AT THE CHATEAU OF CORINNE.

BY CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON.

ON the shores of Lake Leman there are many villas. For several centuries the vine-clad banks have been a favorite resting-place for visitors from many nations. English, French, Germans, Austrians, Poles, and Russians are found in the circle of strangers whose gardens fringe the lake northward from Geneva, eastward from Lausanne, and southward from Vevey, Clarens, and Montreux. Not long ago an American joined this circle. The American was a lady named Winthrop.

Mrs. Winthrop's villa was not one of the larger residences. It was an old-fashioned square mansion, half Swiss, half French, ending in a high peaked roof, which came slanting sharply down over several narrowed half-stories, indicated by little windows like dove perches —four in the broadest part, two above, then one winking all alone under the peak. On the left side a round tower, inappropriate but picturesque, joined itself to the square outline of the main building; the round tower had also a peaked roof, which was surmounted by a contorted ornament of iron somewhat resembling a letter S. Altogether the villa was the sort of house which Americans are accustomed to call "quaint." Its name was quaint also—Miolans la Tour, or, more briefly, Miolans. Cousin Walpole pronounced this "Miaw-lins."

Mrs. Winthrop had taken possession of the villa in May, and it was now late in August; Lake Leman therefore had enjoyed her society for three long months. Through all this time, in the old lake's estimation, and notwithstanding the English, French, Germans, Austrians, Poles, and Russians, many of them titled, who were also upon its banks, the American lady remained an interesting presence. And not in the opinion of the old lake only, but in that also of other observers, less fluid and impersonal. Mrs. Winthrop was much admired. Miolans had entertained numerous guests during the summer; to-day, however, it held only the *bona fide* members of the family, namely, Mrs. Winthrop, her cousin Sylvia, and Mr. H. Walpole, Miss Sylvia's cousin. Mr. H. Walpole was always called "Cousin Walpole" by Sylvia, who took comfort in the name, her own (a grief to her) being neither more nor less than Pitcher. "Sylvia Pitcher" was not impressive, but "H. Walpole" could shine for two. If people supposed that H. stood for Horace, why, that was their own affair.

Mrs. Winthrop, followed by her great white dog, had strolled down toward the lake. After a while she came within sight of the gate; some one was entering. The porter's lodge was unoccupied save by two old busts that looked out from niches above the windows, much surprised that no one knew them. The newcomer surveyed the lodge and the busts; then opened the gate and came in. He was a stranger; a gentleman; an American. These three items Mrs. Winthrop's eyes told her, one by one, as she drew nearer. He now caught sight of her—a lady coming down the water-path, followed by a shaggy dog. He went forward to meet her, raising his hat. "I think this is Mrs. Winthrop. May I introduce myself? I am John Ford."

"Sylvia will be delighted," said Mrs. Winthrop, giving her hand in courteous welcome. "We have been hoping that we should see you, Mr. Ford, before the summer was over."

They stood a few moments, and then went up the plane-tree avenue toward the house. Mrs. Winthrop spoke the usual phrases of the opening of an acquaintance with grace and ease; her companion made the usual replies. He was quite as much at his ease as she was, but he did not especially cultivate grace. Sylvia, enjoying her conversation with Cousin Walpole, sat just within the hall door; she was taken quite by surprise. "Oh, John, how you startled me! I thought you were in Norway. But how very glad I am to see you, my dear, dear boy!" She stood on tiptoe to kiss him, with a moisture in her soft, faded, but still pretty eyes.

Mrs. Winthrop remained outside; there were garden chairs in the small porch, and she seated herself in one of them. She smiled a little when she heard Sylvia greet this mature specimen of manhood as a "dear, dear boy."

Cousin Walpole now came forward. "You are welcome, sir," he said, in his slender little voice. Then, bethinking

him of his French, he added, with dignity, "Welcome to Miaw-lins—Miaw-lins-lay-Tower."

Ford took a seat in the hall beside his aunt. She talked volubly: the surprise had excited her. But every now and then she looked at him with a far-off remembrance in her eyes: she was thinking of his mother, her sister, long dead. "How much you look like her!" she said at last. "The same profile — exact. And how beautiful Mary's profile was! Every one admired it."

Ford, who had been gazing at the rug, looked up; he caught Mrs. Winthrop's glance, and the gleam of merriment in it. "Yes, my profile is like my mother's, and therefore good," he answered, gravely. "It is a pity that my full face contradicts it. However, I live in profile as much as possible; I present myself edgewise."

"What *do* you mean, dear?" said Sylvia.

"I am like the new moon," he answered; "I show but a rim. All the rest I keep dark."

Mrs. Winthrop laughed; and again Ford caught her glance. What he had said of himself was true. He had a regular, clearly cut, delicately finished profile, but his full face contradicted it somewhat, showing more strength than beauty. His eyes were gray, without much expression, unless calmness can be called an expression; his hair and beard, both closely cut, were dark brown. As to his height, no one would have called him tall, yet neither would any one have described him as short. And the same phrasing might have been applied to his general appearance: no one would have called him handsome, yet neither would any one have classed him as ordinary. As to what is more important than looks, namely, manner, although his was quiet, and quite without pretension, a close observer could have discovered in it, and without much effort, that the opinions of John Ford (although never obtruded upon others) were in general sufficiently satisfactory to John Ford; and furthermore, that the opinions of other people, whether accordant or discordant with his own, troubled him little.

After a while all went down to the outlook to see the after-glow on Mont Blanc. Mrs. Winthrop led the way with Cousin Walpole, whose high bell-crowned straw hat had a dignity which no modern headcovering could hope to rival.

Sylvia followed, with her nephew. "You must come and stay with us, John," she said; "Katharine has so much company that you will find it entertaining, and even at times instructive. I am sure I have found it so; and I am, you know, your senior. We are alone to-day; but it is for the first time. Generally the house is full."

"But I do not like a full house," said Ford, smiling down upon the upturned face of the little "senior" by his side.

"You will like this one. It is not a commonplace society—by no means commonplace. The hours, too, are easy; breakfast, for instance, from nine to eleven—as you please. As to the quality of the—of the bodily support, it is sufficient to say that Marches is house-keeper. You remember Marches?"

"Perfectly. Her tarts no one could forget."

"Katharine is indebted to me for Marches," continued Sylvia. "I relinquished her to Katharine upon the occasion of her marriage, ten years ago; for she was totally inexperienced, you know — only seventeen."

"Then she is now twenty-seven."

"I should not have mentioned that," said Miss Pitcher, instinctively. "It was an inadvertence. Could you oblige me by forgetting it?"

"With the greatest ease. She is, then, sensitive about her age?"

"Not in the least. Why should she be? Certainly no one would ever dream of calling twenty-seven *old!*" (Miss Pitcher paused with dignity.) "You think her beautiful, of course?" she added.

"She is a fine-looking woman."

"Oh, John, that is what they always say of women who weigh two hundred! And Katharine is very slender."

Ford laughed. "I supposed the fact that Mrs. Winthrop was handsome went without the saying."

"It goes," said Sylvia, impressively, "but not without the saying; I assure you, by no means without the saying. It has been said this summer many times."

"And she does not find it fatiguing?"

The little aunt looked at her nephew. "You do not like her," she said, with a fine air of penetration, touching his coat sleeve lightly with one finger. "I see that you do not like her."

"My dear aunt! I do not know her in the least."

"Well, how does she impress you, then, *not* knowing her?" said Miss Pitcher, folding her arms under her little pink shawl with an impartial air.

He glanced at the figure in front. "How she impresses me?" he said. "She impresses me as a very attractive, but very complete, woman of the world."

A flood of remonstrance rose to Sylvia's lips; but she was obliged to repress it, because Mrs. Winthrop had paused, and was waiting for them.

"Here is one of our fairest little vistas, Mr. Ford," she said as they came up, showing him an oval opening in the shrubbery, through which a gleam of blue lake, a village on the opposite shore, and the arrowy snow-clad Silver Needle rising behind high in the upper blue, were visible, like a picture in a leaf frame. The opening was so narrow that only two persons could look through it. Sylvia and Cousin Walpole walked on.

"But you have seen it all before," said Mrs. Winthrop. "To you it is not something from fairy-land, hardly to be believed, as it is to me. Do you know, sometimes, when waking in the early dawn, before the prosaic little details of the day have risen in my mind, I ask myself, with a sort of doubt in the reality of it all, if this is Katharine Winthrop living on the shores of Lake Leman—herself really, and not her imagination only, her longing dream." It is very well uttered, with a touch of enthusiasm which carried it along, and which was in itself a confidence.

