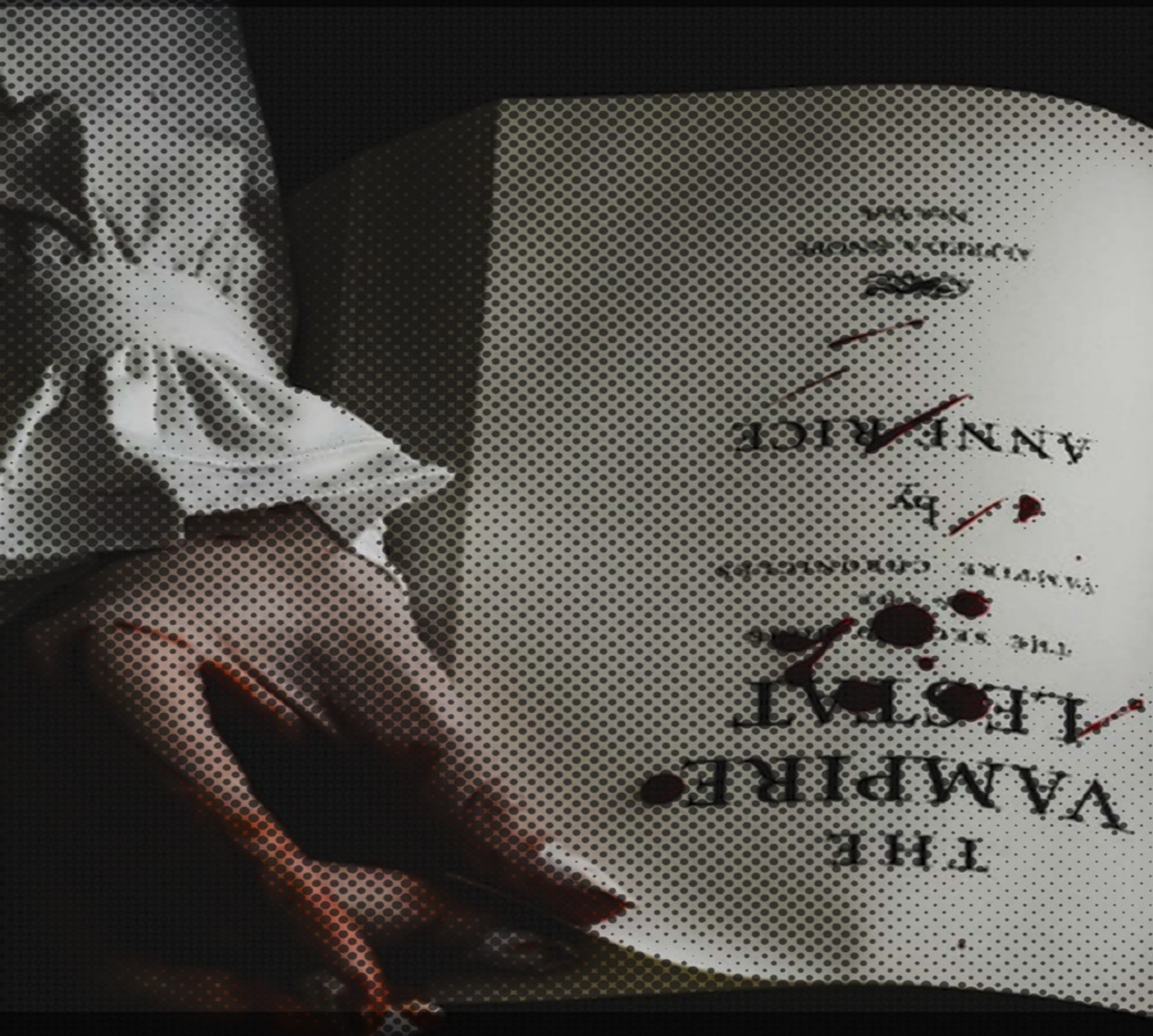


**Florence Marryat**



*The blood  
of the vampire*

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# **The blood of the vampire**



Published by Good Press, 2022

[goodpress@okpublishing.info](mailto:goodpress@okpublishing.info)

EAN 4064066431082

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# CHAPTER I.

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It was the magic hour of dining. The long Digue of Heyst was almost deserted; so was the strip of loose, yellow sand which skirted its base, and all the *tables d'hôtes* were filling fast. Henri, the youngest waiter of the Hôtel Lion d'Or, was standing on the steps between the two great gilded lions, which stood rampant on either side the portals, vigorously ringing a loud and discordant bell to summons the stragglers, whilst the ladies, who were waiting the commencement of dinner in the little salon to the side, stopped their ears to dull its clamour. Philippe and Jules were busy, laying white cloths and glasses, etc., on the marble tables in the open balcony, outside the *salle à manger*, where strangers to the Hotel might dine *à la carte*, if they chose. Inside, the long, narrow tables, were decorated with dusty geraniums and fuchsias, whilst each cruet stand had a small bunch of dirty artificial flowers tied to its handle. But the visitors to the Lion d'Or, who were mostly English, were too eager for their evening meal, to cavil at their surroundings. The Baroness Gobelli, with her husband on one side, and her son on the other, was the first to seat herself at table. The Baroness always appeared with the soup, for she had observed that the first comers received a more generous helping than those who came in last. No such anxiety occupied the minds of Mrs. Pullen and her friend Miss Leyton, who sat opposite to the Baroness and her family. They did not care sufficiently for the *potage aux croutons*, which usually formed the beginning of the



