there scarce could be,
In this world, I think, to me.
Childish wrongs in papa's arms
Soon are all forgot,
Near to him more light the cares
Vexing woman's lot,
All Life's ills lose half their power
O'er my heart in this glad hour.