

ФРЕДЕРИК МАРРИЕТ

VALERIE

Фредерик Марриет

Valerie

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Frederick Marryat

Valerie

Preface

On August 10, 1845, Marryat wrote to Mrs S., a lady for whom, to the time of his death, he retained the highest sentiments of friendship and esteem:—

“I really wish you would write your confessions, I will publish them. I have a beautiful opening in some memoranda I have made of the early life of a Frenchwoman, that is, up to the age of seventeen, when she is cast adrift upon the world, and I would work it all up together. Let us commence, and divide the tin; it is better than doing nothing. I have been helping Ainsworth in the *New Monthly*, and I told him that I had commenced a work called *Mademoiselle Virginie*, which he might perhaps have. Without my knowing it, he has announced its coming forth; but it does not follow that he is to have it, nevertheless, and indeed he now wishes me to continue one” (*The Privateersman*) “that I have already begun in the magazine.”

However, Mrs S., with whom at one time Washington Irving also wished to collaborate, declined the offer; and *Mademoiselle Virginie* was ultimately published in the *New Monthly* under the title of *Valerie*. The first eleven chapters appeared in the magazine 1846, 1847, and the remaining pages were added—according to *The Life and Letters of Captain Marryat*—by another hand, when it came out in book form.

There are two special features in *Valerie*, beyond its actual merits, that inevitably excite our attention. It is Marryat’s last work, and the only one in which the interest centres entirely on women. For this reason, and from the eighteenth century flavour in some of its characters, the book inevitably recalls Miss Burney and her little-read *The Wanderer*, in which, as in *Valerie*, a proud and sensitive girl is thrown on the world, and discovers—by bitter experience as governess, companion, and music mistress—the sneer that lurks beneath the smile of fashion and prosperity.

The subject is well handled, on the old familiar lines, and supplies the groundwork of an eminently readable story, peopled by many life-like “humours” and an attractive, spirited heroine. The adventures of *Valerie* are various and well-sustained; her bearing throughout secures the reader’s sympathy, and he is conscious of a genuine pleasure in her ultimate prosperity and happiness.

Valerie, an autobiography, is here reprinted from the first edition in two volumes. Henry Colburn, 1849.

R.B.J.

After Marryat’s death a fragment of a story for the “Juvenile Library” was found in his desk, and has been published in the *Life and Letters* by Florence Marryat. It describes the experience of a man who, like Marryat himself, was compelled by the failure of speculations to live in the country and manage his own estate. It was projected “because few young people have any knowledge of farming, and there are no books written by which any knowledge of it may be imparted to children.” Marryat himself was not a very successful farmer, but probably his theory was in advance of his practice.

Chapter One

I have titled these pages with nothing more than my baptismal name. If the reader finds sufficient interest in them to read to the end, he will discover the position that I am in, after an eventful life. I shall, however, not trespass upon his time by making many introductory remarks; but commence at once with my birth, parentage, and education. This is necessary, as although the two first are, perhaps, of little comparative consequence, still the latter is of importance, as it will prepare the reader for many events in my after-life. I may add, that much depends upon birth and parentage; at all events, it is necessary to complete a perfect picture. Let me, therefore, begin at the beginning.

I was born in France. My father, who was of the *ancienne noblesse* of France, by a younger branch of the best blood, and was a most splendid specimen of the outward man, was the son of an old officer, and an officer himself in the army of Napoleon. In the conquest of Italy, he had served in the ranks, and continuing to follow Napoleon through all his campaigns, had arrived to the grade of captain of cavalry. He had distinguished himself on many occasions, was a favourite of the Emperor's, wore the cross of the Legion of Honour, and was considered in a fair way to rapid promotion, when he committed a great error. During the time that his squadron was occupying a small German town, situated on the river Erbach, called Deux Ponts, he saw my mother, fell desperately in love, and married. There was some excuse for him, for a more beautiful woman than my mother I never beheld; moreover, she was highly talented, and a most perfect musician; of a good family, and with a dower by no means contemptible.

The reader may say that, in marrying such a woman, my father could hardly be said to have committed a very great error. This is true, the error was not in marrying, but in allowing his wife's influence over him to stop his future advancement. He wished to leave her with her father and mother until the campaign was over. She refused to be left, and he yielded to her wishes. Now, Napoleon had no objection to his officers being married, but a very great dislike to their wives accompanying the army; and this was the fault which my father committed, and which lost him the favour of his general. My mother was too beautiful a woman not to be noticed, and immediately inquired about, and the knowledge soon came to Napoleon's ears, and militated against my father's future advancement.

During the first year of their marriage, my eldest brother, Auguste, was born, and shortly afterwards my mother promised an increase to the family, which was the occasion of great satisfaction to my father, who now that he had been married more than a year, would at times look at my mother, and, beautiful as she was, calculate in his mind whether the possession of her was indemnification sufficient for the loss of the brigade which she had cost him.

To account for my father's satisfaction, I must acquaint the reader with circumstances which are not very well known. As I before observed, Napoleon had no objection to marriage, because he required men for his army; and because he required men, and not women, he thought very poorly of a married couple who produced a plurality of girls. If, on the contrary, a woman presented her husband with six or seven boys, if he was an officer in the army, he was certain of a pension for life. Now, as my mother had commenced with a boy, and it is well known that there is every chance of a woman continuing to produce the sex which first makes its appearance, she was much complimented and congratulated by the officers when she so soon gave signs of an increase, and they prophesied that she would, by her fruitfulness, in a few years obtain a pension for her husband. My father hoped so, and thought that if he had lost the brigade, he would be indemnified by the pension. My mother was certain of it; and declared it was a boy.

But prophesies, hopes, and declarations, were all falsified and overthrown by my unfortunate appearance. The disappointment of my father was great; but he bore it like a man. My mother was not only disappointed, but indignant. She felt mortified after all her declarations, that I should have appeared and disproved them. She was a woman of violent temper, a discovery which my father made

too late. To me, as the cause of her humiliation and disappointment, she took an aversion, which only increased as I grew up, and which, as will be hereafter shown, was the main spring of all my vicissitudes in after-life.

Surely, there is an error in asserting that there is no feeling so strong as maternal love. How often do we witness instances like mine, in which disappointed vanity, ambition, or interest, have changed this love into deadly hate!

My father, who felt the inconvenience of my mother accompanying him on forced marches, and who, perhaps, being disappointed in his hopes of a pension, thought that he might as well recover the Emperor's favour, and look for the brigade, now proposed that my mother should return with her two children to her parents. This my mother, who had always gained the upper-hand, positively refused to accede to. She did, however, allow me and my brother Auguste to be sent to her parents' care at Deux Ponts, and there we remained while my father followed the fortunes of the Emperor, and my mother followed the fortunes of my father. I have little or no recollection of my maternal grandfather and grandmother. I remember that I lived with them, as I remained there with my brother till I was seven years old, at which period my paternal grandmother offered to receive my brother and me, and take charge of our education. This offer was accepted, and we both went to Luneville where she resided.

I have said that my paternal grandmother offered to receive us, and not my paternal grandfather, who was still alive. Such was the case; as, could he have had his own way, he would not have allowed us to come to Luneville, for he had a great dislike to children; but my grandmother had property of her own, independent of her husband, and she insisted upon our coming. Very often, after we had been received into her house, I would hear remonstrance on his part relative to the expense of keeping us, and the reply of my grandmother, which would be, "*Eh bien, Monsieur Chatenoeuf, c'est mon argent que je dépense.*" I must describe Monsieur Chatenoeuf. As I before stated, he had been an officer in the French army; but had now retired upon his pension, with the rank of major, and decorated with the Legion of Honour. At the time that I first saw him, he was a tall, elegant old man, with hair as white as silver. I heard it said, that when young he was considered one of the bravest and handsomest officers in the French army. He was very quiet in his manners, spoke very little, and took a large quantity of snuff. He was egotistic to excess, attending wholly to himself and his own comforts, and it was because the noise of children interfered with his comfort, that he disliked them so much. We saw little of him, and cared less. If I came into his room when he was alone, he promised me a good whipping, I therefore avoided him as much as I could; the association was not pleasant.

Luneville is a beautiful town in the Department of Meurthe. The castle, or rather palace, is a very splendid and spacious building, in which formerly the Dukes of Lorraine held their court. It was afterwards inhabited by King Stanislaus, who founded a military school, a library and a hospital. The palace was a square building, with a handsome façade facing the town, and in front of it there was a fountain. There was a large square in the centre of the palace, and behind it an extensive garden, which was well kept up and carefully attended to. One side of the palace was occupied by the officers of the regiments quartered in Luneville; the opposite side, by the soldiery; and the remainder of the building was appropriated to the reception of old retired officers who had been pensioned. It was in this beautiful building, that my grandfather and grandmother were established for the remainder of their lives. Except the Tuileries, I know of no palace in France equal to that of Luneville. Here it was that, at seven years old, I took up my quarters; and it is from that period that I have always dated my existence.

I have described my grandfather and my residence, but now I must introduce my grandmother; my dear, excellent, grandmother, whom I loved so much when she was living, and whose memory I shall ever revere. In person she was rather diminutive, but, although sixty years of age, she still retained her figure, which was remarkably pretty, and she was as straight as an arrow. Never had age pressed more lightly upon the human frame; for, strange to say, her hair was black as jet, and fell down to her knees. It was considered a great curiosity, and she was not a little proud of it, for there

was not a grey hair to be seen. Although she had lost many of her teeth, her skin was not wrinkled, but had a freshness most remarkable in a person so advanced in years. Her mind was as young as her body; she was very witty and coquettish, and the officers living in the palace were continually in her apartments, preferring her company to that of younger women. Partial to children, she would join in all our sports, and sit down to play “hunt the slipper,” with us and our young companions. But with all her vivacity, she was a strictly moral and religious woman. She could be lenient to indiscretion and carelessness, but any deviation from truth and honesty on the part of my brother or myself, was certain to be visited with severe punishment. She argued, that there could be no virtue, where there was deceit, which she considered as the hot-bed from which every vice would spring out spontaneously; that truth was the basis of all that was good and noble, and that every other branch of education was, comparatively speaking, of no importance, and, without truth, of no value. She was right.

My brother and I were both sent to day-schools. The maid Catherine always took me to school after breakfast, and came to fetch me home about four o'clock in the afternoon. Those were happy times. With what joy I used to return to the palace, bounding into my grandmother's apartment on the ground floor, sometimes to frighten her, leaping in at the window and dropping at her feet, the old lady scolding and laughing at the same time. My grandmother was, as I observed, religious, but she was not a devotee. The great object was to instil into me a love of truth, and in this she was indefatigable. When I did wrong, it was not the fault I had committed which caused her concern; it was the fear that I should deny it, which worried and alarmed her. To prevent this, the old lady had a curious method—she dreamed for my benefit. If I had done wrong, and she suspected me, she would not accuse me until she had made such inquiries as convinced her that I was the guilty person; and then, perhaps, the next morning, she would say, as I stood by her side: “Valerie, I had a dream last night; I can't get it out of my head. I dreamt that my little girl had forgotten her promise to me, and when she went to the store-room had eaten a large piece of the cake.”

She would fix her eyes upon me as she narrated the events of her dream, and, as she proceeded, my face would be covered with blushes, and my eyes cast down in confusion; I dared not look at her, and by the time that she had finished, I was down on my knees, with my face buried in her lap. If my offence was great, I had to say my prayers, and implore the Divine forgiveness, and was sent to prison, that is, locked up for a few hours in my bedroom. Catherine, the maid, had been many years with my grandmother, and was, to a certain degree, a privileged person; at all events, she considered herself warranted in giving her opinion, and grumbling as much as she pleased, and such was invariably the case whenever I was locked up. “*Toujours en prison, cette pauvre petite*. It is too bad, madam; you must let her out.” My grandmother would quietly reply, “Catherine, you are a good woman, but you understand nothing about the education of children.” Sometimes, however, she obtained the key from my grandmother, and I was released sooner than was originally intended.

The fact is, that being put in prison was a very heavy punishment, as it invariably took place in the evenings, after my return from school, so that I lost my play-hours. There were a great many officers with their wives located in the palace, and, of course, no want of playmates. The girls used to go to the bosquet, which adjoined the gardens of the palace, collect flowers, and make a garland, which they hung on a rope stretched across the court-yard of the palace. As the day closed in, the party from each house, or apartments rather, brought out a lantern, and having thus illuminated our ballroom by subscription, the boys and girls danced the “*ronde*,” and other games, until it was bedtime. As the window of my bedroom looked out upon the court, whenever I was put into prison, I had the mortification of witnessing all these joyous games, without being permitted to join in them.

