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TO THE MEMORY OF
CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS.
(9th April, 1873.)

FIRST SCENE.
The Cottage on the Frontier.

PREAMBLE.

THE place is France.

The time is autumn, in the year eighteen hundred and seventy--the year of the war between France and Germany.

The persons are, Captain Arnault, of the French army; Surgeon Surville, of the French ambulance; Surgeon Wetzel, of the German army; Mercy Merrick, attached as nurse to the French ambulance; and Grace Roseberry, a traveling lady on her way to England.

CHAPTER I.

THE TWO WOMEN.

IT was a dark night. The rain was pouring in torrents.

Late in the evening a skirmishing party of the French and a skirmishing party of the Germans had met, by accident, near the little village of Lagrange, close to the German frontier. In the struggle that followed, the French had (for once) got the better of the enemy. For the time, at least, a few hundreds out of the host of the invaders had been forced back over the frontier. It was a trifling affair, occurring not long after the great German victory of Weissenbourg, and the newspapers took little or no notice of it.

Captain Arnault, commanding on the French side, sat alone in one of the cottages of the village, inhabited by the miller of the district. The Captain was reading, by the light of a solitary tallow-candle, some intercepted dispatches taken from the Germans. He had suffered the wood fire, scattered over the large open grate, to burn low; the red embers only faintly illuminated a part of the room. On the floor behind him lay some of the miller's empty sacks. In a corner opposite to him was the miller's solid walnut-wood bed. On the walls all around him were the miller's colored prints, representing a happy mixture of devotional and domestic subjects. A door of communication leading into the kitchen of the cottage had been torn from its hinges, and used to carry the men wounded in the skirmish from the field. They were now comfortably laid at rest in the kitchen, under the care of the French surgeon and the English nurse attached to the ambulance. A piece of coarse canvas screened the opening between the two rooms in place of the door. A second door, leading from the bed-chamber into the yard, was locked; and the wooden shutter protecting the one window of the room was carefully barred. Sentinels, doubled in number, were placed at all the outposts. The French commander had neglected no precaution which could reasonably insure for himself and for his men a quiet and comfortable night.

Still absorbed in his perusal of the dispatches, and now and then making notes of what he read by the help of writing materials placed at his side, Captain Arnault was interrupted by the appearance of an intruder in the room. Surgeon Surville, entering from the kitchen, drew aside the canvas screen, and approached the little round table at which his superior officer was sitting.

"What is it?" said the captain, sharply.

"A question to ask," replied the surgeon. "Are we safe for the night?"

"Why do you want to know?" inquired the captain, suspiciously.

The surgeon pointed to the kitchen, now the hospital devoted to the wounded men.

"The poor fellows are anxious about the next few hours," he replied. "They dread a surprise, and they ask me if there is any reasonable hope of their having one night's rest. What do you think of the chances?"

The captain shrugged his shoulders. The surgeon persisted.

"Surely you ought to know?" he said.

"I know that we are in possession of the village for the present," retorted Captain

Arnault, "and I know no more. Here are the papers of the enemy." He held them up and shook them impatiently as he spoke. "They give me no information that I can rely on. For all I can tell to the contrary, the main body of the Germans, outnumbering us ten to one, may be nearer this cottage than the main body of the French. Draw your own conclusions. I have nothing more to say."

Having answered in those discouraging terms, Captain Arnault got on his feet, drew the hood of his great-coat over his head, and lit a cigar at the candle.

"Where are you going?" asked the surgeon.

"To visit the outposts."

"Do you want this room for a little while?"

"Not for some hours to come. Are you thinking of moving any of your wounded men in here?"

"I was thinking of the English lady," answered the surgeon. "The kitchen is not quite the place for her. She would be more comfortable here; and the English nurse might keep her company."

Captain Arnault smiled, not very pleasantly. "They are two fine women," he said, "and Surgeon Surville is a ladies' man. Let them come in, if they are rash enough to trust themselves here with you." He checked himself on the point of going out, and looked back distrustfully at the lighted candle. "Caution the women," he said, "to limit the exercise of their curiosity to the inside of this room."

"What do you mean?"

The captain's forefinger pointed significantly to the closed window-shutter.

"Did you ever know a woman who could resist looking out of window?" he asked. "Dark as it is, sooner or later these ladies of yours will feel tempted to open that shutter. Tell them I don't want the light of the candle to betray my headquarters to the German scouts. How is the weather? Still raining?"

