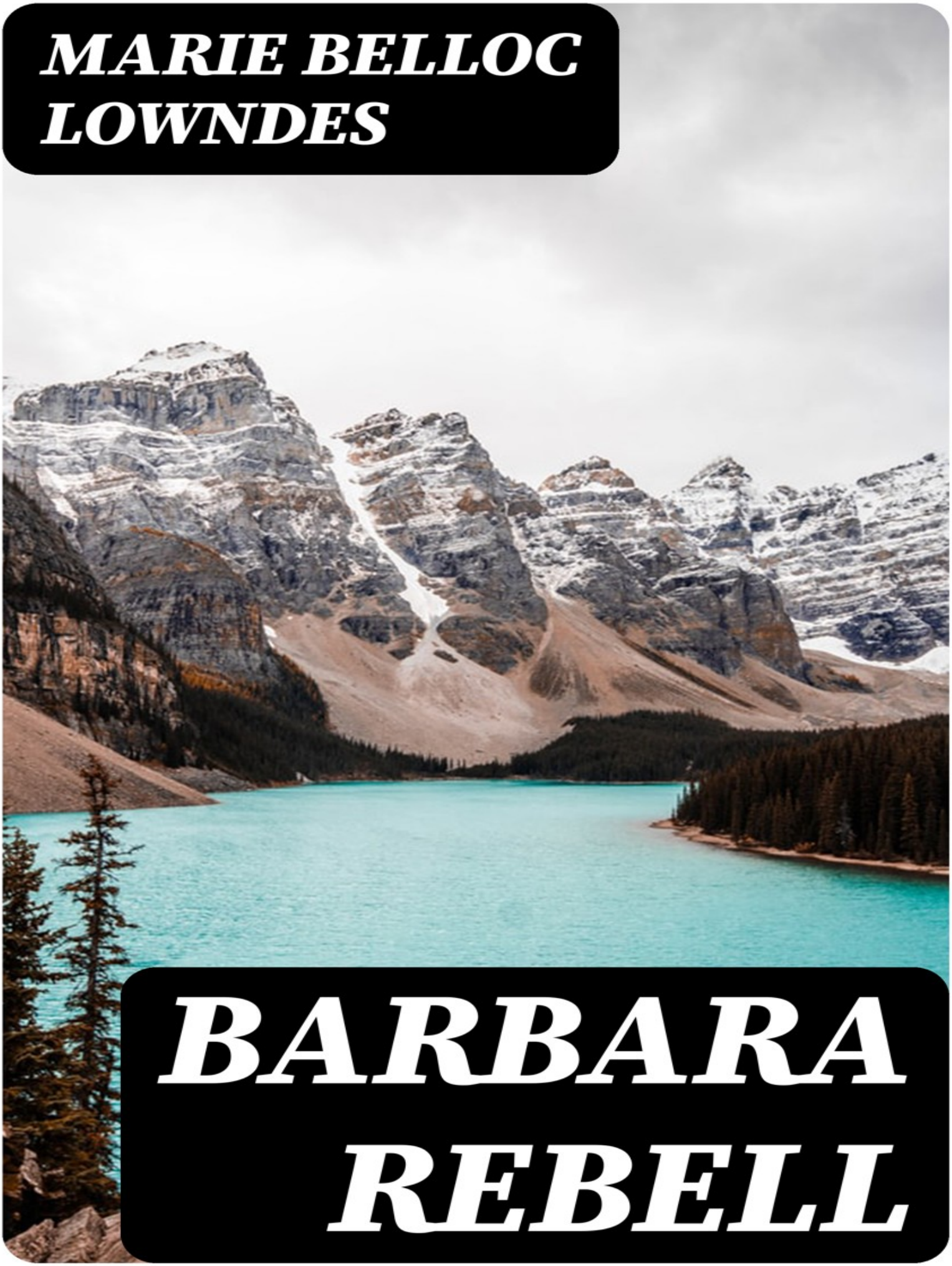
MARIE BELLOC LOWNDES



BARBARA REBELL

Marie Belloc Lowndes

Barbara Rebell

EAN 8596547235378

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

PROLOGUE.
CHAPTER I.
CHAPTER II.
CHAPTER III.
CHAPTER IV.
CHAPTER V.
CHAPTER VI.
CHAPTER VII.
CHAPTER VIII.
CHAPTER IX.
CHAPTER X.
CHAPTER XI.
CHAPTER XII.
CHAPTER XIII.
CHAPTER XIV.
CHAPTER XV.
CHAPTER XVI.
CHAPTER XVII.
CHAPTER XVIII.
CHAPTER XIX.
CHAPTER XX.
CHAPTER XXI.
CHAPTER XXII.
CHAPTER XXIII.

PROLOGUE.

Table of Contents

"Have regard to thy name; for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great treasures of gold."

ECCLESIASTICUS xl. 12.

BARBARA REBELL'S tenth birthday,—that is the ninth of June, 1870,—was destined to be long remembered by her as a day of days; both as having seen the first meeting with one who, though unknown till then, had occupied a great place in her imagination, if only because the name of this lady, her godmother, had been associated every night and morning with that of her father and mother in her prayers, and as having witnessed the greatest of her childish disappointments.

