

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydow Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Eliasberg Ebner Eschenbach
Ewald Eliot Zweig Vergil
Goethe London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Elisabeth von Österreich Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Rathenau Doyle Gjellerup
Mommssen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch
Dach Verne von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Droste-Hülshoff
Karrillon Reuter Rousseau Hagen Hauff Humboldt
Garschin Defoe Hauptmann Gautier
Damaschke Descartes Hebbel Baudelaire
Wolfram von Eschenbach Dickens Schopenhauer Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Bronner Darwin Melville Grimm Jerome Rilke George
Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Bebel Proust
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Herodot
Storm Casanova Tersteegen Grillparzer Georgy
Chamberlain Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Strachwitz Katharina II. von Rußland Bellamy Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschechow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpis
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Höltz Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Machiavelli Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht
Nietzsche Nansen Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz Ringelnatz
von Ossietzky May vom Stein Lawrence Irving
Petalozzi Platon Pückler Michelangelo Knigge Kafka
Sachs Poe Liebermann Kock Korolenko
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Jacqueline –Volume 2

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JACQUELINE

By

THERESE BENTZON (MME. BLANC)

BOOK 2.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLUE BAND

Love, like any other human malady, should be treated according to the age and temperament of the sufferer. Madame de Nailles, who was a very keen observer, especially where her own interests were concerned, lent herself with the best possible grace to everything that might amuse and distract Jacqueline, of whom she had by this time grown afraid. Not that she now dreaded her as a rival. The attitude of coldness and reserve that the young girl had adopted in her intercourse with Marien, her stepmother could see, was no evidence of coquetry. She showed, in her behavior to the friend of the family, a freedom from embarrassment which was new to her, and a frigidity which could not possibly have been assumed so persistently. No! what struck Madame de Nailles was the suddenness of this transformation. Jacqueline evidently took no further interest in Marien; she had apparently no longer any affection for herself—she, who had been once her dear little mamma, whom she had loved so tenderly, now felt herself to be considered only as a stepmother. Fraulein Schult, too, received no more confidences. What did it all mean?

Had Jacqueline, through any means, discovered a secret, which, in her hands, might be turned into a most dangerous weapon? She had a way of saying before the guilty pair: "Poor papa!" with an air of pity, as she kissed him, which made Madame de Nailles's flesh creep, and sometimes she would amuse herself by making ambiguous remarks which shot arrows of suspicion into a heart already afraid. "I feel sure," thought the Baroness, "that she has found out everything. But, no! it seems impossible. How can I discover what she knows?"

Jacqueline's revenge consisted in leaving her stepmother in doubt. She more than suspected, not without cause, that Fraulein

Schult was false to her, and had the wit to baffle all the clever questions of her 'promeneuse'.

"My worship of a man of genius—a great artist? Oh! that has all come to an end since I have found out that his devotion belongs to an elderly lady with a fair complexion and light hair. I am only sorry for him."

Jacqueline had great hopes that these cruel words would be reported—as they were—to her stepmother, and, of course, they did not mitigate the Baroness's uneasiness. Madame de Nailles revenged herself for this insult by dismissing the innocent echo of the impertinence—of course, under some plausible pretext. She felt it necessary also to be very cautious how she treated the enemy whom she was forced to shelter under her own roof. Her policy—a policy imposed on her by force of circumstances—was one of great indulgence and consideration, so that Jacqueline, soon feeling that she was for the present under no control, took the bit between her teeth. No other impression can adequately convey an idea of the sort of fury with which she plunged into pleasure and excitement, a state of mind which apparently, without any transition, succeeded her late melancholy. She had done with sentiment, she thought, forever. She meant to be practical and positive, a little Parisienne, and "in the swim." There were plenty of examples among those she knew that she could follow. Berthe, Helene, and Claire Wermant were excellent leaders in that sort of thing. Those three daughters of the 'agent de change' were at this time at Treport, in charge of a governess, who let them do whatever they pleased, subject only to be scolded by their father, who came down every Saturday to Treport, on that train that was called the 'train des maris'. They had made friends with two or three American girls, who were called "fast," and Jacqueline was soon enrolled in the ranks of that gay company.

The cure that was begun on the wooden horse at Blackfern's was completed on the sea-shore.