"Pouring."

"So much the better. The Germans won't see us." With that consolatory remark he unlocked the door leading into the yard, and walked out.

The surgeon lifted the canvas screen and called into the kitchen:

"Miss Merrick, have you time to take a little rest?"

"Plenty of time," answered a soft voice with an underlying melancholy in it, plainly distinguishable though it had only spoken three words.

"Come in, then," continued the surgeon, "and bring the English lady with you. Here is a quiet room all to yourselves."

He held back the canvas, and the two women appeared.

The nurse led the way--tall, lithe, graceful--attired in her uniform dress of neat black stuff, with plain linen collar and cuffs, and with the scarlet cross of the Geneva Convention embroidered on her left shoulder. Pale and sad, her expression and manner both eloquently suggestive of suppressed suffering and sorrow, there was an innate nobility in the carriage of this woman's head, an innate grandeur in the gaze of her large gray eyes and in the lines of her finely proportioned face, which made her irresistibly striking and beautiful, seen under any circumstances and clad in any dress. Her companion, darker in complexion and smaller in stature, possessed attractions which were quite marked enough to account for the surgeon's polite anxiety to shelter her in the captain's room. The common consent of mankind would have declared her to be an unusually pretty woman. She wore the large gray cloak that covered her from head to foot with a grace that lent its own attractions to a plain and even a shabby article of dress. The languor in her movements, and the uncertainty of tone in her voice as she thanked the surgeon suggested that she was suffering from fatigue. Her dark eyes searched the dimly-lighted room timidly, and she held fast by the nurse's arm with the air of a woman whose nerves had been severely shaken by some recent alarm.

"You have one thing to remember, ladies," said the surgeon. "Beware of opening the shutter, for fear of the light being seen through the window. For the rest, we are free to make ourselves as comfortable here as we can. Compose yourself, dear madam, and rely on the protection of a Frenchman who is devoted to you!" He gallantly emphasized his last words by raising the hand of the English lady to his lips. At the moment when he kissed it the canvas screen was again drawn aside. A person in the service of the ambulance appeared, announcing that a bandage had slipped, and that one of the wounded men was to all appearance bleeding to death. The surgeon, submitting to destiny with the worst possible grace, dropped the charming Englishwoman's hand, and returned to his duties in the kitchen. The two ladies were left together in the room.

"Will you take a chair, madam?" asked the nurse.

"Don't call me 'madam,'" returned the young lady, cordially. "My name is Grace Roseberry. What is your name?"

The nurse hesitated. "Not a pretty name, like yours," she said, and hesitated again. "Call me 'Mercy Merrick,' " she added, after a moment's consideration.

Had she given an assumed name? Was there some unhappy celebrity attached to her own name? Miss Roseberry did not wait to ask herself these questions. "How can I thank you," she exclaimed, gratefully, "for your sisterly kindness to a stranger like me?"

"I have only done my duty," said Mercy Merrick, a little coldly. "Don't speak of it."

"I must speak of it. What a situation you found me in when the French soldiers had driven the Germans away! My traveling-carriage stopped; the horses seized; I myself in a strange country at nightfall, robbed of my money and my luggage, and drenched to the skin by the pouring rain! I am indebted to you for shelter in this place--I am wearing your clothes--I should have died of the fright and the exposure but for you. What return can I make for such services as these?"

Mercy placed a chair for her guest near the captain's table, and seated herself, at some little distance, on an old chest in a corner of the room. "May I ask you a question?" she said, abruptly.

"A hundred questions," cried Grace, "if you like." She looked at the expiring fire, and at the dimly visible figure of her companion seated in the obscurest corner of the room. "That wretched candle hardly gives any light," she said, impatiently. "It won't last much longer. Can't we make the place more cheerful? Come out of your corner. Call for more wood and more lights."

Mercy remained in her corner and shook her head. "Candles and wood are scarce things here," she answered. "We must be patient, even if we are left in the dark. Tell me," she went on, raising her quiet voice a little, "how came you to risk crossing the frontier in wartime?"

Grace's voice dropped when she answered the question. Grace's momentary gayety of manner suddenly left her.

"I had urgent reasons," she said, "for returning to England."

"Alone?" rejoined the other. "Without any one to protect you?"

