

STEPHANIE.

BY LOUIS VEUILLLOT.

[Translated from the French by Mrs. Josephine Black.]

CHAPTER IX.

May 29.

MY dearest Elise, since last I wrote to you I had reason to think that my castles in the air had received a shock which would overthrow them, never to ascend in their dreamy beauty to the sky again. One day I saw a great fuss going on outside Germain's quiet house—people going to and fro and bringing all sorts of things, including a great many ladies' knickknacks, a work-table, a toilet-table, a flower-stand, etc. What if Germain was going to be married? Yesterday morning he came out with a bright, elegant-looking girl leaning on his arm to whom he was showing the most loving attention. He seemed quite a different person from the grave, quiet gentleman I was accustomed to meet. He laughed, chatted, and once he caught the hand lying on his arm, and then they laughed again. Of course, she must be his wife, and how happy they looked! Ah! my Lord Viscount de Sauveterre, never did you seem less pleasing to the object of your honoured attentions than in the strong light of this simple, lost happiness. I put on my hat and went off to Mass. I knew that a quiet hour of prayer would do me all the good in the world. Germain and his companion were there before me, kneeling side by side. I knelt down very quietly behind them and prayed for them with all my heart. But by-and-by came a servant, who stopped beside the young lady and spoke one of the sweetest words I have ever heard in all my life—"Mademoiselle!" I wish I could pay back that most excellent girl for the pleasure she gave me at that moment. Mademoiselle turned round and showed an unmistakable family likeness to Germain. She was not his wife, but simply his sister, who had come to live with him, the sister who long ago learned to love little Roeschen. She said a word or two to her brother and then followed the servant. She had one of the fairest young faces I have ever seen. A bright, clever, good, wholesome face of some twenty summers, that looked as if a frown of bad temper had never crossed it, as if no shade of evil could rest long upon it, a face in fact, quite in keeping with early Mass on a glorious morning in May. In a short time she came back with an old lady leaning on her arm, for whom Germain busily prepared a comfortable *prie-dieu*, and who, of course, must be their mother. It was a rare sight, Elise, when the moment of Communion came, to see the three go up so reverently, the mother leaning on her noble son. I could not help feeling that I belonged to them. It seemed strange for me to be away alone, separated from them, and something seemed to tell me that God had wise ends in bringing us together again. I think we know our own in this world, Elise, and we stretch out our longing arms to them, and woe, woe, to us if we let wealth, or rank, or any other thing but duty thrust us apart; for I believe that just so shall we know them one day in Heaven. My three friends made a very long thanksgiving, but not so long as mine; and I defy all their piety to make a more fervent one.

When I am in the church, these thoughts, far from distracting me, seem to gather up my whole will, my whole soul, into one earnest, refreshing prayer. It seems as if the shadow of the holy place fell across my heart, and that by the light of the sanctuary lamp my thoughts stole in; grave, calm, holy. Here God is my confidant, my counsellor, my guardian; and feelings that I would watch anxiously abroad in the world's glare, may here throw themselves down at His feet in all their strength, for with them goes the cry that they are to be subject to the affair of salvation, and only important as they effect salvation. Do not be uneasy about me on this score. I yesterday learned one consoling experience of my own spirit. I have seen that the final overthrow of all my hopes might crush my heart, but they could not root out resignation.

CHAPTER X.

June 15.

His name is Darcet—Darcet without a shade of an apostrophe. Oh, what a calamity! But really, now, it is not such an unbearable name after all. Perhaps my aunt will end by saying that is just as good as Corbin: although Corbin, she thinks, is not without a certain heraldic rudeness, and breathes more of the antique than of the commonplace. In a tournament given by the Duke of Brittany one Corbin of Anjou, master of the horse, exhibited much prowess—not a doubt but he was one of our Corbins. My dear Elise, can no one find a Darcet who fought in the Crusades, and buy my life's happiness with the dust of the ennobling dead? But, really, it is a shame for me to be satirical about my aunt, for I owe to her that I have found out Germain's name.

Last evening the curé came to spend the evening with us. I had remarked him on the previous day speaking to our friend in the street, and I bravely turned the conversation on the parishioners, asking him if he was content with their attendance. I knew well enough that this was a favorite topic with him. I knew how dearly he loved those who assisted regularly at all the devotions, and I knew that Germain and his mother and sister were models in this respect. Every Sunday they are in the church early, and in the evening they are in their places again before the bell has nearly done ringing for Vespers. I expected that the curé would immediately cite such a splendid example, especially as poor M. de Tourmagne was there; and in spite of his real, sincere piety, the good count is wont to avoid High Mass in the most adroit manner, and very seldom makes his appearance at Vespers. or, when he does, it is generally towards the end of the "*Magnificat*." Unfortunately, M. de Tourmagne guessed what was coming, and immediately flew to cover, and commenced an animated discussion on the subject of certain decrees and ordinances which prescribed assistance at all parish offices. So in punishment for my wickedness I was condemned to endure a shower of eloquence and erudition which I did not exactly bargain for. However, the gentlemen forgot themselves so far as to take to