"Yes—ah—quite so. Yet you hardly look like a person who would think that sort of thing under those circumstances," said Ford, watching a bark, with the picturesque lateen-sails of Lake Leman, cross his green-framed picture from east to west.

Mrs. Winthrop let the hand with which she had made her little gesture drop. She stood looking at him. But he did not add anything to his remark, or turn his glance from the lateen-sails.

"What sort of a person, then, do I look like?" she said.

He turned. She was smiling; he smiled also. "I was alluding merely to the time you named. As it happened, my aunt had mentioned to me by chance your breakfast hours."

"That was not all, I think."

"You are very good to be interested."

"I am not good; only curious. Pray tell me."

"I have so little imagination, Mrs. Winthrop, that I cannot invent the proper charming interpretation as I ought. As to bald truth, of course you cannot expect me to present you with that during a first visit of ceremony."

"The first visit will, I hope, be a long one; you must come and stay with us. As to ceremony, if this is your idea of it—"

"—What must I be when unceremonious! I suppose you are thinking," said Ford, laughing. "On the whole, I had better make no attempts. The owl, in his own character, is esteemed an honest bird; but let him not try to be a nightingale."

"Come as owl, nightingale, or what you please, so long as you come. When you do, I shall ask you again what you meant."

"If you are going to hold it over me, perhaps I had better tell you now?"

"Much better."

"I only meant, then, that Mrs. Winthrop did not strike me as at all the sort of person who would allow anything prosaic to interfere with her poetical, heart-felt enthusiasms."

She laughed gayly. "You are delightful. You have such a heavy apparatus for fibbing that it becomes fairly stately. You do not believe I have any enthusiasms at all," she added. Her eyes were dark blue, with long lashes; they were very fine eyes.

"I will believe whatever you please," said John Ford.

"Very well. Believe what I tell you."

"You include only what you tell in words?"

"Plainly, you are not troubled by timidity," said the lady, laughing a second time.

"On the contrary, it is excess of timidity. It makes me desperate and crude."

They had walked on, and now came up with the others. "Does he amuse you?" said Sylvia, in a low tone, as Cousin Walpole in his turn walked onward with the new-comer. "I heard you laughing."

"Yes; but he is not at all what you said. He is so shy and ill at ease that it is almost painful."

"Dear me!" said the aunt, with con-

cern. "The best thing, then, will be for him to come and stay with us. You have so much company that it will be good for him; his shyness will wear off."

"I have invited him, but I doubt his coming," said the lady of the manor.

The outlook was a little terrace built out over the water. Mrs. Winthrop seated herself and took off her garden hat (Mrs. Winthrop had a very graceful head, and thick soft brown hair). "Not so close, Gibbon," she said, as the shaggy dog laid himself down beside her.

"You call your dog Gibbon?" said Ford.

"Yes; he came from Lausanne, where Gibbon lived; and I think he looks just like him. But pray put on your hat, Mr. Ford. A man in the open air, deprived of his hat, is always a wretched object, and always takes cold."

"I may be wretched, but I do not take cold," replied Ford, letting his hat lie.

"John *does* look very strong," said Sylvia, with pride.

"O fortunate youth—if he but knew his good fortune!" said Cousin Walpole. "From the Latin, sir; I do not quote the original tongue in the presence of ladies, which would seem pedantic. You do look strong indeed, and I congratulate you. I myself have never been an athlete; but I admire, and with impartiality, the muscles of the gladiator."

"Surely, Cousin Walpole, there is nothing in common between John and a gladiator!"

"Your pardon, Cousin Sylvia; I was speaking generally. My conversation, sir," said the bachelor, turning to Ford, "is apt to be general."

"No one likes personalities, I suppose," replied Ford, watching the last hues of the sunset.

"On the contrary, I am devoted to them," said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Oh no, Katharine; you malign yourself," said Sylvia. "You must not believe all she says, John."

"Mr. Ford has just promised to do that very thing," remarked Mrs. Winthrop.

"Dear me!" said Sylvia. Her tone of dismay was so sincere that they all laughed. "You know, dear, you have so much imagination," she said, apologetically, to her cousin.

"Mr. Ford has not," replied the younger lady; "so the exercise will do him no harm."

The sky behind the splendid white mass of Mont Blanc was of a deep warm gold; the line of snowy peaks attending the monarch rose irregularly against this radiance from east to west, framed by the dark nearer masses of the Salève and Voirons. The sun had disappeared, cresting with glory as he sank the soft purple summits of the Jura, and sending up a blaze of color in the narrow valley of the Rhone. Then, as all this waned slowly into grayness, softly, shyly, the lovely after-glow floated up the side of the monarch, tingeing all his fields of pure white ice and snow with rosy light as it moved onward, and resting on the far peak in the sky long after the lake and its shores had faded into night.

"This lake, sir," said Cousin Walpole, "is remarkable for the number of persons distinguished in literature who have at various times resided upon its banks. I may mention, cursorily, Voltaire, Sismondi, Gibbon, Rousseau, Sir Humphry Davy, D'Aubigné, Calvin, Grimm, Benjamin Constant, Schlegel, Châteaubriand, Byron, Shelley, the elder Dumas, and in addition that most eloquent authoress and noble woman Madame de Staël."

"The banks must certainly be acquainted with a large amount of fine language," said Ford.

"And oh! how we have enjoyed Coppet, John! You remember Coppet?" said Miss Pitcher. "We have had, I assure you, days and conversations there which I, for one, can never forget. Do you remember, Katharine, that moment by the fish-pond, when, carried away by the influences of the spot, Mr. Percival exclaimed, and with such deep feeling, '*Étonnante femme!*'"

"Meaning Mrs. Winthrop?" said Ford.

"No, John, no; meaning Madame de Staël," replied the little aunt.

Mr. Ford did not take up his abode at Miolans, in spite of his aunt's wish and Mrs. Winthrop's invitation. He preferred a little inn among the vineyards, half a mile distant. But he came often to the villa, generally rowing himself down the lake in a skiff; the skiff, indeed, spent most of its time moored at the water-steps of Miolans, for its owner accompanied the ladies in various excursions to Vevey, Clarens, Chillon, and southward to Geneva.

"I thought you had so much company," he said one afternoon to Sylvia, when they happened to be alone. "I

have been coming and going now for ten days, and have seen no one."

"These ten days were reserved for the Storms," replied Miss Pitcher. "But old Mrs. Storm fell ill at Baden-Baden, and what could they do!"

"Take care of her, I should say."

"Gilbert Storm was poignantly disappointed. He is, I think, on the whole, the best among Katharine's *outside* admirers."

"Then there are inside ones?"

"Several. You know Mr. Winthrop was thirty-five years older than Katharine. It was hardly to be expected, therefore, that she should love him—I mean in the *true* way."

"Whatever she might have done in the false."

"You are too cynical, my dear boy. There was nothing false about it; Katharine was simply a child. He was very fond of her, I assure you. And died most happily."

"For all concerned."

Sylvia shook her head. But Mrs. Winthrop's step was now heard in the hall; she came in with several letters in her hand. "Any news?" said Miss Pitcher.

"No," replied the younger lady. "Nothing ever happens any more."

"As Ronsard sang,

"'Le temps s'en va, le temps s'en va, ma dame!
Las! le temps non; mais nous nous en allons,'"

said Ford, bringing forward her especial chair.

"That is true," she answered, soberly, almost sombrely.

That evening the moonlight on the lake was surpassingly lovely; there was not a ripple to break the sheen of the water, and the clear outline of Mont Blanc rose like silver against the dark black-blue of the sky. They all strolled down to the shore; Mrs. Winthrop went out with Ford in his skiff, "for ten minutes." Sylvia watched the little boat float up and down for twenty; then she returned to the house and read for forty more. When Sylvia was down-stairs, she read the third canto of "Childe Harold"; in her own room she kept a private supply of the works of Miss Yonge. At ten, Katharine entered. "Has John gone?" said the aunt, putting in her mark and closing the Byronic volume.

"Yes; he came to the door, but would not come in."

"I wish he would come and stay. He might as well; he is here every day."

"That is the very point; he also goes every day," replied Katharine.

She was leaning back in her chair, her eyes fixed upon the carpet. Sylvia was going to say something more, when suddenly a new idea came to her. It was a stirring idea; she did not often have such inspirations; she remained silent, investigating it. After a while, "When do you expect the Carrols?" she said.

"Not until October."