The girls with whom she now associated were nine or ten little imps of Satan, who, with their hair flying in the wind and their caps over one ear, made the quiet beach ring with their boy-like gayety. They were called "the Blue Band," because of a sort of uniform that they adopted. We speak of them intentionally as masculine, and not

feminine, because what is masculine best suited their appearance and behavior, for, though all could flirt like coquettes of experience, they were more like boys than girls, if judged by their age and their costume.

These Blues lived close to one another on that avenue that is edged with chalets, cottages, and villas, whose lower floors are abundantly provided with great glass windows, which seem to let the ocean into their very rooms, as well as to lay bare everything that passes in them to the public eye, as frankly as if their inmates bivouacked in the open street. Nothing was private; neither the meals, nor the coming and going of visitors. It must be said, however, that the inhabitants of these glass houses were very seldom at home. Bathing, and croquet, or tennis, at low water, on the sands, searching for shells, fishing with nets, dances at the Casino, little family dances alternating with concerts, to which even children went till nine o'clock, would seem enough to fill up the days of these young people, but they had also to make boating excursions to Cayeux, Crotoy, and Hourdel, besides riding parties in the beautiful country that surrounded the Chateau of Lizerolles, where they usually dismounted on their return.

At Lizerolles they were received by Madame d'Argy, who was delighted that they provided safe amusement for her son, who appeared in the midst of this group of half-grown girls like a young cock among the hens of his harem. Frederic d'Argy, the young naval officer, who was enjoying his holiday, as M. de Nailles had said, was enjoying it exceedingly. How often, long after, on board the ship Floye, as he paced the silent quarter-deck, far from any opportunity of flirting, did he recall the forms and faces of these young girls, some dark, some fair, some rosy- half-women and half-children, who made much of him, and scolded him, and teased him, and contended for his attentions, while no better could be had, on purpose to tease one another. Oh! what a delightful time he had had! They did not leave him to himself one moment. He had to lift them into their saddles, to assist them as they clambered over the rocks, to superintend their attempts at swimming, to dance with them all by turns, and to look after them in the difficult character of Mentor, for he was older than they, and were they not entrusted to his care? What a serious responsibility! Had not Mentor even found

himself too often timid and excited when one little firm foot was placed in his hand, when his arm was round one little waist, when he could render her as a cavalier a thousand little services, or accept with gladness the role of her consoler. He did everything he could think of to please them, finding all of them charming, though Jacqueline never ceased to be the one he preferred, a preference which she might easily have inferred from the poor lad's unusual timidity and awkwardness when he was brought into contact with her. But she paid no attention to his devotion, accepting himself and all he did for her as, in some sort, her personal property.

He was of no consequence, he did not count; what was he but her comrade and former playfellow?

Happily for Fred, he took pleasure in the familiarity with which she treated him—a familiarity which, had he known it, was not flattering. He was in the seventh heaven for a whole fortnight, during which he was the recipient of more dried flowers and bows of ribbon than he ever got in all the rest of his life—the American girls were very fond of giving keepsakes—but then his star waned. He was no longer the only one. The grown-up brother of the Wermants came to Treport—Raoul, with his air of a young man about town—a boulevardier, with his jacket cut in the latest fashion, with his cockle-shell of a boat, which he managed as well on salt water as on fresh, sculling with his arms bare, a cigarette in his mouth, a monocle in his eye, and a pith-helmet, such as is worn in India. The young ladies used to gather on the sands to watch him as he struck the water with the broad blade of his scull, near enough for them to see and to admire his nautical ability. They thought all his jokes amusing, and they delighted in his way of seizing his partner for a waltz and bearing her off as if she were a prize, hardly allowing her to touch the floor.

Fred thought him, with his stock of old jokes, very ill-mannered. He laughed at his sculling, and had a great mind to strike him after he saw him waltzing with Jacqueline. But he had to acknowledge the general appreciation felt for the fellow whom he called vulgar.

