

is useless to stay here longer; he is right. I will cross to-night, and when I come back it will be to take her away."

It is hardly evening; as yet the factory people have not turned out from their work, the streets are empty and silent, the light is dull and grey, there is an oppressiveness in the air as of a coming storm. For once, as Horace acknowledges in the midst of his irritation, fortune favors him. As he looks down the street he sees Aimée coming towards him. She is on her way home from vespers, for it is a feast-day. She is accompanied only by Marie, who walks muttering and grumbling close at her heels.

They have come to the stone bridge which leads over the river. They stop for an instant to allow a laden wagon, with its team of horses jingling their bells, to pass them by, and in a moment Horace is on the narrow foot-way beside them.

"Marie," he says, with an authoritative tap on the old woman's shoulder, "Marie, my good woman, you are fatigued. I see you pant for breath. Here on this stone seat you may rest yourself. I am going to take Mlle. Aimée down to the water's side. And remember silence and discretion are a woman's greatest virtues; even in this world they shall be rewarded."

"Ah, monsieur, it is a crime, a treachery you would have me commit," cries the old servant, but he pays no heed to her, and so she resigns herself, and seated upon the bench which he has pointed out she folds her brown, wrinkled hands over her brown stuff petticoat.

Then it is that Horace, turning his flushed, handsome, face upon her, tells Aimée that she is to come with him. And she does not resist his will, for is it not her joy to obey his behests?

"The letter has come, Aimée," he says, "and I see now that it was a mistake to write. I can not make them understand. Your father, too, lays upon me hard conditions. I think I must leave you just for a little, that I may come back when no one can forbid it, and claim you as my own."

He speaks quickly, with a remembrance of his interview with M. Laval and his father's letter making his tone more full of annoyance than she has ever heard it before.

She does not speak for an instant, but it seems to him that the little hand he holds is cold and nerveless in his clasp and he presses quick kisses upon it and draws her nearer to him.

"Your father will not risk anything, my darling. He can not see that if we were at once married all would be right in the end."

"He wishes your father also to give consent? But is not that right?" asks Aimée timidly; "I have never yet heard that any one was married without the consent of their parents."

"People are never married with it in England," says Horace succinctly. How can he tell her that any one in this wide world dares to hold her lower than himself?

"But you must not let me be the cause of your parents being angry with you. You must not grieve them for my sake, Horace," speaking the last word almost most under her breath.

"They have no right to be angry or grieved either," he answers quickly. "Grieved that I should have gathered the sweetest, fairest little flower that ever blossomed! It is only that English people are so narrow-minded that they can only appreciate themselves."

"It is, then, because I am French that they will not approve of me."

"Yes, I suppose so," he says reluctantly.

"And then your papa is noble, and our family is not; and also it is true I shall have so small a fortune. He would have wished you to marry some rich lady, perhaps."

"Perhaps," echoes Horace evasively.

His short answers fall like so many stabs upon her heart. If this is true, and he can not deny it, what is to be the end?

"What are we to do then," she cries, whilst her tears fall fast.

"We must be true to one another," says her lover eagerly. "It is only a question of waiting until I come back from England. When I am face to face with them — It is nothing but these preconceived notions; this absurd insular pride."

He breaks off. It is not so easy to make all this plain to her. She looks at him wistfully enough, poor child, but she does not speak, for she does not know what to say.

"It will not be very long," he continues, speaking rather low and quickly, and looking away from her. "Only eight hours from Havre to Southampton, and then I am close to my home. It will be nearly as quick as writing, and so much better. I suppose they will want me to stay a few days, and it would not do to put them out, would it? If you can spare me, perhaps I had better stay a week."

"You must not think me so unreasonable," she says gently. "I can wait. It will only be seven days after all."

"Only seven days," he echoes mechanically, but somehow he wishes she would not be so literal.

"It will soon pass," he continues, more cheerfully. "Do you know it is only ten days since we first met?"

"I know," she answered softly. Was not each day as distinct as yesterday, marked with gilded letters in love's calendar?

"And you have already learnt to love me," he cries again gladly, for sitting here with her hand in his, even though they are soon to part, he can not choose but be glad. "Oh, my little pure love, how unworthy of you I am! Why did this dull old town, of all places in the world, hold within it such a treasure for me?"

She shakes her head and half laughs at that. What is she but a little wild flower he has stooped to gather?