Miss Pitcher knew this perfectly, but she thought the question might lead to further information. It did. "Miss Jay has written," pursued Mrs. Winthrop, her eyes still fixed absently on the carpet. "But I answered, asking her to wait until October, when the Carrols would be here. It will be much pleasanter for them both."

"She has put them off!" thought the little aunt. "She does not want any one here just at present." And she was so fluttered by the new possibilities rising round her like a cloud that she said good-night, and went upstairs to think them over; she did not even read Miss Yonge.

The next day Ford did not come to Miolans until just before the dinner hour. Sylvia was disappointed by this tardiness, but cheered when Katharine came in; for Mrs. Winthrop wore one of her most becoming dresses. "She wishes to look her best," thought the aunt. But, at this moment, in the twilight, a carriage came rapidly up the driveway and stopped at the door. "Why, it is Mr. Percival!" said Sylvia, catching a glimpse of the occupant.

"Yes; he has come to spend a few days," answered Mrs. Winthrop, going into the hall to greet her new guest.

Down fell the aunt's cloud-castle; but at the same moment a more personal feeling took its place in the modest little middle-aged breast; Miss Pitcher deeply admired Mr. Percival.

"You know who it is, of course?" she whispered to her nephew when she had recovered her composure.

"You said Percival, didn't you?"

"Yes; but this is Lorimer Percival—Lorimer Percival, the poet."

Katharine now came back. Sylvia sat waiting, and turning her bracelets round on her wrists. Sylvia's bracelets turned easily; when she took a book from the top shelf of the bookcase, they went to her shoulders.

Before long Mr. Percival entered. Din-

ner was announced. The conversation at the table was animated. From it Ford gathered that the new guest had spent several weeks at Miolans early in the season, and that he had also made since then one or two shorter visits. His manner was that of an intimate friend. The intimate friend talked well. Cousin Walpole's little candle illuminated the outlying corners. Sylvia supplied an atmosphere of general admiration. Mrs. Winthrop supplied one of beauty. She looked remarkably well—brilliant; her guest—the one who was not a poet—noticed this. He had time to notice it, as well as several other things, for he said but little himself; the conversation was led by Mr. Percival.

It was decided that they would all go to Coppet the next day—"dear Coppet," as Sylvia called it. The expedition seemed to be partly sacred and partly sylvan; a pilgrimage-picnic. When Ford took leave, Mrs. Winthrop and Mr. Percival accompanied him as far as the water-steps. As his skiff glided out on the calm lake, he heard the gentleman's voice suggesting that they should stroll up and down a while in the moonlight, and the lady's answer, "Yes; for ten minutes." He remembered that Mrs. Winthrop's ten minutes was sometimes an hour.

The next day they went to Coppet; Mrs. Winthrop and Mr. Percival in the carriage, Sylvia and Cousin Walpole in the phaeton, and Ford on horseback.

"Oh! isn't this almost *too* delightful?" said Miss Pitcher, when they reached the gates of the old Necker château. Cousin Walpole was engaged in tying his horse, and Mr. Percival had politely stepped forward to assist her from the phaeton. It is but fair, however, to suppose that her exclamation referred as much to the intellectual influences of the home of Madame de Staël as to the attentions of the poet. "I could live here, and I could die here," she continued, with ardor. But as Mr. Percival had now gone back to Mrs. Winthrop, she was obliged to finish her sentence to her nephew, which was not quite the same thing. "Couldn't *you*, John?" she said.

"It would be easy enough to die, I should say," replied Ford, dismounting.

"We must all die," remarked Cousin Walpole from the post where he was at work upon the horse. He tied that peaceful animal in such intricate and unexpected convolutions that it took Mrs. Winthrop's coachman, later, fully twenty minutes to comprehend and unravel them.

The Necker homestead is a plain old-fashioned château, built round three sides of a square, a court-yard within. From the end of the south side a long irregular wing of lower out-buildings stretches toward the road, ending in a thickened huddled knot along its margin, as though the country highway had refused to allow aristocratic encroachments, and had pushed them all back with determined hands. Across the three high pale-yellow façades of the main building the faded shutters were tightly closed. There was not a sign of life, save in a little square house at the end of the knot, where, as far as possible from the historic mansion he guarded, lived the old custodian, who strongly resembled the portraits of Benjamin Franklin.

Benjamin Franklin knew Mrs. Winthrop (and Mrs. Winthrop's purse). He hastened through the knot in his shuffling woollen shoes, and unlocked the court-yard entrance.

"We must go all through the dear old house again, for John's sake," said Sylvia.

"Do not sacrifice yourselves; I have seen it," said her nephew.

"But not lately, dear John."

"I am quite willing to serve as a pretext," he answered, leading the way in.

They passed through the dark old hall below, where the white statue of Necker gleams in solitude, and went up the broad stairway, the old custodian preceding them, and throwing open the barred shutters of room after room. The warm sunshine flowed in and streamed across the floors, the dim tapestries, the spindle-legged gilded furniture, and the Cupid-decked clocks. The old paintings on the walls seemed to waken slowly and survey them as they passed. Lorimer Percival seated himself in a yellow arm-chair, and looked about with the air of a man who was breathing a delicate aroma.

"This is the room where the 'incomparable Juliette' danced her celebrated gavotte," he remarked, "probably to the music of that old harpsichord—or is it a spinet?—in the corner."

"Pray tell us about it," entreated Sylvia, who had seated herself gingerly on the edge of a small ottoman embroidered with pink shepherdesses on a blue meadow, and rose-colored lambs. Mrs. Win-

throp meanwhile had appropriated a spindle-legged sofa, and was leaning back against a tapestried Endymion.

Percival smiled, but did not refuse Sylvia's request. He had not the objection which some men have to a monologue. It must be added, however, that for that sort of thing he selected his audience. Upon this occasion the outside element of John Ford, strolling about near the windows, was discordant, but not enough so to affect the admiring appreciation of the little group nearer his chair.

"Madame de Staël," he began, with his eyes on the cornice, "was a woman of many and generous enthusiasms. She had long wished to behold the grace of her lovely friend Madame Récamier, in her celebrated gavotte, well known in the salons of Paris, but as yet unseen by the exile of Coppet. By great good fortune there happened to be in the village, upon the occasion of a visit from Madame Récamier, a French dancing-master. Madame de Staël sent for him, and the enchanted little man had the signal honor of going through the dance with the beautiful Juliette, in this room, in the presence of all the distinguished society of Coppet: no doubt it was the glory of his life. When the dance was ended, Corinne, carried away by admiration, embraced with transport—"

"The dancing-master?" said Cousin Walpole, much interested.

"No; her *ravissante amie*."

Cousin Walpole, conscious that he had made a mistake, betook himself to the portrait near by. "Superb woman!" he murmured, contemplating it. "Superb!"

The portrait represented the authoress of *Corinne* standing, her talented head crowned by a majestic aureole of yellow satin turban, whose voluminous folds accounted probably for the scanty amount of material left for the shoulders and arms.

"If I could have had the choice," said Miss Pitcher, pensively gazing at this portrait, "I would rather have been that noble creature than any one else on history's page."

Later they went down to the old garden. It stretched back behind the house for some distance, shut in by a high stone wall. A long straight alley, shaded by even rows of trees, went down one side like a mathematical line; on the other there was some of the stiff landscape gardening of the last century. In the open space in the centre was a moss-grown fish-pond, and near the house a dignified little company of clipped trees. They strolled down the straight walk: this time Ford was with Mrs. Winthrop, while Sylvia, Mr. Percival, and Cousin Walpole were in front.

"I suppose she used to walk here," observed Mrs. Winthrop.

"In her turban," suggested Ford.

"Perhaps she has sat upon that very bench—who knows?—and mused," said Sylvia, imaginatively.

"Aloud, of course," commented her nephew. But these irreverent remarks were in undertone; only Mrs. Winthrop could hear them.

"No doubt they all walked here," observed the poet; "it was one of the customs of the time to take slow exercise daily in one of these dignified alleys. The whole society of Coppet was no doubt often here, Madame de Staël and her various guests, Schlegel, Constant, the Montmorency, Sismondi, Madame Récamier, and many others."

"Would that I too could have been of that company!" said Cousin Walpole, with warmth.

"Which one of the two ladies would you have accompanied down this walk, if choice had been forced upon you?" said Mrs. Winthrop.

"Which one?—Madame de Staël, of course," replied the little bachelor, chivalrously.

"And you, Mr. Percival?"

"With the one who had the intellect," replied the poet.