*table d'hôte* dinner. The long tables were soon filled with a motley crew of English, Germans, and Belgians, all chattering, especially the foreigners, as fast as their tongues could travel. Amongst them was a sprinkling of children, mostly unruly and ill-behaved, who had to be called to order every now and then, which made Miss Leyton's lip curl with disgust. Just opposite to her, and next to Mr. Bobby Bates, the Baroness's son by her first marriage, and whom she always treated as if he had been a boy of ten years old, was an unoccupied chair, turned up against the table to signify that it was engaged.

"I wonder if that is for the German Princess of whom Madame Lamont is so fond of talking," whispered Elinor Leyton to Mrs. Pullen, "she said this morning that she expected her this afternoon."

"O! surely not!" replied her friend, "I do not know much about royalties, but I should think a Princess would hardly dine at a public *table d'hôte*."

"O! a German Princess! what is that?" said Miss Leyton, with a curled lip again, for she was a daughter of Lord Walthamstowe, and thought very little of any aristocracy, except that of her own country.

As she spoke, however, the chair opposite was sharply pulled into place, and a young lady seated herself on it, and looked boldly (though not brazenly) up and down the tables, and at her neighbours on each side of her. She was a remarkable-looking girl—more remarkable, perhaps, than beautiful, for her beauty did not strike one at first sight. Her figure was tall but slight and lissom. It looked almost boneless as she swayed easily from side to side of her chair.

Her skin was colourless but clear. Her eyes were long-shaped, dark, and narrow, with heavy lids and thick black lashes which lay upon her cheeks. Her brows were arched and delicately pencilled, and her nose was straight and small. Not so her mouth however, which was large, with lips of a deep blood colour, displaying small white teeth. To crown all, her head was covered with a mass of soft, dull, blue-black hair, which was twisted in careless masses about the nape of her neck, and looked as if it was unaccustomed to comb or hairpin. She was dressed very simply in a white cambric frock, but there was not a woman present, who had not discovered in five minutes, that the lace with which it was profusely trimmed, was costly Valenciennes, and that it was clasped at her throat with brilliants. The new-comer did not seem in the least abashed by the numbers of eyes which were turned upon her, but bore the scrutiny very calmly, smiling in a sort of furtive way at everybody, until the *entrées* were handed round, when she rivetted all her attention upon the contents of her plate. Miss Leyton thought she had never seen any young person devour her food with so much avidity and enjoyment. She could not help watching her. The Baroness Gobelli, who was a very coarse feeder, scattering her food over her plate and not infrequently over the table cloth as well, was nothing compared to the young stranger. It was not so much that she ate rapidly and with evident appetite, but that she kept her eyes fixed upon her food, as if she feared someone might deprive her of it. As soon as her plate was empty, she called sharply to the waiter in French, and ordered him to get her some more.

“That’s right, my dear!” exclaimed the Baroness, nodding her huge head, and smiling broadly at the new-comer; “make ’em bring you more! It’s an excellent dish, that! I’ll ’ave some more myself!”

As Philippe deposited the last helping of the *entrée* on the young lady’s plate, the Baroness thrust hers beneath his nose.

“’Ere!” she said, “bring three more ’elpings for the Baron and Bobby and me!”

The man shook his head to intimate that the dish was finished, but the Baroness was not to be put off with a flimsy excuse. She commenced to make a row. Few meals passed without a squabble of some sort, between the Hotel servants and this terrible woman.

“Now we are in for it again!” murmured Miss Leyton into Mrs. Pullen’s ear. The waiter brought a different *entrée*, but the Baroness insisted upon having a second helping of *tête de veau aux champignons*.

“*Il n’y a plus, Madame!*” asseverated Philippe, with a gesture of deprecation.

“What does ’e say?” demanded the Baroness, who was not good at French.

“There is no more, mein tear!” replied her husband, with a strong German accent.

“Confound their impudence!” exclaimed his wife with a heated countenance, “’ere, send Monsieur ’ere at once! I’ll soon see if we’re not to ’ave enough to eat in ’is beastly Hotel!”