Raoul Wermant did not stay long at Treport. He had only come to see his sisters on his way to Dieppe, where he expected to meet a certain Leah Skip, an actress from the 'Nouveautes'. If he kept her

waiting, however, for some days, it was because he was loath to leave the handsome Madame de Villegruy, who was living near her friend Madame de Nailles, recruiting herself after the fatigues of the winter season. Such being the situation, the young girls of the Blue Band might have tried in vain to make any impression upon him. But the hatred with which he inspired Fred found some relief in the composition of fragments of melancholy verse, which the young midshipman hid under his mattresses. It is not an uncommon thing for naval men to combine a love of the sea with a love of poetry. Fred's verses were not good, but they were full of dejection. The poor fellow compared Raoul Wermant to Faust, and himself to Siebel. He spoke of

The youth whose eyes were brimming with salt tears,
Whose heart was troubled by a thousand fears,
Poor slighted lover!—since in his heavy heart
All his illusions perish and depart.

Again, he wrote of Siebel:

O Siebel! — thine is but the common fate!
They told thee Fortune upon youth would wait;
'Tis false when love's in question—and you may —

Here he enumerated all the proofs of tenderness possible for a woman to give her lover, and then he added:

You may know all, poor Siebel! — all, some day,
When weary of this life and all its dreams,
You learn to know it is not what it seems;
When there is nothing that can cheer you more,
All that remains is fondly to adore!

And after trying in vain to find a rhyme for lover, he cried:

Oh! tell me — if one grief exceeds another
Is not this worst, to feel mere friendship moves
To cruel kindness the dear girl he loves?

Fred's mother surprised him one night while he was watering with his tears the ink he was putting to so sorry a use. She had been aware that he sat up late at night—his sleeplessness was not the insomnia of genius—for she had seen the glare of light from his little lamp burning later than the usual bedtime of the chateau, in one of the turret chambers at Lizerolles.

In vain Fred denied that he was doing anything, in vain he tried to put his papers out of sight; his mother was so persuasive that at last he owned everything to her, and in addition to the comfort he derived from his confession, he gained a certain satisfaction to his 'amour-propre', for Madame d'Argy thought the verses beautiful. A mother's geese are always swans. But it was only when she said, "I don't see why you should not marry your Jacqueline—such a thing is not by any means impossible," and promised to do all in her power to insure his happiness, that Fred felt how dearly he loved his mother. Oh, a thousand times more than he had ever supposed he loved her! However, he had not yet done with the agonies that lie in wait for lovers.

Madame de Monredon arrived one day at the Hotel de la Plage, accompanied by her granddaughter, whom she had taken away from the convent before the beginning of the holidays. Since she had fully arranged the marriage with M. de Talbrun, it seemed important that Giselle should acquire some liveliness, and recruit her health, before the fatal wedding-day arrived. M. de Talbrun liked ladies to be always well and always lively, and it was her duty to see that Giselle accommodated herself to his taste; sea-bathing, life in the open air, and merry companions, were the things she needed to make her a little less thin, to give her tone, and to take some of her convent stiffness out of her. Besides, she could have free intercourse with her intended husband, thanks to the greater freedom of manners permitted at the sea-side. Such were the ideas of Madame de Monredon.

Poor Giselle! In vain they dressed her in fine clothes, in vain they talked to her and scolded her from morning till night, she continued to be the little convent-bred schoolgirl she had always been; with downcast eyes, pale as a flower that has known no sunlight, and timid to a point of suffering. M. de Talbrun frightened her as much

as ever, and she had looked forward to the comfort of weeping in the arms of Jacqueline, who, the last time she had seen her, had been herself so unhappy. But what was her astonishment to find the young girl, who, a few weeks before, had made her such tragic confidences through the grille in the convent parlor, transformed into a creature bent on excitement and amusement. When she attempted to allude to the subject on which Jacqueline had spoken to her at the convent, and to ask her what it was that had then made her so unhappy, Jacqueline cried: "Oh! my dear, I have forgotten all about it!" But there was exaggeration in this profession of forgetfulness, and she hurriedly drew Giselle back to the game of croquet, where they were joined by M. de Talbrun.

The future husband of Giselle was a stout young fellow, short and thick-set, with broad shoulders, a large flat face, and strong jaws, ornamented with an enormous pair of whiskers, which partly compensated him for a loss of hair. He had never done anything but shoot and hunt over his property nine months in the year, and spend the other three months in Paris, where the jockey Club and ballet-dancers sufficed for his amusement. He did not pretend to be a man whose bachelor life had been altogether blameless, but he considered himself to be a "correct" man, according to what he understood by that expression, which implied neither talents, virtues, nor good manners; nevertheless, all the Blue Band agreed that he was a finished type of gentleman-hood. Even Raoul's sisters had to confess, with a certain disgust, that, whatever people may say, in our own day the aristocracy of wealth has to lower its flag before the authentic quarterings of the old noblesse. They secretly envied Giselle because she was going to be a grande dame, while all the while they asserted that old-fashioned distinctions had no longer any meaning. Nevertheless, they looked forward to the day when they, too, might take their places in the Faubourg St. Germain. One may purchase that luxury with a fortune of eight hundred thousand francs.

