

these, and the prospect of earning fifty pounds a year, of being independent of her father's help, were great inducements for her going to Morton St. Jude. So a week after her first visit there, she returned to begin the duties that consisted of no formal set work but would be so variable as not to be the least tiring or inconvenient. This Madam assured her, and indeed so light was the occupation that it might have been said to consist of doing nothing.

It was Madge's first evening at the cottage, whither the errand Sarah Ann had returned to resume her attendance on Madam. Sarah Ann was a tall, hard-featured woman, prone to attacks of spasms, and in the intervals between these, which were of longer or shorter duration, according to circumstances, she worked "like a horse," to quote herself. Madam and her companion had finished dinner, and gone into the drawing-room where the former threw herself upon the couch, declaring that her happiness was too great. She was in good spirits, so good in fact, that she chattered incessantly, and gesticulated so wildly, that the "toupe" became disarranged, and assumed a jaunty position, such as a soldier's cap presents.

"This is our first evening together, my chaille," she said. "We will make it so happy, is it not so? We will have what you call a little 'festa,' a joyousness. That you have come to me, my chaille, make no longer the cottage unhappy. And we will have presently a fine 'ouse and servants. Pestel! But Sarah was a miser-able. She groan all day with her spa-aseems. And she made a gesture of the supremest contempt.

"Are you thinking of moving from Morton St. Jude?" asked Madge. "Yes, I move in some time. To London, to Vien-na, to Brus-sels. Why not? Who can say? I will advise with you, sweet chaille, to where we shall go. You shall decide. I have so much money that we go anywhere," and Madam seated herself at the piano.

"You do not travel much now, I suppose?" continued Madge, watching the increasing vivacity of the little lady curiously. They had had champagne for dinner to celebrate Madge's arrival, and the wine had flushed Madam's face through the rouge.

"Not since my Henri die," she answered. "But now—yes, we will travel, my chaille, now that you are with me. I have still so many friends, know you. They say, Come! but I reply, I am alone! Then I resolve upon being with a companion, and we travel together. At Trouville were so many sheeps of my friends; with that name so strange. They shall be sheeps of pleasure, that name."

"You mean yachts," said Madge, smiling at Madam's difficulty of definition, who nodded violently.

"That name; yes 'yorts' they shall be called," she exclaimed, "and I make voyage in them, often. Two, three week so marvellous, that I am become a true sailor, at Trouville. My Henri, he remains always so ill when we voyage, poor sweet. Was not the time delightful, think you?" "It must have been a very pleasant time," replied Madge. "I should imagine that yachting was very enjoyable," and at this Madam's bright little eyes seemed to flicker with delight, and the crow's-feet round them puckered.

"Ah! we will again enter into the world," she cried. "I think not of money. Was it not given to enjoy?" and she twisted round, bringing her fingers down on the keys with a discordant crash. "Now I will sing to you," and in a sudden burst Madam began singing.

But such singing! Madge sat listening painfully to the trills and runs of the shrill voice, that seemed screaming out the words of the song. It was a tremulous voice too, that had no music in it, and jarred the harmonies of the notes, ending in a shriek high up, and turning round again, Madam burst into a laugh.

"My Henri has wept at my singing, often," she exclaimed. "Its tenderness so pathetic, is it not so? I sang when we were last in Paris," and a sudden revulsion of feeling appeared to overcome her, at the thought of the deceased Henri. There was something like a gulp in Madam's sinewy throat, as the lace of her collar rose and fell on it. Then all her merriment came back, wildly.

Sarah entered at this moment, with a spectre-like movement, carrying a tray on which were wine and

glasses, keeping her gaze on Madam, who returned the look spitefully, and placing the tray on the table, the spectre backed out of the room without speaking.

"Ma foi!" said Madam. "That woman enrage me. So triste, so gloomy is she. Skeleton!" and she poured out the wine violently, heedless that it ran over the edge of the glass and splashed the tray. Madge refused the offer of it, and Madam drank with a relish, making a clicking sound in her throat now, as she swallowed.

"I will have you play, my chaille," she said, putting down her glass, "but it shall not be solemn music. A dance, a gavotte, a waltz. Ah! My Henri waltz so divine; and I."

Considering it part of her duty, Madge sat down at the piano, playing a merry, quick tune, and Madam gave a shriek of delight.

"Mon Dieu," she cried. "Who can resist this music? See; I dance to you, my chaille." And lifting her skirts daintily between her finger and thumb, Madam Ange began to pirouette and leap to the imminent peril of the wine glasses and decanter, pointing to her toes, as she executed a series of elaborate steps with a kind of effish nimbleness, until from want of breath, she fell back on the couch, and Madge ceased playing.

Panting and smiling, Madam glanced at her young companion and bade her sing.