Certain dates to most of us become in time retrospectively memorable, and doubtless this sunny, fragrant June day would in any case have been remembered by Barbara as the last of a long series of high days and holidays spent by her in her French home during the first few years of her life. Barbara Rebell left St. Germains two months after her tenth birthday; but the town which has seen so few changes in its stately, ordered beauty, since it afforded a magnificent hospitality to the last Stuart King and Queen of England, always remained to her "home," in the dear and intimate sense of the word, and that for many years after everything save the actual roof and walls of the villa where Mr. and Mrs. Rebell had lived such long, and on

the whole such peaceful years, had been destroyed—overwhelmed with locust-like destruction—by the passage of an alien soldiery.

But early in the June of 1870 there was nothing to show what July and August were to bring to France, and the various incidents which so much impressed the child's imagination, and made the day memorable, were almost wholly connected with that solitary inner life which is yet so curiously affected by material occurrences.

Barbara's birthday began very differently from what she had thought it would do. The little girl had pleasant recollections of the fashion in which her last fête day, "la Sainte Barbe," had been celebrated. She remembered vividly the white bouquets brought by the tradespeople, the cakes and gifts offered by her little French friends, they who dwelt in Legitimist seclusion in the old town—for St. Germains was at that time a Royalist stronghold—far from the supposed malign influence of the high forest trees, and broad, wind-swept Terrace, which had first attracted Barbara's parents, and caused them to choose St. Germains as their place of retreat.

And so Barbara had looked forward very eagerly to her tenth birthday, but by eleven o'clock what, so far, had it brought her? No bouquets, no cakes, no trifling gifts of the kind she loved! As she sat out in her little chair on the balcony of which the gilt balustrade was now concealed by festoons of green leaves and white roses, and from which opened the windows of her mother's drawing-room, the child's conscience pricked her somewhat. Had not her parents early called her into their room and presented her

with a beautiful little gold watch—a gift, too, brought specially from London by Mr. Daman, a Queen's Messenger, who was one of her father's oldest friends, and one of the very few English-speaking folk who ever sought out Mr. and Mrs. Rebell in their seclusion?

"You may wear it all to-day," her mother had said with some solemnity, "but after to-night I will put it away until you are old enough to take care of a watch." In time the little watch became a cherished possession, a dear familiar friend, but on this first day of ownership Barbara took small pleasure in her gift.

The child had not liked to ask if any further birthday treat was in contemplation. She stood in great awe of her quiet-mannered, preoccupied father: and, while loving her gentle, kind mother with all her eager passionate little heart, she did not at that time understand how tenderly she herself was loved in return by the fragile, pensive looking woman, who seemed to those about her absorbed rather in her husband than in her daughter.

And so, after having been dismissed rather curtly by her father, Barbara had made her way disconsolately out to the balcony which was in a sense her play-room, for there she spent many of her solitary hours. Sitting in her own little wicker chair, with *The Fairchild Family* lying on the osier table by her side, and *Les Malheurs de Sophie* on her lap, she wondered rather wistfully what the day to which she had so much looked forward was likely to bring forth.

Dressed in a white India muslin frock, her long dark hair curled, as was the fashion in those days, and tied neatly out of the way with a pale blue ribbon, her unseeing eyes

gazing at one of the most beautiful views in the world, little Barbara Rebell, not for the first time, fell to wondering why her life was so different from that of the English children of whom she read in the books her mother had lately sent for from the home of her own childhood. Even the Fairchilds were a family, not a solitary little girl; each of the French children she knew had at least one brother or sister apiece to bear them company, and all through her thoughts—her disconnected, discontented birthday thoughts—there ran a thread of uneasy wonder as to why she and her parents were living here in France instead of in far away England.

Barbara had of late become dimly aware that her mother made no effort to enter into the eager, cheerful life about her; even after many years spent entirely in France Mrs. Rebell still spoke French with a certain difficulty, and she had tacitly refused to form any tie but one of courteous acquaintance with the few French families with whom—entirely for the sake of her child, but Barbara did not know that—she had entered into social relation, using a Protestant banker as a connecting link.

The summer before her tenth birthday Barbara had overheard some fragments of a conversation held between two mothers of some of her little French friends; and the few words, so carelessly uttered, had roused a passion of emotion in the innocent eavesdropper: the feeling which most predominated being the unreasoning, pathetic surprise felt by a childish mind when brought suddenly across anything in the nature of a masked attack.

"Enfin qu'est que ce Monsieur Rebell a bien pu faire de si terrible? Pour moi il a un air sinistre, cet homme-là!"

"Peut-être a-t-il tué quelqu'un en duel! Il parait qu'en Angleterre on est devenu féroce sur ce châpitre-là."

"En tous cas, cette pauvre Madame Rebell est bien jolie, et bien à plaindre!"