All the ladies who understood what she said, looked horrified at such language, but that was of no consequence

to Madame Gobelli, who continued to call out at intervals for “Monsieur” until she found the dinner was coming to an end without her, and thought it would be more politic to attend to business and postpone her feud till a more convenient occasion. The Baroness Gobelli was a mystery to most people in the Hotel. She was an enormous woman of the elephant build, with a large, flat face and clumsy hands and feet. Her skin was coarse, so was her hair, so were her features. The only things which redeemed an otherwise repulsive face, were a pair of good-humoured, though cunning blue eyes and a set of firm, white teeth. Who the Baroness had originally been, no one could quite make out. It was evident that she must have sprung from some low origin from her lack of education and breeding, yet she spoke familiarly of aristocratic names, even of Royal ones, and appeared to be acquainted with their families and homes. There was a floating rumour that she had been old Mr. Bates’s cook before he married her, and when he left her a widow with an only child and a considerable fortune, the little German Baron had thought that her money was a fair equivalent for her personality. She was exceedingly vulgar, and when roused, exceedingly vituperative, but she possessed a rough good humour when pleased, and a large amount of natural shrewdness, which stood her instead of cleverness. But she was an unscrupulous liar, and rather boasted of the fact than otherwise. Having plenty of money at her command, she was used to take violent fancies to people—taking them up suddenly, loading them with presents and favours for as long as it pleased her, and then dropping them as suddenly, without why or wherefore—



even insulting them if she could not shake them off without doing so. The Baron was completely under her thumb; more than that, he was servile in her presence, which astonished those people, who did not know that amongst her other arrogant insistences, the Baroness laid claim to holding intercourse with certain supernatural and invisible beings, who had the power to wreak vengeance on all those who offended her. This fear it was, combined with the fact that she had all the money and kept the strings of the bag pretty close where he was concerned, that made the Baron wait upon his wife's wishes as if he were her slave. Perhaps the softest spot in the Baroness's heart was kept for her sickly and uninteresting son, Bobby Bates, whom she treated, nevertheless, with the roughness of a tigress for her cub. She kept him still more under her surveillance than she did her husband, and Bobby, though he had attained his nineteenth year, dared not say Boo! to a goose, in presence of his Mamma. As the cheese was handed round, Elinor Leyton rose from her seat with an impatient gesture.

"Do let us get out of this atmosphere, Margaret!" she said in a low tone. "I really cannot stand it any longer!"

The two ladies left the table, and went out beyond the balcony, to where a number of painted iron chairs and tables were placed on the Digue, for the accommodation of passing wayfarers, who might wish to rest awhile and quench their thirst with *limonade* or lager beer.

"I wonder who that girl is!" remarked Mrs. Pullen as soon as they were out of hearing. "I don't know whether I like her or not, but there is something rather distinguished-looking about her!"

“Do you think so?” said Miss Leyton, “I thought she only distinguished herself by eating like a cormorant! I never saw anyone in society gobble her food in such a manner! She made me positively sick!”

“Was it as bad as that?” replied the more quiet Mrs. Pullen, in an indifferent manner. Her eyes were attracted just then by the perambulator which contained her baby, and she rose to meet it.

“How is she, Nurse?” she asked as anxiously as if she had not parted from the infant an hour before. “Has she been awake all the time?”

“Yes, Ma’am, and looking about her like anything! But she seems inclined to sleep now! I thought it was about time to take her in!”

“O! no! not on such a warm, lovely evening! If she does go to sleep in the open air, it will do her no harm. Leave her with me! I want you to go indoors, and find out the name of the young lady who sat opposite to me at dinner to-day, Philippe understands English. He will tell you!”

“Why on earth do you want to know?” demanded Miss Leyton, as the servant disappeared.

“O! I don’t know! I feel a little curious, that is all! She seems so young to be by herself!”

Elinor Leyton answered nothing, but walked across the Digue and stood, looking out over the sea. She was anticipating the arrival of her *fiancé*, Captain Ralph Pullen of the Limerick Rangers, but he had delayed his coming to join them, and she began to find Heyst rather dull.

The visitors of the Lion d’Or had finished their meal by this time, and were beginning to reassemble on the Digue,

preparatory to taking a stroll before they turned into one of the many *cafés-chantants*, which were situated at stated intervals in front of the sea. Amongst them came the Baroness Gobelli, leaning heavily on a thick stick with one hand, and her husband's shoulder with the other. The couple presented an extraordinary appearance, as they perambulated slowly up and down the Digue.

She—with her great height and bulk, towering a head above her companion, whilst he—with a full-sized torso, and short legs—a large hat crammed down upon his forehead, and no neck to speak of, so that the brim appeared to rest upon his shoulders—was a ludicrous figure, as he walked beside his wife, bending under the weight of her support. But yet, she was actually proud of him. Notwithstanding his ill-shaped figure, the Baron possessed one of those mild German faces, with pale watery blue eyes, a long nose, and hair and beard of a reddish-golden colour, which entitled him, in the estimation of some people, to be called a handsome man, and the Baroness was never tired of informing the public that his head and face had once been drawn for that of some celebrated saint.