"We must be even more lacking in beauty than we suppose, Sylvia, since they all choose the plain one," said Katharine, laughing. "But you have not spoken yet, Mr. Ford: what would your choice have been?"

"Between the two, there would hardly have been one."

"Isn't that a little enigmatical?"

"John means that he admires them equally," explained the aunt.

"That is it," said her nephew.

Lunch was spread upon the grass. Mrs. Winthrop's coachman had made an impromptu carpet of carriage rugs and shawls. Percival threw himself down beside the ladies; Cousin Walpole, after trying various attitudes, took the one denominated "cross-legged." Ford surveyed

their group for a moment, then went off and came back with a garden bench; upon this he seated himself comfortably, with his back against a tree.

"You are not sufficiently humble, Mr. Ford," said Katharine.

"It is not a question of humility, but of grace. I have not the gifts of Mr. Percival."

Percival said nothing. He was graceful; why disclaim it?

"But you are very strong, John," said Sylvia, with an intention of consolation. "And if not exactly graceful, I am sure you are very well shaped."

Her hearers, including Ford himself, tried not to laugh, but failed. There was a burst of merriment.

"You think John does not need my encouragement?" said the little lady, looking at the laughers. "You think I forget how old he is? It is quite true, no doubt. But I remember him *so* well, you know, in his little white frock, with his dear little dimpled shoulders! He always would have bread and sugar, whether it was good for him or not, and he was so pretty and plump!"

These reminiscences provoked another peal.

"You may laugh," said Miss Pitcher, nodding her head sagely, "but he did eat a great deal of sugar. Nothing else would content him but that bowl on the high shelf."

"Do you still retain the same tastes, Mr. Ford?" said Katharine. "Do you still prefer what is out of reach—*on a high shelf*?"

"When one is grown," said Ford, "there is very little that is absolutely out of reach. It is, generally speaking, a question merely of determination, and—a long arm."

The sun sank; his rays came slanting under their tree, gilding the grass in bars. The conversation had taken a turn toward the society of the eighteenth century. Percival said the most. But a poet may well talk in a memorial garden, hushed and sunny, on a cushioned carpet under the trees, with a long-stemmed wineglass near his hand, and fair ladies listening in rapt attention. Ford, leaning back against his tree, was smoking a cigarette; it is to be supposed that he was listening also.

"Here is something I read the other day, at least as nearly as I can recall it," said the speaker. He was gazing at the tops of the trees on the other side of the pond. He had a habit of fixing his eyes upon something high above his hearers' heads when speaking. Men considered this an impertinence; but women had been known to allude to it as "dreamy."

"'Fair vanished ladies of the past,'" quoted the poet in his delightful voice, "'so charming even in your errors, do you merit the judgment which the more rigid customs of our modern age would pronounce upon you? Was that enthusiasm for virtue and for lofty sentiments with which your delicious old letters and memoirs, written in faded ink and flowing language, with so much wit and so much bad spelling, are adorned—was it all declamation merely, because, weighed in our severer balances, your lives were not always in accordance with it? Are there not other balances? And were you not, even in your errors, seeking at least an ideal that was fair? Striving to replace by a sensibility most devoted and tender, a morality which, in the artificial society that surrounded you, had become well-nigh impossible? Let us not forget how many of you, when the dread hour came, faced with unfaltering courage the horrors of the Revolution, sustained by your example the hearts of strong men which had failed them, and atoned on the red guillotine for the errors and follies of your whole generation with your delicate lives.'"

He paused. Then, in a lighter tone, added: "Charming vanished dames, in your powder and brocade, I salute you! I, for one, enroll myself among your faithful and tender admirers."

Mr. Percival remained two weeks at Miolans. He was much with Mrs. Winthrop. They seemed to have subjects of their own for conversation, for on several occasions when Ford came over in the morning they were said to be "in the library," and Miss Pitcher was obliged to confess that she did not feel at liberty to disturb them. She remarked, with a sigh, that it must be "very intellectual," and once she asked her nephew if he had not noticed the poet's "brow."

"Oh yes; he is one of those tall slim long-faced talking fellows whom you women are very apt to admire," said Ford.

Miss Pitcher felt as much wrath as her gentle nature allowed. But again her sentiments were divided, and she sacrificed her personal feelings. That even-

ing she confided to Katharine, under a pledge of deepest secrecy, her belief that "John" was "jealous."

Mrs. Winthrop greeted this confidence with laughter. Not discouraged, the aunt the next day confided to her nephew her conviction that, as regarded the poet, Katharine had not yet "at all made up her mind."

"That is rather cruel to Percival, isn't it?" said Ford.

"Oh, he too has many, many *friends*," said Sylvia, veering again.

"Fortunate fellow!"

At last Percival went. Ford was again the only visitor. And if he did not have long mornings in the library, he had portions not a few of afternoons in the garden. For if he came up the water-steps and found the mistress of the house sitting under the trees, with no other companion than a book, it was but natural that he should join her, and possibly make some effort to rival the printed page.

"You do not like driving?" she said one day. They were in the parlor, and the carriage was coming round; she had invited him to accompany them, and he had declined.

"Not with a coachman, I confess."

"There is always the phaeton," she said, carelessly.

He glanced at her, but she was examining the border of her lace scarf. "On the whole, I prefer riding," he answered, as though it was a question of general preferences.

"And Katharine rides *so* well!" said Sylvia, looking up from her wax flowers. Sylvia made charming wax flowers, generally water-lilies, because they were "so regular."

"There are no good horses about here," observed Ford. "I have tried them all. I presume at home in America you keep a fine one?"

"Oh, in America! That is too far off. I do not remember what I did in America," answered Mrs. Winthrop.

A day or two later. "You were mistaken about there being no good saddle-horses here," she remarked. "My coachman has found two; they are in the stable now."

"If you are going to be kind enough to offer one of them to me," he said, rather formally, after a moment's silence, "I shall then have the pleasure of some rides with you, after all."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Winthrop. "As you say—after all!" She was smiling. He smiled too, but shook his head. Sylvia did not see this little by-play. Whatever it meant, however, it did not prevent Ford's riding with Mrs. Winthrop several times, her groom following. Miss Pitcher watched these little excursions with much interest.

Meanwhile letters from Lorimer Percival came to Miolans almost daily. "That is the Percival crest," said Sylvia to her nephew, one of these epistles, which had just arrived, being on the hall table, seal upward, as they passed. "*So* appropriate for a poet, I think—a flame."

"Ah! I took it for steam," said Ford.

Now the elder Percival had been a successful builder of locomotives. "John," said Miss Pitcher, solemnly, "do you mean that for derision?"

"Derision, my dear aunt! There is nothing in the world so powerful as steam. If I only had more, I too might be a poet. Or if my father had had more, I too might have enjoyed a fortune."

"Mr. Percival enjoys no fortune," said Sylvia, still solemnly.

"What has he done with it, then? Enjoyed it all out?"

"He tells me that it dissolved, like a mist, in his grasp."

"Yes; they call it by various names," said Ford.

Mrs. Winthrop, dressed in her habit, now came down the stairway; she took the letter and put it in her pocket. That day the groom could not accompany them: the horse he rode was lame. "We are sufficiently brave to do without him for one afternoon, are we not?" said the lady.

"I confess I am timid; but I will do my best," answered Ford, assisting her to mount. Sylvia, standing in the doorway, thought this a most unfortunate reply.

They rode southward. "Shall we stop for a few moments?" said Katharine, as they came toward Coppet.

"Yes; for ten," he answered.

The old custodian let them in, and threw open the windows as before. The visitors went out on the little shelf-like balcony which opened from the drawing-room.

"You notice there is no view, or next to none," said Ford, "although we are on the shore of Lake Leman, and under the shadow of Mont Blanc. They did not care for views in the eighteenth century;

that is, views of the earth; they were all for views of the 'soul.' Madame de Staël detested the country; to the last, Coppet remained to her a dreary exile. She was the woman who frankly said that she would not cross the room to look at the Bay of Naples, but would walk twenty miles to talk with an agreeable man."

"They were as rare then, it seems, as they are now," said Mrs. Winthrop. "But to-day we go more than twenty miles; we go to Europe."

"She did the same; that is, what was the same in her day; she went to Germany. There she found two rather agreeable men—Goethe and Schiller. Having found them, she proceeded to talk to them. They confessed to each other, long afterward, the deep relief they felt when that gifted woman departed."

"Ah, well, all she wanted, all she was seeking, was sympathy."

"She should have waited until it came to her."

"But if it never came?"