The effect of these few carelessly uttered words had been to transform the listener from a happy baby into a thoughtful, over-sensitive little girl. Barbara had felt a wild revolt and indignation in the knowledge that her parents were being thus discussed—that her father should be described as "sinister," her mother pitied. Again and again she repeated to herself the words that she had heard: their meaning had stamped itself on her mind. Could her father have indeed killed a man in a duel? To Barbara the thought was at once horrible and fascinating, and she brooded over it, turning the idea this way and that: the constant companionship of her mother—for Mrs. Rebell rarely left her alone with their French servants—having unconsciously taught her a deep and almost secretive reserve.

Were her father guilty of what these French ladies suspected, then—or so thought Barbara—his subdued, melancholy air was indeed natural, as also his apparent dislike of meeting fellow countrymen and countrywomen, for he and his wife always markedly avoided any English visitors to St. Germains. Now and again Mr. Rebell would spend a long day in Paris, returning laden with a large parcel of books, the latest English novels for his wife, more serious volumes for his own perusal; but both Mrs. Rebell and Barbara had learnt to dread these expeditions, for they

brought with them sad after-days of silent depression and restlessness which left their effect on the wife long after the traveller himself had regained his usual sombre quietude of manner.

Barbara was secretly proud of the fact that her father was so extremely unlike, both in manner and in appearance, the Frenchmen who now formed his only acquaintances. This was perhaps owing in a measure to the periodical visit of his London tailor, for Richard Rebell had retained amid his misfortunes—and he was fond of telling himself that no living man had been so unfortunate—the one-time dandy's fastidiousness about his dress. The foreigners with whom he was unwillingly brought in contact sometimes speculated as to the mysterious Englishman's probable age; his hair was already grey, his pale, coldly impassive face had none of the healthy tints of youth, yet he was still upright and vigorous, and possessed to a singular degree what the French value above all things, distinction of appearance. As a matter of fact Mr. Rebell was only some twelve years older than his still girlish-looking wife; but certain terrible events seemed to have had a petrifying effect both on his mind and on his appearance, intensified by the fact that both he and Mrs. Rebell tacitly chose to live as if in a world of half-lights and neutral tints, rarely indeed alluding to the past, instinctively avoiding any topic which could cause them emotion.

Every age,—it might be said with truth every decade,—has its ideal of feminine beauty; and the man who had been the Richard Rebell of the London 'fifties would instinctively have chosen and been chosen by the loveliest girl in the

brilliant world in which they both then moved and had their being. Adela Oglander, the youngest child of a Hampshire squire, had indeed been very lovely, satisfying in every point the ideal of her day, of her race, and of her generation: slender and yet not over tall: golden-haired and blue-eyed: with delicate regular features, and rounded cheeks in which the colour soon came and went uncertainly when Richard Rebell began to haunt the Mayfair ball-rooms where he knew he would meet her and her placid, rather foolish mother. The girl's sunny beauty and artless charm of manner had delighted the social arbiters of the hour. She became, in the sense which was then possible, the fashion, and her engagement to Richard Rebell, finally arranged at the royal garden party which in those days took place each season in the old-world gardens of Chiswick House, had been to themselves as well as to their friends a happy, nine days' wonder.

Richard Rebell had been long regarded as a bachelor of bachelors, a man whose means did not permit of such a luxury as marriage to ill-dowered beauty. But his friends reminded themselves that he was in a sense heir to a fine property, now in the actual ownership of his cousin, a certain Madame Sampiero, a beautiful childless woman separated from the Corsican adventurer whom she had married in one of those moments of amazing, destructive folly which occasionally overwhelm a certain type of clever and high-spirited Englishwoman. Still, if there were some who shook their heads over the imprudence of such a marriage as that of Richard Rebell and Adela Oglander, all the world loves a lover, and every man who had obtained

the privilege of an introduction to Miss Oglander envied Rebell his good fortune, for his betrothed was as good and as blithesome as she was pretty.

Later, when recalling that enchanted time, and the five happy years which had followed, Mrs. Rebell told herself that there had then been meted out to her full measure of life's happiness: she might, alas! have added that since that time Providence had dealt out to her, as completely, full measure of pain and suffering. For what was hidden from the little circle of kindly French gossips at St. Germains had been indeed a very tragic thing.

After those first cloudless years of happy, nay triumphant, married life, the popular, much-envied man-about-town, the proud husband of one of the loveliest and most considered of younger London hostesses, had gradually become aware that he was being looked at askance and shunned by those great folk to whose liking he attached perhaps undue importance.

Then had followed a period of angry, incredulous amazement, till a well-meaning friend found courage to tell him the truth. It had come to be thought that he "sometimes" cheated at cards—more, it was whispered that he had actually been caught red-handed in the house of a friend who had spared him exposure in deference to what were then still the English laws of hospitality. His chief accuser, the man to whom Rebell, once on his track, again and again traced the fatal rumour, was, as so often happens in such cases, himself quite unimportant till he became the man of straw round whom raged one of the most painful

and protracted libel suits fought in nineteenth century England.