Her own appearance was really comical, for though she had plenty of means, her want of taste, or indifference to dress, made everyone stare at her as she passed. On the present occasion, she wore a silk gown which had cost seventeen shillings a yard, with a costly velvet cloak, a bonnet which might have been rescued from the dustbin, and cotton gloves with all her fingers out. She shook her thick walking-stick in Miss Leyton's face as she passed by her, and called out loud enough for everyone to hear: "And

when is the handsome Captain coming to join you, Miss Leyton, eh? Take care he ain't running after some other gal! 'When pensive I thought on my L.O.V.E.' Ha! ha! ha!"

Elinor flushed a delicate pink but did not turn her head, nor take any notice of her tormentor. She detested the Baroness with a perfectly bitter hatred, and her proud cold nature revolted from her coarseness and familiarity.

"Tied to your brat again!" cried the Baroness, as she passed Margaret Pullen who was moving the perambulator gently to and fro by the handle, so as to keep her infant asleep; "why didn't you put it in the tub as soon as it was born? It would 'ave saved you a heap of trouble! I often wish I had done so by that devil Bobby! 'Ere, where are you, Bobby?"

"I'm close behind you, Mamma!" replied the simple-looking youth.

"Well! don't you get running away from your father and me, and winking at the gals! There's time enough for that, ain't there, Gustave?" she concluded, addressing the Baron.

"Come along, Robert, and mind what your mother tells you!" said the Herr Baron with his guttural German accent, as the extraordinary trio pursued their way down the Digue, the Baroness making audible remarks on everybody she met, as they went.

Margaret Pullen sat where they had left her, moving about the perambulator, whilst her eyes, like Elinor's, were fixed upon the tranquil water. The August sun had now quite disappeared, and the indescribably faint and unpleasant odour, which is associated with the dunes of Heyst, had begun to make itself apparent. A still languor had crept over

everything, and there were indications of a thunderstorm in the air. She was thinking of her husband, Colonel Arthur Pullen, the elder brother of Miss Leyton's *fiancé*, who was toiling out in India for baby and herself. It had been a terrible blow to Margaret, to let him go out alone after only one year of happy wedded life, but the expected advent of her little daughter at the time, had prohibited her undertaking so long a journey and she had been compelled to remain behind. And now baby was six months old, and Colonel Pullen hoped to be home by Christmas, so had advised her to wait for his return. But her thoughts were sad sometimes, notwithstanding.

Events happen so unexpectedly in this world—who could say for certain that she and her husband would ever meet again—that Arthur would ever see his little girl, or that she should live to place her in her father's arms? But such a state of feeling was morbid, she knew, and she generally made an effort to shake it off. The nurse, returning with the information she had sent her to acquire, roused her from her reverie.

"If you please, Ma'am, the young lady's name is Brandt, and Philippe says she came from London!"

"English! I should never have guessed it!" observed Mrs. Pullen, "She speaks French so well."

"Shall I take the baby now, Ma'am?"

"Yes! Wheel her along the Digue. I shall come and meet you by and by!"

As the servant obeyed her orders, she called to Miss Leyton.

"Elinor! come here!"

“What is it?” asked Miss Leyton, seating herself beside her.

“The new girl’s name is Brandt and she comes from England! Would you have believed it?”

“I did not take sufficient interest in her to make any speculations on the subject. I only observed that she had a mouth from ear to ear, and ate like a pig! What does it concern us, where she comes from?”

At that moment, a Mrs. Montague, who, with her husband, was conveying a family of nine children over to Brussels, under the mistaken impression, that they would be able to live cheaper there than in England, came down the Hotel steps with half a dozen of them, clinging to her skirts, and went straight up to Margaret Pullen.

“O! Mrs. Pullen! What is that young lady’s name, who sat opposite to you at dinner? Everybody is asking! I hear she is enormously rich, and travelling alone. Did you see the lace on her dress? Real Valenciennes, and the diamond rings she wore! Frederick says they must be worth a lot of money. She must be someone of consequence I should imagine!”

“On the contrary, my nurse tells me she is English and her name is Brandt. Has she no friends here?”

“Madame Lamont says she arrived in company with another girl, but they are located at different parts of the Hotel. It seems very strange, does it not?”

“And it sounds very improper!” interposed Elinor Leyton, “I should say the less we have to say to her, the better! You never know what acquaintances you may make in a place like this! When I look up and down the *table d’hôte* menagerie sometimes, it makes me quite ill!”



“Does it?” rejoined Mrs. Montague, “I think it’s so amusing! That Baroness Gobelli, for instance——”

“Don’t mention her before me!” cried Miss Leyton, in a tone of disgust, “the woman is not fit for civilised society!”

“She is rather common, certainly, and strange in her behaviour,” said Mrs. Montague, “but she is very good-natured. She gave my little Edward a louis yesterday. I felt quite ashamed to let him take it!”

“That just proves her vulgarity,” exclaimed Elinor Leyton, who had not a sixpence to give away, herself, “it shows that she thinks her money will atone for all her other shortcomings! She gave that Miss Taylor who left last week, a valuable brooch off her own throat. And poor payment too, for all the dirty things she made her do and the ridicule she poured upon her. I daresay this *nouveau riche* will try to curry favour with us by the same means.”

