

more nuts and staves like it she had been born and bred in France, where, in the presence of gentlemen, young girls silently adhere to their brilliant manners, whose wit and grace and social tact make the charm of the Parisian salons.

This social etiquette was very irksome to the little French girl, who seemed always opening and shutting her wings. In the course of the evening M. Vergniaud slipped into her hand, unperceived by any of us, a closed envelope with the whisper: "Put it in your pocket. Do not let any one see you."

The mystery which French people are fond of attaching to harmless trifles is inconceivable. One evening, in the earlier part of our stay in Paris, a cousin of Miss St. Clair's, who was in the same hotel with Mr. Denham, called on us, and when he was taking leave she held out an unsealed note: "Will you give this to Fred? Don't forget it."

Mme. Le Fort was thunderstruck: "Is it possible? Send a note to a young gentleman right before Mme. Fleming and all of us!"

"Why," said I, "do young people never write notes to each other in France?"

"Not openly like that—little three cornered notes to slip into the hand while dancing."

"This is the way to fold them," said Clarice, taking up a small sheet of paper. "You see that just fit into the hollow of the hand, and nobody could ever see it."

dancing girls of Pompeii stepping out from the frescoed walls or inextricably entangled in the lovely garlands of fruit and flowers that wound their mazy way along the borders.

One evening, while we were waiting for one of the endless courses of a table d'hôte dinner, my wandering eyes were caught by the most perfect human head I had ever seen. It seemed that the youthful Lord Byron, so well known in busts and engravings—the small head with high forehead and clustering dark brown curls, the perfectly molded chin, the full, ripe beauty of the lips. The eyes were a deep blue, but I thought them black at first, they were so darkly shaded by the thick black lashes. I am convinced that Byron must have had just such eyes, for some of his biographers describe them as black and others as blue.

When he rose from the table I saw a slight, well knit figure of exquisite proportions, like the Greek god of love. (Not Cupid with his vulgar arrows, but the true heavenly Eros. I saw him once in the museum at Naples and again in the Vatican. Is it Love, or Death, or Immortality? I queried, and then I knew it was the three in one.) I soon learned that the youth whose ideal beauty had impressed me so strongly was the Count Francisco de Alvala, of Toledo, in Spain. I fancy that his eyes were easily attracted to beauty as mine; for the next day he was my visitor at table; not for the sake of looking at me, it was well aware, but on account of my beautiful neighbor. However, he sought my acquaintance with the grave courtesy becoming a grandee of Spain, and naturally gained that of Miss St. Clair also.

"Why," said I, "do young people never write notes to each other in France?"

"Not openly like that—little three cornered notes to slip into the hand while dancing."

"This is the way to fold them," said Clarice, taking up a small sheet of paper. "You see that just fit into the hollow of the hand, and nobody could ever see it."

seen in the dusky Roman twilight, when suddenly, as if by magic, every archway crisscrossed the gigantic ruin glowed, incandescent, as if dyed with the blood of the martyrs that had drenched its soil. There were salvos of artillery, bursts of military music and a few vivas from the multitude. A brilliant spectacle, but the tender beauty of moonlight harmonizes better with the solemnity of ruins.

Rapt in the memories that the scene awakened, I paid little attention to the monologue of my Italian friend, when I was suddenly roused by the question, "Did you ever see a prettier couple?"

"Who?" I asked absently.

"There," he rejoined, pointing to the count and Miss St. Clair, who preceded us.

"He is too young," I replied, but the question was asked so significantly that it disturbed me a little, and I resolved to be more cautious than heretofore.

The next morning Piero appeared with his carriage to take us to the Baths of Caracalla. He hoped madame did not lose the illumination. He was wretched to disappoint madame; he begged a thousand pardons. His little boy was taken violently ill; he was forced to go for the doctor; madame was so good.

The truth flashed upon me: "Piero, how much did the count give you to stay away last night?"

quid on my right. "I am sorry for that boy," said he to me; "he is very unhappy."



"Don't you see? He is madly in love with your bewitching little American. It is his first impression, and he takes it hard. Well, he will have to learn like the rest of us."

"I hope you are mistaken," and I glanced uneasily at my young neighbors, who were too much absorbed in their own conversation to heed that between the marquis and myself.

"That is impossible," he raves to me about her. It is very pretty, too—a perfect idyl, all poetry and romance; eternal, unchangeable and all that boyish nonsense. We older men know better. But madame will be here soon, and he will look after him."

"Who is madam?"

"The archbishop of Toledo, his guardian. He has been here, but some diocesan matter called him home. He will be back soon, and then the count will dine at home. As to that, he does now, and delicious dinners they are, too. He only makes a pretense of eating here, just to have a chance to see his little divinity."

"He was here when we came."

been very happy together."

"But I think there is another man," I stammered, surprised at finding my outposts carried so easily.

"You do not mean to say that she is compromised with any man?" almost fiercely.

"I do not know what meaning you attach to that word," for the count's imperfect French was not always intelligible. "There is a young man, the son of a neighbor, who has admired her a long time."

"Oh, he admires her, with a curl of the exquisite lips, as if to say, 'Who does not?'"

"But I think she may like him a little."

"Why do you torture me so? Tell me at once that they are betrothed," cried he, pale with concentrated anger.

"I must see Miss St. Clair to-night."

to the roll, coffee and eggs, which constitute an Italian breakfast, and there sat the count as vigilant as a sentinel. "You will go," said he with a snarl.

"I think we may," I said.