The croquet-ground, which was underwater at high tide, was a long stretch of sand that fringed the shingle. Two parties were formed, in which care was taken to make both sides as nearly equal as possible, after which the game began, with screams, with laughter, a little cheating and some disputes, as is the usual custom. All

this appeared to amuse Oscar de Talbrun—exceedingly. For the first time during his wooing he was not bored. The Misses Sparks—Kate and Nora—by their "high spirits" agreeably reminded him of one or two excursions he had made in past days into Bohemian society.

He formed the highest opinion of Jacqueline when he saw how her still short skirts showed pretty striped silk stockings, and how her well-shaped foot was planted firmly on a blue ball, when she was preparing to roquer the red one. The way in which he fixed his eyes upon her gave great offense to Fred, and did it not alarm and shock Giselle? No! Giselle looked on calmly at the fun and talk around her, as unmoved as the stump of a tree, spoiling the game sometimes by her ignorance or her awkwardness, well satisfied that M. de Talbrun should leave her alone. Talking with him was very distasteful to her.

"You have been more stupid than usual," had been what her grandmother had never failed to say to her in Paris after one of his visits, which he alternated with bouquets. But at Treport no one seemed to mind her being stupid, and indeed M. de Talbrun hardly thought of her existence, up to the moment when they were all nearly caught by the first wave that came rolling in over the croquet-ground, when all the girls took flight, flushed, animated, and with lively gesticulation, while the gentlemen followed with the box into which had been hastily flung hoops, balls, and mallets.

On their way Count Oscar condescendingly explained to Fred, as to a novice, that the only good thing about croquet was that it brought men and girls together. He was himself very good at games, he said, having remarkably firm muscles and exceptionally sharp sight; but he went on to add that he had not been able to show what he could do that day. The wet sand did not make so good a croquet-ground as the one he had had made in his park! It is a good thing to know one's ground in all circumstances, but especially in playing croquet. Then, dexterously passing from the game to the players, he went on to say, under cover of giving Fred a warning, that a man need not fear going too far with those girls from America—they had known how to flirt from the time they were born. They could look out for themselves, they had talons and beaks; but up to a certain point they were very easy to get on with.

Those other players were queer little things; the three sisters Wermant were not wanting in chic, but, hang it!—the sweetest flower of them all, to his mind, was the tall one, the dark one—unripe fruit in perfection! "And a year or two hence," added M. de Talbrun, with all the self-confidence of an expert, "every one will be talking about her in the world of society."

Poor Fred kept silent, trying to curb his wrath. But the blood mounted to his temples as he listened to these remarks, poured into his ear by a man of thirty-five, between puffs of his cigar, because there was nobody else to whom he could make them. But they seemed to Fred very ill-mannered and ill-timed. If he had not dreaded making himself absurd, he would gladly have stood forth as the champion of the Sparks, the Wermants, and all the other members of the Blue Band, so that he might give vent to the anger raging in his heart on hearing that odious compliment to Jacqueline. Why was he not old enough to marry her? What right had that detestable Talbrun to take notice of any girl but his fiancée? If he himself could marry now, his choice would soon be made! No doubt, later—as his mother had said to him. But would Jacqueline wait? Everybody was beginning to admire her. Somebody would carry her off—somebody would cut him out while he was away at sea. Oh, horrible thought for a young lover!

That night, at the Casino, while dancing a quadrille with Giselle, he could not refrain from saying to her, "Don't you object to Monsieur de Talbrun's dancing so much with Jacqueline?"

"Who?—I?" she cried, astonished, "I don't see why he should not." And then, with a faint laugh, she added: "Oh, if she would only take him— and keep him!"

But Madame de Monredon kept a sharp eye upon M. de Talbrun. "It seems to me," she said, looking fixedly into the face of her future grandson-in-law, "that you really take pleasure in making children skip about with you."

