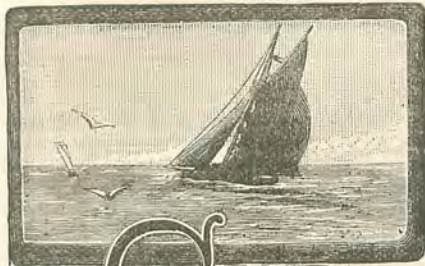


## "MADAME."



SOME time in the latter part of the year 1645, a tall meanly-dressed woman might have been seen tramping along the Kentish roads towards Dover. A rough-looking man was with her, and she carried a ragged little child in her arms, whom she called Peter. So poverty-stricken and disreputable were they in appearance, that the captain of the packet boat from Dover to Calais looked suspiciously at them when they asked for passage, and their fellow-travellers gave them a wide berth. Had the captain followed them on their arrival at the French coast, and seen the change they soon effected in their dress and manner, he would probably have wished he had been more suspicious, and had refused to carry them over; for the woman was Lady Morton, and the little Peter was Henrietta Anne, the youngest daughter of Charles I., and the future wife of Monsieur, the brother of Louis XIV.

The English Queen, Henrietta Maria, had fled to France some time before this, when her little daughter was only a few weeks old, and the baby had been left in the care of Lady Morton. Once only had her father seen her for a few minutes, and it seemed as though the child would grow up without knowing either of her parents; for after the battle of Naseby the Parliament began to show an interest in the royal children. But Lady Morton determined never to give up her charge except to her mother; and so she disguised herself as a beggar-woman, and escaped to France. But even in France all hardships were not over, for there was civil war there as well as in England, and the royal family and its English guests were at one time reduced to great straits. One cold January day, when Charles I. was waiting his trial in England, Cardinal de Retz visited Henrietta Maria at the Louvre, and found her without money, fire, or bread, and the little princess in bed to keep her warm. But these troubles were temporary; and the French Court treated its guests generously, though it was still a life of exile. Henrietta Maria was constantly engaged in plots and intrigue to regain her son's inheritance for him, and spent nearly all her money in assisting the English Royalists. She always kept her little daughter with her; and the child had many a lesson in intrigue which she turned to good account in later days. She was bright and intelligent, skilled in accomplishments, and a great favourite with her brothers. Her mother, who had been forced

to allow all her other children to be brought up as Protestants, was determined that this, her youngest child, should be a Roman Catholic like herself, and she had her carefully instructed in religion. Père Cyprian Gamache relates how the queen herself used to bring the little girl to the Louvre chapel, and would listen while he catechised her with the other children. The little princess was also taught to proselytise, and her mother suggested she should try to convert Lady Morton.

This is the account she gives of her method. "Madam, I embrace my *gouvernante*; I hug her; I kiss her; I say to her, 'Madam Morton, be converted, be a Catholic; you must be a Catholic to be saved. Father Cyprian tells me so very often; you have heard him as well as I. Be a Catholic, good lady, and I will love you dearly.'"

The hugs and kisses did not avail much, for Lady Morton died a good Protestant, much to Father Cyprian's disgust.

But it was not to be all religion for the princess; her mother looked forward to a brilliant future for her, and she began to arrange for it betimes. The queen-mother of France had her two sons, and as she was on very friendly terms with her English sister-in-law, it was natural the two mothers should do a little matchmaking together. The young king, Louis XIV., was showing rather too much attention to one of the Cardinal Mazarin's pretty nieces, Madame de Mercœur; so his mother arranged a little ball at which the English princess should be present, and Louis was to lead the dance with her. But all did not go well. The king preferred his usual partner, Madame de Mercœur; he did not like "little girls." The English queen was apologetic, fearful of giving offence; her daughter "did not dance much; had hurt her foot," and so on; but the queen-mother insisted, and so the little eleven-year-old Henrietta had her dance, but did not enjoy it much, for the king was sulky, and did not care to hide it from "a little girl."

For a few years longer Henrietta Anne lived a quiet retired life, sometimes in Paris, sometimes at St. Germain, or in retreat in a convent. Perhaps it was at this time that she acquired her knowledge of history, which, Bossuet says, she knew so well; for her after life does not seem to have afforded much opportunity for so serious a study. But her mother was anxious she should marry, and thought no rank too high for her. But still Louis did not find her to his taste. "She is not formed enough;" "so thin;" and her family still in exile. One or two other matches were spoken of, but nothing came of them, as the gentlemen drew back from such a dubious alliance. But her brother's restoration to the English throne made a great change in her position. Monsieur the Duke of Orleans, and only brother of Louis, pressed his suit with great assiduity, and the marriage took place in the spring of 1661. Madame, as she was henceforth called, was then about seventeen years of age, and is described by Madame de Motteville as having a very delicate and fair complexion, in which the rose and jessamine mingled. Her eyes were small but brilliant, her nose "not bad," her lips scarlet, and her teeth as white as one could wish. Her face was rather too long and very thin, but her figure was good, though she was slightly lame.