Grace's head sank on her bosom. "I have left my only protector--my father--in the English burial-ground at Rome," she answered simply. "My mother died, years since, in Canada."

The shadowy figure of the nurse suddenly changed its position on the chest. She had started as the last word passed Miss Roseberry's lips.

"Do you know Canada?" asked Grace.

"Well," was the brief answer--reluctantly given, short as it was.

"Were you ever near Port Logan?"

"I once lived within a few miles of Port Logan."

"When?"

"Some time since." With those words Mercy Merrick shrank back into her corner and changed the subject. "Your relatives in England must be very anxious about you," she said.

Grace sighed. "I have no relatives in England. You can hardly imagine a person more friendless than I am. We went away from Canada, when my father's health failed, to try the climate of Italy, by the doctor's advice. His death has left me not only friendless but poor." She paused, and took a leather letter-case from the pocket of the large gray cloak which the nurse had lent to her. "My prospects in life," she resumed, "are all contained in this little case. Here is the one treasure I contrived to conceal when I was robbed of my other things."

Mercy could just see the letter-case as Grace held it up in the deepening obscurity of the room. "Have you got money in it?" she asked.

"No; only a few family papers, and a letter from my father, introducing me to an elderly lady in England--a connection of his by marriage, whom I have never seen. The lady has consented to receive me as her companion and reader. If I don't return to England soon, some other person may get the place."

"Have you no other resource?"

"None. My education has been neglected--we led a wild life in the far West. I am

quite unfit to go out as a governess. I am absolutely dependent on this stranger, who receives me for my father's sake." She put the letter-case back in the pocket of her cloak, and ended her little narrative as unaffectedly as she had begun it. "Mine is a sad story, is it not?" she said.

The voice of the nurse answered her suddenly and bitterly in these strange words:

"There are sadder stories than yours. There are thousands of miserable women who would ask for no greater blessing than to change places with you."

Grace started. "What can there possibly be to envy in such a lot as mine?"

"Your unblemished character, and your prospect of being established honorably in a respectable house."

Grace turned in her chair, and looked wonderingly into the dim corner of the room.

"How strangely you say that!" she exclaimed. There was no answer; the shadowy figure on the chest never moved. Grace rose impulsively, and drawing her chair after her, approached the nurse. "Is there some romance in your life?" she asked. "Why have you sacrificed yourself to the terrible duties which I find you performing here? You interest me indescribably. Give me your hand."

Mercy shrank back, and refused the offered hand.

"Are we not friends?" Grace asked, in astonishment.

"We can never be friends."

"Why not?"

The nurse was dumb. Grace called to mind the hesitation that she had shown when she had mentioned her name, and drew a new conclusion from it. "Should I be guessing right," she asked, eagerly, "if I guessed you to be some great lady in disguise?"

Mercy laughed to herself--low and bitterly. "I a great lady!" she said, contemptuously. "For Heaven's sake, let us talk of something else!"

Grace's curiosity was thoroughly roused. She persisted. "Once more," she whispered, persuasively, "let us be friends." She gently laid her hand as she spoke on Mercy's shoulder. Mercy roughly shook it off. There was a rudeness in the action which would have offended the most patient woman living. Grace drew back indignantly. "Ah!" she

cried, "you are cruel."

"I am kind," answered the nurse, speaking more sternly than ever.

"Is it kind to keep me at a distance? I have told you my story."

The nurse's voice rose excitedly. "Don't tempt me to speak out," she said; "you will regret it."

Grace declined to accept the warning. "I have placed confidence in you," she went on. "It is ungenerous to lay me under an obligation, and then to shut me out of your confidence in return."

"You *will* have it?" said Mercy Merrick. "You *shall* have it! Sit down again." Grace's heart began to quicken its beat in expectation of the disclosure that was to come. She drew her chair closer to the chest on which the nurse was sitting. With a firm hand Mercy put the chair back to a distance from her. "Not so near me!" she said, harshly.

"Why not?"

"Not so near," repeated the sternly resolute voice. "Wait till you have heard what I have to say."

Grace obeyed without a word more. There was a momentary silence. A faint flash of light leaped up from the expiring candle, and showed Mercy crouching on the chest, with her elbows on her knees, and her face hidden in her hands. The next instant the room was buried in obscurity. As the darkness fell on the two women the nurse spoke.

CHAPTER II.

MAGDALEN--IN MODERN TIMES.

"WHEN your mother was alive were you ever out with her after nightfall in the streets of a great city?"

