

LIFE'S LESSON

By GRACE PEARL MACOMBER

LIFE is a lesson. Count all joy, all pain,  
 No more than part of what the soul must learn  
 In this great school, the world. Though you  
 should yearn  
 For one brief, blessed pause; though you would  
 fain  
 Forego the tales of war and bloodshed vain,  
 Remember—you were born to teach! Dis-  
 cern  
 Strange secrets with unshrinking eye, nor  
 spurn  
 One principle which makes the lesson plain;  
 One lesson, so your training be complete.  
 Herein lies life's deep truth, then hold it  
 fast;  
 Failure and loss are better than they seem;  
 No heart so brave as that which bears defeat!  
 He acts the hero's part who wins at last  
 In life-long battle with his vanquished dream.

UNKNOWN WIVES  
 OF  
 WELL-KNOWN MEN

\* XVIII.—MADAME VICTORIEN SARDOU

By LUCY H. HOOPER



THE family of the celebrated dramatist, Victorien Sardou, the author of "Theodora," "Fedora," "La Tosca," and other plays all more or less famous and successful, is a singularly interesting one. His aged father still survives, and though the elder Sardou has recently celebrated his ninetieth birthday he preserves his faculties unimpaired, and is never so happy as when he can enjoy the society of the children of his world-renowned son, and of that gentleman and his wife as



MADAME SARDOU

well. The elder M. Sardou lives at the town of Cannes, near Cannes, in one of the most beautiful sites of the Riviera, and he is the owner of the house in which the great tragic actress, Rachel, breathed her last, in 1858, after a long illness from which she had vainly sought relief in that delicious climate.

The marriage of M. Victorien Sardou was as charming a love episode as may be found in any of his plays. He was approaching middle age, and was considered as being wholly absorbed in his literary labors to the exclusion of any other passion, when the Parisian world was amazed by the announcement of his engagement to M'lle Anne Soulié, daughter of M. Eudore Soulié, chief director of the galleries and the palace of Versailles, and also of the royal library and the national archives contained therein. M. Soulié became famous in the literary circles of France by his discovery, in the last-named department, of a mass of documents relating to Moliere, which had remained unknown up to that moment, and which included the inventory of his possessions drawn up after his death. The erudite librarian was thoroughly versed moreover on every topic connected with Versailles and the age of Louis XIV. He published several works, comprising among others the memoirs of Herard, the physician of Henri IV, and of the Duke de Luynes and the Marquis de Dan-

geau as well. He was one of the intimate friends of the Princess Mathilde, the first cousin of Napoleon III, and was a frequent guest at the brilliant soirees which that lady was accustomed to give during the palmy days of the Second Empire, and at which figured all the literary and artistic celebrities of the day. But the home of M. Soulié was at Versailles. There, in the old palace city, there grew up around him three charming daughters and two sons, and his house was noted for its simple but delightful hospitality.

The favorite residence of M. Victorien Sardou has always been his country seat at Morly, distant one hour by rail from Paris and within easy reach of Versailles. He was planning a grand historical drama, the scene of which was to be laid in the early years of the reign of Louis XIV during the troubled period of La Fronde. He afterward entirely changed the subject of his play, laying the scene in Italy and transforming it into his drama of "La Haine" (Hatred), which he rates very high among his own works, though it has never, when acted, achieved any success. But while working out his original plan he got into the habit of making frequent visits to Versailles for the purpose of consulting the erudite director of the palace on the different personages and events of the reign of Louis XIV. M. Soulié, on more than one occasion, took his celebrated guest home to lunch or to dine with him, and presented him to his daughters, who were delighted to make the acquaintance of the famous author of "A Scrap of Paper" and of "Patrie."

The second daughter, M'lle Anne, was then in the first bloom of youth, and was a remarkably beautiful as well as a most intelligent girl. She had profited fully by the teachings and the example of her learned father, and was well fitted to comprehend and to appreciate the brilliant talents of their guest. She was at that time a dazzling blonde, tall and striking looking, and remarkably graceful. Very soon the visits of M. Sardou to the home of the erudite director increased and multiplied in an astonishing ratio, and it speedily became evident that the fair daughter, and not the learned father, was the magnet that drew him so often from Morly to Versailles. In fact, his historical studies were almost wholly laid aside in favor of the fascinating story that he read in the blue eyes of Mademoiselle Anne. And so it came to pass that one fine day, in the historic precincts of the chapel of the palace at Versailles, the lovely blonde and the famous dramatist were united in holy matrimony. The great drama of the reign of Louis XIV never has been written, but was replaced for the bridegroom and the bride by that episode in real life that is known as conjugal felicity.

The marriage took place in 1872. M. and Mme. Sardou have seen grow up around them four children—three sons and a daughter. The eldest, Pierre, is eighteen, and has passed his examination as Bachelor of Letters. He is now preparing for that of Bachelor of Science. The second child, and only daughter, M'lle Genevieve, is not quite seventeen. She promises to inherit much of her mother's beauty. Jean, aged fifteen, and André, who is just twelve, complete the family.

At present the health of Madame Sardou gives rise to a good deal of anxiety on the part of her husband and children. Without being positively ill, she has been a good deal tried by the unremitting care which she has bestowed upon her children, all of whom have been attacked, more or less severely, with the influenza. The last to succumb to the reigning epidemic was M. Sardou himself, and his devoted wife would yield to no one else the right of watching over him.

The Parisian residence of the Sardou family is a private hotel, situated in the fashionable Malesherbes quarter of the city, and is on the Rue de General Foy. In summer they take possession of the beautiful villa at Morly, where the great dramatist does most of his literary work, preferring the calm and quiet of the country to the noise and distractions of Paris. He is very fond of Nice, and for some years past a spacious and sumptuous villa, which, after the custom of the place, he intends to call the "Villa Fedora" after his own favorite among all his works, has been in process of construction for him from designs furnished by himself. The delicate health of Madame Sardou has caused him to hurry the completion of this villa, which bids fair to be one of the most elegant on the Riviera.

Some five years after her marriage Madame Sardou lost her distinguished and tenderly beloved father. Of her two sisters, the eldest married Baron Schmitz, brother of the general of the same name, who died a short time ago. The younger one has remained single. Her eldest brother, Henry, became a surgeon in the French army, and died in Tunis. The second, Emilien, is a captain in the 11th regiment of Infantry, and is at present in Algiers devoting himself to topographical researches. He inherits his father's taste for study, and is a great favorite with Madame Sardou.

The training and example of M. Soulié in the early years of Madame Sardou's life have made of her a thorough connoisseur in historic art, furniture, bric-a-brac and especially in that of the eighteenth century. She takes great delight in her husband's unique collection of historical costumes, and of pictures representing the scenes and the festivals of past epochs. Her taste and her education in such matters were of great assistance to him in regulating the dresses and the accessories of his later historical plays. In a word, she has always filled the position not only of wife and mother and lady of the house, but of his sympathetic and appreciative comrade in the literary labors of his brilliant career.

The portrait affixed to this sketch is a reproduction of a likeness in pastel, executed when Madame Sardou was in the bloom of youth and in the full radiance of her remarkable beauty. It is a fine work of art as well as an admirable likeness, and is at present one of the chief ornaments in the boudoir of the original at Paris.

\* In this series of pen-portraits of "Unknown Wives of Well-Known Men," commenced in the January, 1891, JOURNAL, the following, each accompanied with portrait, have been printed:

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