At first public opinion, or rather the opinion of those whom Rebell regarded as important, ranged itself on his side, and there were many who considered that he had been ill-advised to take any notice of the matter. But when it became known, and that in the pitiless, clear publicity afforded by a court of law, that the plaintiff's private means were very small, much smaller than had been suspected even by those who thought themselves his intimates, that he was noted for his high play, and, most damaging fact of all, that he had been instrumental in forming a new and very select club of which the stated object was play, and nothing but play, feeling veered sharply round. Richard Rebell admitted—and among his backers it was pointed out that such an admission made for innocence—that a not unimportant portion of his income had for some time past consisted of his card winnings. That this should be even said outraged those respectable folk who like to think that gambling and ruin are synonymous terms. Yet, had they looked but a little below the surface, where could they have found so striking a confirmation of their view as in this very case?

To cut the story short, the lawsuit ended in a virtual triumph for the man whose malicious dislike and envy of the plaintiff had had to himself so unexpected a result. Richard Rebell was awarded only nominal damages. The old adage, "The greater the truth the greater the libel," was freely quoted, and the one-time man of fashion and his wife disappeared with dramatic suddenness from the world in

which they had both been once so welcome. Apart from every other reason, Mr. and Mrs. Rebell would have been compelled, by their financial circumstances, to alter what had been their way of life. All that remained to them after the heavy costs of the lawsuit were paid was the income of Mrs. Rebell's marriage settlement, and then it was that Richard Rebell's cousin, the Madame Sampiero to whom reference has already been made, arranged to give her cousin—who was, as she eagerly reminded him, her natural heir—an allowance which practically trebled his small income. Thanks to her generosity Mr. and Mrs. Rebell and their only child, born three years after their marriage, had been able to live in considerable comfort and state in the French town finally chosen by them as their home of exile, where they had been fortunate in finding, close to the Forest and the Terrace, a house which had belonged to one of the great Napoleon's generals. The hero's descendants were in high favour at the Tuileries and had no love for quiet St. Germains: they had accordingly been overjoyed to find an English tenant for the stately villa which contained many relics of their famous forbear, and of which the furnishings, while pleasing the fine taste of Richard Rebell, seemed to them hopelessly rococo and out of date.

As time went on, Adela Rebell suffered more rather than less. She would have preferred the humblest lodging in the quietest of English hamlets to the charming villa which was still full of mementoes of the soldier who had found a glorious death at Waterloo. Sometimes she would tell herself that all might yet go well with her, and her beloved, her noble, her ill-used Richard—for so she ever thought of him—

were it not for their child. The knowledge that Barbara would never enjoy the happy and lightsome youth which had been her own portion was bitter indeed: the conviction that her daughter must be cut off from all the pleasant girlish joys and privileges of her English contemporaries brought deep pain.

Let us now return to Barbara and to the birthday which was to prove eventful. The little girl was still hesitating between her French and her English storybook when the door of the drawing-room opened, and she saw her mother's slight figure advancing languidly across the shining floor to the deep chair where she always sat. A moment later Barbara's father came into the room: he held a newspaper in his hand, and instinctively the child knew that he was both annoyed and angered.

"Adela," he said, in the formal and rather cold accent which both his wife and child had come to associate with something painful or unpleasant, "I should like you to read this,"—then he added: "Well, no, I think I will ask you to listen, while I translate it," and slowly he read, choosing his words with some care, anxious to render every shade of meaning, the following sentences, composing one of the happily-named "Echoes" printed on the front page of the *Figaro*, the then newly-established, brilliant journal which had become the most widely read paper in French society:—

"Her Majesty the Empress to-day received in private audience Madame Sampiero, *née* Rebell, one of the most sympathetic and distinguished of English great ladies, and this in spite of the fact that the name of Sampiero is full of

glorious memories to those who know and care—and what good Frenchman does not do so?—for the noble traditions of Corsican history. Mylady Sampiero"—here Barbara's father suddenly lowered the paper and, glancing at his wife, gave a queer sardonic laugh—"was presented subsequently to his Majesty the Emperor by the noted English statesman, Mylord Bosworth, who, it will be remembered, was on terms of intimacy with our Sovereign when he, as Prince Louis Napoleon, was living a life of exile in London. Indeed, it was Mylord who first gratified the London world with the news that the prisoner of Ham had escaped."

There was a slight pause: Mr. Rebell laid the *Figaro* down on a gilt-rimmed table which stood close to his wife's chair.

"Well?" he said, "what do you think of that? You'll see it dished up, and who can wonder at it, in next week's *Vanity Fair*!"

The child, sitting out on the balcony, saw her mother's pale face become gradually suffused with colour, and she heard the almost whispered words, "Yes, most unfortunate! But, my dear, how could poor Bar have foreseen such a thing?"

"Of course Bar did not foresee this, but equally of course Bosworth must have supplied the *Figaro* with the main facts—how else could this absurdly worded note have been written?" He added slowly, "This is obviously Bosworth's idea of a rebuff to the Embassy—Ah well! I didn't mean to tell you, but I had it from Daman yesterday that Barbara, immediately on her arrival in Paris, had been sent word that she must not expect, this time, to be received at the Embassy."