Madame's life was now all gaiety and joyousness; she had missed being queen of France but she could at least be queen of hearts. There was one heart, however, in which she did not reign long; her husband loved her fifteen days, and then—no more. He was wrapped up in himself, and had very little

capacity for business; and his young wife proved much too lively and brilliant for him. He was vain, and liked to play a first part; and he was jealous of her beauty, because it was greater than his; and of the admiration she attracted, because it threw him into the shade. The king's antipathy to Madame was soon overcome, and she soon became such a favourite that no party of pleasure was complete without her. The long evening walks of the king and Madame attracted the notice of more than Monsieur; and the queen-mother, who had hoped to find a docile little daughter-in-law in the English princess, was scandalised, and counselled more prudence; the queen was distressed, and even Henrietta Maria was implored to use her influence. The little storm soon blew over. Madame and the king laughed, and continued to enjoy themselves, and the royal attention to the pretty Mlle. de Lavallière soon gave the Court a new subject of gossip. It was a Court of splendid pleasures and intrigues, and all the leaders were intent on enjoyment, and pursued it with all the ardour of youth and health. Madame must have her intrigue also, and we hear of escapades and rendezvous that lessen our wonder at the jealousy of Monsieur. There was a certain Comte de Guiche, who was banished from Court no less than three times on her account, though she avers it was only indiscretion—nothing more. The king paid little attention, but Monsieur could not be expected to keep silence at rumours of stolen interviews after supper, exchange of *billet doux*, and even a hint at a guest at Madame's receptions who was a woman in dress only. So the Count departed on a military expedition.

But Madame aspired to be something more than a mere Court butterfly—to play a part in politics was her ambition; and Louis soon found how helpful she could be in his negotiations with England. The Triple Alliance between England, Holland, and Sweden, was not acceptable to him, and he determined, that if he could not break it, he would at any rate neutralise its effect. He knew that Charles had an old grudge against the Dutch for their inhospitality towards him when in exile; he also knew that Charles was always in pecuniary difficulties; so he hoped that old prejudices, and the prospect of ready money, would effect his wishes. Charles was equally anxious for an alliance so favourable to himself; but neither king cared to come to the point, and state terms; and it was here that Madame was of use. Much political knowledge she had not, nor yet much political insight; her standpoint was purely personal. It was her interest in the contracting parties, her ready sympathy and receptivity, joined to her tact and unflinching good-humour, that made her such a valuable assistant. Each king knew the affection the other had for her, and worked on that to obtain better terms, and could also plead "for her sake" as a graceful mode of retreat from untenable demands.

Charles writes that he was well disposed to treat with France "for her sake," and that whatever be his terms, his love and affection for her will always be the same; and Louis avers that his affection for her leads him to grant much, and he sends a special letter of directions to his ambassador to smooth all difficulties when she visited England. Madame loved her brother, and would willingly have given him all he wanted; she also loved, and feared a little, her brother-in-law, and would do as much for him; and she was pleased and gratified to be a mediator between them. She also possessed the invaluable power of keeping a secret, so that not even her husband could find out why she was so

often in conference with the king, and why she received so many despatches.

She served both sides impartially, and with surprising success. Now she is indignant for Louis at Charles's exorbitant demands; and then, when those demands are reduced to less than half, she intercedes for just one million more for her impecunious brother. The religious clause was probably more important to her than to either of the contracting parties; for she was devout, and had not forgotten the early teaching of Père Gamache. But Louis cared more about his Dutch war than to see his neighbour of England a good son of the Church; and Charles was not unwilling to put off any declaration of Catholicism to a more convenient season.

But the matter dragged on slowly, and Charles held back from signing; so it was proposed that Madame should visit England, and exert a little personal influence. Then a domestic difficulty arose. Monsieur, poor fellow! was sore at heart because of this new rôle his wife had adopted; and he also would fain have meddled in imperial politics; but Louis had no

opinion of his capacity for business, and so he had to be content with knowing that there was something to know, and that he was not to know it. When he was asked for permission for Madame to go to England, he felt his turn had come, and he stoutly refused his consent unless he went also. But Charles did not care much about his brother-in-law, and would not invite him, so two or three months were spent in negotiations. At last a grudging consent was given that Madame should go to Dover, but on no account was she to go to London, not even to Canterbury, and three days was to be the limit of her stay. The three days were lengthened to twelve; but Monsieur was inexorable about the place, so the treaty was signed at Dover. A little difficulty arose at the last, for Charles would sign as "King of France;" but Louis was so sure of the substance that he could afford to grant his rival the shadow. So at length all was concluded, and Madame returned gleefully to France. Monsieur was still sulky, and would not go to meet her, neither would he let her join the Court, but carried her off to St.

Cloud, whither Mademoiselle de Montpensier, "the Mademoiselle" of Madame de Sévigné, saw her depart with tears in her eyes.

A fortnight later, on the morning of June 30, 1670, all was confusion and dismay at Court, for Madame had died in great agony after a few hours' illness. There were whispers of poison and foul play, countenanced by some words of the princess herself; but the doctors said cholera morbus. The king was grieved beyond his wont, for he had not only lost a pleasant, gay companion, but a willing assistant; and he feared complications in English affairs. Even Monsieur seemed overwhelmed, though his love had been so short, his jealousy and distrust so enduring, till he suddenly remembered his wife's political papers, and went hastily to read them before they should be seized by the officers of state.