At that moment, the girl under discussion, Miss Brandt, appeared on the balcony, which was only raised a few feet above where they sat. She wore the same dress she had at dinner, with the addition of a little fleecy shawl about her shoulders. She stood smiling, and looking at the ladies (who had naturally dropped all discussion about her) for a few moments, and then she ventured to descend the steps between the rampant gilded lions, and almost timidly, as it seemed, took up a position near them. Mrs. Pullen felt that she could not be so discourteous as to take no notice whatever of the new-comer, and so, greatly to Miss Leyton’s disgust, she uttered quietly, “Good evening!”

It was quite enough for Miss Brandt. She drew nearer with smiles mantling over her face.

“Good evening! Isn’t it lovely here?—so soft and warm, something like the Island, but so much fresher!”

She looked up and down the Digue, now crowded with a multitude of visitors, and drew in her breath with a long sigh of content.

“How gay and happy they all seem, and how happy I am too! Do you know, if I had my will, what I should like to do?” she said, addressing Mrs. Pullen.

“No! indeed!”

“I should like to tear up and down this road as hard as ever I could, throwing my arms over my head and screaming aloud!”

The ladies exchanged glances of astonishment, but Margaret Pullen could not forbear smiling as she asked their new acquaintance the reason why.

“O! because I am free—free at last, after ten long years of imprisonment! I am telling you the truth, I am indeed, and you would feel just the same if you had been shut up in a horrid Convent ever since you were eleven years old!”

At the word “convent”, the national Protestant horror immediately spread itself over the faces of the three other ladies; Mrs. Montague gathered her flock about her and took them out of the way of possible contamination, though she would have much preferred to hear the rest of Miss Brandt’s story, and Elinor Leyton moved her chair further away. But Margaret Pullen was interested and encouraged the girl to proceed.

“In a convent! I suppose then you are a Roman Catholic!”  
Harriet Brandt suddenly opened her slumbrous eyes.

“I don’t think so! I’m not quite sure what I am! Of course I’ve had any amount of religion crammed down my throat in the Convent, and I had to follow their prayers, whilst there, but I don’t believe my parents were Catholics! But it does not signify, I am my own mistress now. I can be what I like!”

“You have been so unfortunate then as to lose your parents!”

“O! yes! years ago, that is why my guardian, Mr. Trawler, placed me in the Convent for my education. And I’ve been there for ten years! Is it not a shame? I’m twenty-one now! That’s why I’m free! You see,” the girl went on confidentially, “my parents left me everything, and as soon as I came of age I entered into possession of it. My guardian, Mr. Trawler, who lives in Jamaica,—did I tell you that I’ve come from Jamaica?—thought I should live with him and his wife, when I left the Convent, and pay them for my keep, but I refused. They had kept me too tight! I wanted to see the world and life—it was what I had been looking forward to—so as soon as my affairs were settled, I left the West Indies and came over here!”

“They said you came from England in the Hotel!”

“So I did! The steamer came to London and I stayed there a week before I came on here!”

“But you are too young to travel about by yourself, Miss Brandt! English young ladies never do so!” said Mrs. Pullen.

“I’m not by myself, exactly! Olga Brimont, who was in the Convent with me, came too. But she is ill, so she’s upstairs. She has come to her brother who is in Brussels, and we travelled together. We had the same cabin on board the steamer, and Olga was very ill. One night the doctor

thought she was going to die! I stayed with her all the time. I used to sit up with her at night, but it did her no good. We stopped in London because we wanted to buy some dresses and things, but she was not able to go out, and I had to go alone. Her brother is away from Brussels at present so he wrote her to stay in Heyst till he could fetch her, and as I had nowhere particular to go, I came with her! And she is better already! She has been fast asleep all the afternoon!"

"And what will you do when your friend leaves you?" asked Mrs. Pullen.

"O! I don't know! Travel about, I suppose! I shall go wherever it may please me!"

"Are you not going to take a walk this evening?" demanded Elinor Leyton in a low voice of her friend, wishing to put a stop to the conversation.

"Certainly! I told nurse I would join her and baby by-and-by!"

"Shall I fetch your hat then?" enquired Miss Leyton, as she rose to go up to their apartments.

"Yes! if you will, dear, please, and my velvet cape, in case it should turn chilly!"

"I will fetch mine too!" cried Miss Brandt, jumping up with alacrity. "I may go with you, mayn't I? I'll just tell Olga that I'm going out and be down again in five minutes!" and without waiting for an answer, she was gone.

"See what you have brought upon us!" remarked Elinor in a vexed tone.

"Well! it was not my fault," replied Margaret, "and after all, what does it signify? It is only a little act of courtesy to an unprotected girl. I don't dislike her, Elinor! She is very

familiar and communicative, but fancy what it must be like to find herself her own mistress, and with money at her command, after ten years' seclusion within the four walls of a convent! It is enough to turn the head of any girl. I think it would be very churlish to refuse to be friendly with her!"