"You sharm me!" she screamed. "And I drink to your 'appiness, my chaille," which she did at once with an unsteady hand. "We shall be comrades, and I already love you. Sing."

"What shall I sing?" "What shall it be then? Sing your 'God Save the Queen,' my chaille, and I will as-sist." So with good nature entering into the fun, Madge began singing the national anthem, Madam's voice aiding her.

When it was ended, Sarah appeared, very much like the emblem of mortality at an Egyptian banquet, and proclaimed that it was eleven o'clock. Furthermore she informed Madam in a sepulchral tone that "human strength" was "human strength," and had its limits. Therefore, if nothing more was required of her, she was going to bed.

"Allons," retorted Madam sarcastically. "Yes, to your bed, or your grave, I care not, Saran." To which Sarah said, "Thank you, ma'am," lofly, and disappeared.

This was the beginning of Madge's service as companion to Madam Ange Duval, whom not until late the following day did she see again, for Madam sent a message that one of her violent headaches destroyed her. So Madge took a long walk into the country, and upon her return to the cottage found her employer dozing over the fire, averse to conversation. During the evening, however, she reviewed, chatting in her rapid way upon their future movements.

Looking back after a week had elapsed since coming to Morton St. Jude, Madge found nothing to complain of. Madame Duval had been generousity itself, and had sent a huge hamper of delicacies to Westdown House, for the invalid "Papa," as she described Mr. Selby. A carriage had been hired from the village, she and Madge taking some pleasant drives, and Mrs Selby was gladdened by receiving a letter from her daughter, stating that the situation was a satisfactory one. "We are going to the Isle of Wight," wrote Madge, "where Madam has some friends. Cowes Regatta is to be held next week, so we shall have plenty to amuse us."

One morning Madam received a letter, which she read through a tortoise shell rimmed handglass, nodding to the writing in a gratified way.

"It is from a friend, this letter," she told Madge, "that I shall have almost forgotten, yet does he not forget me. He remembers Trouville, and my Henri, the 'appy day there that we met, and he invite to visit his so sharming wife, who is with him on his yort. Ah! I remember M'sieur Ashton and his delightful family, and we are—peste—so strange a word come now. How you call c-r-u-i-s-e, my chaille?"

Madge told her the pronunciation of the word, explaining that it meant sailing a short distance hither and thither.

"You are the most cleavre chaille," exclaimed Madam. "You are already a sailor, I perceive, is it not? Yes, but we will vesst M'sieur Ashton, and we must prepare ourselves with costumes of the sea. Allons! We

will buy them in Weenchester. You will be divine, my chaille, in that dress."

Madge murmured something about the expense of buying a yachting costume, at hearing which Madam snapped her fingers.

"I buy them for you," she said, "and of the best. A cloak so warm, and all that you shall need. Yes, we will go into Weenchester to-day."

Madge made an objection, but rather freely, to be over-ruled, and the fly having been requisitioned, she and Madam drove into the city later in the day, and proceeded to a fashionable dressmaker's, where, after a great deal of talking and gesticulating, Madam ordered two costumes. They must be completed in ten days, she said, and brought to Morton St. Jude, her own dress to be embellished with anchors and flags on the sleeves and collar, for she would be quite a sailor. Madam also provided herself with a coquettish straw hat, that perched itself on the toupe, and gave her an "air." It was all very amusing, and Madge laughed heartily as she regarded Madam parading and ogling before the tall mirror in the hat shop.

The costumes were brought punctually to the cottage, and Madam declared them to be "ravishing." Sarah, being summoned to see her mistress arrayed in hers, through lack of there being anyone else to behold the fiery, pronounced it to be "too showy" for her taste. She also re-

marked that boys wore hats the shape of Madam's.

"Imbecile!" exclaimed Madam. "So senseless a Saran! Your boy! Peste. Were not these hats worn by the captains and officers of the sheeps? Yes, and these flugs also."

"Rubbish!" retorted Sarah Ann, who distinctly curled her lip, and Madge laughed until the tears came into her eyes. Everything was so quaint and unusual about Madam Duval that it was impossible not to laugh, and beyond all Madam was one of the best-natured persons in the world.

The next day they departed from Morton St. Jude, on their way to Cowes, where they stayed at an hotel, Madam spending her money freely. From Madge's room there was a glorious view of the sea and harbour, and lying a short distance off shore was a schooner yacht to which a boat was carrying some stores. There were many other vessels, for the season was at its height, and Cowes crowded with visitors, amongst whom Madam's jaunty hat and emblematic anchors and flags had created quite a sensation. M'sieur Ashton would arrive in two days, she had told Madge, who as she watched the bright scene from the hotel window, wondered whether that schooner yacht were his. It had not been there yesterday, and whilst she was thinking thus, Madam came into the room.

"M'sieur has already come," she exclaimed. "He has sent so sharming

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