To prove the effect of my grandmother's system of dreaming upon me, I will narrate a circumstance which occurred. My grandfather had a landed property about four miles from Luneville. A portion of this land was let to a farmer, and the remainder he farmed on his own account, and the produce was consumed in the house-keeping. From this farm we received milk, butter, cheese, all kinds of fruit, and indeed everything which a farm produces. In that part of France they have

a method of melting down and clarifying butter for winter use, instead of salting it. This not only preserves it, but, to most people, makes it more palatable; at all events I can answer for myself, for I was inordinately fond of it. There were eighteen or twenty jars of it in the store-room, which were used up in rotation. I dared not take any out of the jar in use, as I should be certain to be discovered; so I went to the last jar, and by my repeated assaults upon it, it was nearly empty before my grandmother discovered it. As usual, she had a dream. She commenced with counting over the number of jars of butter; and how she opened such a one, and it was full; and then the next, and it was full; but before her dream was half over, and while she was still a long way from the jar which I had despoiled, I was on my knees, telling her the end of the dream, of my own accord, for I could not bear the suspense of having all the jars examined. From that time, I generally made a full confession before the dream was ended.

But when I was about nine years old, I was guilty of a very heavy offence, which I shall narrate, on account of the peculiar punishment which I received, and which might be advantageously pursued by the parents of the present day, who may happen to cast their eyes over these memoirs. It was the custom for the children of the officers who lived in the palace, that is, the girls, to club together occasionally, that they might have a little *fête* in the garden of the palace. It was a sort of pic-nic, to which every one contributed; some would bring cakes, some fruit; some would bring money (a few sous) to purchase bon-bons, or anything else which might be agreed upon.

On those occasions, my grandmother invariably gave me fruit, a very liberal allowance of apples and pears, from the store-room; for we had plenty from the orchard of the farm. But one day, one of the elder girls told me that they had plenty of fruit, and that I must bring some money. I asked my grandmother, but she refused me; and then this girl proposed that I should steal some from my grandfather. I objected; but she ridiculed my objections, and pressed me until she overcame my scruples, and I consented. But when I left her after she had obtained my promise, I was in a sad state. I knew it was wicked to steal, and the girl had taken care to point out to me how wicked it was to break a promise. I did not know what to do: all that evening I was in such a state of feverish excitement, that my grandmother was quite astonished. The fact was, that I was ashamed to retract my promise, and yet I trembled at the deed that I was about to do. I went into my room and got into bed. I remained awake; and about midnight I got up, and creeping softly into my grandfather's room, I went to his clothes, which were on a chair, and rifled his pockets of—two sous!

Having effected my purpose, I retired stealthily, and gained my own room. What my feelings were when I was again in bed I cannot well describe—they were horrible—I could not shut my eyes for the remainder of the night and the next morning I made my appearance, haggard, pale, and trembling. It proved, however, that my grandfather who was awake, had witnessed the theft in silence, and informed my grandmother of it. Before I went to school, my grandmother called me in to her, for I had avoided her.

“Come here, Valerie,” said she, “I have had a dream—a most dreadful dream—it was about a little girl, who, in the middle of the night, crept into her grandfather's room—”

I could bear no more. I threw myself on the floor, and, in agony, screamed out—

“Yes, grandmamma, and stole two sous.”

A paroxysm of tears followed the confession, and for more than an hour I remained on the floor, hiding my face and sobbing. My grandmother allowed me to remain there—she was very much annoyed—I had committed a crime of the first magnitude—my punishment was severe. I was locked up in my room for ten days: but this was the smallest portion of the punishment: every visitor that came in, I was sent for, and on my making my appearance, my grandmother would take me by the hand, and leading me up, would formally present me to the visitors.

“Permettez, madame (ou monsieur), que je vous présente Mademoiselle Valerie, qui est enfermée dans sa chambre, pour avoir vole deux sous de son grand-père.”

Oh! the shame, the mortification that I felt. This would take place at least ten times a day; and each succeeding presentation was followed by a burst of tears, as I was again led back to my chamber. Severe as this punishment was, the effect of it was excellent. I would have endured martyrdom, after what I had gone through, before I would have taken what was not my own. It was a painful, but a judicious, and most radical cure.

For five years I remained under the care of this most estimable woman, and, under her guidance, had become a truthful and religious girl; and I may conscientiously add, that I was as innocent as a lamb—but a change was at hand. The Emperor had been hurled from his throne, and was shut up on a barren rock, and soon great alterations were made in the French army. My father's regiment of huzzars had been disbanded, and he was now appointed to a dragoon regiment, which was ordered to Luneville. He arrived with my mother and a numerous family, she having presented him with seven more children; so that, with Auguste and me, he had now nine children. I may as well here observe that my mother continued to add yearly to the family, till she had fourteen in all, and out of these there were seven boys; so that, had the Emperor remained on the throne of France, my father would certainly have secured the pension.

The arrival of my family was a source both of pleasure and pain to me. I was most anxious to see all my brothers and sisters, and my heart yearned towards my father and mother, although I had no recollection of them; but I was fearful that I should be removed from my grandmother's care, and she was equally alarmed at the chance of our separation. Unfortunately for me, it turned out as we had anticipated. My mother was anything but gracious to my grandmother, notwithstanding the obligations she was under to her, and very soon took an opportunity of quarrelling with her. The cause of the quarrel was very absurd, and proved that it was predetermined on the part of my mother. My grandmother had some curious old carved furniture, which my mother coveted, and requested my grandmother to let her have it. This my grandmother would not consent to, and my mother took offence at her refusal. I and my brother were immediately ordered home, my mother asserting that we had been both very badly brought up; and this was all the thanks that my grandmother received for her kindness to us, and defraying all our expenses for five years. I had not been at home more than a week, when my father's regiment was ordered to Nance; but, during this short period, I had sufficient to convince me that I should be very miserable. My mother's dislike to me, which I have referred to before, now assumed the character of positive hatred, and I was very ill-treated. I was employed as a servant, and as nurse to the younger children; and hardly a day passed without my feeling the weight of her hand. We set off for Nance, and I thought my heart would break as I quitted the arms of my grandmother, who wept over me. My father was very willing to leave me with my grandmother, who promised to leave her property to me; but this offer in my favour enraged my mother still more; she declared that I should not remain; and my father had long succumbed to her termagant disposition, and yielded implicit obedience to her authority. It was lamentable to see such a fine soldierlike man afraid even to speak before this woman; but he was completely under her thralldom, and never dared to contradict.

As soon as we were settled in the barracks at Nance, my mother commenced her system of persecution in downright earnest. I had to make all the beds, wash the children, carry out the baby, and do every menial office for my brothers and sisters, who were encouraged to order me about. I had very good clothes, which had been provided me by my grandmother; they were all taken away, and altered for my younger sisters; but what was still more mortifying, all my sisters had lessons in music, dancing, and other accomplishments, from various masters, whose instructions I was not permitted to take advantage of, although there would have been no addition to the expense.

"Oh! my father," cried I, "why is this?—what have I done?—am not I your daughter—your eldest daughter?"

"I will speak to your mother," replied he.

And he did venture to do so; but by so doing, he raised up such a tempest, that he was glad to drop the subject, and apologise for an act of justice. Poor man! he could do no more than pity me.

I well remember my feelings at that time. I felt that I could love my mother, love her dearly, if she would have allowed me so to do. I had tried to obtain her good-will, but I received nothing in return but blows, and at last I became so alarmed when in her presence that I almost lost my reason. My ears were boxed till I could not recollect where I was, and I became stupefied with fear. All I thought of, all my anxiety, at last, was to get out of the room where my mother was. My terror was so great that her voice made me tremble, and at the sight of her I caught my breath and gasped from alarm. My brother Auguste was very nearly as much an object of dislike to my mother as I was, chiefly because he had been brought up by my grandmother, and moreover because he would take my part.

The great favourite of my mother was my second brother Nicolas; he was a wonderful musician, could play upon any instrument and the most difficult music at sight. This talent endeared him to my mother, who was herself a first-rate musician. He was permitted to order me about just as he pleased, and if I did not please him, to beat me without mercy, and very often my mother would fly at me and assist him. But Auguste took my part, and Nicolas received very severe chastisement from him, but this did not help me; on the contrary, if Auguste interfered in my behalf, my mother would pounce upon me, and I may say that I was stunned with her blows. Auguste appealed to his father, but he dared not interfere. He was coward enough to sit by and see his daughter treated in this way without remonstrance; and, in a short time, I was fast approaching to what my mother declared me to be—a perfect idiot.

I trust that my own sex will not think me a renegade when I say, that, if ever there was a proof that woman was intended by the Creator to be subject to man, it is, that once place power in the hands of woman, and there is not one out of a hundred who will not abuse it. We hear much of the rights of woman, and their wrongs; but this is certain, that in a family, as in a State, there can be no divided rule—no equality. One must be master, and no family is so badly managed, or so badly brought up, as where the law of nature is reversed, and we contemplate that most despicable of all *lusi naturae*—a hen-pecked husband. To proceed, the consequence of my mother's treatment, was to undermine in me all the precepts of my worthy grandmother. I was a slave; and a slave under the continual influence of fear cannot be honest. The fear of punishment produced deceit to avoid it. Even my brother Auguste, from his regard and pity for me, would fall into the same error. "Valerie," he would say, running out to me as I was coming home with my little brother in my arms, "your mother will beat you on your return. You must say so and so." This so and so was, of course, an untruth; and, in consequence, my fibs were so awkward, and accompanied by so much hesitation and blushing, that I was invariably found out, and then punished for what I did not deserve to be; and when my mother obtained such triumphant proof against me, she did not fail to make the most of it with my father, who, by degrees, began to consider that my treatment was merited, and that I was a bad and deceitful child.

My only happiness was to be out in the open air, away from my mother's presence, and this was only to be obtained when I was ordered out with my little brother Pierre, whom I had to carry as soon as I had done the household work. If Pierre was fractious, my mother would order me out of the house with him immediately. This I knew, and I used to pinch the poor child to make him cry, that I might gain my object, and be sent away; so that to duplicity I added cruelty. Six months before this, had any one told me that I ever would be guilty of such a thing, with what indignation I should have denied it!

Although my mother flattered herself that it was only in her own domestic circle that her unnatural conduct towards me was known, such was not the case, and the treatment which I received from her was the occasion of much sympathy on the part of the officers and their wives, who were quartered in the barracks. Some of them ventured to remonstrate with my father for his consenting to it; but although he was cowed by a woman, he had no fear of men, and as he told them candidly that any future interference in his domestic concerns must be answered by the sword, no more was

said to him on the subject. Strange, that a man should risk his life with such indifference, rather than remedy an evil, and yet be under such thralldom to a woman!—that one who was always distinguished in action as the most forward and the most brave, should be a trembling coward before an imperious wife! But this is a world of sad contradictions.

There was a lady in the barracks, wife to one of the superior officers, who was very partial to me. She had a daughter, a very sweet girl, who was also named Valerie. When I could escape from the house, I used to be constantly with them; and when I saw my name-sake caressing and caressed, in the arms of her mother, as I was sitting by on a stool, the tears would run down at the thoughts that such pleasure was debarred from me.

“Why do you cry, Valerie?”

“Oh! madam, why have I not a mother like your Valerie? Why am I to be beat instead of being caressed and fondled like her? What have I done?—But she is not my mother—I’m sure she cannot be—I will never believe it!”

And such had really become my conviction, and in consequence I never would address her by the title of mother. This my mother perceived, and it only added to her ill-will. Only permit any one feeling or passion to master you—allow it to increase by never being in the slightest degree checked, and it is horrible to what an excess it will carry you. About this time, my mother proved the truth of the above observation, by saying to me, as she struck me to the ground—

“I’ll kill you,” cried she; and then, catching her breath, said in a low, determined tone, “Oh! I only wish that I dared.”

Chapter Two

One day, a short time after this, I was walking out as usual with my little brother Pierre in my arms; I was deep in thought; in imagination I was at Luneville with my dear grandmother, when my foot slipped and I fell. In trying to save my brother I hurt myself very much, and he, poor child, was unfortunately very much hurt as well as myself. He cried and moaned piteously, and I did all that I could to console him, but he was in too much pain to be comforted. I remained out for an hour or two, not daring to go home, but the evening was closing in and I returned at last. The child, who could not yet speak, still moaned and cried, and I told the truth as to the cause of it. My mother flew at me, and I received such chastisement that I could be patient no longer, and I pushed my mother from me; I was felled to the ground and left there bleeding profusely.