"It would—if she had not been so eager and voracious. The truth is, Corinne was an inordinate egotist. She expected all minds to defer to her superiority, while at the very moment she was engaged in extracting from them any poor little knowledge or ideas they might possess which could serve her own purposes. All her books were talked into existence; she talked them before she wrote them. It was her custom, at the dinner-table here at Coppet, to introduce the subject upon which she was engaged, and all her guests were expected, indeed forced, to discuss it with her in all its bearings, to listen to all she herself had to say, and never to depart from the given line by the slightest digression until she gave the signal. The next morning, closeted in her own room, she wrote out the results of all this, and it became a chapter."

"She was a woman of genius, all the same," said Mrs. Winthrop, in a disagreeing tone.

"A woman of genius! And what is the very term but a stigma? No woman is so proclaimed by the great brazen tongue of the Public unless she has thrown away her birthright of womanly seclusion for the miserable mess of pottage called 'fame.'"

"The seclusion of a convent? or a prison?"

"Neither. Of a home."

"You perhaps commend obedience, also?"

"In one way—yes."

"I'm glad to know there are other ways."

"I shall be very obedient to the woman I love, in several of those other ways," replied Ford, gathering some of the ripening grapes near the balcony rail.

Mrs. Winthrop went back into the faded drawing-room. "It is a pity there is no portrait here of Madame Récamier," she remarked. "That, you might have admired."

"The 'incomparable Juliette' was at least not literary. But in another way she was as much before the public as though she had been what you call a woman of genius. It may be said, indeed, that she had genius—a genius for attracting admiration."

"You are hard to please."

"Not at all; I ask only the simple and retiring womanly graces. But anything retiring was hard to find in the eighteenth century."

"You dislike literary women very much," said Mrs. Winthrop. She had crossed the room to examine an old mirror made of squares of glass, welded together by little leaden frames, which had once been gilded.

"Hardly. I pity them."

"You did not know, then, that I was one?"

He had crossed the room also, and was now standing behind her; as she asked the question she looked at his image in the glass.

"I did not know it," he answered, looking at hers.

"I am, anonymously."

"Better anonymously than avowedly."

"Will you read something I have written?"

"Thanks. I am not in the least a critic."

"I know that; you are too prejudiced, too narrow, to be one. All the same, will you read?"

"If you insist."

"I do insist. What is more, I have it with me. I have had it for several days, waiting for a good opportunity." She drew from her pocket a small flat package, and gave it to him.

"Must it be now?"

"Here and now. Where could we find a more appropriate atmosphere?"

He seated himself and opened the parcel; within was a small square book in flexible covers, in decoration paper and type, a daintily rich little volume.

"Ah! I know this," he said. "I read it when it first came out."

"So much the better. You can give me your opinion without the trouble of reading."

"It received a good deal of praise, I remember," he said, turning over the leaves.

She was silent.

"There was a charming little description somewhere—about going out on the Campagna to gather the wild narcissus," he went on, after a pause.

And then there was another silence.

"But—" said Mrs. Winthrop.

"But, as you kindly suggest, I am no judge of poetry. I can say nothing of value."

"Say it, valuable or not. Do you know, Mr. Ford, that you have scarcely spoken one really truthful word to me since we first met. Yet I feel sure that it does not come natural to you, and that it has cost you some trouble to—to—"

"To decorate, as I have, my plain speech. But if that is true, is it not a compliment?"

"And do I care for your compliments? I have compliments in abundance, and much finer ones than yours. What I want from you is the truth, your real opinion of that little volume in your hand. You are the only man I have met in years who seems to feel no desire to flatter me, to make me think well of myself. I see no reason why I should not think well of myself; but, all the same, I am curious. I can see that you judge me impartially, even severely."

She paused. He did not look up or disclaim; he went on turning the pages of the little volume.

She had not seated herself; she was standing beside a table opposite him. "I can see that you do not in the least like me," she added, in a lower tone.

"My dear lady, you have so many to like you!" said Ford.

And then he did look up; their eyes met.

A flush came to her cheeks. He shut the little book and rose.

"Really, I am too insignificant a victim," he said, bowing as he returned it.

"You mean that I—that I have tried—"

"Oh no; you do it naturally."

For the moment her self-possession had failed her. But now she had it in hand again. "If I *have* tried, naturally or artificially, I have made a failure—have I not?"

"It must be a novel experience for Mrs. Winthrop."

She turned away and looked at a portrait of Voltaire. After some moments, "Let us come back to the real point between us," she said, as he did not speak; "that is, your opinion of my little book."

"Is that the real point between us?"

"Of course it is. We will walk up and down Corinne's old rooms, and you shall tell me as we walk."

"Why do you force me to say unpleasant things?"

"They are unpleasant, then? I knew it! Unpleasant for me."

"For us both."

"For you, I doubt it. For me, they cannot be more unpleasant than the things you have already said. Yet you see I forgive them."

"Yes; but I have not forgiven you, Mrs. Winthrop."

"For what, pray?"

"For proposing to make me a victim."

"Apparently you had small difficulty in escaping."

"As you say—apparently. But perhaps I conceal my wounds."

"You are trying to turn the subject, so that I will not insist about the little book."

"I wish, indeed, that you would not insist."

"But if I am the sort of woman you have indicated, I should think you would enjoy punishing me a little."

"A little, perhaps. But this would be too severe."

They were walking slowly through the rooms; she turned her head and looked at him. "I have listened to you, Mr. Ford; I have let you say pretty much what you pleased to me, because it was amusing. But you cannot seriously believe that I really care for what you say, severe or otherwise?"

"Only as any right-minded woman must care."

"Say on. Now I insist."

"Good-by to Miolans, then. You will never admit me within its gates again; that is, unless you have the unusual justice—unusual in a woman—to see that what I say is but the severity of a true friend."

"A friend is not severe."

"Yes, he is; in such a case as this, must be."

"Go on. I will decide afterward."

They entered the third room. Ford reflected a moment; then began. "The poem, which you now tell me is yours, had, as its distinguishing feature, a certain daring. Regarding its other points: its rhythm was crude and unmelodious; its coloring was exaggerated—reading it, one was cloyed with color; its logic—for there was an attempt at logic—was utterly weak." He paused. Mrs. Winthrop was looking straight before her at the wall across the end of the last room in the vista. Her critic did not lift his eyes, but transferred his gaze from one section of the dark old floor to the next as they walked onward.

"All this, however," he resumed, "could be forgiven. We do not expect great poems from women any more than we expect great pictures; we do not expect strong logic any more than we expect brawny muscle. A woman's poetry is subjective. But what cannot be forgiven—at least in my opinion—is that which I have called the distinguishing feature of the volume, a certain sort of daring. This is its essential, unpardonable sin. Not because it is in itself dangerous; it has not force enough for that; but because it comes, and can be recognized at once as coming, from the lips of a woman. For a woman should not dare in that way. Thinking to soar, she invariably descends. Her mental realm is not the same as that of man; lower, on the same level, or far above, it is at least different. And to see her leave it, and come in all her white purity, which must inevitably be soiled, to the garish arena where men are contending, where the dust is rising, and the air is tainted and heavy—this is indeed a painful sight. Every honest man feels like going to her, poor mistaken sibyl that she is, closing her lips with gentle hand, and leading her away to some far spot among the quiet fields, where she can learn her error, and begin her life anew. To the pity of it is added the certain truth that if the words she sang could be carried out to their logical end, if they were to be clothed in the hard realities of life and set up before her, they would strike first the poor creature who was chanting them, and crush her to the dust. Fortunately there is no danger of this; it is among the impossibilities. And sometimes the poor sibyls learn, and through the teachings of their own hearts, their great mistake." As he ended, for the first time he lifted his eyes from the floor and looked at her.

Katharine Winthrop's face was flushed; the dark color extended over her forehead and dyed even her throat, and there was an expression as though only by a strong effort was a tremor of the lips controlled. This gave to her mouth a fixed look. She was so unlike herself, veiled in that deep, steady, painful blush, that, involuntarily and earnestly, Ford said, "I beg you not to mind it so much."

"I mind only that you should dare to say such things to me," she answered, slowly, as though utterance was an effort.

"Remember that you forced me to speak."

"I did not expect—this."

"How could I know what you expected? But in one way I am glad you made me go on; it is well that you should have for once a man's true opinion."

"All men do not think as you think."

"Yes, they do; the honest ones."

"Mr. Percival does not."

"Oh, Percival! He's effeminate."

"So you judge him," said Mrs. Winthrop, to whose utterance anger had now restored the distinctness.