Poor Madame! she was wept and mourned a few days, a grand funeral oration was pronounced by Bossuet, a place was empty, a bright presence was missed for a little while, and then a new bride was found for Monsieur, and the Court danced on as merrily as before.

## MILDRED'S MISSION.

By the Author of "The Shepherd's Fairy," etc.

### PART II.

"Grow old along with me:  
The best is yet to be:  
The last of life for which the first was made."  
—R. Browning.



FIVE years is a long time to look forward to, but a short time to look back on; and the five years which elapsed from the day Mildred renounced her own happiness for her father's sake, seemed to have flown as she looked back upon them on her twenty-fifth birthday.

They had not been very eventful years to Mildred; they had been spent mainly in teaching the little ones, making and mending their clothes, looking after the house, and trying to make sixpence go as far as a shilling; for Dr. Duncan was still a struggling physician.

The principal event had been the marriage of Jack Stevens about a year after Mildred refused him; then the rector of the parish, with whom they were on intimate terms, and who was Mildred's ideal of an almost perfect man, married, and his wife became her most intimate friend.

Yet they had been very happy years; and if Mildred was sometimes inclined to envy her friend Mrs. Gilbert, she in her turn envied Mildred as she saw the children hang round her, and lean their soft cheeks against Mildred's blooming face, which looked as young and fresh as on the day she stood watching the ships and the gulls; for Mrs. Gilbert at the end of the five years had no children.

"Oh, Mildred, how I envy you!" exclaimed Mrs. Gilbert one day, as little Dorcas, now

seven years old, came in and gave her sister a great hug before she went out for a walk.

"I am to be envied, I think. When I am inclined to be depressed I often think what a true prophetess Mrs. Browning was when she said, 'A child-kiss set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad; thus thy love shall chant itself its own beatitudes.' Children are a great joy; but don't envy me. I have no husband; you have no children. We can't have everything in this world, can we?"

So said Mildred; but at the end of another five years she was forced to confess happiness was not so equally distributed, for her friend Mrs. Gilbert now had three children, while Mildred's boys were at school, and only came home for the holidays, and Dorcas was grown almost too big a girl to be petted.

Dr. Duncan was better off now; they had moved into a larger house; and yet, perhaps, because she had not so much to do, Mildred was not any happier than in the old days when they were poorer. This second five years had brought more changes. Jack was engaged to be married, and Harry, the second boy, was already married; and perhaps, as Mildred felt her own youth was going, it was natural she sometimes felt lonely when Dorcas was in bed and her father called out to some patient.

But his cheery, "Where is Mildred?"—always his first question when he entered the house—dispelled all gloomy thoughts; and the knowledge that she made him happy was in itself happiness.

Uneventful lives pass the quickest, and age one the least; and when, one June day fifteen years after Mildred saw Mr. Gilbert with his bride-elect on his arm pass along the street, she again saw him pass alone, and with a deep hatband round his hat, she could scarcely believe it was fifteen years since that former day in June. There was not a grey hair in her fair locks yet; but she was thirty-five for all that; her youth was gone, though time had not left any lines on her face.

"How sad he looks," thought Mildred, looking after Mr. Gilbert, who had been a widower for nearly two years now, his wife having died, and left him with four little children.

"Mildred, my dear, I want you," exclaimed Dr. Duncan, opening the door and interrupting Mildred's reverie.

Mildred started up and followed her father into his consulting-room. He was standing with his back to the fire when she went in, and he seemed nervous.

"Shut the door, my dear; shut the door. I—I have something to tell you."

"Yes, father; what is it?" asked Mildred. "I—I—in short, I think it is right you should know——" Here Dr. Duncan paused again.

"Is it bad news, father?" said Mildred, feeling alarmed.

"No, no, my dear; rather good news. The fact is, I am thinking of marrying."

If he had pointed a pistol at her and said he was thinking of shooting her, Mildred would not have been more taken aback. That Dorcas would some day marry and leave her Mildred had schooled herself to bear; but the very idea of her father marrying again had never entered her head; she was dumfounded; she could not speak.

She sank on to the nearest chair; the colour fled from her cheeks; she tried in vain to utter a word, to ask who the lady was, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

Fortunately, perhaps, a summons for Dr. Duncan interrupted them.

"I'll come directly. Dear, dear, I can hardly call my time my own! We never have long together, Mildred my darling. I must tell you all about it another time. Good-bye—I am off," and the doctor rushed off with a twinkle in his eye which escaped Mildred's notice.

When he was gone she got up and went upstairs to her own room as one in a dream: no greater blow, except the death of one near and dear to her, could have fallen on her. How should she bear to be ousted from her place at her age? How could she submit to a step-mother? How could she bear to see some stranger share all her father's confidence?

She never knew till now how much he was to her, how much she had to lose—she seldom do know the value of what we have; it is the lost we know the worth of.

She sat down on her bed stunned, unable to realise it at first; then came a reaction, and she decided promptly there was only one possible course open to her; she must leave home for her father's sake as much as for her