After a time I rose up and crawled to bed. I reflected upon all I had suffered, and made up my mind that I would no longer remain under my father's roof. At daybreak I dressed myself, hastened out of the barracks, and set off for Luneville, which was fifteen miles distant. I had gained about half the way when I was met by a soldier of the regiment who had once been our servant. I tried to avoid him, but he recognised me. I then begged him not to interfere with me, and told him that I was running away to my grandmother's. Jacques, for that was his name, replied that I was right, and that he would say nothing about it.

"But, mademoiselle," continued he, "you will be tired before you get to Luneville, and may have a chance of a conveyance if you have money to pay for it."

He then slipped a five-franc piece into my hand, and left me to pursue my way. I continued my journey, and at last arrived at the farm belonging to my grandfather, which I have before mentioned, as being about four miles from the town. I was afraid to go direct to Luneville, on account of my grandfather, who, I knew from motives of parsimony, would be unwilling to receive me. I told my history to the farmer's wife, showing her my face covered with bruises and scars, and entreated her to go to my grandmother's and tell her where I was. She put me to bed, and the next morning set off for Luneville, and acquainted my grandmother with the circumstances. The old lady immediately ordered her *char-à-banc* and drove out for me. There was proof positive of my mother's cruelty, and the good old woman shed tears over me when she had pulled off the humble blue cotton dress which I wore and examined my wounds and bruises. When we arrived at Luneville, we met with much opposition from my grandfather, but my grandmother was resolute.

"Since you object to my receiving her in the house," said she, "at all events you cannot prevent my doing my duty towards her, and doing as I please with my own money. I shall, therefore, send her to school and pay her expenses."

As soon as new clothes could be made for me, I was sent to the best *pension* in Luneville. Shortly afterwards my father arrived; he had been despatched by my mother to reclaim me and bring me back with him, but he found the tide too strong against him, and my grandmother threatened to appeal to the authorities and make an exposure; this he knew would be a serious injury to his character, and he was therefore compelled to go back without me, and I remained a year and a half at the *pension*, very happy and improving very fast in my education and my personal appearance.

But I was not destined to be so happy long. True it was, that during this year and a half of tranquillity and happiness, the feelings created by my mother's treatment had softened down, and all animosity had long been discarded, but I was too happy to want to return home again. At the expiration of this year and a half, my father's regiment was again ordered to shift their quarters to a small town, the name of which I now forget, but Luneville lay in their route. My mother had for some time ceased to importune my father about my return. The fact was, that she had been so coldly treated by the other ladies at Nance, in consequence of her behaviour to me, that she did not think it advisable; but now that they were about to remove, she insisted upon my father taking me with

him, promising that I should be well-treated, and have the same instruction as my sisters; in fact, she promised everything; acknowledging to my grandmother that she had been too hasty to me, and was very sorry for it. Even my brother Auguste thought that she was now sincere, and my father, my brother, and even my dear grandmother, persuaded me to consent. My mother was now very kind and affectionate towards me, and as I really wanted to love her, I left the *pension* and accompanied the family to their new quarters.

But this was all treachery on the part of my mother. Regardless of my advantage, as she had shown herself on every occasion, she had played her part that she might have an opportunity of discharging an accumulated debt of revenge, which had been heaped up in consequence of the slights she had received from other people on account of her treatment of me. We had hardly been settled in our new abode, before my mother burst out again with a virulence which exceeded all her former cruelty. But I was no longer the frightened victim that I had been; I complained to my father, and insisted upon justice; but that was useless. My brother Auguste now took my part in defiance of his father, and it was one scene of continual family discord. I had made many friends, and used to remain at their houses all day. As for doing household work, notwithstanding her blows, I refused it. One morning my mother was chastising me severely, when my brother Auguste, who was dressed in his hussar uniform, came in and hastened to my assistance, interposing himself between us. My mother's rage was beyond all bounds.

"Wretch," cried she, "would you strike your mother?"

"No," replied he, "but I will protect my sister. You barbarous woman, why do you not kill her at once, it would be a kindness?"

It was after this scene that I resolved that I would again return to Luneville. I did not confide my intentions to anyone, not even to Auguste. There was a great difficulty in getting out of the front door without being perceived, and my bundle would have created suspicion; by the back of the house the only exit was through a barred window. I was then fourteen years old but very slight in figure. I tried if my head would pass through the bars, and succeeding, I soon forced my body through, and seizing my bundle, made all haste to the diligence office. I found that it was about to start for Luneville, which was more than half a day's journey distant. I got in very quickly, and the conducteur knowing me, thought that all was right, and the diligence drove off.

There were two people in the coupé with me, an officer and his wife; before we had proceeded far they asked me where I was going, I replied to my grandmother's at Luneville. Thinking it, however, strange that I should be unaccompanied, they questioned, until they extracted the whole history from me. The lady wished me to come to her on a visit, but the husband, more prudent, said that I was better under the care of my grandmother.

About mid-day we stopped to change horses at an auberge called the Louis d'Or, about a quarter of a mile from Luneville. Here I alighted without offering any explanation to the conducteur; but as he knew me and my grandmother well, that was of no consequence. My reason for alighting was, that the diligence would have put me down at the front of the palace, where I was certain to meet my grandfather, who passed the major portion of the day there, basking on one of the seats, and I was afraid to see him until I had communicated with my grandmother. I had an uncle in the town, and I had been very intimate with my cousin Marie, who was a pretty, kind-hearted girl, and I resolved that I would go there, and beg her to go to my grandmother. The difficulty was, how to get to the house without passing the front of the palace, or even the bridge across the river. At last I decided that I would walk down by the river side until I was opposite to the bosquet, which adjoined the garden of the palace, and there wait till it was low water, when I knew that the river could be forded, as I had often seen others do so.

When I arrived opposite to the bosquet I sat down on my bundle, by the banks of the river for two or three hours, watching the long feathery weeds at the bottom, which moved gently from one side to the other with the current of the stream. As soon as it was low water, I pulled off my shoes and

stockings, put them into my bundle, and raising my petticoats, I gained the opposite shore without difficulty. I then replaced my shoes and stockings, crossed the bosquet, and gained my uncle's house. My uncle was not at home, but I told my story and showed my bruises to Marie, who immediately put on her bonnet and went to my grandmother. That night I was again installed in my own little bedroom, and most gratefully did I pray before I went to sleep.

This time my grandmother took more decided steps. She went to the commandant of the town, taking me with her, pointing out the treatment which I had received, and claiming his protection; she stated that she had educated me and brought me up, and that she had a claim upon me. My mother's treatment of me was so notorious, that the commandant immediately decided that my grandmother had a right to detain me; and when my father came a day or two after to take me back, he was ordered home by the commandant, with a severe rebuke, and the assurance that I should not return to a father who could permit such cruelty and injustice.

I was now once more happy; but as I remained in the house, my grandfather was continually vexing my grandmother on my account; nevertheless, I remained there more than a year, during which I learnt a great deal, particularly lace-work and fine embroidery, at which I became very expert. But now there was another opposition raised, which was on the part of my uncle, who joined my grandfather in annoying the old lady. The fact was, that when I was not there, my grandmother was very kind and generous to my cousin Marie, who certainly deserved it; but now that I was again with her, all her presents and expenses were lavished upon me, and poor Marie was neglected.

My uncle was not pleased at this; he joined my grandfather, and they pointed out that I was now more than fifteen, and my mother dare not beat me, and as my father was continually writing for me to return, it was her duty not to oppose. Between the two, my poor grandmother was so annoyed and perplexed that she hardly knew what to do. They made her miserable, and at last they worried her into consenting that I should return to my family which had now removed to Colmar. I did not know this. It was my grandmother's birthday. I had worked for her a beautiful sachet in lace and embroidery, which, with a large bouquet, I brought to her as a present. The old lady folded me in her arms and burst into tears. She then told me that we must part, and that I must return to my father's. Had a dagger been thrust to my heart, I could not have received more anguish.

"Yes, dear Valerie," continued she, "you must leave me to-morrow; I can no longer prevent it. I have not the health and spirits that I had. I am growing old—very old."

I did not remonstrate or try to make her alter her decision. I knew how much she had been annoyed and worried for my sake, and I felt that I would bear everything for hers. I cried bitterly. The next morning my father made his appearance and embraced me with great affection. He was much pleased with my personal improvement. I was now fast budding into womanhood, although I had the feelings of a mere child. I bade farewell to my grandmother, and also to my grandfather, whom I never saw again, as he died three months after I quitted Luneville.

I trust my readers will not think that I dwell too long upon this portion of my life. I do it because I consider it is necessary they should know in what manner I was brought up, and also the cause of my leaving my family, as I afterwards did. If I had stated merely that I could not agree with my mother who treated me cruelly, they might have imagined that I was not warranted, in a moment of irritation, in taking such a decided step; but when they learn that my persecutions were renewed the moment that I was again in my mother's power, and that nothing could conquer her inveteracy against me, neither time, nor absence, nor submission on my part, nor remonstrance from others; not even a regard for her own character, nor the loss of her friends and acquaintances, they will then acknowledge that I could have done no otherwise, unless I preferred being in daily risk of my life. On my arrival at Colmar, my mother received me graciously, but her politeness did not last long. I now gave a new cause of offence—one that a woman, proud of her beauty and jealous of its decay, does not easily forgive. I was admired and paid great attention to by the officers, much more attention than she received herself.

“M. Chatenoeuf,” the officers would say, “you have begotten a daughter much handsomer than yourself.” My mother considered this as a polite way to avoid saying that I was much handsomer than she was. If she thought so, she did herself a great injustice, for I could not be compared to what she was, when she was of my age. She was even then a most splendid matron. But I had youth in my favour, which is more than half the battle. At all events, the remarks and attentions of the officers aroused my mother’s spleen, and she was more harsh in language than ever, although I admit that it was but seldom that she resorted to blows.

I recollect that one day, when I was not supposed to be in hearing, one of the officers said to another, “Ma foi, elle est jolie—elle a besoin de deux ans, et elle sera parfaite.” So childish and innocent was I at that time, that I could not imagine what they meant.

“Why was I to be two years older?” I thought, and puzzled over it till I fell fast asleep. The attentions of the officers, and the flattery he received from them on my account, appeared to have more effect on my father than I could have imagined. Perhaps he felt that I was somebody to be proud of, and his vanity gave him that courage to oppose my mother, which his paternal feelings had not roused. I recollect one instance particularly. There was a great ceremony to be performed in the church, no less than the christening of the two new bells, previous to their being hoisted up in the belfry. The officers told my father that I must be present, and on his return home he stated to my mother his intention of taking me with him on the following day to see the ceremony.

“She can’t go—she has no clothes fit to wear,” cried my mother.

“Why has she not, madame?” replied my father, sternly. “Let her have some ready for to-morrow, and without fail.”

My mother perceived that my father was not to be trifled with, and therefore thought proper to acquiesce. Pity it was that he did not use his authority a little more, after he had discovered that he could regain it if he pleased.

On the following day I accompanied my father, who was one of the officers on duty in the interior of the church, and as he stood in advance of his men, I remained at his side, and of course had a very complete view of the whole ceremony. I was very neatly-dressed, and my father received many compliments upon my appearance. At last the ceremony began. The church was lined with troops to keep back the crowd, and the procession entered the church, the bishop walking under a canopy, attended by the priests, then the banners, and pretty children, dressed as angels, tossing frankincense from silver censers. The two bells were in the centre of the church, both of them dressed in white petticoats, which covered them completely, ornamented with ribbons, and a garland of flowers upon the head of each—if I may so designate their tops. The godmothers, dressed in white as on baptismal ceremonies, and the godfathers in court suits, stood on each side. They had been selected from the *élite* of the families in the town. The organ and the military band relieved each other until the service commenced. The bishop read the formula; the godmothers and godfathers gave the customary security; the holy water was sprinkled over the bells, and thus were they regularly baptised. One was named Eulalie and the other Lucile. It was a very pretty ceremony, and I should have liked to have been present at their “*première communion*” if it ever took place.

My English readers may consider this as a piece of mummery. At the time I did not. As a good Catholic, which I was at that time, and a pretty Frenchwoman, I thought that nothing could be more correct than the *decoration des belles*. I believe that it has always been the custom to name bells—to consecrate them most certainly—and if we call to mind what an important part they perform in our religion, I do not wonder at it. By being consecrated, they receive the rites of the church. Why, therefore, should they not receive the same rites in baptism? But why baptise them? Because they speak to us in many ways, and with their loud tongues express the feelings, and make known the duties imposed upon us. Is there cause for the nation to rejoice, their merry notes proclaim it from afar; in solemn tones they summon us to the house of prayer, to the lifting of the Host, and to the blessing of the priest; and it is their mournful notes which announce to us that one of our generation

has been summoned away, and has quitted this transitory abode. Their offices are Christian offices, and therefore are they received into the church.