In those extraordinary terms Mercy Merrick opened the confidential interview which Grace Roseberry had forced on her. Grace answered, simply, "I don't understand you."

"I will put it in another way," said the nurse. Its unnatural hardness and sternness of tone passed away from her voice, and its native gentleness and sadness returned, as she made that reply. "You read the newspapers like the rest of the world," she went on; "have you ever read of your unhappy fellow- creatures (the starving outcasts of the population) whom Want has driven into Sin?"

Still wondering, Grace answered that she had read of such things often, in newspapers and in books.

"Have you heard--when those starving and sinning fellow-creatures happened to be women--of Refuges established to protect and reclaim them?"

The wonder in Grace's mind passed away, and a vague suspicion of something painful to come took its place. "These are extraordinary questions," she said, nervously.

"What do you mean?"

"Answer me," the nurse insisted. "Have you heard of the Refuges? Have you heard of the Women?"

"Yes."

"Move your chair a little further away from me." She paused. Her voice, without losing its steadiness, fell to its lowest tones. "I was once of those women," she said, quietly.

Grace sprang to her feet with a faint cry. She stood petrified--incapable of uttering a word.

"I have been in a Refuge," pursued the sweet, sad voice of the other woman. "I have been in a Prison. Do you still wish to be my friend? Do you still insist on sitting close by me and taking my hand?" She waited for a reply, and no reply came. "You see you were wrong," she went on, gently, "when you called me cruel--and I was right when I told you I was kind."

At that appeal Grace composed herself, and spoke. "I don't wish to offend you--" she began, confusedly.

Mercy Merrick stopped her there.

"You don't offend me," she said, without the faintest note of displeasure in her tone. "I am accustomed to stand in the pillory of my own past life. I sometimes ask myself if it was all my fault. I sometimes wonder if Society had no duties toward me when I was

a child selling matches in the street--when I was a hard-working girl fainting at my needle for want of food." Her voice faltered a little for the first time as it pronounced those words; she waited a moment, and recovered herself. "It's too late to dwell on these things now," she said, resignedly. "Society can subscribe to reclaim me; but Society can't take me back. You see me here in a place of trust--patiently, humbly, doing all the good I can. It doesn't matter! Here, or elsewhere, what I *am* can never alter what I *was*. For three years past all that a sincerely penitent woman can do I have done. It doesn't matter! Once let my past story be known, and the shadow of it covers me; the kindest people shrink."

She waited again. Would a word of sympathy come to comfort her from the other woman's lips? No! Miss Roseberry was shocked; Miss Roseberry was confused. "I am very sorry for you," was all that Miss Roseberry could say.

"Everybody is sorry for me," answered the nurse, as patiently as ever; "everybody is kind to me. But the lost place is not to be regained. I can't get back! I can't get back?" she cried, with a passionate outburst of despair--checked instantly the moment it had escaped her. "Shall I tell you what my experience has been?" she resumed. "Will you hear the story of Magdalen--in modern times?"

Grace drew back a step; Mercy instantly understood her.

"I am going to tell you nothing that you need shrink from hearing," she said. "A lady in your position would not understand the trials and the struggles that I have passed through. My story shall begin at the Refuge. The matron sent me out to service with the character that I had honestly earned--the character of a reclaimed woman. I justified the confidence placed in me; I was a faithful servant. One day my mistress sent for me--a kind mistress, if ever there was one yet. 'Mercy, I am sorry for you; it has come out that I took you from a Refuge; I shall lose every servant in the house; you must go.' I went back to the matron--another kind woman. She received me like a mother. 'We will try again, Mercy; don't be cast down.' I told you I had been in Canada?"

Grace began to feel interested in spite of herself. She answered with something like warmth in her tone. She returned to her chair--placed at its safe and significant distance from the chest.

The nurse went on:

"My next place was in Canada, with an officer's wife: gentlefolks who had emigrated. More kindness; and, this time, a pleasant, peaceful life for me. I said to myself, 'Is the lost place regained? *Have* I got back?' My mistress died. New people came into our

neighborhood. There was a young lady among them--my master began to think of another wife. I have the misfortune (in my situation) to be what is called a handsome woman; I rouse the curiosity of strangers. The new people asked questions about me; my master's answers did not satisfy them. In a word, they found me out. The old story again! 'Mercy, I am very sorry; scandal is busy with you and with me; we are innocent, but there is no help for it--we must part.' I left the place; having gained one advantage during my stay in Canada, which I find of use to me here."