As he spoke Richard Rebell walked up and down the room with quick, rather mincing steps: again he came and stood before his wife: "Our name dragged in!" he exclaimed, "apropos of nothing!" a note of sharp chagrin and disgust piercing in his quiet voice. "And this ridiculous, this farcical reference to that adventurer, if indeed Sampiero is the man's real name, of which I always had my doubts!"

The colour faded from Mrs. Rebell's cheek; she put her hand with an instinctive movement to her side: "Richard," she said, her voice faltering, in spite of herself, "the letter I received to-day was from Barbara Sampiero. She is staying, as you know, at Meurice's, and—and—pray do not be angry, my love, but she proposes to come out and see us here, to-day!"

Her husband made no answer. He stood speechlessly looking down at her, and when the silence became intolerable Mrs. Rebell again spoke, but in a firmer, less apologetic tone. "And oh! Richard, I shall be so glad to see her—I can never never forget how good she was to me years ago—how nobly generous she has been to us all, since that time."

Richard Rebell turned abruptly away. He walked to the open window, and little Barbara, glancing up, noticed with surprise that her father looked very hot, that even his forehead had reddened. Standing there, staring out with unseeing eyes at the wonderful view unrolled below, he closed and opened his right hand with a nervous gesture, as he at last answered, "Of course, I also shall be glad to see her. Though, mind you, Adela, I think that during all these long years she might have found time to come before."

Turning round, he added, "Surely you are not afraid that I shall insult my kinswoman in what is, after all, my own house?" and then, as his wife made no answer, he said with sudden suspicion, "Of course, she is coming alone? She would not have dared to propose anything else?"

Mrs. Rebell rose from her chair. She came and stood by her husband, and for the first time became aware of her little daughter's presence on the balcony. She had, however, said too much to retreat, and perhaps she felt that the child, sitting out there, would make her difficult task easier.

"No, Richard, unfortunately she does not propose to come alone. It seems that Lord Bosworth has been given the use of one of the Imperial carriages, and he proposes to drive her here, the whole way from Paris. He is staying, it appears, at the Bristol."

And then, turning away, she burst into sudden stormy tears, covering her face with her hands, swaying from head to foot with suppressed sobs.

Barbara watched the scene with bewildered surprise and terror. It is good when a child's ideal of married life is founded on that of her own father and mother. Richard Rebell was often impatient and irritable, but the little girl had never seen the shadow of anything resembling a dissension between her parents. What then did this mean, what did her mother's tears portend? But already Mrs. Rebell was making a determined effort to command herself. Her husband put his arm, not untenderly, round her shoulder, and, with his face set in stern lines, led her back to her seat. Then Barbara suddenly darted into the room, and flung herself on her mother, putting her slender arms

round that dear mother's neck, and so making, all unconsciously, a welcome diversion. Mrs. Rebell even laughed a little. "Dear child—my little Barbara—you didn't know that grown-up people ever cried!"

But Barbara was already retreating to the balcony, and she heard her father say in a low voice, as if for the first time he realised that his words might be overheard: "I am sure you do not seriously contemplate our receiving Bar and—and Bosworth, together? The idea is monstrous! Whatever has come and gone, however degraded I may have become among my fellows, I still have the right to protect my wife from insult, and to expect her to obey me in such a matter as this."

But Mrs. Rebell clasped her hands together and looked up in the troubled face of the man opposite her with a look at once appealing and unsubmissive. "Richard!" she cried, "oh Richard! I always *do* obey you. When have you ever known me go against your wish, or even desire to do so?"

He shook his head impatiently, and she added urgently, "But in this one matter—oh, my dear love—pray try and look at it from my point of view! It is Barbara I wish to receive—Barbara who is of consequence to us. I know well all you would say," the speaker gave a sudden imperceptible look towards the open window, "but you would not put so cruel an affront on that noble, generous creature! Ah, yes, Richard, she *is* noble, she *is* generous."

"Her generosity shall cease to-morrow—nay, to-day," he said grimly.

"Do not say so!" she cried, starting up; and her little daughter, gazing fascinated, thought she had never till to-

day seen her mother look really alive, alive as other women are. Mrs. Rebell had pushed her fair hair off her forehead, and her cheeks were red, her blue eyes bright, with excitement.

"Ah no, Richard, I was not thinking of *that*—not of such generosity as can be made to cease to-morrow or to-day; but of Barbara's long goodness to us both, nay, if you like to put it so, of her goodness to me, who am in no way related to her! Could any sister have been kinder than she has been? Were any of my own sisters as kind? True, we did not choose to avail ourselves of her hospitality."

"I think that now, even you, Adela, must see that I was right in that matter." Richard Rebell spoke rather drily.

"I never questioned it," she said, sharply; "you know, Richard, I never questioned your decision!"

There was a pause. The memories of both husband and wife were busy with the past, with an offer which had been made to them by Richard Rebell's kinswoman, the offer of a home in England, and of a chance, or so the wife had thought at the time, of ultimate rehabilitation for one whom many even then thought completely innocent of the charge brought against him.

Adela Rebell was a woman of high honesty, and so, "That is not quite true," she said reluctantly, "I *did* question your decision in my heart, and I see now that you were right. And yet perhaps, my dear, if we had been there——?"