Chapter Three

An elder sister of my mother's resided at Colmar, and I passed most of my time with her during our stay. When my father's regiment was ordered to Paris, this lady requested that I might remain with her; but my mother refused, telling her sister that she could not, conscientiously as a mother, allow any of her daughters to quit her care for any worldly advantage. That this was mere hypocrisy, the reader will imagine; indeed, it was fully proved so to be in two hours afterwards, by my mother telling my father that if her sister had offered to take Clara, my second sister, she would have consented. The fact was, that the old lady had promised to dower me very handsomely (for she was rich), and my mother could not bear any good fortune to come to me.

We passed through Luneville on our road to Paris, and I saw my dear grandmother for the last time. She requested that I might be left with her, making the same offer as she did before, of leaving me all her property at her death, but my mother would not listen to any solicitation. Now as our family was now fourteen in number, she surely might, in either of the above instances, have well spared me, and it would have been a relief to my father; but this is certain, she would not spare me, although she never disguised her dislike, and would, if she had dared, have treated me as she had formerly done. I was very anxious to stay with my dear grandmother. She had altered very much since my grandfather's death, and was evidently breaking up fast; but my mother was inexorable. We continued our route, and arrived at Paris, where we took up our quarters in the barracks close to the Boulevards.

My mother was as harsh as ever, and now recommenced her boxes of the ear—which during the time we were at Colmar had but seldom been applied. In all my troubles I never was without friends. I now made an acquaintance with the wife of the colonel of the regiment who joined us at Paris. She had no children. I imparted all my troubles to her, and she used to console me. She was a very religious woman, and as I had been brought up in the same way by my grandmother, she was pleased to find piety in one so young, and became much attached to me. She had a sister, a widow of large fortune, who lived in the Rue St Honoré, a very pleasant, lively woman, but very sarcastic when she pleased, and not caring what she said if her feelings prompted her. I constantly met her at the colonel's house, and she invited me to come and see her at her own, but I knew that my mother would not permit me, so I did not ask. As the colonel was my father's superior officer, all attempts to break off my intimacy with her which my mother made, were unavailing, and I passed as usual all my time in any other house except my home.

I have now to record but two more beatings. The reader may think that I have recorded enough already, but as these were the two last, and they were peculiar, I must beg him to allow me so to do. The first beating was given me for the following cause: A very gentlemanlike young officer in the regiment was very particular in his attentions to me. I liked his company, but my thoughts had never been directed towards marriage, for I was too childish and innocent. One morning it appeared that he proposed to my father, who immediately gave his consent, provided that I was agreeable, and this he ventured to do without consulting my mother. Perhaps he thought it a good opportunity to remove me from my mother's persecution. At all events when he made known to her what he had done, and requested her to sound me on the subject, she was in no pleasant humour. When she did so, my reply was (he being a very dark-complexioned man, although well-featured), "Non, maman, je ne veux pas. Il est trop noir."

To my astonishment, my mother flew at me, and I received such an avalanche of boxes on the ears for this reply, that I was glad to make my escape as fast as I could, and locked myself up in my own room. Now I really believe that I was almost a single instance of a young lady having her ears well boxed for refusing to marry a man that she did not care for—but such was my fate.

The treatment I received in this instance got wind in the barracks, and my cause was warmly taken up by every one. Finding myself thus supported, I one day ventured to refuse to do a very menial

and unpleasant office, and for this refusal I received the second beating. It was the last certainly, but it was the most severe, for my mother caught up a hearth-brush, and struck me for several minutes such a succession of severe blows, that my face was so disfigured that I was hardly to be recognised, my head cut open in several places, and the blood pouring down me in every direction. At last she left me for dead on the floor. After a time I recovered my recollection, and when I did so, I sprang away from the servants who had been supporting me, and with my hair flying in the wind, and my face and dress streaming with blood, I ran across the barrack-yard to the colonel's house, and entering the room in which she was sitting with her sister, sank at her feet, choking with the blood which poured out of my mouth.

"Who is it?" exclaimed she, springing up in horror and amazement.

"Valerie—pauvre Valerie," moaned I, with my face on the floor.

They raised me up, sent for the servants, took me into a bedroom, and sent for the surgeon of the regiment, who lived in the barracks. As soon as I was somewhat recovered, I told them that it was my mother's treatment; and I became so excited, that as soon as the surgeon had left the house, I cried, "Never, madam, will I again enter my father's house; never while I live—if you do not protect me—or if nobody else will—if you send me back again, I will throw myself in the Seine. I swear it as I kneel."

"What is to be done, sister?" said the colonel's wife.

"I will see. At all events, Valerie, I will keep you here a few days till something can be arranged. It is now quite dark, and you shall stay here, and sleep on this bed."

"Or the bed of the river," replied I, "I care not if it were that, for I should not rise up to misery. I have made a vow, and I repeat, that I never will enter my father's house again."

"My dear Valerie," said the colonel's wife, in a soothing tone.

"Leave her to me, sister," said the other, who was busy arranging my hair now that my wounds had stopped bleeding, "I will talk to her. The colonel will be home directly, and you must receive him."

Madame Allarde, for that was the colonel's wife's name, left the room. As soon as she was gone, Madame d'Albret, her sister, said to me, "Valerie, I fear that what you have said you will adhere to, and you will throw yourself into the river."

"Yes, if I am taken back again," replied I. "I hope God will forgive me, but I feel I shall, for my mind is overthrown, and I am not sane at times."

"My poor child, you may go back again to your father's house, because my sister and her husband, in their position, cannot prevent it, but believe me, you shall not remain there. As long as I have a home to offer, you shall never want one; but you must listen to me. I wish to serve you and to punish your unnatural mother, and I will do so, but Valerie, you must well weigh circumstances before you decide; I say that I can offer you a home, but recollect life is uncertain, and if it pleases God to summon me, you will have a home no longer. What will you do then?—for you will never be able to return to your father's house."

"You are very kind, madam," replied I, "but my resolution is formed, and I will work for my daily bread in any way that I can, rather than return. Put me but in the way of doing that, and I will for ever bless you."

"You shall never work for your bread while I live, Valerie, but if I die, you will have to do something for your own support, and recollect how friendless you will be, and so young."

"Can I be more friendless than I am at home, madame?" said I, shaking my head, mournfully.

"Your father deserves punishment for his want of moral courage as well as your mother," replied Madame d'Albret. "You had better go to bed now, and to-morrow give me your decision."

"To-morrow will make no change, madame," answered I, "but I fear that there is no chance of my escape. To-morrow my father will arrive for me as usual, and—but I have said it. You may preserve my life, madame, but how I know not," and I threw myself down on the bed in despair.

Chapter Four

About an hour afterwards Madame d'Albret, who had left me on the bed while she went down to her sister, came up again, and spoke to me, but from weakness occasioned by the loss of blood and from excitement, I talked for many minutes in the most incoherent manner, and Madame d'Albret was seriously alarmed. In the meantime the colonel had come home, and his wife explained what had happened. She led him up to my room just at the time that I was raving. He took the candle, and looked at my swelled features, and said, "I should not have recognised the poor girl. *Mort de ma vie!* but this is infamous, and Monsieur de Chatenoeuf is a contemptible coward. I will see him to-morrow morning."

The colonel and his wife then left the room. By this time I had recovered from my paroxysm. Madame d'Albret came to me, and putting her face close to mine, said, "Valerie."

"Yes, madame," replied I.

"Are you more composed now? Do you think that you could listen to me?"

"Yes, madame, and thankfully," replied I.

"Well, then, my plan is this. I am sure that the colonel will take you home to-morrow. Let him do so; in the morning I will tell you how to behave. To-morrow night you shall escape, and I will be with a *fiacre* at the corner of the street ready to receive you. I will take you to my house, and no one, not even my sister, shall know that you are with me. They will believe that you have thrown yourself into the Seine, and as the regiment is ordered to Lyons, and will leave in ten days or a fortnight, there will be no chance, if you are concealed till their departure, of their knowing that you are alive."

"Thank you, thank you, madame, you know not how happy you have made me," replied I, pressing my hand to my heart, which throbbed painfully with joy. "God bless you, Madame d'Albret. Oh, how I shall pray for you, kind Madame d'Albret!"

Madame d'Albret shed tears over me after I had done speaking, and then wishing me good-night, told me that she would see me in the morning, and let me know what was going on, and then give me further directions for my conduct. She then left me, and I tried to go to sleep, but I was in too much pain. Once I did slumber, and dreamt that my mother was beating me again. I screamed with the pain that the blows gave me and awoke. I slept no more that night. At daylight I rose, and, as may be supposed, the first thing that I did was to look into the glass. I was terrified; my face was swelled so that my features were hardly distinguishable; one eye was closed up, and the blood had oozed out through the handkerchief which had been tied round my head by the surgeon. I was, indeed, an object. The servant brought me up some coffee, which I drank, and then remained till the colonel's wife came up to me.

It was the first and only time that I ever beheld that good woman angry. She called from the top of the stairs for her husband to come up; he did so, looked at me, said nothing, but went down again. About half-an-hour afterwards Madame d'Albret and the surgeon came up together. The latter was interrogated by her as to the effects of the injuries I had received, and after examination, he replied, that although it would take some days for the inflammation and marks of the blows to go away, yet he did not consider that eventually I should be in any way disfigured. This gave me great pleasure, as I suspect it would have done any other pretty girl in my situation. Madame d'Albret waited till the surgeon was gone, and then gave me some further instructions, which I obeyed to the letter. She also brought me a black veil in case I had not one of my own. She then left me, saying, that the colonel had sent for my father, and that she wished to be present at the interview.

My father came, and the colonel, after stating the treatment which I had received, loaded him with reproaches; told him his conduct was that of a coward to allow his wife to be guilty of such cruelty towards his child. Then he sent Madame d'Albret to bring me down; when I entered, my father started back with surprise; he had answered the colonel haughtily, but when he beheld the condition

I was in, he said, "Colonel, you are right; I deserve all you have said and even more, but now do me the favour to accompany me home. Come, Valerie, my poor child, your father begs your pardon."

As my father took my hand to lead me away, Madame d'Albret said to the colonel, "My dear Allarde, do you not incur a heavy responsibility in allowing that girl to go back again? You know what she said yesterday."

"Yes, ma chère, I have been told by your sister, but it was said in a state of excitement, and I have no doubt that kindness will remove all such ideas. Monsieur de Chatenoeuf, I am at your orders."

I never said a word during all this interview. Madame d'Albret tied the black veil round my head and let it fall to conceal my features, and I was led home by my father accompanied by the colonel. We went into the room where my mother was sitting. My father lifted the veil from my face.

"Madame," said my father, in a severe tone, "do you see the condition to which your barbarity has reduced this poor girl? I have brought Monsieur Allarde here to tell you before him, that your conduct has been infamous, and that mine has been unpardonable in not having protected her from your cruelty; but I now tell you, that you have bent the bow till it has broken, and your power in this house is ended for ever."

My mother was so much astonished at this severe rebuke before witnesses, that she remained with her mouth open and her eyes staring. At last she gave a sort of chuckling laugh.

"Madame, I am in earnest," continued my father, "and you shall find that in future I command here. To your room, madame, immediately!"

The last word was pronounced in a voice of thunder. My mother rose, and as she retired, burst into a passionate flood of tears. The colonel then took his leave, saying to my father.

"Tenez-vous la."

My father remained a quarter of an hour with me, consoling me and blaming himself, and promising that in future he would see me done justice to. I heard him without reply. The tears started in my eyes at his kind expressions, but I felt there was no security for his adhering to all he promised, and I trembled as I thought so. He left me and went out. My mother, who had been watching, as soon as she saw that he had left the house, hastened downstairs from her room, and came into the one where I was sitting alone.

"So, mademoiselle," said she, panting, and apparently striving to contain herself, "my power in this house is gone for ever, and all through you. Ha, ha, ha! we shall see, we shall see. D'ye hear me, creature?" continued she, with her clenched hand close to my face. "No, not yet," said she, after a pause, and then she left the room.

