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CORNER OF FRONT AND MARKET STREETS,
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THE SMUGGLER'S LEAP.

A PASSAGE IN THE PYRANEES.

'Oh! there's not in this wide world,' I exclaimed quite unintentionally quoting Tom Moore; 'there never has been, nor can be again, so charming a creature. No nymph or sylph, or winged Ariel, or syren with song and mirror, was ever so fascinating—no daughter of Eve so pretty and provoking!'

This apostrophe, which certainly appears, now that in cooler moment I recall it, rather rhapodical, was not uttered aloud, nor even *sotto voce*, seeing that its object, Miss Dora M'Dermot, was riding along only three paces in front of me, whilst her brother walked by my side. It was a mere mental ejaculation, elicited by the surpassing perfections of the aforesaid Dora, who assuredly was the most charming girl I had ever beheld. But for the Pyrenean scenery around us, and the rough, ill-conducted mule, with its clumsy side-saddle of discolored leatheer, on which she was mounted, instead, of the Spanish jennet or well-bread English palfrey that would best have suited so fair an equestrian, I could without any great exertion of fancy, have dreamed myself back to the days of the M'Gregor, and fancied that it was Die Vernon riding up the mountain side, gaily chattering as she went with the handsome cavalier who walked by her stirrup, and who might have been Frank Osbaldistone, only that he was too manly-looking for Scott's somewhat effeminate hero. How beautifully moulded was the form which her dark green habit set off to such advantage, how fairy-like the foot that pressed the clumsy stirrup; how slender the fingers that grasped the reign! She had discarded the heavy riding hat and senseless bonnet, those graceless inventions of some cunning milliner, and had adopted a head-dress not unusual in the country in which she then was. This was a *beret* or flat cap, woven of snow-white wool, and surmounted by a crimesen tassel spread out over the top. From beneath this elegant *coiffure* her dark eyes flashed and sparkled, whilst her luxuriant chestnut curls fell down over her neck, the alabaster fairnesss of which made her white head-dress look almost tawny. Either because the air, although we were still in the month of September, was fresh upon the mountains, or else because she was pretty and a woman, and therefore not sorry to show herself to the best advantage, she had twisted round her waist a very long cashmere scarf, previously passing it over one shoulder in the manner of a sword-belt, the ends hanging down nearly to her stirrup; and this gave something peculiarly picturesque, almost fantastical, to her whole appearance.

Upon the second day of my arrival at the baths of St. Sauveur, in the Pyreness, I had fallen in with my old friend and college chum. Jack M'Dermot, who was taking his sister the round of the French watering places. Dora's health had been delicate, the faculty had recommended the excursion; and Jack, who doted upon his only sister, had dragged her away from the gaieties of London, and brought her off to the Pyrenees. M'Dermot was an excellent fellow, neither a wit nor a Solomon, but a good-hearted dog, who had been much liked a Trin Col, Dublin, where he thought very little of his studies, and a good deal of his horses and dogs. An Irishman, to be sure, occasionally a slight touch of the brogue was perceptible, in his talk, but from this his sister, who had been brought up in England, was perfectly free. Jack had a snug estate of three thousand a year; Miss Dora had twenty thousand pounds from her mother. She had passed two seasons in London; and if she was not already married, it was because not one of the fifty aspirants to her hand had found favor in her bright eyes. Lively and high-spirited, with a slight turn for the satirical, she loved her independence, and was difficult to please.

I had been absent from England for nearly two years, on a continental tour; and although I had heard much of Miss M'Dermot, I had never seen her till her brother introduced me to her at St. Sauveur. I had not known her an hour, before I found myself in a fair way to add another to the list of the poor moths who had signed their wings at the perilous light of her beauty.—When M'Dermot, learning that, like themselves, I was on a desultory sort of ramble, and had not marked out any particular route, offered me a seat in their carriage, and urged me to accompany them, instead of prudently flying from the danger, I foolishly exposed myself to it lo! what might have been anticipated, came to pass. Before I had been two days in Dora's society, my doom was sealed; I had ceased to belong to myself; I was her slave, the slave of her sunny smile and bright eyes—talisman more potent than any lamp or ring that djinn or fairy ever obeyed.