"Well! I hope it may turn out all right! But you must remember how Ralph cautioned us against making any acquaintances in a foreign hotel."

"But I am not under Ralph's orders, though you may be, and I should not care to go entirely by the advice of so very fastidious and exclusive a gentleman as he is! My Arthur would never find fault with me, I am sure, for being friendly with a young unmarried girl."

"Anyway, Margaret, let me entreat you not to discuss my private affairs with this new *protégée* of yours. I don't want to see her saucer eyes goggling over the news of my engagement to your brother-in-law!"

"Certainly I will not, since you ask it! But you hardly expect to keep it a secret when Ralph comes down here, do you?"

"Why not? Why need anyone know more than that he is your husband's brother?"

"I expect they know a good deal more now," said Margaret, laughing. "The news that you are the Honourable Elinor Leyton and that your father is Baron Walthamstowe, was known all over Heyst the second day we were here. And I have no doubt it has been succeeded by the interesting intelligence that you are engaged to marry Captain Pullen. You cannot keep servants' tongues from wagging, you know!"

“I suppose not!” replied Elinor, with a *moue* of contempt. “However, they will learn no more through me or Ralph. We are not ‘Arry and ‘Arriet’ to sit on the Digue with our arms round each other’s waists.”

“Still—there are signs and symptoms,” said Margaret, laughing.

“There will be none with us!” rejoined Miss Leyton, indignantly, as Harriet Brandt, with a black lace hat on, trimmed with yellow roses, and a little fichu tied carelessly across her bosom, ran lightly down the steps to join them.



# CHAPTER II.

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The Digue was crowded by that time. All Heyst had turned out to enjoy the evening air and to partake in the gaiety of the place. A band was playing on the movable orchestra, which was towed by three skinny little donkeys, day after day, from one end of the Digue to the other. To-night, it was its turn to be in the middle, where a large company of people was sitting on green painted chairs that cost ten centimes for hire each, whilst children danced, or ran madly round and round its base. Everyone had changed his, or her, seaside garb for more fashionable array—even the children were robed in white frocks and gala hats—and the whole scene was gay and festive. Harriet Brandt ran from one side to the other of the Digue, as though she also had been a child. Everything she saw seemed to astonish and delight her. First, she was gazing out over the calm and placid water—and next, she was exclaiming at the bits of rubbish in the shape of embroidered baskets, or painted shells, exhibited in the shop windows, which were side by side with the private houses and hotels, forming a long line of buildings fronting the water.

She kept on declaring that she wanted to buy that or this, and lamenting she had not brought more money with her.

“You will have plenty of opportunities to select and purchase what you want to-morrow,” said Mrs. Pullen, “and you will be better able to judge what they are like. They look

better under the gas than they do by daylight, I can assure you, Miss Brandt!”

“O! but they are lovely—delightful!” replied the girl, enthusiastically, “I never saw anything so pretty before! Do look at that little doll in a bathing costume, with her cap in one hand, her sponge in the other! She is charming—unique! *Tout ce qu’il y a de plus beau!*”

She spoke French perfectly, and when she spoke English, it was with a slightly foreign accent, that greatly enhanced its charm. It made Mrs. Pullen observe:

“You are more used to speaking French than English, Miss Brandt!”

“Yes! We always spoke French in the Convent, and it is in general use in the Island. But I thought—I hoped—that I spoke English like an Englishwoman! I *am* an Englishwoman, you know!”

“Are you? I was not quite sure! Brandt sounds rather German!”

“No! my father was English, his name was Henry Brandt, and my mother was a Miss Carey—daughter of one of the Justices of Barbadoes!”

“O! indeed!” replied Mrs. Pullen. She did not know what else to say. The subject was of no interest to her! At that moment they encountered the nurse and perambulator, and she naturally stopped to speak to her baby.

The sight of the infant seemed to drive Miss Brandt wild.

“O! is that your baby, Mrs. Pullen, is that really your baby?” she exclaimed excitedly, “you never told me you had one. O! the darling! the sweet dear little angel! I love little white babies! I adore them. They are so sweet and fresh and

clean—so different from the little niggers who smell so nasty, you can't touch them! We never saw a baby in the Convent, and so few English children live to grow up in Jamaica! O! let me hold her! let me carry her! I *must!*”

She was about to seize the infant in her arms, when the mother interposed.

“No, Miss Brandt, please, not this evening! She is but half awake, and has arrived at that age when she is frightened of strangers. Another time perhaps, when she has become used to you, but not now!”

“But I will be so careful of her, pretty dear!” persisted the girl, “I will nurse her so gently, that she will fall to sleep again in my arms. Come! my little love, come!” she continued to the baby, who pouted her lips and looked as if she were going to cry.

“Leave her alone!” exclaimed Elinor Leyton in a sharp voice. “Do you not hear what Mrs. Pullen says—that you are not to touch her!”