"We will not quarrel about Lorimer Percival," said Ford; "he is not worth it—at least he is not worth it to me." Then, as they entered the last room, "Take it as I meant it, Katharine," he said, the tone of his voice changing—"take it as a true woman should. Show me the sweet side of your nature, the gentle, womanly side, and I will then be your suitor indeed, and a far more real and earnest one than though I had become the victim you intended me to be. You may not care for me; you may never care. But only let me see you accept for your own sake what I have said, in the right spirit, and I will at least ask you to care, as humbly and devotedly as man ever asked woman. For when she is her true self she is so far above us that we can only be humble."

The flush still covered her forehead; her eyes looked at him, strangely and darkly blue in all this red.

"Curious, isn't it, how things come about?" she said. "You have made me a declaration, after all."

"A conditional one."

"No, not conditional in reality, although you might have pleased yourself with the fancy. For I need not have been in earnest. I had only to pretend a little, to pretend to be the acquiescent creature you admire, and I could have turned you round my little finger. It is rather a pity I did not do it. It might have been entertaining."

He had watched her as she spoke. "I do not in the least believe you," he said, gravely.

"It is not of much consequence whether you believe me or not. I think, on the whole, however, that I may as well take this occasion to tell you what you seem not to have suspected: I am engaged to Mr. Percival."

"Of course, then, you were angry when I spoke of him as I did. But I beg you will do me the justice to believe that I never for a moment dreamed that he was anything to Mrs. Winthrop."

"Your dreams must be unobservant."

"I knew that he was with you, of course, and that you received his letters—there is one in your pocket now. But it made no impression upon me; that is, as far as you were concerned."

"And why not? Even in the guise of an apology, Mr. Ford, you succeed in insinuating your rudeness. What you have said, when translated, simply means that you never dreamed that Mrs. Winthrop could be interested in Mr. Percival. And why should she not be interested? But the truth is, there is such an infinite space between you that you cannot in the least comprehend him." She turned toward the door which led to the stairway.

"That is very possible," said Ford. "But I have not now the honor to be a rival of Mr. Percival's, even as an unfavored suitor; you did not comply with my condition."

They went down the stairs, past the shining statue of Necker, and out into the sunshine. Benjamin Franklin brought forward the horses, and Ford assisted her to mount. "You prefer that I should not go with you," he said; "but of course I must. We cannot always have things just as we wish them in this vexatious world, you know."

The flush on her face was still deep; but she had recovered herself sufficiently to smile. "We will select subjects that will act as safe conductors down to commonplace," she said. They did. Only at the gate of Miolans was any allusion made to the preceding conversation.

He had said good-by; the two riding-gloves had formally touched each other. "It may be for a long time," he remarked. "I start toward Italy this evening; I shall go to Chambéry and Turin."

She passed him; her horse turned into the plane-tree avenue. "Do not suppose that I could not have been, that I could not be—if I chose—all you described," she said, looking back.

"I know you could. It was the possibilities in you which attracted me, and made me say what I did."

"*That* for your possibilities!" she answered, making the gesture of throwing something lightly away.

He lifted his hat; she smiled, bowed slightly, and rode onward out of sight. He took his horse to the stables, went down to the water-steps, and unmoored his skiff. The next day Sylvia received a note from him; it contained his good-by, but he himself was already on the way to Italy.

The following summer found Miss Pitcher again at Miolans. But although her little figure was still seen going down to the outlook at sunset, although she still made wax flowers and read (with a mark) "Childe Harold," it was evident that she was not as she had been. She was languid, mournful, and by August these adjectives were no longer sufficient to describe her condition, for she was now seriously ill. Her nephew, who was spending the summer in Scotland, was notified by a letter from Cousin Walpole. In answer he travelled southward to Lake Leman without an hour's delay; for Sylvia and himself were the only ones of their blood on the old side of the Atlantic, and if the gentle little aunt was to pass from earth in a strange land, he wished to be beside her.

But Sylvia did not pass. Her nephew read her case so skilfully, and with the others tended her so carefully, that in three weeks' time she was lying on a couch by the window, with "Childe Harold" again by her side. But if she was now well enough for a little literature, she was also well enough for a little conversation.

"I suppose you were much surprised, John, to find Katharine still Mrs. Winthrop?"

"No, not much."

"But she told me that she had mentioned to you her engagement."

"Yes, she mentioned it."

"You speak as though she was one of the women who make and break engagements lightly. But she is not, I assure you: far from it."

"She broke this one, it seems."

"One breaking does not make a—breaker," said Sylvia, thinking vaguely of "swallows," and nearly saying "summer." She paused, then shook her head sadly. "I have never understood it," she said, with a deep sigh. "It lasted, I know, until the very end of June. I think I may say, without exaggeration, that I spent the entire month of July, day and night, picturing to myself his sufferings."

"You took more time than he did. He was married before July was ended."

"Simply despair."

"Despair took on a cheerful guise. Some of the rest of us might not object to it in such a shape."

But Miss Pitcher continued her dirge. "So terrible for such a man! A mere child—only seventeen!"

"And he is—"

"Thirty-seven years, eight months, and nine days," answered the lady, in the tone of an obituary. "Twenty years younger than he is! Of course she cannot in the least appreciate the true depth of his poetry."

"He may not care for that, you know, if she appreciates him," said Ford—Miss Pitcher thought, heartlessly.

During these three weeks of attendance upon his aunt he had, of course, seen Mrs. Winthrop daily. Generally he met her in the sick-room, where she gave to the patient a tender and devoted care. If she was in the drawing-room when he came down, Cousin Walpole was there also; he had not once seen her alone. He was not staying at Miolans, although he spent most of his time there; his abode nominally was a farm-house near by. Sylvia improved daily, and early in September her nephew prepared for departure. He was going to Heidelberg. One beautiful morning he felt in the mood for a long farewell ride. He sent word to Sylvia that he should not be at Miolans before evening, mounted, and rode off at a brisk pace. He was out all day under the blue sky, and enjoyed it. He had some wonderful new views of Mont Blanc, some exhilarating speed over tempting stretches of road, a lunch at a rustic inn among the vineyards, and the uninterrupted companionship of his own thoughts. Toward five o'clock, on his way home, he came by Coppet. Here the idle ease of the long day was broken by the small accident of his horse losing a shoe. He took him to the little blacksmith's shop in the village; then, while the work was in slow Swiss progress, he strolled back up the ascent toward the old château.

A shaggy white dog came to meet him; it was his friend Gibbon, and a moment later he recognized Mrs. Winthrop's groom, holding his own and his mistress's horse. Mrs. Winthrop was in the garden, so Benjamin Franklin said. He opened the high gate set in the stone wall, and went down the long walk.

She was at the far end; her back was toward him, and she did not hear his step; she started when he spoke her name. But she recovered herself immediately, smiled, and began talking with much the same easy graceful manner she had shown upon his first arrival at Miolans, when they met at the gate the year before. This meant that she had put him back as an acquaintance where he was then.

He did not seem unwilling to go. They strolled onward for ten minutes; then Mrs. Winthrop said that she must start homeward; they turned toward the gate. They had been speaking of Sylvia's illness and recovery. "I often think when I look at my little aunt," said Ford, "how pretty she must have been in her youth. And, by-the-way, just before leaving Scotland I met a lady who reminded me of her, or rather of my idea of what she must have been—it was Mrs. Lorimer Percival."

"She is charming, I am told," said the lady beside him.

"I don't know about the charming; I dislike the word. But she is very lovely, and very lovable."

"Did you see much of her?"

"I saw her several times; but only saw her. We did not speak."

"You judge, then, by appearance merely?"

"In this case—yes. Her nature is written on her face."

"All are at liberty to study it, then. Pray describe her."

He was silent. Then, "If I comply," he said, "will you bear in mind that I am quite well aware that that which makes

this little lady's happiness is something that Mrs. Winthrop, of her own accord, has cast aside as nothing worth?" As he rounded off this phrase he turned and looked at her.

But she did not meet his eyes. "I will remember," she answered.

He waited. But she said nothing more.

"Mrs. Percival," he resumed, "is a beautiful young girl, with a face like a wild flower in the woods. She has an expression which is to me enchanting—an expression of sweet and simple goodness, and gentle confiding trust. One is thankful to have even seen such a face."

"You speak warmly. I am afraid you are jealous of poor Mr. Percival."

"He did not strike me as poor. If I was jealous, it was not the first time. He was always fortunate."

"Perhaps there are other wild flowers in the woods; you must search more diligently." She opened the gate, passed through, and signalled to her groom.