"So I do," he replied, frankly and good-humoredly. "It makes me feel young again."

And Madame de Monredon was satisfied. She was ready to admit that most men marry women who have not particularly enchanted

them, and she had brought up Giselle with all those passive qualities, which, together with a large fortune, usually suit best with a 'mariage de convenance'.

Meantime Jacqueline piqued herself upon her worldly wisdom, which she looked upon as equal to Madame de Monredon's, since the terrible event which had filled her mind with doubts. She thought M. de Talbrun would do well enough for a husband, and she took care to say so to Giselle.

"It is a fact," she told her, with all the self-confidence of large experience, "that men who are very fascinating always remain bachelors. That is probably why Monsieur de Cymier, Madame de Villegry's handsome cousin, does not think of marrying."

She was mistaken. The Comte de Cymier, a satellite who revolved around that star of beauty, Madame de Villegry, had been by degrees brought round by that lady herself to thoughts of matrimony.

Madame de Villegry, notwithstanding her profuse use of henna and many cosmetics, which was always the first thing to strike those who saw her, prided herself on being uncompromised as to her moral character. There are some women who, because they stop short of actual vice, consider themselves irreproachable. They are willing, so to speak, to hang out the bush, but keep no tavern. In former times an appearance of evil was avoided in order to cover evil deeds, but at present there are those who, under the cover of being only "fast," risk the appearance of evil.

Madame de Villegry was what is sometimes called a "professional beauty." She devoted many hours daily to her toilette, she liked to have a crowd of admirers around her. But when one of them became too troublesome, she got rid of him by persuading him to marry. She had before this proposed several young girls to Gerard de Cymier, each one plainer and more insignificant than the others. It was to tell his dear friend that the one she had last suggested was positively too ugly for him, that the young attache to an embassy had come down to the sea-side to visit her.

The day after his arrival he was sitting on the shingle at Madame de Villegry's feet, both much amused by the grotesque spectacle presented by the bathers, who exhibited themselves in all degrees of

ugliness and deformity. Of course Madame de Villegrý did not bathe, being, as she said, too nervous. She was sitting under a large parasol and enjoying her own superiority over those wretched, amphibious creatures who waddled on the sands before her, comparing Madame X to a seal and Mademoiselle Z to the skeleton of a cuttle-fish.

"Well! it was that kind of thing you wished me to marry," said M. de Cymier, in a tone of resentment.

"But, my poor friend, what would you have? All young girls are like that. They improve when they are married."

"If one could only be sure."

"One is never sure of anything, especially anything relating to young girls. One can not say that they do more than exist till they are married. A husband has to make whatever he chooses out of them. You are quite capable of making what you choose of your wife. Take the risk, then."

"I could educate her as to morals—though, I must say, I am not much used to that kind of instruction; but you will permit me to think that, as to person, I should at least wish to see a rough sketch of what I may expect in my wife before my marriage."

At that moment, a girl who had been bathing came out of the water a few yards from them; the elegant outline of her slender figure, clad in a bathing-suit of white flannel, which clung to her closely, was thrown into strong relief by the clear blue background of a summer sky.

"Tiens!—but she is pretty!" cried Gerard, breaking off what he was saying: "And she is the first pretty one I have seen!"

Madame de Villegrý took up her tortoiseshell opera-glasses, which were fastened to her waist, but already the young girl, over whose shoulders an attentive servant had flung a wrapper—a 'peignoir-eponge'—had run along the boardwalk and stopped before her, with a gay "Good-morning!"

"Jacqueline!" said Madame de Villegrý. "Well, my dear child, did you find the water pleasant?"

"Delightful!" said the young girl, giving a rapid glance at M. de Cymier, who had risen.