"What is it?"

"Our nearest neighbors were French-Canadians. I learned to speak the French language."

"Did you return to London?"

"Where else could I go, without a character?" said Mercy, sadly. "I went back again to the matron. Sickness had broken out in the Refuge; I made myself useful as a nurse. One of the doctors was struck with me--'fell in love' with me, as the phrase is. He would have married me. The nurse, as an honest woman, was bound to tell him the truth. He never appeared again. The old story! I began to be weary of saying to myself, 'I can't get back! I can't get back!' Despair got hold of me, the despair that hardens the heart. I might have committed suicide; I might even have drifted back into my old life--but for one man."

At those last words her voice--quiet and even through the earlier part of her sad story--began to falter once more. She stopped, following silently the memories and associations roused in her by what she had just said. Had she forgotten the presence of another person in the room? Grace's curiosity left Grace no resource but to say a word on her side.

"Who was the man?" she asked. "How did he befriend you?"

"Befriend me? He doesn't even know that such a person as I am is in existence."

That strange answer, naturally enough, only strengthened the anxiety of Grace to hear more. "You said just now--" she began.

"I said just now that he saved me. He did save me; you shall hear how. One Sunday our regular clergyman at the Refuge was not able to officiate. His place was taken by a stranger, quite a young man. The matron told us the stranger's name was Julian Gray. I sat in the back row of seats, under the shadow of the gallery, where I could see him without his seeing me. His text was from the words, 'Joy shall be in heaven over

one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. 'What happier women might have thought of his sermon I cannot say; there was not a dry eye among us at the Refuge. As for me, he touched my heart as no man has touched it before or since. The hard despair melted in me at the sound of his voice; the weary round of my life showed its nobler side again while he spoke. From that time I have accepted my hard lot, I have been a patient woman. I might have been something more, I might have been a happy woman, if I could have prevailed on myself to speak to Julian Gray."

"What hindered you from speaking to him?"

"I was afraid."

"Afraid of what?"

"Afraid of making my hard life harder still."

A woman who could have sympathized with her would perhaps have guessed what those words meant. Grace was simply embarrassed by her; and Grace failed to guess.

"I don't understand you," she said.

There was no alternative for Mercy but to own the truth in plain words. She sighed, and said the words. "I was afraid I might interest him in my sorrows, and might set my heart on him in return." The utter absence of any fellow-feeling with her on Grace's side expressed itself unconsciously in the plainest terms.

"You!" she exclaimed, in a tone of blank astonishment.

The nurse rose slowly to her feet. Grace's expression of surprise told her plainly--almost brutally--that her confession had gone far enough.

"I astonish you?" she said. "Ah, my young lady, you don't know what rough usage a woman's heart can bear, and still beat truly! Before I saw Julian Gray I only knew men as objects of horror to me. Let us drop the subject. The preacher at the Refuge is nothing but a remembrance now--the one welcome remembrance of my life! I have nothing more to tell you. You insisted on hearing my story--you have heard it."

"I have not heard how you found employment here," said Grace, continuing the conversation with uneasy politeness, as she best might.

Mercy crossed the room, and slowly raked together the last living embers of the fire.

"The matron has friends in France," she answered, "who are connected with the military hospitals. It was not difficult to get me the place, under those circumstances. Society can find a use for me here. My hand is as light, my words of comfort are as welcome, among those suffering wretches" (she pointed to the room in which the wounded men were lying) "as if I was the most reputable woman breathing. And if a stray shot comes my way before the war is over--well! Society will be rid of me on easy terms."

She stood looking thoughtfully into the wreck of the fire--as if she saw in it the wreck of her own life. Common humanity made it an act of necessity to say something to her. Grace considered--advanced a step toward her--stopped--and took refuge in the most trivial of all the common phrases which one human being can address to another.

"If there is anything I can do for you--" she began. The sentence, halting there, was never finished. Miss Roseberry was just merciful enough toward the lost woman who had rescued and sheltered her to feel that it was needless to say more.