If my father's kindness had somewhat staggered my resolution, this conduct of my mother's confirmed it. I felt that she was right in what she said, and that in a month she would regain her sway, and drive me to desperation. During the whole of that day I made no reply to anything that was said to me by my brothers and sisters, who came in by stealth to see me. In this I followed the advice of Madame d'Albret, and at the same time my own feelings and inclinations. The servants who offered me dinner, and coaxed me to take some nourishment, could not get any answer from me, and at last one of them, who was a kind-hearted girl, burst out into tears, crying that mademoiselle was *folle*. My father did not come home to dinner; my mother remained in her room till he came in in the evening, and then he went up to her. It wanted but half-an-hour of the time that I had agreed to meet Madame d'Albret. I waited that time, during which I heard sounds of high altercation above stairs. I was quite alone, for my mother had prevented the children coming to me, and as the clock struck, I dropped my veil over my face and quietly walking out of the house, made for the rendezvous agreed.

I found the *fiacre* with Madame d'Albret waiting for me, and stepping into it, I was in a few minutes safely lodged in her splendid comfortable apartments. Madame d'Albret put me in a little cabinet inside of her own room, so that no one, except one servant whom she could trust, knew of my being on the premises. There I was left to recover from my bruises, and regain, if possible, my

good looks. On the following day she repaired to the barracks, and remained with her sister till the evening, when she returned, and came up to me.

“All has happened as I wished,” said she, as she took off her bonnet; “you are nowhere to be found, and they have not the least suspicion that you are here. When you were first missed, they thought you had returned to the colonel’s, and your father did not think it advisable to make inquiry until the next morning, when to his surprise he learnt that you had never been there. The dismounted hussar, who was sentry during the evening, was then examined; and he replied, that about half-past eight o’clock, a young person, who by her figure he presumed to be Mademoiselle Chatenoeuf, had gone out of the gates, but that she had a thick veil over her face, and he could not see it. When your father and the colonel had interrogated the man and dismissed him, my poor sister burst into tears and said, ‘Alas! alas! then she has kept her word, and has thrown herself into the Seine. Oh, Monsieur Allarde, my sister said you would incur a heavy responsibility by sending that poor girl back, and now it has proved but too true: poor dear Valerie!’ Your father and the colonel were almost as much distressed as my sister, and it was just at that time that I came in.

“‘Sister,’ cried Madame Allarde to me, ‘Valerie has left the barracks.’

“‘What!’ exclaimed I, ‘When? oh my fear was too true!’ said I, clasping my hands and then taking out my handkerchief, I covered my face and sobbed. I tell you, Valerie, that nothing but my affection for you would have induced me to be so deceitful, but under the circumstances I hope I was justified. My assumed grief and distress quite removed any suspicion of your being here, and shortly afterwards the colonel made a sign to your father, and they both left the barracks; I have no doubt they went down to the Morgue, to ascertain if their fears had already been proved correct.”

“What is the Morgue, madame?” said I.

“Do you not know, my child? It is a small building by the side of the Seine, where all bodies which are found in the river are laid out for the examination of the friends of those who are missing. Below the bridges there is a large strong net laid across, which receives all the bodies as they are swept away by the tide; that is, it receives many, if not most of them, but some are never found again.”

Madame Allarde did not fail to return to the barracks on the next day, and found that a general excitement prevailed, not only among the officers but the men. My supposed suicide had been made known. My father had visited the Morgue a second time, and the police had been on the search without success. My mother dared not even show herself at the window of her apartments, and found herself avoided even by her own children. As for my father, he was half mad, and never met her but to load her with reproaches, and to curse his own folly in having so long submitted to her imperious will.

“At all events, one good has arisen from your supposed death, Valerie,” said Madame d’Albret, “which is, that your father has completely resumed his authority, and I do not think will ever yield it up again.”

“My poor father,” replied I, shedding tears, “I feel for him.”

“He is certainly to be pitied,” replied Madame d’Albret, “but it is his own conscience which must be his greatest tormentor. He was selfish enough not to feel for you during your years of persecution, and rather than have his own comforts invaded by domestic brawls for a short period, he allowed you to be sacrificed. But observe, Valerie, if you have still a wish to return to your parents, it is not too late. The regiment does not leave Paris till next Thursday.”

“Oh, no, no,” cried I, “my mother would kill me; don’t mention that again, madame,” continued I, trembling.

“I will not, my child, for to tell you the truth, you would not appear in so favourable a light, if you were now to return. You have caused much grief to my sister and husband, and they would not receive you with cordiality after having thus trifled with their feelings. It would also be a victory for your mother; and I doubt not but that in a short time she would again recover that power which for the present she has lost. You never can be happy in your family after what has passed, and I think that what has been done is for the best. Your father can well spare one child out of fourteen, having

little more than a long sword for their support. Your supposed death will be the cause of your father retaining his lawful authority, and preventing any of the remaining children receiving such injustice as you have done; and remorse will check, if it does not humanise your mother, and I trust that the latter will be the case. I had well weighed all this in my mind, my dear Valerie, before I made the proposal, and I consider still that for your sake and for the sake of others, it is better that you should be the sacrifice. Nevertheless, I repeat, consult your own feelings, and if you repent the step which you have taken, there is yet time for you to return.”

“My dear madame, return I never will, unless I am taken by force. All I feel is, that I should like that my father’s bitter anguish was assuaged by his knowledge of my being still in existence.”

“And so should I, Valerie, were it possible that the communication could be made, and the same happy results be arrived at; but that cannot be, unless it should please Heaven to summon your mother, and then you might safely inform your father of your existence.”

“You are right, madame.”

“Yes, I think I am, Valerie; for, after all, your father duly deserves his severe penance, which is, to visit the Morgue every day; but painful as is the remedy, it is necessary for the cure.”

“Yes, madame,” replied I, sobbing, “all you say is true, but still I cannot help weeping and pitying my poor father; not that it alters my determination, but I cannot command my feelings.”

“Your feelings do you honour, Valerie, and I do not blame you for your grief. Do not, however, indulge it to excess, for that is turning a virtue into a failing.”

There were still three days remaining previous to the departure of the regiment for Lyons. I was sorely distressed during this time. I pictured to myself my father’s remorse, and would gladly have hastened to the barracks and thrown myself into his arms, but my mother’s image rose before me, and her last words, “We shall see if my power is gone for ever,” rung in my ears; her clenched hand was apparently close to my face, and then my resolution remained fixed. The swelling of my features had now subsided, and I had in some degree recovered my good looks; still my eye and cheeks were tinged black and yellow in various places, and the cuts on my head not quite healed. However, I was satisfied that the surgeon of the regiment was correct in his assertion that I should not be the least disfigured by the treatment which I had received.

“I have news for you,” said Madame d’Albret, as she returned from the barracks, where she had been to see her sister off on her journey. “Your brother, Auguste, who you know has been away, has returned to rejoin his regiment, but has since obtained his rank in another, which is stationed at Brest.”

“Why has he done so, madame? do you know? have you seen him?”

“Yes; he was at the colonel’s; he stated that he could not remain in the regiment if his mother continued with his father; that he should never be able after what had happened to treat his mother with common courtesy, still less with the duty of a son, and therefore he preferred leaving the regiment.”

“And my father, madame?”

“Your father allows him to act as he pleases; indeed, he feels the force of what your brother says, and so does my brother-in-law, who has given his assent, as commanding officer, to your brother’s exchange. Auguste laments you very much, and the poor fellow looks very ill. I think he has done right, although it is a severe blow to your mother; but for her I have no compassion.”

“My mother never liked Auguste, madame.”

“No, I believe that; but what annoys her is the cause of his leaving his regiment, as it is open condemnation of her conduct.”

“Yes, I can understand that feeling on her part,” replied I.

“Well, Valerie, I did not return until the regiment was gone and the barracks cleared. You know the commandant always goes the last. I saw my sister safe off, and now I am here to tell you that you are no longer a prisoner, but may make yourself comfortable by roving through my apartments. But the first affair which we must take in hand is your wardrobe. I am rich enough to furnish you, so that shall be seen to immediately. And, Valerie dear, let me now say once for all, what I do not intend

to repeat in words, but I hope to prove by my actions. Look upon me as your mother, for I have not taken you away from your family without the resolution of supplying, as far as I can, not the mother you have lost, but the mother which in your dreams you have fancied. I love you, my child, for you are deserving of love. Treat me, therefore, with that unlimited confidence and affection which your young and pure heart yearns to pour out.”

“Bless you, madame, bless you,” cried I, bursting into tears, and burying my face in her lap; “I feel that now I have a mother.”

Chapter Five

For several days I remained quiet in the little ante-chamber, during which Madame d'Albret had been busy every morning driving in her carriage, and ordering me a wardrobe; and as the various articles came in, I was as much surprised as I was pleased at the taste which had been shown, and the expense which must have been incurred.

"My dear madame," cried I, as each parcel was opened, "these are much too good for me; recollect I am but a poor soldier's daughter."

"You were so," replied Madame d'Albret; "but you forget," continued she, kissing my forehead, "that the poor soldier's daughter was drowned in the Seine, and you are now the *protégée* of Madame d'Albret. I have already mentioned to all my friends that I expect a young cousin from Gascony, whom I have adopted, having no children of my own. Your own name is noble, and you may safely retain it, as there are no want of Chatenoeufs in Gascony, and there have been former alliances between them and the d'Albrets. I have no doubt that if I were to refer back to family records, that I could prove you to be a cousin, some three hundred times removed, and that is quite enough. As soon as you are quite well, and I think in a week all vestiges of your ill-treatment will be effaced, we will go down to my chateau for a few months, and we will return to Paris in the season. Has Madame Paon been here?"

"Yes, my dear madame, she has, and has taken my measure for the dresses; but don't scold me. I must cry a little, for I am so happy and so grateful. My heart will burst if I do not. Bless you, bless you, dear madame; little did I think before I saw you, that I should ever cry for joy."

Madame d'Albret embraced me with much affection, and allowed me to give vent to my feelings, which I did, bedewing her hands with my tears. A week afterwards, everything was ready, and we set off for the chateau in Brittany, travelling in Madame d'Albret's post-chariot with an *avant courier*, and without regard to expense.

And now I must make the reader somewhat better acquainted with my kind protectress. I little thought at the time that she offered me her protection, that she was a personage of such consequence, but the fact was, that her sister having made a very inferior match to her own, she, out of delicacy, while the Colonel and his wife were at Paris, avoided anything like state in paying them a visit, and I supposed that she was much in the same rank and society as they were; but such was not the case.

Madame d'Albret had married into one of the highest and most noble families of France. Her husband had died three years after their marriage, and having no children, had left her a large revenue entirely at her own disposal during her life, and wishing her to marry again, had the property entailed upon her children if she had any, if not, after her death, it was to go to a distant branch of the d'Albret family. I was informed that her income amounted to 60,000 livres per annum, besides her chateau in the country, and the hotel in the Rue St Honoré, which belonged to her, although she only occupied a portion of it. Her husband had now been dead more than ten years, and Madame d'Albret had not been persuaded by her numerous suitors to marry again. She was still handsome, about thirty-four years of age, and I hardly need say, was in the very best society in Paris. Such was the person who came to the barracks in so unassuming a manner, and whose protection I was so fortunate as to obtain.

I could dwell long upon the happy days that I passed at the chateau. There was no want of society, and the *réunions* were charming; and being in the country, I was allowed to join them, having been formally introduced by Madame d'Albret to all her visitors, as her cousin. My time was fully occupied. Madame d'Albret, perceiving that I had great talent for music and a fine voice, had procured me good masters, and wishing to prove my gratitude by attention, I was indefatigable, and made so rapid a progress, that my masters were surprised. Music and embroidery, at which I had before mentioned I was very expert, were my only occupations—and on the latter my talents were exerted to please Madame d'Albret, by offering her each piece as they were successively taken from the frame. So far from wishing to return to Paris, I was unhappy at the idea of leaving the chateau. Indeed, if

the reader will recall what I have narrated of my former life, he will at once perceive that I could but be in a state of perfect happiness.