speaking Latin; my aunt lost all patience and plunged hotly into the argument on the side of the parish, reproaching M. de Tourmagne with having several times neglected to fast, because he was not in the church before the sermon to hear it announced. The count gave a parting stroke; he urged the active part men are at present obliged to play in civil society, the multiplication of occupations in consequence of the revolutions which have shaken Europe, and a hundred other arguments to the effect that the length of religious services is not in accordance with the present wants of civilisation. Here I broke in, another opponent to the poor count's very fallacious arguments. I hinted that probably the curé could cite some instances of persons whose occupations were as absorbing as those of M. de Tourmagne and who yet found time to come and join in the praises of God. "Certainly," ejaculated M. le Curé, "certainly;"—but that was all; we could see quite well that he was racking his brains to find an example; the fact was, none occurred to him, though this was exactly what I had counted on. My aunt, dreading that M. de Tourmagne should have the last word, came again to the rescue by assisting the pastor's ungrateful memory.

"For example," she said, "take that splendid young fellow who is there so regularly with his mother and sister;—you must have remarked them—near us, nearly under the pulpit. Stephanie, you know whom I mean?"

"Yes, aunt."

I became very intent, indeed, on my embroidery, for I felt the tell-tale color mounting uncomfortably into my face.

"You mean M. Darcet," cried the curé, in delight, "M. Germain Darcet! Ah! my dear count, M. Darcet will condemn you. I forgot about him for the moment. A *savant* like yourself, but with his fortune and name to make and a mother and sister to support. That is occupation enough, I think, and still he never misses any of the devotions."

"Darcet!" repeated my aunt; "I do not know that family." "It is not a family," replied the curé, "at least not an aristocratic family; and yet they are three of the most charming people I have ever met. They are honor itself, and as to their piety, I have seldom met any so tender and solid."

"Germain Darcet!" repeated M. de Tourmagne, "Germain Darcet?—I wonder where I have heard that name before?"

"In the Academy of Science, most probably. M. Darcet is a most accomplished man. I believe he has written a book, but I don't think it has been successful;—he is too modest and too proud to gain public admirers."

"Bah!" returned the count; "if he has merit, believe me, the admirers will come of themselves. Darcet!—Darcet!—I am sure I have heard that name before. What is his occupation?"

"I don't know. He speaks very little about himself. I only know that he has travelled a good deal. But that reminds me, Madame d'Aubecourt—he is a countryman of yours; he is a Vendéan."

"Oh, well, said my aunt, "I do not wonder at his piety then. Good blood never lies, true blue never stains."

"Yes," added the curé; "his father was a gentleman of some property, whose dearest object in life was to bring up his noble son worthily, and whose only regret was that he had not more money to leave him. With the consent of his excellent mother, our young friend set off on his travels, and by his hard work he supplies for the deficiencies of their slender income."

Here the conversation changed very much against my will, you may be sure. But this was not to be the last time that the name of Germain Darcet was to be introduced in conversation in the *salon* of the Marchioness d'Aubecourt. And he is a Vendéan! Elise, Elise, the ways of Providence are very wonderful. Good-bye, now, for I am off to our bookseller's, stricken with a new and most brilliant idea which ought to have occurred to me long ago.

(To be Continued.)

The French are again mooted the question of levelling the *enceinte* round Paris, and filling up the ditch. During the siege they were of no use, but, on the contrary, sadly hampered the troops when a sortie was decided upon, as many valuable hours were occupied getting the troops through the gates. The Minister of War has given his consent to the destruction under certain conditions:—1st. that the new line of exterior forts must be finished at the expense of the city by the construction of eight *redoubts*; 2nd. the adoption of a new *enceinte* traced in front of the line of the old detached forts, where there are no natural obstacles like the Seine and the Marne. The price of the new *enceinte*, about fifty miles in circumference, but which would not be continuous, is set down at 20,000,000 dols.

From an article which appears in the *Wexford People* we take the following extracts:—At the next general election the Irish public will have to face a difficulty of which they have had timely notice—the payment of their members—that is, if they mean to continue the game of Parliamentary warfare, which up to this at least has been a winning game, since Mr. Parnell assumed the leadership of the Irish party. The fact has now become plain to every order of intelligence that a representative who serves his country faithfully must needs surrender up his whole time to his Parliamentary duties while the House is in session. A hap-hazard visit, a speech on some great occasion, or a vote on a critical division, will not, as of old, satisfy the requirements of an Irish member. Men devoted to literature may, of course, by burning the candle at both ends, snatch a few hours each day or night from the Parliamentary treadmill, but for men engaged in business in Ireland to give the necessary time or the time that is expected from them, in Parliament, is utterly out of the question. Whatever way we may turn the subject, no matter from what standpoint we may view it, the practical question confronts us—will you pay your members? We have frequently shown that the system of having representatives directly in operation in almost every country ruled through the exercise of popular suffrage, and we have pointed out that the ruling classes in England who virtuously protest against *direct* payment have been paying themselves *indirectly* in a variety of form as well as in hard cash.