"I shall perhaps meet you there."

When we reached the Farnese gate he was waiting there, which made the "perhaps" superfluous. We had a long ramble over the lonely hill, stretching out like a green New England pasture, but where from time to time we came unexpectedly upon flights of steps which led to massive substructures of stone, foundations of ancient palaces, and to excavated halls paved with mosaics and lined with frescoes more beautiful than those of Pompeii.

There were many statues, more or less mutilated, and stately brick arches laden with a wealth of flowering shrubs, and here and there thickets of tall, dark cypress trees, harmonious with rains. My young companions were rather silent, but I fancy their thoughts were not engrossed with old historic lore. I made a conscientious effort to force mine into the ruts of association which I had supposed to be inevitable in such a spot, but the bright sunshine, the delicate blue of the distant Campagna, the living gladness of earth and air were too strong for me, and I inwardly applauded a lively American girl who interrupted her dragging guide with the incisive "don't care a snap for Caesar."

On reaching the gate after our three hours' ramble I consigned Miss St. Clair to some friends who were waiting for her and stepped into the count's carriage. He seemed to feel bound in honor not to speak of love to Miss St. Clair since the revelation of the Sistina chapel, but he must have a little solace in talking to me about it. "It would be easy," said he, "if she were not fiancée, but that makes it difficult—very difficult indeed. I am glad it is not going to be for three years; that is a long time, a very long time. Then, with a sudden illumination of face and a delicious intonation of the musical voice, 'Perhaps they will never marry; perhaps it will be another man—I.' (Blessed infatuation of youth, with its wonderful perhaps, which never comes to maturer years.)

"One of these years I shall hope to hear that you are married to a beautiful lady of your own country and your own religion."

"You never will."

me as irresistibly ludicrous.

"But you will tell him all about me."

"Yes."

"I shall never to speak English—I have begun already—and in a year I shall be in America. Will you write your address for me on this card?"

I did so.

"If you ever come to Spain, remember that my house and all that is in it are yours."

"I shall never go to Spain."

"Perhaps you will one day see Miss St. Clair, looking up in my face with a bright smile of inextinguishable hope. 'Good-by for a year.'"



There was a sudden influx of new guests.

It is the most natural thing in the world to make acquaintances in Rome. People talk together of the things they have seen or wish to see; they go to the same places by day, and in the evening they meet in the ladies' parlor to compare their impressions. The young count never failed to join us in the evening. He had always something to show us—prints of his home in Spain, articles of vertu that he had bought, sketches that he had made, for he was a good amateur artist.

A group of young people of different nations generally collected on these occasions, and the conversation often turned on the usages peculiar to their respective countries.

"In Spain I could not greet a lady with a simple good evening," said the count. "I should say, 'Permit the humblest of your servants to lay himself at your feet,' or something like that."

"Why do you not say it to us?" asked a bright-eyed Canadian girl.

"Well, it might be a little awkward if you should happen to take it literally. In Spain it is the merest commonplace."

"If such exaggerated phrases are knitted into commonplaces, and the most impassioned words grow meaningless, what can a Spanish gentleman find to say when his heart is really touched?" I inquired.

"I fancy we should find some very simple words to say it in," said the boy, flushing like a girl. "But I do not know—I have never learned."

"Talk some more," commanded the little princess.

"If a pretty young lady is walking in our streets a man is often flung suddenly in her way, and proud and happy is its owner if she deigns to set her dainty foot upon it."

"What do they do that for? Because the streets are so muddy?" inquired an obtuse young woman. But nobody volunteered to enlighten her.

"Cannot we go to Spain?" asked Miss St. Clair. "I should like to see a modern St. Walter Raleigh."

"If the senorita should appear in our streets they would be thrown with mantras," said the young count gallantly.

"Would you throw down yours for me to step upon?"

"Surely, senorita."

"I'll come then. It must be of velvet, mind."

"I loved the beautiful youth. His presence was like a poem in my life, and if it ever occurred to me that the familiar intercourse of the young people might not be altogether prudent, I dismissed it with the thought, 'He is only a boy.'"

There was to be an illumination of the Coliseum. We were going of course, and Count Alvala begged that I would honor him by making use of his carriage on this occasion. "Thank you, but I have already spoken to Piero to come for us."

"Oh, but we can send him away. You will find my carriage more comfortable, and it will be in every way pleasanter. We have only to wait a little."

Eight o'clock came. Miss St. Clair and I descended to the court of the hotel, but where was Piero? "It is singular. He was never late before, but I am confident that he will be here presently. We have only to wait a little."

"I have the honor to be your obedient servant."

Helen held to me the open sheet, with kindling eyes and glowing cheeks. "Three months! I don't need three minutes; I wouldn't change in three centuries. I am so glad to be free!" she cried, sobbing and laughing at the same moment. "He has worried me so—a poor little thing like me!"

The next morning I started on my return to Boston.

Early in October a servant handed me a card bearing the name Francisco Alvala. I had ceased to think of the boy, not having heard a word from him, but now he was making my name known to me with the son and son-in-law of an Erythraean when Diana stopped to kiss him and all the green leaves in the white moonshine were tremulous with sympathy.

After the first greeting he asked, "How is Miss St. Clair and when did you see her last?"

"I told him of my recent visit."

"She is not married then?"

"On the contrary, she is free. The engagement with Mr. Denham has been broken."

"What did I tell you? Did I not say it would be?" In a burst of triumph.

As a good French woman I am acquainted to reveal that further hills and all the best news at once.