"That is what I am trying to do; but I do not succeed. It is terribly lonely work sometimes."

"What a confession of weakness!"

He placed her in the saddle. "It may be. At any rate, it is the truth. But women do not believe in truth for its own sake; it strikes them as crude."

"You mean cruel," said Katharine Winthrop. She rode off, the groom and Gibbon following. He went back to the blacksmith's shop. The next day he went to Heidelberg.

But he had not seen the last of Corinne's old château. On the 25th of October he was again riding up the plane-tree avenue of Miolans, this time under bare boughs.

"Oh, John! dear John!" said Miss Pitcher, hurrying into the drawing-room when she was told he was there. "How glad I am to see you! But how did you know—I mean, how did you get here at this time of year?"

"By railway and on horseback," he answered. "I like autumn in the country. And I am very glad to see you looking so well, Aunt Sylvia."

But if Sylvia was well in body, she was ill at ease in mind. She began sentences and did not finish them; she often held her little handkerchief to her lips as if repressing herself. Cousin Walpole had gone to Geneva, "on business for Katharine." No, Katharine was not with him; she was out riding somewhere. She was not well, and needed the exercise. Katharine, too, was fond of autumn in the country. But Sylvia found it rainy. After a while Ford took leave, promising to return in the evening. When he reached the country road he paused, looking up and down it for a moment; then he turned his horse southward. It was a dreary day for a ride; a long autumn rain had soaked the ground, clouds covered the sky, and a raw wind was blowing. He rode at a rapid pace, and when he came toward Coppet, he again examined the wet track, then turned toward the château. He was not mistaken; Mrs. Winthrop's horse was there. There was no groom this time; the horse was tied in the courtyard. Benjamin Franklin said that the lady was in the garden, and he said it muffled in a worsted cap and a long wadded coat that came to his heels. No doubt he permitted himself some wonder over the lady's taste.

The lady was at the end of the long walk as before. But to-day the long walk was a picture of desolation; all the bright leaves, faded and brown, were lying on the ground in heaps so sodden that the wind could not lift them, strongly as it blew. Across one end of this vista stretched the blank stone wall, its grayness streaked with wet spots; across the other rose the old château among the bare trees, cold, naked, and yellow, seeming to have already begun its long winter shiver. But men do not mind such things as women mind them. A dull sky and stretch of blank stone wall do not seem to them the end of the world—as they seemed at that moment to Katharine Winthrop. This time she heard his step; perhaps he intended that she should hear it. She turned.

Her face was pale; her eyes, with the dark shadows under them, looked larger than usual. She returned his greeting quietly; her trouble, whatever it was, did not apparently connect itself with him.

"You should not be walking here, Mrs. Winthrop," he said as he came up; "it is too wet."

"It is wet; but I am going now. You have been at Miolans?"

"Yes. I saw my aunt. She told me you were out riding somewhere. I thought perhaps you might be here."

"Is that all she told you?"

"I think so. No; she did say that you were fond of autumn in the country. So

am I. Wouldn't it be wise to stop at the old man's cottage, before remounting, and dry your shoes a little?"

"I never take cold."

"Perhaps we could find a pair in the village that you could wear."

"It is not necessary. I will ride rapidly; the exercise will be the best safeguard."

"Do you know why I have come back?" he said, abandoning the subject of the shoes.

"I do not," answered the lady. She looked very sad and weary.

"I have come back, Katharine, to tell you plainly and humbly that I love you. This time I make no conditions; I have none to make. Do with me as you please: I must bear it. But believe that I love you with all my heart. It has been against my will; I have not been willing to admit it to myself; but of late the certainty has forced itself upon me so overwhelmingly that I had no resource left save to come to you. I am full of faults; but—I love you. I have said many things that displeased you deeply; but—I love you. Do not deliberate. Send me away—if go I must—now. Keep me—if you will keep me—now. You can punish me afterward."

They had been walking onward, but now he stopped. She stopped also; but she said nothing; her eyes were downcast.

"It is a real love I offer you," he said, in a low tone. Then, as still she did not speak, "I will make you very happy, Katharine," he added.

Her face had remained pale, but at this assertion of his a slight color rose, and a smile showed itself faintly. "You are always so sure!" she murmured. And then she laughed, a little low, sweet, sudden laugh.

"Let him laugh who wins," said Ford, triumphantly. The old streaked stone wall, if dreary, was at least high; no one saw him but one very wet and bedraggled little bird, who was in the tree above. This bird was so much cheered (it must have been that) that he immediately chirruped one note quite briskly, and coming out on a drier twig, began to arrange his soaked feathers.

"Now," said Ford, "we will have those shoes dried, whether you like it or not. No more imprudence allowed. How angry you were when I said we might find a pair in the village that you could wear! Of course I meant children's size." He had drawn her hand through his arm, and was going toward the gate.

But she freed herself and stopped. "It is all a mistake," she said, hurriedly. "It means nothing. I am not myself to-day. Do not think of it."

"Certainly I shall not trouble myself to think of it much when — what is so much better—I have it."

"No; it is nothing. Forget it. I shall not see you again. I am going back to America immediately—next week."

He looked at her as she uttered these short sentences. Then he took her hands in his. "I know about the loss of your fortune, Katharine; you need not tell me. No, Sylvia did not betray you. I heard it quite by chance from another source while I was still in Heidelberg. That is the reason I came."

"The reason you came!" she repeated, moving from him, with the old proud light coming back into her eyes. "You thought I would be overwhelmed—you thought that I would be so broken that I would be glad—you pitied me—you came to help me? And you were *sure*—" She stopped; her voice was shaking.

"Yes, Katharine, I did pity you. Yes, I came to help you if you would let me. But I was not sure. I was sure of nothing but my own obstinate love, which burst out uncontrollably when I thought of you in trouble. I have never thought of you in that way before; you have always had everything. The thought has brought me straight to your side."

But she was not softened. "I withdraw all I have said," she answered. "You have taken advantage."

"As it happens, you have said nothing. As to taking advantage, of course I took advantage: I was glad enough to see your pale face and sad eyes. But that is because you have always carried things with such a high hand. First and last, I have had a great deal of bad treatment."

"That is not true."

"Very well; then it is not. It shall be as you please. Do you want me to go down on my knees to you on this wet gravel?"

But she still turned from him.

"Katharine," he said, in a graver tone, "I am sorry on your account that your fortune is gone, or nearly gone; but on my own, how can I help being glad? It was a barrier between us, which, as I am,

and as you are—but principally as you are—would have been, I fear, a hopeless one. I doubt if I should ever have surmounted it. Your loss brings you nearer to me—the woman I deeply love, love in spite of myself. Now if you are my wife—and a tenderly loved wife you will be—you will in a measure be dependent upon your husband, and that is very sweet to a self-willed man like myself. Perhaps in time I can even make it sweet to you."

A red spot burned in each of her cheeks. "It is very hard," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Well, on the whole, life *is* hard," answered John Ford. But the expression in his eyes was more tender than his words. At any rate, it seemed to satisfy her.

"Do you know what I am going to do?" he said, some minutes later. "I am going to make Benjamin Franklin light a fire on one of those old literary hearths at the château. Your shoes shall be dried in the presence of Corinne herself (who must, however, have worn a much larger pair). And while they are drying I will offer a formal apology for any past want of respect, not only to Corinne, but to all the other portraits, especially to that blue-eyed Madame Necker in her very tight white satin gown. We will drink their healths in some of the native wine. If you insist, I will even make an effort to admire the yellow turban."

He carried out his plan. Benjamin Franklin, tempted by the fee offered, and relying no doubt upon the gloomy weather as a barrier against discovery, made a bright fire upon one of the astonished hearths, and brought over a flask of native wine, a little loaf, and some fine grapes. Ford arranged these on a spindle-legged table, and brought forward an old tapestried arm-chair for Katharine. Then, while she sat sipping her wine and drying her shoes before the crackling flame, he went gravely round the room, glass in hand, pausing before each portrait to bow ceremoniously and drink to its health and long life—probably in a pictorial sense. When he had finished the circuit, "Here's to you all, charming vanished ladies of the past," he said; "may you each have every honor in the picturesque, powdered, unorthographic age to which you belong, and never by any possibility step over into ours!"

"That last touch has spoiled the whole," said the lady in the tapestried chair.

But Ford declared that an expression in Madame Necker's blue eye approved his words.