The nurse lifted her noble head and advanced slowly toward the canvas screen to return to her duties. "Miss Roseberry might have taken my hand!" she thought to herself, bitterly. No! Miss Roseberry stood there at a distance, at a loss what to say next. "What can you do for me?" Mercy asked, stung by the cold courtesy of her companion into a momentary outbreak of contempt. "Can you change my identity? Can you give me the name and the place of an innocent woman? If I only had your chance! If I only had your reputation and your prospects!" She laid one hand over her bosom, and controlled herself. "Stay here," she resumed, "while I go back to my work. I will see that your clothes are dried. You shall wear my clothes as short a time as possible."

With those melancholy words--touchingly, not bitterly spoken--she moved to pass into the kitchen, when she noticed that the pattering sound of the rain against the window was audible no more. Dropping the canvas for the moment, she retraced her steps, and, unfastening the wooden shutter, looked out.

The moon was rising dimly in the watery sky; the rain had ceased; the friendly darkness which had hidden the French position from the German scouts was lessening every moment. In a few hours more (if nothing happened) the English lady might resume her journey. In a few hours more the morning would dawn.

Mercy lifted her hand to close the shutter. Before she could fasten it the report of a rifle-shot reached the cottage from one of the distant posts. It was followed almost instantly by a second report, nearer and louder than the first. Mercy paused, with the shutter in her hand, and listened intently for the next sound.

CHAPTER III.

THE GERMAN SHELL.

A THIRD rifle-shot rang through the night air, close to the cottage. Grace started and approached the window in alarm.

"What does that firing mean?" she asked.

"Signals from the outposts," the nurse quietly replied.

"Is there any danger? Have the Germans come back?"

Surgeon Surville answered the question. He lifted the canvas screen, and looked into the room as Miss Roseberry spoke.

"The Germans are advancing on us," he said. "Their vanguard is in sight."

Grace sank on the chair near her, trembling from head to foot. Mercy advanced to the surgeon, and put the decisive question to him.

"Do we defend the position?" she inquired.

Surgeon Surville ominously shook his head.

"Impossible! We are outnumbered as usual--ten to one."

The shrill roll of the French drums was heard outside.

"There is the retreat sounded!" said the surgeon. "The captain is not a man to think twice about what he does. We are left to take care of ourselves. In five minutes we must be out of this place."

A volley of rifle-shots rang out as he spoke. The German vanguard was attacking the French at the outposts. Grace caught the surgeon entreatingly by the arm. "Take me with you," she cried. "Oh, sir, I have suffered from the Germans already! Don't forsake me, if they come back!" The surgeon was equal to the occasion; he placed the

hand of the pretty Englishwoman on his breast. "Fear nothing, madam," he said, looking as if he could have annihilated the whole German force with his own invincible arm. "A Frenchman's heart beats under your hand. A Frenchman's devotion protects you." Grace's head sank on his shoulder. Monsieur Surville felt that he had asserted himself; he looked round invitingly at Mercy. She, too, was an attractive woman. The Frenchman had another shoulder at *her* service. Unhappily the room was dark--the look was lost on Mercy. She was thinking of the helpless men in the inner chamber, and she quietly recalled the surgeon to a sense of his professional duties.

"What is to become of the sick and wounded?" she asked.

Monsieur Surville shrugged one shoulder--the shoulder that was free.

"The strongest among them we can take away with us," he said. "The others must be left here. Fear nothing for yourself, dear lady. There will be a place for you in the baggage-wagon."

"And for me, too?" Grace pleaded, eagerly.

The surgeon's invincible arm stole round the young lady's waist, and answered mutely with a squeeze.

"Take her with you," said Mercy. "My place is with the men whom you leave behind."

Grace listened in amazement. "Think what you risk," she said "if you stop here."

Mercy pointed to her left shoulder.

"Don't alarm yourself on my account," she answered; "the red cross will protect me."

Another roll of the drum warned the susceptible surgeon to take his place as director-general of the ambulance without any further delay. He conducted Grace to a chair, and placed both her hands on his heart this time, to reconcile her to the misfortune of his absence. "Wait here till I return for you," he whispered. "Fear nothing, my charming friend. Say to yourself, 'Surville is the soul of honor! Surville is devoted to me!'" He struck his breast; he again forgot the obscurity in the room, and cast one look of unutterable homage at his charming friend. "*A bientôt!*" he cried, and kissed his hand and disappeared.

As the canvas screen fell over him the sharp report of the rifle-firing was suddenly and grandly dominated by the roar of cannon. The instant after a shell exploded in the garden outside, within a few yards of the window.