She spoke so acridly, that gentle Margaret Pullen felt grieved for the look of dismay that darted into Harriet Brandt's face on hearing it.

“O! I am sorry—I didn't mean—” she stammered, with a side glance at Margaret.

“Of course you did not mean anything but what was kind,” said Mrs. Pullen, “Miss Leyton perfectly understands that, and when baby is used to you, I daresay she will be very grateful for your attentions. But to-night she is sleepy and tired, and, perhaps, a little cross. Take her home, Nurse,” she went on, “and put her to bed! Good-night, my sweet!” and the perambulator passed them and was gone.

An awkward silence ensued between the three women after this little incident. Elinor Leyton walked somewhat apart from her companions, as if she wished to avoid all further controversy, whilst Margaret Pullen sought some way by which to atone for her friend's rudeness to the young stranger. Presently they came across one of the *cafés chantants* which are attached to the seaside hotels, and which was brilliantly lighted up. A large awning was spread outside, to shelter some dozens of chairs and tables, most of which were already occupied. The windows of the hotel salon had been thrown wide open, to accommodate some singers and musicians, who advanced in turn and stood on the threshold to amuse the audience. As they approached the scene, a tenor in evening dress was singing a love song, whilst the musicians accompanied his voice from the salon, and the occupants of the chairs were listening with rapt attention.

"How charming! how delightful!" cried Harriet Brandt, as they reached the spot, "I never saw anything like this in the Island!"

"You appear never to have seen anything!" remarked Miss Leyton, with a sneer. Miss Brandt glanced apologetically at Mrs. Pullen.

"How could I see anything, when I was in the Convent?" she said, "I know there are places of entertainment in the Island, but I was never allowed to go to any. And in London, there was no one for me to go with! I should so much like to go in there," indicating the *café*. "Will you come with me, both of you I mean, and I will pay for everything! I have plenty of money, you know!"

“There is nothing to pay, my dear, unless you call for refreshment,” was Margaret’s reply. “Yes, I will go with you certainly, if you so much wish it! Elinor, you won’t mind, will you?”

But Miss Leyton was engaged talking to a Monsieur and Mademoiselle Vieuxtemps—an old brother and sister, resident in the Lion d’Or—who had stopped to wish her Good-evening! They were dear, good old people, but rather monotonous and dull, and Elinor had more than once ridiculed their manner of talking and voted them the most terrible bores. Mrs. Pullen concluded therefore, that she would get rid of them as soon as courtesy permitted her to do so, and follow her. With a smile and a bow therefore, to the Vieuxtemps, she pushed her way through the crowd with Harriet Brandt, to where she perceived that three seats were vacant, and took possession of them. They were not good seats for hearing or seeing, being to one side of the salon, and quite in the shadow, but the place was so full that she saw no chance of getting any others. As soon as they were seated, the waiter came round for orders, and it was with difficulty that Mrs. Pullen prevented her companion purchasing sufficient liqueurs and cakes to serve double the number of their company.

“You must allow me to pay for myself, Miss Brandt,” she said gravely, “or I will never accompany you anywhere again!”

“But I have lots of money,” pleaded the girl, “much more than I know what to do with—it would be a pleasure to me, it would indeed!”

But Mrs. Pullen was resolute, and three *limonades* only were placed upon their table. Elinor Leyton had not yet made her appearance, and Mrs. Pullen kept craning her neck over the other seats to see where she might be, without success.

“She cannot have missed us!” she observed, “I wonder if she can have continued her walk with the *Vieuxtemps*!”

“O! what does it signify?” said Harriet, drawing her chair closer to that of Mrs. Pullen, “we can do very well without her. I don’t think she’s very nice, do you?”

“You must not speak of Miss Leyton like that to me, Miss Brandt,” remonstrated Margaret, gently, “because—she is a great friend of our family.”

She had been going to say, “Because she will be my sister-in-law before long,” but remembered Elinor’s request in time, and substituted the other sentence.

“I don’t think she’s very kind, though,” persisted the other.

“It is only her manner, Miss Brandt! She does not mean anything by it!”

“But you are so different,” said the girl as she crept still closer, “I could see it when you smiled at me at dinner. I knew I should like you at once. And I want you to like me too—so much! It has been the dream of my life to have some friends. That is why I would not stay in Jamaica. I don’t like the people there! I want friends—real friends!”

“But you must have had plenty of friends of your own age in the Convent.”

“That shows you don’t know anything about a convent! It’s the very last place where they will let you make a friend



—they're afraid lest you should tell each other too much! The convent I was in was an Ursuline order, and even the nuns were obliged to walk three and three, never two, together, lest they should have secrets between them. As for us girls, we were never left alone for a single minute! There was always a sister with us, even at night, walking up and down between the rows of beds, pretending to read her prayers, but with her eyes on us the whole time and her ears open to catch what we said. I suppose they were afraid we should talk about lovers. I think girls do talk about them when they can, more in convents than in other places, though they have never had any. It would be so dreadful to be like the poor nuns, and never have a lover to the end of one's days, wouldn't it?"