He now came back to the hearth. "This will never do," he said. "The shoes are not drying; you must take them off." And with that he knelt down and began to unbutton them. But Katharine, agreeing to obey orders, finished the task herself. The old custodian, who had been standing in the doorway laughing at Ford's portrait pantomime, now saw an opportunity to make himself useful; he came forward, took one of the shoes, put it upon his hand, and kneeling down, held it close to the flame. The shoes were little boots of dark cloth like the habit, slender, dainty, and made with thin soles; they were for riding, not walking. Ford brought forward a second arm-chair and sat down. "The old room looks really cheerful," he said. "The portraits are beginning to thaw; presently we shall see them smile."

Katharine too was smiling. She was also blushing a little. The blush and slight embarrassment made her look like a school-girl.

"Where shall we go for the winter?" said Ford. "I can give you one more winter over here, and then I must go home and get to work again. And as we have so little foreign time left, I suggest that we lose none of it, and begin our married life at once. Don't be alarmed; he does not understand a word of English. Shall we say, then, next week?"

"No."

"Are you waiting to know me better? Take me, and make me better."

"What are your principal faults—I mean besides those I already know?" she said, shielding her face from the heat of the fire with her riding gauntlets.

"I have very few. I like my own way; but it is always a good way. My opinions are rather decided ones; but would you like an undecided man? I do not enjoy general society, but I am extremely fond of the particular. I think that is all."

"And your obstinacy?"

"Only firmness."

"You are narrow, prejudiced; you do not believe in progress of any kind. You would keep women down with an iron hand."

"A velvet one."

The custodian now took the other shoe.

"He will certainly stretch them with

that broad palm of his," said Ford. "But perhaps it is as well; you have a habit of wearing shoes that are too small. What ridiculous little affairs those are! Will twelve pairs a year content you?"

A flush rose in her cheeks; she made no reply.

"It will be very hard for you to give up your independence, your control of things," he said.

But she turned toward him with a very sweet expression in her eyes. "You will do it all for me," she answered.

He rose, walked about the room, coming back to lean over the gilded top of her chair and say, with emphasis, "What in the world does that old wretch mean by staying here so persistently all this time?"

She laughed. Benjamin Franklin, looking up from his task, laughed too—probably on general principles of sociability and appreciation of his fee.

"To go back to your faults," she said; "please come and sit down, and acknowledge them. You have a very jealous nature."

"You are mistaken. However, if you like jealousy, I can easily take it up."

"It will not be necessary. It is already there."

"You are thinking of some particular instance; of whom did you suppose I was jealous?"

But she would not say.

After a while he came back to it. "You thought I was jealous of Lorimer Percival," he said.

The custodian now announced that both shoes were dry; she put them on, buttoning them with an improvised button-hook made of a hair-pin. The old man stood straightening himself after his bent posture; he still smiled—probably on the same general principles. The afternoon was drawing toward its close; Ford asked him to bring round the horses. He went out; they could hear his slow, careful tread on each of the slippery stairs. Katharine had risen; she went to the mirror to adjust her riding-hat. Ford came up and stood behind her. "Do you remember when I looked at you in the glass, in this same way, a year ago?" he said.

"How you talked to me that day about my poor little book! You made me feel terribly."

"I am sorry. Forgive it."

"But you do not forgive the book?"

"I will forget it, instead. You will write no more."

"Always so sure! However, I will promise, if you acknowledge that you have a jealous disposition."

She spoke gayly. He watched her in the glass a moment, then drew her away. "Whether I have a jealous disposition or not I do not know," he answered. "But I was never jealous of Lorimer Percival; I held him in too light estimation. And I did not believe—no, not at any time—that you loved him; he was not a man whom you would love. Why you allowed yourself to become engaged to him I do not know; but I suspect it was because he flattered what you thought your literary talent. I do not believe you would ever have married him; you would have drawn back at the last moment. To be engaged to him was one thing, to marry him another. You kept your engagement along for months, when there was no reason at all for the delay. If you had married him I should have thought the less of you, but I should not have been jealous." He paused. "I might never have let you know it, Katharine," he went on; "but I prefer that there should be nothing but the truth between us. I know that it was Percival who broke the engagement at the last, and not you. I knew it when I was here in the summer. He himself told me when I met him in Scotland just after his marriage."

She broke from him. "How base are all men!" she said, in a voice unlike her own.

"In him it was simply egotism. He knew that I had known of his engagement to you, and he wished me to appreciate that in order to marry that sweet young girl, who was quite without fortune, he had been obliged to make, and had made, a great sacrifice."

"Great indeed!" she commented, bitterly. "You do well to commend him."

"I do not commend him. I simply say that he was following out his nature. Being a poet, he is what is called sympathetic, you know; and he wanted my appreciation and sympathy—I will not say applause."

She was standing with her back toward him. She now walked toward the door. But her courage failed, she sank into a chair and covered her face with her hands. "It is too much," she said. "You wait until I have lost my fortune and am over-

whelmed; you wait until I am rejected, cast aside; and then you come and win from me an avowal of my love, telling me afterward — *afterward*" — her voice broke, she burst into tears.

"Telling you afterward nothing but that I love you. Telling you afterward that I have not had one really happy moment since our conversation in this old house a year ago. Telling you afterward that my life has resolved itself into but one unceasing, tormenting wish—the wish, Katharine, that you would love me, I suppose I ought to say a little, but I mean a great deal. Look at me; is this humble enough for you?"

He drew her hands away; she saw that he was kneeling at her feet; and, not only that, but she saw also something very like a mist in the gray eyes she had always thought too cold.

In the library of Mr. John Ford, near New York, there hangs in the place of honor a water-color sketch of an old yellow château. Beneath it, ranged by themselves, are all the works of that eloquent authoress and noble woman, Madame de Staël.

"You admire her?" said a visitor recently, in some surprise. "To me she has always seemed a—a little antique, you know."

"She is antiquity itself! But she once lent me her house, and I am grateful. By-the-way, Katharine, I never told you, although I found it out afterward: Benjamin Franklin understood English, after all."

Editor's Easy Chair.

MORE than once the Easy Chair has improved a text from Thackeray in which the satirist of snobs says that he should like to be seen upon any afternoon in the height of the season sauntering down Pall-Mall with a duke upon each arm. It is a very suggestive text, and very characteristic of the preacher. For Thackeray, if he was, as he says, very fond of preaching, was also his own parishioner, and he acknowledged frankly that he was often hit by the sermon.

In this particular remark he means, of course, that even those of us who denounce snobbery most strenuously are at heart a little snobbish. It is perhaps the preacher's secret consciousness of his own weakness, and his wrath with himself as both a sinner and a hypocrite, which lead him to pause suddenly in his discourse, and startle the congregation by remarking that while he is saying, "Thou art the man," he really means, "I am the man." The phrase of which he is so fond, and which he uses so often, *de te fabula narratur*—it is you that the coat fits—illustrates the same consciousness, and the tendency to apply the moral to himself. It is the same feeling also which explains the general distrust of those who allude often and vehemently to their consciences, and the impatience with which they are believed to be canting hypocrites. It is this universal feeling to which Sheridan appeals in Joseph Surface. The instinctive disposition to regard the man of fine sentiments as a Mawworm implies that every man is so deeply conscious of his own moral weakness that he suspects the other man, who affirms his own goodness, to be a liar.

There is certainly often an unconscious existence in ourselves of weakness which we lustily denounce in others. One of the most common and familiar figures in American life, for instance, is the demagogue. He is the kind of servile courtier that is bred in a republic. He is the man who goes to other lands to which his own country owes infinite delight and instruction and the most ennobling traditions, and without the capacity to perceive that every nation and form of civilization are the result of historic development, and that all civilized periods and countries are inextricably bound together, he scoffs at his own cradle and derides the ancestors that made him.

He does this to flatter his fellow-countrymen, just as the courtiers of Elizabeth swore that the splendor of her beauty extinguished the charms of all other women. He sneers at the lords walking backward before the Queen in Westminster Abbey, yet on the platform he crawls on his belly before the mob. The demagogue reviles the parasites of princes, but is himself the parasite of the people. The royal household officer in his quaint costume of a former age is a grotesque and amusing figure. But he is not contemptible like the republican buffoon who ridicules him to please what he calls the people, or the harlequin who makes himself a clown in order to get to Congress. *De te fabula narratur.* When he holds up the minion of a monarchy to scorn, he is himself the toady and the tuft-hunter at whom he sneers.

Yes, says Thackeray; but stop: I should myself like to be seen walking down Pall-Mall with a duke on each arm. You, excellent Easy Chair, or you, accomplished editor, when you talk about "the people's money," and the people's this, that, and the other, does