Richard Rebell got up. He went and deliberately closed the window, making a temporary prisoner of the little girl: then he came back, and answered, very composedly, the meaning of the half-question which his wife's shrinking

delicacy had prevented her putting into words. "Our being there, Adela, would not have made the slightest difference," he gave her a peculiar, not unkindly look, "for as a matter of fact I was then aware of what you apparently only began to suspect long after; and I think that you will admit that the state of things would have made our position at Chancton intolerable. We should very naturally have been expected to shut our eyes—to pander——"

"Yes—yes indeed!" his wife shrank back. "But you never told me this before——Why did you not tell me at the time?"

"My dear," he answered, very quietly, "that is not the sort of thing a man cares to tell, even his wife, when the heroine of the tale is his own cousin. And Barbara, as you have reminded me to-day, had behaved, and was behaving, very generously to us both."

"But if—if you felt like that, why——"

Mrs. Rebell looked up imploringly; she knew what this conversation meant in pain and retrospective anguish to them both. But again Richard Rebell answered, very patiently, his wife's unspoken question, "Well, I admit that I am perhaps illogical. But what happened two years ago, I mean the birth of Barbara's child—has made a difference to my feeling. I don't think"—he spoke questioningly as if to himself, "I hope to God I don't feel as I do owing to any ignoble disappointment?"

"No, no, indeed not!" There was an accent of eager protest in Adela Rebell's voice: "Besides, she wrote and said—she has said again and again—that it will make no difference."

"In any case," he spoke rather coldly, "Barbara Sampiero is certain to outlive me, and I do not think anything would make her unjust to our girl. But to return to what I was saying, and then, if you do not mind, Adela, we will not refer to the subject again——The birth of the child, I say, has altered my feeling, much as it seems to have done, from what I gather from Daman, that of the rest of the world."

"I always so disliked Mr. Daman," his wife said irrelevantly.

"No doubt, no doubt—I grant you that he's not a very nice fellow, but he's always been fond of her, and after all he has always stuck to us. There's no doubt as to what he says being the truth——"

"But Richard—is not that very unfair?" Mrs. Rebell spoke with a fire that surprised herself: "if, as you tell me now, you always knew the truth concerning Bar and Lord Bosworth, should what happened two years ago make such a difference?"

"Till two years ago,"—he spoke as if he had not heard her words,—"Barbara held her own completely; so much is quite clear, and that, mind you, with all the world, even including the strait-laced folk about Chancton. I suppose people were sorry for her—for them both, if it comes to that——Besides, it was nobody's business but their own. Now——" he hesitated: "Daman tells me that she's absolutely solitary, I mean of course as regards the women." He added musingly, as if to himself, "She's acted with extraordinary, with criminal folly over this matter."

"Then she is being treated as we should have been treated,—indeed as we were, by most people, during the

short time we stayed in England eight years ago?"

"I do not think," Mr. Rebell spoke very coldly, "that your comparison, Adela, holds good. But now, to-day, the point is this: am I to be compelled to receive, and indeed to countenance, Barbara Sampiero and her lover? and further, am I to allow my wife to do so? Do you suppose"—he spoke with a sudden fierceness,—"that either Barbara or Bosworth would have ever thought of doing what you tell me they have actually written and proposed doing, to-day, had our own circumstances been different? Barbara may be—nay she is, as you very properly point out—a noble and generous creature, but in this matter, my dear Adela, she's behaving ungenerously; she's exacting a price, and a heavy price, for her past kindness. But it is one which after to-day I shall take care she shall not be in a position to exact.

"Yes," he went on slowly, "we shall of course have to give up this house," his eyes glanced with a certain affection round the room which had always pleased his taste. "Our requirements," he concluded, "have become very simple. We might travel, and show our child something of the world."

A light leapt into his wife's eyes; oh! what joy it would be to leave St. Germains, to become for a while nomadic, but with a sigh she returned to the present. "And to-day, what is to happen to-day, Richard? There is no time to stop them—they will be here in two or three hours."

Mr. Rebell remained silent for some moments, and then: "Not even to please you," he said, "can I bring myself to receive them. But I admit the force of what you said just now. Therefore, if you care to do so, stay—stay and make

what excuse for my absence seems good to you. Bosworth will know the reason well enough, unless he's more lost to a sense of decency than I take him to be. But Bar—poor dear Bar," a note of unwilling tenderness crept into his cold voice, "will doubtless believe you if you tell her, what indeed is true enough, that I have an important engagement to-day with Daman, and that, if she cares to see me, I will come and see her before she leaves Paris——"

The speaker went to the window and opened it. He bent down and touched Barbara's forehead with his dry lips. "I trust," he said in his thin voice, "that you will have a pleasant birthday. I will bring you back a box of chocolates from Marquis'," and then, without waiting to hear the child's murmured thanks, he turned on his heel and was gone. Barbara did not see her father again till the next morning.