Until I was received by Madame d'Albret, I had lived a life of persecution, and had not known kindness. Fear was the passion which had been acted upon, and which, I may say, had crushed both mind and body: now all was kindness and love. Praise, which I had never before received, was now lavished upon me, and I felt my energies and talents roused, and developing themselves in a way that astonished myself. I had not known what I was, or what I was capable of. I had had no confidence in myself, and I had believed myself to be almost as incapable as my mother would have persuaded me, and everybody else. This sudden change of treatment had a most surprising effect. In the course of a few months I had grown nearly three inches taller, and not only my figure, but my features, had become so improved, that, although not vain, it was impossible for me not to believe what every one said, and what my glass told me, that I was very handsome, and that I should make a great sensation when I was introduced at Paris. But although I believed this, I felt no desire. I was too happy as I was, and would not have exchanged the kindness of Madame d'Albret for the best husband that France could produce; and when anything was mentioned by ladies who visited Madame d'Albret, to that effect, and they talked about my future establishment, my reply invariably was, "*Je ne veux pas.*" I had always expressed my regrets that we should be obliged to go to Paris for the season, and Madame d'Albret, who of course had no wish to part with me so soon, and who felt that I was still young enough to remain for some years single, made me very happy by telling me that she did not intend to stay long in the capital, and that although I should appear at her parties, she did not intend that I should be much at public places. And so it proved; we went to Paris, and the best masters were procured for me, but I did not go out with Madame d'Albret, except occasionally, in her morning drives, and once or twice to the Opera and theatres. My music occupied the major portion of my time, and having expressed a wish to learn English, I had a good master; but I had another resource from an intimacy having arisen between me and Madame Paon, whom, I believe, I have before mentioned as the first milliner in Paris.

This intimacy was brought about in the following manner. Being very clever with my needle, and having a great taste for dress, I used to amuse myself at the chateau with inventing something new, not for myself, but for Madame d'Albret, and very often surprised and pleased her by making alterations or additions to her dresses, which were always admired, and declared to be in the best taste. On our arrival at Paris, Madame Paon was visited of course, that the new fashions might be ascertained, and she immediately remarked and admired my little inventions. I was therefore consulted whenever a new dress was to be made for Madame d'Albret, and as Madame Paon was a very lady-like and superior person, of a decayed, but good family, we soon became very intimate. We had been at Paris about two months, when one morning Madame Paon observed to Madame d'Albret, that as I was learning English it would not be a bad plan if Madame d'Albret was to drop me at her establishment when she took her morning airing, as she had two highly respectable English *modistes* in her employ, who she found were necessary for her English customers, and that I should learn more English by an hour's conversation with them than a master could supply. Madame d'Albret agreed with her, I was pleased at the idea, and consequently three or four mornings in the week were passed at Madame Paon's.

But the reader must be introduced to the establishment of Madame Paon, or he may imagine that it was too condescending for a young lady in my position to visit at a milliner's. Madame Paon was the first milliner at Paris, and as is generally the case, was on the most intimate terms with all the ladies. She made for the court, and, indeed, for every lady to whom she could dedicate her time, as it was almost a favour to be permitted to be one of her customers. Her establishment was in the Rue St Honoré, I forget the name of the hotel, but it was one of the largest.

The suite of apartments were magnificent. You passed from one room to another, each displaying every variety of rich and graceful costume. In every room were demoiselles well-dressed to attend to the customers, and everything bespoke a degree of taste and elegance quite unparalleled. At

last you arrived at the reception-room of madame, which was spacious and most superbly furnished. There were no men in the establishment except in one room, called the Comptoir, in which were six clerks at their desks. When I add that Madame Paon was elegant in her manners, and handsome in her person, very tall and majestic, that she was rich, kept several servants, a handsome carriage, and had a *maison de campagne*, to which she retired every Saturday afternoon, the reader may acknowledge that she was a person whom Madame d'Albret might permit me to visit.

This intimacy soon became very great. There was a certain degree of *éclat* at my being so constantly in the house, and, moreover, as I had a decided taste for dress, I often brought forward some new invention which was not only approved of, but a source of profit to Madame Paon. Everything was submitted to my judgment as Madame Paon more than once observed, "What a first-rate *modiste* you would make, mademoiselle; but, unfortunately for the fashions, there is no chance of your being so employed."

At last the Paris season was nearly over, and truly glad was I when Madame d'Albret mentioned the day of our departure. I had very much improved in my music and my English during our residence at Paris. I had not been out except to small parties, and had no wish whatever to go out at all. I was satisfied with Madame d'Albret's company, and had no wish to leave her. I may say that I was truly happy, and my countenance was radiant, and proved that I was so. My thoughts would occasionally revert to my father and my brother Auguste, and make me melancholy for the time, but I felt that all was for the best, and I built castles, in which I imagined my suddenly breaking in upon them, throwing myself in my father's arms, and requesting him to share the wealth and luxury with which I fancied myself to be endowed.

I was now nearly eighteen years old. I had been one year under the protection of Madame d'Albret, and the old dowagers who visited us at the chateau were incessantly pointing out to Madame d'Albret that it was time to look out for an establishment for me. Madame d'Albret was, to a certain degree, of their opinion, but she did not wish to part with me, and I was resolute in my determination not to leave her. I had no wish to be married; I had reflected much upon the subject; the few married lives I had witnessed were not to my taste. I had seen my kind-hearted amiable grandmother thwarted by a penurious husband; I had witnessed my father under the control of a revengeful woman; and when I beheld, as I did every day, the peace and happiness in the establishment of Madame d'Albret as a single woman, I felt certain that marriage was a lottery in which there were thousands of blanks to one prize. When, therefore, any of Madame d'Albret's acquaintances brought up the subject, when they left the room I earnestly implored Madame d'Albret not to be influenced by their remarks, as I had made up my mind to remain single, and that all I asked was to remain with her and prove my gratitude.

"I believe you, Valerie," replied Madame d'Albret, "but I should not be doing my duty if I permitted you to act upon your own feelings. A girl like you was not intended by Heaven to pine away in celibacy, but to adorn the station in life in which she is placed. At the same time, I will not press the matter, but if an advantageous offer were to be made, I shall then consider it my duty to exert my influence with you to make you change your mind, but, at the same time, I will never use anything more than persuasion. I am too happy with you as a companion to wish to part with you, but, at the same time, I should be very selfish if I did not give you up when your own interest told me that such was my duty."

"Well, madame, I thank Heaven that I have no fortune, and that will, I trust, be a bar to any proposals from the interested gentleman of the present day."

"That may not save you, Valerie," replied Madame d'Albret, laughing, "gentlemen may be satisfied with expectancies; nay, it is possible that one may be found who may be satisfied with your own pretty self, and ask no more."

"I rather think not, madame," replied I. "You have too good an opinion of me, and must not expect others to view me with your partial eyes; all I can say is, that if such a gentleman could be

found, his disinterestedness would make me think more highly of him than I do of the sex at present, although not sufficiently well to wish me to change my present condition.”

“Well, well, we shall see,” replied Madame d’Albret, “the carriage is at the door, so bring me my bonnet and cashmere.”

A few weeks after our return to the chateau, a Monsieur de G—, of an old family in Brittany, who had been for the last two years in England, returned to his father’s house, and called upon Madame d’Albret. She had known him from childhood, and received him most cordially. I must describe him fully, as he played no small part in my little drama. He was, I should think, nearly thirty years of age, small in person but elegantly made, with a very handsome but rather effeminate face. His address and manners were perfect. He was very witty, and apparently very amiable. His deportment towards our sex was certainly most fascinating—so tender and so respectful. I certainly never had before seen so polished a man. He sang well, and played upon several instruments; drew, caricatured—indeed, he did everything well that he attempted to do; I hardly need say that with such qualifications, and being so old a friend, that he was gladly welcomed by Madame d’Albret, and became a daily visitor at the chateau. I was soon intimate with him and partial to his company, but nothing more; indeed, his attentions to Madame d’Albret were quite as great as to me, and there was nothing to permit any one to suppose that he was paying his court either to her or to me. Madame d’Albret thought otherwise, because we sang together, and because he talked to me in English, and she as well as others rallied me in consequence.

After two months had passed away, Monsieur de G— was supposed to be paying his attentions more particularly to me, and I thought so myself; Madame d’Albret certainly did, and gave him every opportunity. He was the heir to a large property, and did not require money with his wife. About this time, an English lady of the name of Bathurst who was travelling with a niece, a little girl about fourteen years old, had accepted an invitation from Monsieur de G—’s father, to pass a week with them at their chateau, which was about five miles from that of Madame d’Albret, and this lady was introduced. She was apparently very amiable, and certainly very *distinguée* in her manners, and we saw a great deal of her as she was a great favourite with Madame d’Albret.

A few weeks after the introduction of this English lady, I was one day on the terrace alone, when I was accosted by Monsieur de G—. After a remark or two upon the beauty of the autumnal flowers, he observed, “How different are the customs of two great nations, with but a few leagues of water between them—I refer to the French and the English. You would be surprised to see how great they are if you were ever to go to England—in none, perhaps, more so than in the affairs of the heart. In France we do not consult the wishes or the feelings of the young lady, we apply to her parents, and if the match is considered equally advantageous, the young lady is told to prepare herself for changing her condition. In England the very reverse is the case; we apply to the young lady, gain her affections, and when certain of them, we then request the sanction of those who are her guardians. Which do you think is the most natural and satisfactory, Mademoiselle de Chatenoeuf?”

“I have been brought up in France, Monsieur de G—, and I prefer the mode of France; our parents and our guardians are the people most able to decide upon the propriety of a match, and I think that until that point is ascertained, no affections should be engaged, as, should the marriage not be considered advisable, much pain and disappointment will be prevented.”

“In some instances, I grant that such may be the case,” replied he; “but still, is it not treating your sex like slaves to permit no love before marriage? and is it agreeable for ours, that we lead to the altar a person who may consent from a sense of duty, without having the least regard for her husband; nay, perhaps feeling an aversion?”

“I do not think that any kind parents would force their child to marry a man for whom she felt an aversion,” replied I; “and if there is not much love before marriage, there may be a great deal after; but the fact is, it is a subject upon which I am not able, nor do I wish to give my opinion.”

“As you disagree with me, Mademoiselle de Chatenoeuf,” replied he, “I fear you will not be pleased at my courting you in the English fashion; and previous to addressing myself to Madame d’Albret, making known to you my sincere regard for you, and my humble hopes that I am not indifferent to you.”

“I will answer you very plainly, Monsieur de G—; and perhaps it is as well you have taken this unusual step, as it will save you the trouble of making any application to Madame d’Albret. Flattered as I am by your compliment, I beg to decline the honour you propose, and now that you know my feelings, you will of course not be so ungenerous as to make any application to Madame d’Albret.”

“Certainly, mademoiselle,” replied he, with great pique, “but on one condition, which is, that you will promise me that you will not mention to Madame d’Albret what has now passed between us.”

“That I willingly promise, Monsieur de G—, as I may consider it as your secret.”

“And I trust,” continued he, “that you will not discard me from your friendship, but receive me as before.”

“I shall always be happy to receive the friends of Madame d’Albret,” replied I, “and now I wish you a good-morning.”

I went to my own room and reflected upon what had passed. I was angry with Monsieur de G— for what I considered the unwarrantable liberty he had taken, the greater as he must have known my utter dependence upon Madame D’Albret; and how unlikely it was that I would form any such engagement without her knowledge and sanction. That I had no love for Monsieur de G— was certain, although I was pleased with his company and conversation. I was sorry on reflection that I had given my promise not to mention what had passed, but having made the promise, although hastily, I resolved to adhere to it.

I took it for granted that he would gradually withdraw himself, and that we should see little more of him; but in this I was mistaken; he was as frequent in his visits as before, dividing his attentions between Madame d’Albret and me. This annoyed me, and I avoided him as much as I could, and the consequence was, that he was oftener with Madame d’Albret than with me. At first when Madame d’Albret perceived this, she appeared to be vexed, as she had evidently set her mind upon the match, and expected daily to receive a formal proposal from him in my behalf; but gradually, why I know not, it gave her no further concern, and I was permitted to leave the room, and do as I pleased without being subjected to any remarks.

Such was the state of affairs when the Paris season drew near. Madame Bathurst had been induced to remain in Brittany, and was continually with us. She had often asked me to come over to England, and pass a few weeks with them, and I had jokingly replied that I would. One morning Madame d’Albret said to me—

“My dear Valerie, Madame Bathurst has again requested me to allow you to go to England with her. Now if you think that you would like to pass a short time with her, instead of remaining at Paris during the season, I really have no objection, if it would give you pleasure.”

“My dear madame, I was only joking when I said so.”

“Well, you have made Madame Bathurst think you were in earnest, my dear,” replied she; “and I thought so too, and have this morning promised that you shall go with her. I thought you would perfect yourself in English, and it would be a good opportunity of relieving you for a short time of your constant attendance upon me; so, my dear Valerie, I advise you to go. It will amuse you, and a little change will do you good: besides, my dear, I perceive that the attentions of Monsieur de G— are not agreeable to you, and it is as well to break it off by a short absence.”

“I shall not dispute your wishes, madame,” replied I, mournfully, for my heart misgave me, why I knew not, “but if I do go, it will be to oblige you, and not because I really wish it.”