A fortnight had passed, and we were at B——. During that time, the spell that bound me had been each day gaining strength. As an intimate friend of her brother, I was already, with Dora, on the footing of an old acquaintance; she seemed well enough pleased with my society, and chatted with me willingly and familarly; but in vain did I watch for some slight indication, a glance or an intonation, whence to derive hope. None such were perceptible; nor could the most egregious coxcomb have fancied that they were. We once or twice fell in with other acquaintances of hers and her brother's, and with them she had just the same frank, friendly manner, as with me. I had not sufficient vanity however, to expect a woman, especially one so much admired as Miss M'Dermot, to fall in love at first sight with my humble personality, and I, patiently waited, trusting to time and assiduity to advance my cause.

Things were in this state, when one morning, whilst taking an early walk to the springs, I ran up against an English friend, by name of Walter Ashly. He was the son of a country gentleman of moderate fortune, at whose house I had more than once passed a week in the shooting season. Walter was an excellent fellow, and a perfect model of the class to which he belonged. By no means unpolished in his manners, he had *bonhommie*, which was peculiarly agreeably tempered by a certain quiet reserve. He was no university man, nor had he received an education of the higest order; spoke no language but his own with any degree of correctness neither played the fiddle painted pictures, nor wrote poetry. On the other hand, in all manly exercise, he was a proficient; shot, rode, walked and danced to perfection; and the fresh originally, and pleasant tone of his conversation, redeemed any deficiency of reading or accomplishment. In personal appearance he was a splendid fellow, nearly six feet in his boots, strongly, but, at the same time symmatrically built; although his size of limb and width of shoulder rendered him, at six-and-twenty, rather what is called a fine man, than a slender or elegant one. He had the true Anglo-Saxon physiognomy, blue eyes, and light brown hair, that waved, rather than curled, round his broad handsome forehead. And then, what a mustache the fellow had!—(He was an officer in a crack yeomanry corps.) Not one of the composite order, made up of poatum and lamp black, such as may be seen sauntering down St. James' street on a spring afternoon, with incipient guardsman behind them—but worthy of an Italian painter or Hungarian hussar full, well grown, and glossy. Who was the idiot who first set afloat the notion—became an established prejudice in England—that mustaches were unseemly? To nine laces out of ten they are a most becomming addition, increasing physiognomical character, almost giving it where there is none; relieving the monotony of broad, flat checks, and abridging the abomination of a long upper-lip. Uncleanly, say you?—Not a bit of it, if judiciously trimmed and trained. What, sir! are they not at least as proper looking as those loxy thickets extending from jawbone to temple, which you yourself, each morning of your life, take such pains to comb and curl into shape?

Delighted to meet Ashley, I dragged him off to the hotel, to introduce him to M'Dermot and his sister. As a friend of mine, they gave him a cordial welcome, and we passed that day and the following ones together. I soon, however, I must confess, began to repent a little having brought my handsome friend into the society of Dora. She seemed better pleased with him than I altogether liked, nor could I wonder at it. Walter Ashley was exactly the man to please a woman of Dora's character. She was of rather a romantic turn, and about him there was a dash of the chivalrous, well calculated to captivate her imagination. Although perfectly feminine, she was an excellent horsewoman, and an ardent admirer of feats of address and courage, and she had heard me tell her brother of Ashley's perfection in such matters. On his part, Ashley, like every one else who saw her, was evidently greatly struck with her beauty and fascination of manner. I cannot say that I was jealous; I had no right to be so, for Dora had never given me encouragement; but I certainly more than once regretted having introduced a third person into what—honest Jack M'Dermot counting, of course for nothing—had previously been a sort of *tete-a-tete* society. I began to fear that, thanks to myself, my occupation was gone, and Ashley had got it.

It was the fifth day after our meeting with Walter, and we had started early in the morning upon an excursion to a neighboring lake, the scenery around which, we were told, was particularly wild and beautiful. It was situated on a piece of table land on the top of a mountain, which we could see from the hotel window. The distance was barely ten miles, and the road being rough and precipitous, M'Dermot, Ashley and myself, had chosen to walk rather than to risk our necks by riding the broken knee'd ponies that were offered to us. A sure-footed mule, and indifferent side-saddle, had been procured for Miss M'Dermot; and was attended by a wild-looking Bearnese boy, or gossoon, as her brother called him, a creature like a grass-hopper, all legs and arms, with a scared countenance, and long, lank, black hair, hanging in irregular shreds about his face.

There is no season more agreeable in the Pyrenees than the month of September. People are very apt to expatiate on the delights of autumn, its mellow beauty, pensive charms, and such like. I confess that in a general way I like the youth of the year better than its decline, and prefer the bright green tints of spring, with the summer in prospective, to the melancholy autumn, its russet hues and falling leaves; its regrets for fine weather past,

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