It was early afternoon, and the fair-haired Englishwoman and her little dark, eager-eyed daughter were sitting out on the rose-wreathed balcony of the Villa d'Arcole. Mrs. Rebell was very silent. She was longing for, and yet dreading, the coming meeting with one she had not seen since they had parted, with tears, at Dover, eight long years before. Her restlessness affected the child, the more so that Barbara knew that her marraine, that is to say in English, her godmother, the source of many beautiful gifts, was at last coming to see them, and in her short life the rare coming of a visitor had always been an event.

Below the balcony, across the tiny formal garden now bright with flowers, the broad sanded roadway stretching between the Villa d'Arcole and the high cool screen formed

by the forest trees, was flecked with gay groups of children and their be-ribboned nurses. St. Germains was beginning to awake from its noonday torpor, and leisurely walkers, elegant women whose crinolines produced a curious giant blossom-like effect, elderly bourgeois dressed in rather fantastic summer garb, officers in brilliant uniforms—for in those days Imperial France was a land of brilliancy and of uniforms—were already making their way to the Terrace, ever the centre of the town's life and gossip.

Suddenly there came on Barbara's listening ears a sound of wheels, of sharply ringing hoofs, of musical jingling of harness bells. Several of the strollers below stayed their footsteps, and a moment later Mrs. Rebell became aware that before the iron-wrought gilt gates of the villa there had drawn up the prettiest and most fantastic of equipages, while to the child's eager eyes it seemed as if Cinderella's fairy chariot stood below!

Had Richard Rebell been standing by his wife, he would doubtless have seen something slightly absurd, and in any case undignified, in the sight presented by the low, pale blue victoria, drawn by four white horses ridden by postillions, two of whom now stood, impassive as statues, each at one of the leaders' heads. But to Richard Rebell's little daughter the pretty sight brought with it nothing but pure delight; and for a few moments she was scarcely aware of the two figures who sat back on the white leather cushions. And yet one of these figures, that of the woman, was quite as worthy of attention as the equipage which served to frame her peculiar and striking beauty, and so evidently thought the small crowd which had quickly

gathered to gaze at what had been at once recognised as a carriage from the Imperial stables.

Dowered, perhaps to her own misfortune, with a keen dramatic instinct, and a rather riotous love of colour, Barbara Sampiero had chosen to dress, as it were, for the part. Her costume, a deep purple muslin gown, flounced, as was the fashion that spring, from hem to waist, her cross-over puffed bodice, and short-frilled sleeves, the broad Leghorn hat draped with a scarf of old lace fastened down with amethyst bees, and the pale blue parasol matching exactly in tint the colour of the carriage in which she was sitting, recalled a splendid tropical flower.

A certain type of feminine beauty has about it a luminous quality; such was that of Barbara Sampiero, now in full and glowing perfection: some of its radiance due to the fact that as yet Time—she was not far from forty—had spared her any trace of his swift passage. The involuntary homage of those about her proved that she was still as attractive as she had been as a younger woman; her beauty had become to her an all-important asset, and she guarded and tended it most jealously.

Her companion was also, though in a very different way, well worthy of attention. Before stepping out of the carriage he stood up for a moment, and, as he looked about him with amused and leisurely curiosity, the spectators at once recognised in him a typical Englishman of the ruling class. Every detail of his dress, the very cut of his grizzled hair and carefully trimmed whiskers, aroused the envy of those Frenchmen among the crowd who judged themselves to be of much his own age. He had not retained, as had done his

contemporary and one-time friend, Richard Rebell, the figure of his youth, but he was still a fine, vigorous-looking man, with a bearing full of dignity and ease.

As his eyes quickly noted the unchanged aspect of the place where he found himself, he reminded himself, with some quickening of his pulses, that no Englishman living had a right to feel in closer touch with the romance of this French town. In the great grim castle—so unlike the usual smiling château—which rose to the right behind the Villa d'Arcole, his own Stuart forbears had spent their dignified exile. More, he himself had deliberately chosen to associate the most romantic and enchanting episode of a life which had not been lacking in enchanting and romantic episodes, with this same place, with St. Germains. He and Madame Sampiero had good reason to gaze as they were both doing at that famous hostelry, the Pavillon Henri IV., of which they could see, embowered in trees, the picturesque buildings overhanging the precipitous slopes.

Julian Fitzjames Berwick, Lord Bosworth of Leicester, had always made it his business to extract the utmost out of life. He had early promised himself that, whoever else were debarred from looking over the hedge, he would belong to the fortunate few who are privileged to walk through the gate. So far he had been wonderfully successful in attaining the various goals he had set himself to attain. This had been true even of his public life, for he had known how to limit his ambitions to what was easily possible, never taking undue risks, and ever keeping himself free from any connection with forlorn hopes. This perhaps was why this fortunate man was one of the very few statesmen in whom his fellow

countrymen felt a comfortable confidence. All parties were apt to express regret when he was out of office, and though he was no longer in any sense a young man, it was believed that he had a future or several futures before him.

Many of Lord Bosworth's contemporaries and friends would have shrunk from taking part in such an expedition as that of to-day, but the intelligent epicurean had so arranged every detail of this visit to Richard Rebell and his wife, that it must bring, at any rate to himself, more pleasure than annoyance. Still, he was not sorry to stand for a moment enjoying the pretty, bright scene, the wonderful view, and his own and his beautiful companion's sentimental memories, before going in to face, as he fully believed he was about to do, the man who was at once Barbara Sampiero's unfortunate kinsman and his own former intimate.