“My dear Valerie, I think it will be for the best, and therefore you will oblige me. I have promised for you, and I should be sorry to have to recall my promise—so consent, my dear, and I will write to Madame Bathurst, that she may be prepared to receive you.”

“Certainly, madame,” replied I, “your wishes will ever be a law to me:” and so saying, I left the room, and going to my own chamber, I threw myself down on the bed, and wept bitterly without knowing why.

About ten days after this, Madame Bathurst called for me to take me to the chateau of Monsieur de G—’s father, where I was to remain till the next morning, when we were to post to Paris. It was with great pain that I quitted Madame d’Albret, but her kindness to me appeared to have increased rather than diminished, after the proposal of our short separation. “God bless you, my dear Valerie,” she said, “you must write to me twice a week; I shall be most impatient for your return.” I parted from her with many tears, and did not leave off weeping till we arrived at the chateau, at which Madame Bathurst resided.

I was received with formal politeness by the old gentleman, and Monsieur de G—, who was also at home, and in an excessive gay humour. “Alas, mademoiselle,” cried he, “what a desert you will leave behind you! It is too cruel, this travelling mania on your part. We never shall see you again.”

There was so much irony in his face as he said this, that I hardly knew what to make of it; but it made me feel anxious and dissatisfied. I would have given much to have abandoned the journey, but Madame d’Albret’s wishes were a law to me. To avoid reflection, which was painful, I talked with Caroline, the niece of Madame Bathurst, and as we were to set off at daylight, we retired early. The following morning we set off, and in due time arrived at Paris, where we remained but one day, and then proceeded to Boulogne, where we embarked.

It was now November, and half-way across the Channel we were enveloped in a fog, and it was with difficulty that we made the harbour. We set off for London, the fog continued during the whole day, and on our arrival at the suburbs it was thicker than ever, and the horses were led through the streets by people carrying flambeaux. I had heard that England was a *triste pays*, and I thought it so indeed. At last I observed to Madame Bathurst, “Est-ce qu’il n’y a jamais de soleil dans ce pays, madame?”

“Oh, yes,” replied she, laughing, “and a very beautiful sun too.”

The next day we set off for Madame Bathurst’s country seat, to pass the Christmas. Before we were three miles out of London, the fog had disappeared, the sun shone out brilliantly, and the branches of the leafless trees covered with rime, glittered like diamond wands, as we flew past them. What with the change in the weather, and the rapid motion produced by the four English post-horses, I thought England beautiful; but I must say that the first two days were a trial, the more so as I was very despondent from having quitted Madame d’Albret. I was delighted with Madame Bathurst’s country seat, the well-arranged gardens, the conservatories, the neatness displayed in every thing so different from France, the cleanness of the house and furniture; the London carpets over the whole of the rooms and staircases, were, in my opinion, great improvements; but I cared little for the society, which I found not only dull, but it appeared to me to be selfish. I found a lively companion in Caroline, and we sat up in a little boudoir, where we were never interrupted. Here I practised my music, and at Madame Bathurst’s request, spoke alternately English and French with my little companion, for our mutual improvement.

I had written twice to Madame d’Albret, and had received one very kind answer; but no mention was made of my return, although it was at first arranged that my visit was to be three weeks or a month. A fortnight after my arrival at Fairfield, I received a second letter from Madame d’Albret, kind as usual, but stating, to my great grief, that she was not well, having had an attack on her chest from having taken a violent cold. I answered the letter immediately, requesting that I might be permitted to return home and nurse her, for I felt very uneasy. For three weeks, during which I had no reply, I was in a state of great anxiety and distress, as I imagined that Madame d’Albret must have been too ill to write, and I was in a fever of suspense. At last I received a letter from her, stating that she had been very ill, and that she had been recommended by the physicians to go to the south of France for the winter. At the same time, as she could not put off her departure, she wrote to Madame

Bathurst, requesting, if not inconvenient, that she would allow my visit to be extended till the spring, at which season she expected to return to Paris. Madame Bathurst read her letter to me, and stated how happy she should be for me to remain. I could do no otherwise but thank her, although I was truly miserable. I wrote to Madame d'Albret, and stated what my feelings were; but as she had, by what was said in her letter, already left for the south of France, I knew that my letter would arrive too late to enable her to alter her determination. All I requested was, that she would give me continual intelligence of her health.

I was, however, much consoled in my distress by the kindness of Madame Bathurst, and affectionate manners of her niece Caroline, who was my constant companion. There was a great deal of company not only visiting, but staying in the house; but although there was much company, there was very little society. Horses, dogs, guns, were the amusements of the gentlemen during the day. In the evening we saw little of them, as they seldom left the dinner-table before Caroline and I had retired to our rooms; and the ladies appeared to me to be all afraid of each other, and to be constantly on the reserve.

Christmas had passed, and I had not heard again from Madame d'Albret, which was a source of great vexation and many bitter tears. I fancied her dying in the south of France, without anyone to take care of her. I often spoke to Madame Bathurst on the subject, who offered all the excuses that she could devise, but I thought at the same time appeared to be very grave, and unwilling to continue the conversation. At last I thought of Madame Paon, and I wrote to her, inquiring whether she knew how Madame d'Albret was, detailing to her how I had come to England, and how Madame D'Albret had been seriously indisposed, stating my fears from not having received any reply to my last letters. The day after I had written to Madame Paon, Caroline, who was sitting with me in the boudoir, observed, "I heard Mrs Corbet say to my aunt that she had seen Madame d'Albret at Paris about ten days ago."

"Impossible!" replied I; "she is in the south of France."

"So I understood," replied Caroline; "but she did say so, and my aunt immediately sent me out of the room on a message. I am sure it was to get rid of me, that she might talk to Mrs Corbet."

"What can this mean?" exclaimed I. "Oh, my heart forebodes evil! Excuse me, Caroline, but I feel very miserable;" and I laid my face down on the table, covering it with my hands, and tears trickled fast through my fingers.

"Speak to my aunt," said Caroline, consolingly; "do not cry, Valerie, it may be all a mistake."

"I will at once speak to Madame Bathurst," said I, raising my head, "it will be the best plan."

I went into my room, bathed my eyes, and then sought Madame Bathurst, whom I found in the conservatory, giving directions to the gardener. After a time she took my arm and we walked down the terrace.

"Madame Bathurst," said I, "I have been made very miserable by Caroline stating that Mrs Corbet had told you that she met Madame d'Albret at Paris. How can this be?"

"I cannot imagine more than yourself, my dear Valerie," replied Madame Bathurst, "except that Mrs Corbet was mistaken."

"Do you think it was Madame?"

"I cannot say, Valerie, but I have written to Paris to ascertain the fact, which is to me incomprehensible. A few days will let us into the truth; I cannot believe it—indeed, if it were true, I shall consider that Madame d'Albret has treated me ill, for much as I am pleased to have you here, she has not been candid with me in proposing that you should remain the winter, upon the plea of her being obliged to go to the south, when she is still at Paris. I cannot understand it, and until confirmed, I will not believe it. Mrs Corbet is not an acquaintance of hers, and may, therefore, be mistaken."

"She must be, madame," replied I; "still it is strange that I do not hear from her. I am fearful something is wrong, and what it can be, I cannot surmise."

"Let us talk no more about it, my dear Valerie. A few days will decide the point."

A few days did decide the point, for I received an answer from Madame Paon, in which she said:—

“My dear Mademoiselle Chatenoeuf,—You may imagine my surprise at receiving your letter, and I fear you must prepare yourself for unpleasant intelligence. Madame d’Albret is in Paris, and has never been in the south of France that I have heard. When she first called, I inquired after you. The reply was that you were on a visit to a lady in England; that you had left her; that you had a *manie pour l’Angleterre*; and so saying, she shrugged up her shoulders. I was about to inquire more particularly, but she cut the conversation short by asking to see a new pelisse, and I perceived at once that there was something wrong, but what I could not comprehend. I did not see her till four or five weeks afterwards, when she called, accompanied by a Monsieur de G—, a person well known in Paris, where he bears a very indifferent character, as a desperate gambler, and a man of very bad disposition concealed under a very polished exterior; but his character is better known in England, which country, I am told, he was obliged to quit in consequence of some gaming transaction anything but honourable. I again made inquiries after you, and this time the reply was given by Monsieur de G—, who replied that you were an *ingrate*, and your name must not be in future mentioned by anyone to Madame d’Albret.

“The handsome face of Monsieur de G—, was changed to that of a demon when he made this remark, and fully proved to me the truth of the report that he was a person of very bad disposition. Madame d’Albret made no remark, except that she should be careful how she ever engaged a *demoiselle de compagnie* again. I was struck at this remark from her, as I always considered that you were (and indeed I know you were at one time), viewed in a very different light, and I was quite mystified. About a fortnight afterwards Madame d’Albret called upon me and announced her intended marriage to Monsieur de G—, and requested me to make her wedding dresses. Here the whole mystery was out, but why, because she marries Monsieur de G—, you should lose her protection, and why Monsieur de G— should be so inveterate against you, is more than I can tell. I have now, my dear mademoiselle, given you a detail of all I know, and shall be most happy to hear from you if you will please to write to me, etcetera, etcetera.

“Emile Paon, née Mercé.”

Here was a solution of the whole mystery. I read the letter and fell back on the sofa, gasping for breath. It was some time before I could recover myself. I was alone in my bedroom, my head and eyes swimming; but I staggered to the washing-stand, and obtained some water. It was half-an-hour before I could recall my astonished senses, and then everything appeared as clear to me as if it had been revealed. Monsieur de G—’s double attentions; his spiteful look at my refusal; his occupying himself wholly with Madame d’Albret after I refused him; her wishing to get rid of me, by sending me to England with Madame Bathurst, and her subsequent false and evasive conduct. Monsieur de G— had had his revenge, and gained his point at the same time. He had obtained the wealth of Madame d’Albret to squander at the gaming-table, and had contrived, by some means or another, to ruin me in her good opinion. I perceived at once that all was lost, and when I considered the awkwardness of my position, I was almost in despair.

Chapter Six

As I continued for more than an hour on the sofa, gloomily passing in review my short career, my present position, and occasionally venturing a surmise upon the future, a feeling which I had not had before,—one which had hitherto been latent—pride, gradually was awakened in my bosom, and as it was aroused, it sustained me. I have before observed that fear had been my predominating feeling till I had quitted my parents, love and gratitude had succeeded it, but now, smarting under injustice, pride, and, with pride, many less worthy passions, were summoned up, and I appeared in the course of two short hours to be another being. I felt confidence in myself, my eyes were opened all at once as it were to the heartlessness of the world; the more I considered the almost hopeless condition in which I was in, the more my energy was roused. I sat down on the sofa a confiding, clinging girl. I rose up a resolute, clear-sighted woman.

I reflected, and had made up my mind that Madame d'Albret would never forgive one whom she had injured as she had me. She had induced me to break off all family and parental ties (such as they were), she had made me wholly dependent upon her, and had now cast me off in a cruel and heartless manner. She had used deceit because she knew that she could not justify her conduct. She had raised calumnies against me, accusing me of ingratitude, as an excuse for her own conduct. Anything like a reconciliation therefore was impossible, and any assistance from her I was determined not to accept.

Besides, was she not married to Monsieur de G—, whom pique at my refusal had made my enemy, and who had, in all probability, as he pressed his own suit, perceived the necessity, independent of the gratification it afforded him to be my ruin, of removing me as a serious obstacle to Madame d'Albret's contracting a new alliance? From that quarter, therefore, there was nothing to be expected or hoped for, even if it were desired. And what was my position with Madame Bathurst? On a visit! At the termination of which I was houseless.

That Madame Bathurst would probably offer me a temporary asylum, for she would hardly turn me out of doors, I felt convinced; but my new-born pride revolted at the idea of dependence upon one on whom I had no claim whatever. What, then, was to be done? I examined my capital. I was handsome, but that was of no use to me; the insidious conduct of Monsieur de G— had raised to positive dislike the indifference that I felt for his sex, and I had no inclination to make a market of my personal advantages. I could sing and play well. I spoke French and English, and understood Italian. I could embroider the work well with my needle. Such were my capabilities, my stock-in-trade with which to commence the world; I was, therefore, competent to a certain degree to give lessons in music and in French, or to take a governess's place, or to become a modiste.

I thought of Madame Paon, but when I reflected in what manner I had visited her, the respect and homage, I may say, which had been offered up to me, and how different my reception and treatment would be if I entered the establishment as one of themselves, the reflection was too mortifying, and I determined that if I were driven to such an employment for my livelihood, it should be where I was not known. After much consideration, I decided that I would see Madame Bathurst, make known to her my intentions, and ask her assistance and recommendation to procure me a situation. I arranged my hair, removed all traces of my late agitation, and went down to her. I found her alone, and asking her whether she could spare me a few minutes of her time, I handed to her the letter which I had received from Madame Paon, and then made her acquainted with that portion of my history with which she had been unacquainted. As I spoke my courage revived, and my voice became firm—I felt that I was no longer a girl.