"You would not fancy being a nun then, Miss Brandt!"

"I—Oh! dear no! I would rather be dead, twenty times over! But they didn't like my coming out at all. They did try so hard to persuade me to remain with them for ever! One of them, Sister Féodore, told me I must never talk even with gentlemen, if I could avoid it—that they were all wicked and nothing they said was true, and if I trusted them, they would only laugh at me afterwards for my pains. But I don't believe that, do you?"

"Certainly not!" replied Margaret warmly. "The sister who told you so knew nothing about men. My dear husband is more like an angel than a man, and there are many like him. You mustn't believe such nonsense, Miss Brandt! I am sure you never heard your parents say such a silly thing!"

"O! my father and mother! I never remember hearing them say anything!" replied Miss Brandt. She had crept

closer and closer to Mrs. Pullen as she spoke, and now encircled her waist with her arm, and leaned her head upon her shoulder. It was not a position that Margaret liked, nor one she would have expected from a woman on so short an acquaintance, but she did not wish to appear unkind by telling Miss Brandt to move further away. The poor girl was evidently quite unused to the ways and customs of Society, she seemed moreover very friendless and dependent—so Margaret laid her solecism down to ignorance and let her head rest where she had placed it, resolving inwardly meanwhile that she would not subject herself to be treated in so familiar a manner again.

“Don’t you remember your parents then?” she asked her presently.

“Hardly! I saw so little of them,” said Miss Brandt, “my father was a great doctor and scientist, I believe, and I am not quite sure if he knew that he had a daughter!”

“O! my dear, what nonsense!”

“But it is true, Mrs. Pullen! He was always shut up in his laboratory, and I was not allowed to go near that part of the house. I suppose he was very clever and all that—but he was too much engaged in making experiments to take any notice of me, and I am sure I never wanted to see him!”

“How very sad! But you had your mother to turn to for consolation and company, whilst she lived, surely?”

“O! my mother!” echoed Harriet, carelessly. “Yes! my mother! Well! I don’t think I knew much more of her either. The ladies in Jamaica get very lazy, you know, and keep a good deal to their own rooms. The person there I loved best of all, was old Pete, the overseer!”

“The overseer!”

“Of the estate and niggers, you know! We had plenty of niggers on the coffee plantation, regular African fellows, with woolly heads and blubber lips, and yellow whites to their eyes. When I was a little thing of four years old, Pete used to let me whip the little niggers for a treat, when they had done anything wrong. It used to make me laugh to see them wriggle their legs under the whip and cry!”

“O! don’t, Miss Brandt!” exclaimed Margaret Pullen, in a voice of pain.

“It’s true, but they deserved it, you know, the little wretches, always thieving or lying or something! I’ve seen a woman whipped to death, because she wouldn’t work. We think nothing of that sort of thing, over there. Still—you can’t wonder that I was glad to get out of the Island. But I loved old Pete, and if he had been alive when I left, I would have brought him to England with me. He used to carry me for miles through the jungle on his back,—out in the fresh mornings and the cool, dewy eves. I had a pony to ride, but I never went anywhere, without his hand upon my bridle rein. He was always so afraid lest I should come to any harm. I don’t think anybody else cared. Pete was the only creature who ever loved me, and when I think of Jamaica, I remember my old nigger servant as the one friend I had there!”

“It is very, very sad!” was all that Mrs. Pullen could say.

She had become fainter and fainter, as the girl leaned against her with her head upon her breast. Some sensation which she could not define, nor account for—some feeling which she had never experienced before—had come over

her and made her head reel. She felt as if something or someone, were drawing all her life away. She tried to disengage herself from the girl's clasp, but Harriet Brandt seemed to come after her, like a coiling snake, till she could stand it no longer, and faintly exclaiming:

"Miss Brandt! let go of me, please! I feel ill!" she rose and tried to make her way between the crowded tables, towards the open air. As she stumbled along, she came against (to her great relief) her friend, Elinor Leyton.

"O! Elinor!" she gasped, "I don't know what is the matter with me! I feel so strange, so light-headed! Do take me home!"

Miss Leyton dragged her through the audience, and made her sit down on a bench, facing the sea.

"Why! what's the matter?" demanded Harriet Brandt, who had made her way after them, "is Mrs. Pullen ill?"

"So it appears," replied Miss Leyton, coldly, "but how it happened, you should know better than myself! I suppose it is very warm in there!"

"No! no! I do not think so," said Margaret, with a bewildered air, "we had chairs close to the side. And Miss Brandt was telling me of her life in Jamaica, when such an extraordinary sensation came over me! I can't describe it! it was just as if I had been scooped hollow!"

At this description, Harriet Brandt burst into a loud laugh, but Elinor frowned her down.

"It may seem a laughing matter to you, Miss Brandt," she said, in the same cold tone, "but it is none to me. Mrs. Pullen is far from strong, and her health is not to be trifled with. However, I shall not let her out of my sight again."