Meanwhile Mrs. Rebell had made her way swiftly down the house: hurriedly she herself opened the front door, waving back the French servant: then, when she saw the little crowd gathered round the gate, she retreated nervously, leaving her two guests to make their way alone up the geranium-bordered path. But once they had passed through into the cool dim hall, once the light and brightness were shut out, then with a cry of welcome Adela Rebell put her arms round the other woman's neck, and with a certain shy cordiality gave her hand to the man whose coming to-day had caused Richard Rebell to be absent from this meeting, and this although, Mrs. Rebell eagerly reminded herself, Lord Bosworth also had been true and kind during that bitter time eight years ago.

At last all four, for little Barbara was clinging to her mother's skirts, made their way up the narrow turning staircase, and so into the long, sparsely furnished drawing-room, full of grateful quiet and coolness to the two who had just enjoyed a hot if a triumphal drive from Paris.

At once Madame Sampiero sat down and drew the child to her knee: "And so," she said, in a deep melodious voice, "this is little Barbara Rebell? my god-daughter and namesake! For do you know, my child, that I also am a Barbara Rebell? One always keeps, it seems, a right to one's name, and lately—yes really, Adela, I have sometimes thought of going back to mine!" Then, with a quick change of voice, her eyes sweeping the room and the broad balcony, "But where is Richard?" she asked. "Surely you received my letter? You knew that I was coming, to-day?"

But she accepted with great good humour Mrs. Rebell's faltered explanation, perhaps secretly relieved that there need be no meeting with the cousin who owed her so much, and who yet, she had reason to believe, judged with rather pitiless severity the way she had chosen to fashion her life.

Meanwhile, Lord Bosworth and little Barbara had gone out on the balcony, and there, with the tact for which he had long been famed, and which had contributed not a little to his successes when Foreign Minister, he soon made friends with the shy, reserved child.

But Madame Sampiero took no advantage of the *tête-à-tête* so thoughtfully arranged by her friend; instead, but looking intently the while into Adela Rebell's sensitive face, she dwelt wholly on the immediate present; telling of her stay in Paris, the first for many years; of her visit to St.

Cloud—in a few satirical sentences she described to her silent listener the interview with the Empress Eugénie amid the almost theatrical splendour of the summer palace. But the gay voice altered in quality as she asked the quick question, "I suppose Richard reads the *Figaro*? Did he tell you of that reference to—to my visit to St. Cloud?" As her companion bent her head, she added: "It has annoyed us so very much! I am sorry that Richard saw it—I cannot imagine how they became aware of my maiden name, or why they brought in that reference to Corsica!"

Mrs. Rebell, the kindest, least critical of women, yet felt a certain doubt as to whether in this matter her cousin was speaking the truth, but Madame Sampiero had already dismissed the subject with an impatient sigh. She rose from her chair, and walked to and fro, examining with apparent interest the fine pieces of First Empire furniture at that time so completely out of fashion as to appear curiosities. Then she said suddenly, "Surely we might go out of doors. May little Barbara take Julian to the church where James II. is buried? He is anxious to see the inscription the Queen has had placed there. Meanwhile you and I might wait for them on the Terrace; I seem to have so much to tell you, and you know we cannot stay much more than an hour," and, as she noted remorsefully Mrs. Rebell's flush of keen disappointment, she added, "Did I not tell you in my letter that Julian was anxious to see the little place near here belonging to James Berwick, I mean the hunting lodge bought years ago by Julian's brother? However, there may be no time for that, as we are going on to St. Cloud, and also—— But I will ask you about that later."

Once out of doors, leaning over the parapet of the Terrace, gazing down on the wide plain below, and following abstractedly the ribbon-like windings of the river, Madame Sampiero at last touched on more intimate matters, on that which had been in both her own and her companion's minds ever since Mrs. Rebell had drawn her, with such eager hands, into the hall of the villa.

"If Richard had been here," she said, "I could not have spoken to you of my child—of my darling Julia. And though I'm sorry not to see him, I'm glad to have this opportunity of telling you, Adela, that I regret nothing, and that I do not feel that I have any reason to be ashamed." As the other looked at her with deeply troubled eyes, she continued: "Of course I know you think I have acted very wrongly. But in these matters every woman must judge for her own self. After all, that man over there,"—she waved her hand vaguely as if indicating some far distant spot, and Mrs. Rebell, slight though was her sense of humour, felt a flash of melancholy amusement as she realised that the place so indicated meant the Corsican village where Napoleone Sampiero was leading a most agreeable life on the income which he wrested only too easily from his English wife, —"That man, I say, has no claim on me! If there came any change in the French divorce laws he could easily be brought to do what I wish——Oh Adela, if you only knew what a difference my child has made to me,—and in every way!"

For a few moments there was silence between them. Adela Rebell opened her lips—but no words would come, and so at last, timidly and tenderly she laid her hand on the