“Madame Bathurst, I have confided this to you, because you will agree with me that there can be nothing more between Madame d'Albret and me, for even if she made an offer, I would never accept it. I am now in a very false position, owing to her conduct. I am here on a visit, supposed by you to be the *protégée* of that lady, and a person of some consequence. Her protection has been

taken away from me, and I am now a beggar, with nothing but my talents for my future support. I explain this to you frankly, because I cannot think of remaining as your visitor; and if I do not ask too much, all that I wish of your friendship is, that you will give me such a recommendation as you think I deserve, by which I may obtain the means of future livelihood.”

“My dear Valerie,” replied Madame Bathurst, “I will not hurt your feelings. It is a heavy blow, and I am glad to perceive, that instead of being crashed by it, you appear to rise. I have heard of Madame d’Albret’s marriage, and the deceit which she has been practising evidently to get rid of you. Not many days ago I wrote to her, pointing out the variance between what she stated in her letters, and her actual position, and requesting to know what was to be done relative to you. Her answer I have received this day. She states that you have cruelly deceived her; that at the very time that you professed the utmost gratitude and affection, you were slandering her and laughing at her behind her back, particularly to Monsieur de G—, to whom she is now married; and that, however she might be inclined to forgive and overlook your conduct herself, that Monsieur de G— is resolute, and determined that you never shall come again under his roof. She has, therefore, transmitted a billet of 500 francs to enable you to return to your father’s house.”

“Then,” replied I, “it is as I suspected; Monsieur de G— is the cause of all.”

“Why did you trust him, Valerie, or rather why were you so imprudent, and I must add, ungrateful, to speak of Madame d’Albret as you did.”

“And you believe it, Madame Bathurst, you believe that I did so? I can only say that if such is your belief, the sooner we part the better.”

I then told her what I had omitted in my narrative, how I had refused Monsieur de G—, and explaining his character, showed that he had acted thus out of interest and revenge.

“I believe it all now, Valerie, and I must beg your pardon for having supposed that you had been ungrateful. This explanation relieves me, and enables me to make you the offer which I had thought of doing, had I not been checked by this calumny against you. I say, therefore, for the present, my dear Valerie, remain here. You are quite equal to be governess to Caroline, but I prefer you should remain with me more as a friend than as a governess. I say this, because I fear you will be too proud to remain as a dependent, without making yourself useful. You know that I did intend to take a governess for Caroline as soon as we went to London. I will now take you if you will consent, and shall feel the obligation on my side, as I shall not only have retained a capable person, but shall also not lose a dear young friend.”

“I thank you for the offer, my dear madame,” replied I, rising and courtseying; “I trust, however, that you will allow me a little time for reflection before I decide. You must admit that this is a most critical epoch in my life, and I must not make one false step if it is possible to prevent it.”

“Certainly,” replied Madame Bathurst, “certainly. You are right, Valerie, in reflecting well before you decide; but I must say that you are rather haughty in your manner towards me.”

“I may have been, my dear Madame Bathurst, but if so, take my excuses. Recollect the Valerie of yesterday, who was your visitor and young friend, is not the Valerie of to-day!” and with these words I took up the cheque for 500 francs which Madame Bathurst had laid on the table, left the room, and returned to my own apartment.

I returned to my room, and was glad to be once more alone, for although I bore up well under the circumstances, still the compressed excitement was wearying to the frame. I had resolved to accept the offer of Madame Bathurst at the time that she made it, but I did not choose to appear to jump at it, as she probably expected that I would. I felt no confidence in anyone but my own self after the treatment of Madame d’Albret, and I considered that Madame Bathurst would probably dismiss me as soon as my services were no longer required, with as little ceremony as had Madame d’Albret. That I was capable of taking charge of and instructing Caroline, I knew well, and that Madame Bathurst would not easily procure a governess so capable in singing and music as myself. There would be consequently no obligation, and I resolved that I would reject her terms if they were not favourable.

I had some money, for I had spent but a small portion of twenty sovereigns which Madame d'Albret had given me in a purse when I quitted her. I had therefore the means of subsistence for some little time, should I not come to terms with Madame Bathurst.

After an hour's reflection, I sat down and wrote a letter to Madame Paon, stating what had occurred, and my determination to obtain my own livelihood, and adding that as I was not sure whether I should accept of Madame Bathurst's offer, I wished her to give me a letter of introduction to some French acquaintance of hers in London, as I was an utter stranger to everything, and without advice, should probably be cheated in every way. As soon as this letter was finished I commenced another to Madame d'Albret, which was in the following words:—

“My dear Madame,

“Yes, I will still say my dear madame, for although you will never hear of me again, you are still dear to me, more dear perhaps than you were, when I considered you my patroness and my more than mother. And why so,—because when those we love are in misfortune, when those who have benefited us are likely to soon want succour themselves, it is then the time that we should pour out our gratitude and love. I do not consider it your fault, my dear Madame d'Albret, that you have been deceived by a base hypocrite, who wears so captivating a mask; I do not blame you that you have been persuaded by him that I have slandered and behaved ungratefully to you. You have been blinded by your own feelings towards him and by his consummate art. I am also to blame for not having communicated to you that *he* made me a proposal of marriage but a short time previous to my departure, and which I indignantly rejected, because he had taken such an unusual step without any previous communication with you on the subject—not that I would have accepted him, even if you had wished it, for I knew how false and unworthy he was considered to be. I should have told you, my dear madame, of this offer of marriage on his part, but he requested me as a favour not to mention it to you, and I did not then know that he was a ruined man, a desperate gambler, and that he had been obliged to quit this country for dishonourable practices at the gaming-table, as you may easily discover to be true; for even Madame Paon can give you all the necessary information. And into this man's hands have you fallen, my dear Madame d'Albret. Alas, how you are to be pitied! my heart bleeds for you, and I fear that a few months will suffice to prove to you the truth of what I now write. That I am a sufferer by the conduct of Monsieur de G— is true. I have lost a kind patroness, an indulgent mother, and am now left to obtain my own livelihood how I can. All my visions, all my dreams of happiness with you, all my wishes of proving my gratitude and love for your kindness have vanished, and here I am, young, alone, and unprotected. But I think not of myself; at all events I am free—I am not chained to such a person as Monsieur de G—, and it is of you, and all that you will have to suffer, that my thoughts and heart are full. I return you the cheque for 500 francs—I cannot take the money. You are married to Monsieur de G—, and I can accept nothing from one who has made you believe that Valerie could be calumnious and ungrateful. Adieu, my dear madame; I shall pray for you, and weep over your misfortunes.

“Yours ever gratefully,

“Valerie de Chatenoeuf.”

That there was a mixed feeling in this letter, I confess. As I said in it, I really pitied Madame d'Albret and forgave her her unkindness; but I sought revenge upon Monsieur de G—, and in seeking that, I planted daggers into the heart of Madame d'Albret; but I did not at the time that I wrote reflect upon this. What I wished to do was to vindicate myself, and that I could not do without exposing Monsieur de G—, and exposing him in his true colours was, of course, awakening Madame d'Albret to her position sooner than she would have been, and filling her mind with doubts and jealousy. That this was not kind, I felt when I had perused what I had written previous to folding the letter, but I felt no inclination to alter it, probably because I had not quite so wholly forgiven Madame d'Albret as I thought that I had. Be it as it may, the letter was sealed and despatched by that night's post, as well as that written to Madame Paon.

I had now only to arrange with Madame Bathurst, and I went down into the drawing-room where I found her alone. "I have considered, my dear Madame Bathurst," said I, "your kind proposal. I certainly have had a little struggle to get over, as you must admit that it is not pleasant to sink from a visitor in a family into a dependent, as I must in future be, if I remain with you, but the advantages of being with a person whom I respect as much as I do you, and of having charge of a young person to whom I am so attached as I am to Caroline, have decided me on accepting your offer. May I know then, what may be the terms upon which I am received as governess?"

"Valerie, I feel that this is all pride," replied Madame Bathurst, "but still it is not disreputable pride, and though I shall yield to it, I would have made no terms, but retained you as a dear friend, my purse and everything in the house at your command, and I hoped that you would have allowed me so to do; but as you will not, I have only to say that I should have expected to pay any governess whom I might have retained for Caroline, a salary of 100 pounds per annum, and that I offer you the same."

"It is more than sufficient, my dear madame," replied I, "and I accept your offer if you will take me on trial for six months."

"Valerie, you make me laugh, and make me angry at the same time, but I can bear much from you now, for you have had a heavy blow, my poor child. Now let's say no more on the subject; all is settled, and the arrangement will remain a secret, unless you publish it yourself."

"I certainly shall make no secret of it, Madame Bathurst; I should be sorry to show false colours, and be supposed by your friends to be otherwise than what I really am. I have done nothing that I ought to be ashamed of, and I abhor deceit. Whatever may be my position in life, I trust that I shall never disgrace the name that I bear, and I am not the first of a noble name who has had a reverse in fortune."

How strange that I now, for the first time in my life, began to feel pride in my family name. I presume because when we have lost almost everything, we cherish more that which remains to us. From the time that Madame Bathurst had first known me till the last twenty-four hours, not a symptom of pride had ever been discovered in me. As the *protégée* and adopted daughter of Madame d'Albret, with brilliant prospects, I was all humility—now a dependent, with a salary of 100 pounds per annum, Valerie was as proud as Lucifer himself. Madame Bathurst perceived this, and I must do her the justice to say, that she was very guarded in her conduct towards me. She felt sympathy for me, and treated me with more kindness, and, I may say, with more respect than she did when I was her visitor and her equal.

The next day I informed Caroline of the change in my prospects, and of my having accepted the office of governess—that was to say, on a six months' trial. I pointed out to her that it would now be my duty to see that she did not neglect her studies, and that I was determined to do justice to Madame Bathurst's confidence reposed in me. Caroline, who was of a very amiable and sweet disposition, replied, "That she should always look upon me as her friend and companion, and from her love for me, would do everything I wished," and she kept her word.

The reader will agree with me, that it was impossible for any one to have been lowered down in position more gently than I was in this instance. The servants never knew that I had accepted the offer of governess, for I was invariably called Valerie by Madame Bathurst and her niece, and was treated as I was before when a visitor to the house. I bestowed much time upon Caroline, and taught myself daily, that I might be more able to teach her. I went back to the elements in everything, that I might be more capable of instructing, and Caroline made rapid progress in music, and promised to have, in a few years, a very fine voice. We went to town for the season, but I avoided company as much as possible—so much so, that Madame Bathurst complained of it.

"Valerie, you do wrong not to make your appearance. You retire in such a way that people naturally put questions to me, and ask if you are the governess, or what you are."

"I wish them to do so, my dear madame, and I want you to reply frankly. I am the governess, and do not like anything like concealment."

“But I cannot admit that you are what may be called a governess, Valerie. You are a young friend staying with me, who instructs my niece.”

“That is what a governess ought to be,” replied I, “a young friend who instructs your children.”

“I grant it,” replied Madame Bathurst; “but I fear if you were to take the situation in another family, you would find that a governess is not generally so considered or so treated. I do not know any class of people, who are more to be pitied than these young people who enter families as governesses; not considered good enough for the drawing-room, they are too good for the kitchen; they are treated with *hauteur* by the master and mistress, and only admitted, or suffered for a time to be in their company; by the servants they are considered as not having claims to those attentions and civilities, for which they are paid and fed; because receiving salaries, or ‘wages like themselves,’ as they assert, they are not entitled in their opinion to be attended upon. Thus are they, in most houses, neglected by all parties. Unhappy themselves, they cause ill-will and dissension, and more servants are dismissed, or given warning, on account of the governesses, than from any other cause. In the drawing-room they are a check upon conversation; in the school-room, if they do their duty, they are the cause of discontent, pouting and tears; like the bat, they are neither bird nor beast, and they flit about the house like ill-omens; they lose the light-heartedness and spring of youth; become sour from continual vexation and annoyance, and their lives are miserable, tedious, and full of repining. I tell you this candidly; it is a harsh picture, but I fear too true a one. With me I trust you will be happy, but you will run a great risk if you were to change and go into another family.”

“I have heard as much before, my dear madame,” replied I; “but your considerate kindness has made me forget it. I can only say that it will be a melancholy day when I am forced to quit your roof.”

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