He was looking at her with evident admiration, an admiration at which she felt much flattered. She was closely wrapped in her soft, snow-white peignoir, bordered with red, above which rose her lovely neck and head. She was trying to catch, on the point of one little foot, one of her bathing shoes, which had slipped from her. The foot which, when well shod, M. de Talbrun, through his eyeglass, had so much admired, was still prettier without shoe or stocking. It was so perfectly formed, so white, with a little pink tinge here and there, and it was set upon so delicate an ankle! M. de Cymier looked first at the foot, and then his glance passed upward over all the rest of the young figure, which could be seen clearly under the clinging folds of the wet drapery. Her form could be discerned from head to foot, though nothing was uncovered but the pretty little arm which held together with a careless grace the folds of her raiment. The eye of the experienced observer ran rapidly over the outline of her figure, till it reached the dark head and the brown hair, which rippled in little curls over her forehead. Her complexion, slightly golden, was not protected by one of those absurd hats which many bathers place on top of oiled silk caps which fit them closely. Neither was the precaution of oiled silk wanted to protect the thick and curling hair, now sprinkled with great drops that shone like pearls and diamonds. The water, instead of plastering her hair upon her temples, had made it more curly and more fleecy, as it hung over her dark eyebrows, which, very near together at the nose, gave to her eyes a peculiar, slightly oblique expression. Her teeth were dazzling, and were displayed by the smile which parted her lips—lips which were, if anything, too red for her pale complexion. She closed her eyelids now and then to shade her eyes from the too blinding sunlight. Those eyes were not black, but that hazel which has golden streaks. Though only half open, they had quickly taken in the fact that the young man sitting beside Madame de Villegray was very handsome.

As she went on with a swift step to her bathing-house, she drew out two long pins from her back hair, shaking it and letting it fall

down her back with a slightly impatient and imperious gesture; she wished, probably, that it might dry more quickly.

"The devil!" said M. de Cymier, watching her till she disappeared into the bathing-house. "I never should have thought that it was all her own! There is nothing wanting in her. That is a young creature it is pleasant to see."

"Yes," said Madame de Villegry, quietly, "she will be very good-looking when she is eighteen."

"Is she nearly eighteen?"

"She is and she is not, for time passes so quickly. A girl goes to sleep a child, and wakes up old enough to be married. Would you like to be informed, without loss of time, as to her fortune?"

"Oh! I should not care much about her dot. I look out first for other things."

"I know, of course; but Jacqueline de Nailles comes of a very good family."

"Is she the daughter of the deputy?"

"Yes, his only daughter. He has a pretty house in the Parc Monceau and a chateau of some importance in the Haute-Vienne."

"Very good; but, I repeat, I am not mercenary. Of course, if I should marry, I should like, for my wife's sake, to live as well as a married man as I have lived as a bachelor."

"Which means that you would be satisfied with a fortune equal to your own. I should have thought you might have asked more. It is true that if you have been suddenly thunderstruck that may alter your calculations — for it was very sudden, was it not? Venus rising from the sea!"

"Please don't exaggerate! But you are not so cruel, seeing you are always urging me to marry, as to wish me to take a wife who looks like a fright or a horror."

"Heaven preserve me from any such wish! I should be very glad if my little friend Jacqueline were destined to work your reformation."

"I defy the most careful parent to find anything against me at this moment, unless it be a platonic devotion. The youth of Mademoiselle de Nailles is an advantage, for I might indulge myself in that till we were married, and then I should settle down and leave Paris, where nothing keeps me but —"

"But a foolish fancy," laughed Madame de Villegry. "However, in return for your madrigal, accept the advice of a friend. The Nailles seem to me to be prosperous, but everybody in society appears so, and one never knows what may happen any day. You would not do amiss if, before you go on, you were to talk with Wermant, the 'agent de change', who has a considerable knowledge of the business affairs of Jacqueline's father. He could tell you about them better than I can."

"Wermant is at Treport, is he not? I thought I saw him —"

"Yes, he is here till Monday. You have twenty-four hours."

"Do you really think I am in such a hurry?"

"Will you take a bet that by this time to-morrow you will not know exactly the amount of her dot and the extent of her expectations?"

"You would lose. I have something else to think of—now and always."

"What?" she said, carelessly.

"You have forbidden me ever to mention it."

Silence ensued. Then Madame de Villegry said, smiling:

"I suppose you would like me to present you this evening to my friends the De Nailles?"

And in fact they all met that evening at the Casino, and Jacqueline, in a gown of scarlet foulard, which would have been too trying for any other girl, seemed to M. de Cymier as pretty as she had been in her bathing-costume. Her hair was not dressed high, but it was gathered loosely together and confined by a ribbon of the same color as her gown, and she wore a little sailor hat besides. In this costume she had been called by M. de Talbrun the "Fra Diavolo of the Seas," and she never better supported that part, by liveliness and