# MADAME LA FAYETTE.

## HER HERO HUSBAND AND HER HOME.

WHILE most of us are familiar with the career of General La Fayette, we do not know quite so much of his noble and exalted wife, yet Madame La Fayette was no ordinary woman ; and we cannot doubt that her lofty character influenced that of her husband, even as her devoted love soothed and sustained him in his career.

This charming woman was the daughter of the Duc d'Ayen (De Noailles), who was Colonel of the Noailles Cavalry Regiment, afterward Captain of the Household Guards. His wife who was a granddaughter of the great Chancellor d'Aguesseau, was a most pious and excellent woman, devoted to her family and living a retired life in the Hotel de Noailles, educating her daughters herself with the greatest care. They saw but little of their father, who was absorbed in his duties about the court ; so, as is apt to be the case, it was the mother, and not the father, who implanted the seeds of virtue in the hearts of the children which bore such fine fruit afterward.

The girls married young, and when Adrienne was but fourteen she espoused Gilbert La Fayette, who was but sixteen. These wedded children loved each other devotedly with an affection that only increased with time, and became stronger as trials thickened around them.

This marriage enlarged the yearly income of La Fayette, who was already wealthy. The newly-wedded couple remained at the Hotel de Noailles, where three years of uninterrupted happiness flew swiftly by, and then came a parting that threw deep shadows upon the heart of the young wife, now a mother.

The war between England and her colonies had just commenced when La Fayette, deeply sympathizing with the Americans, determined to leave home and all the love and happiness he found there to assist America in her struggle for freedom. His friends tried to argue him out of the notion and advised him to let the Americans fight their battles without his assistance. It was in vain ; and even the strong arms of love could not hold him back. Procuring a vessel and some military stores he set sail for America—a boy not yet twenty years of age, but filled with the courage, enthusiasm, and resolve of a man. Madame La Fayette was led to believe that her husband was going to America on a private mission. Knowing the grief that would fill her heart at parting, La Fayette spared her the trial of saying farewell, and she did not know when he started. Her grief was unbounded, nevertheless, and she had to endure the angry invectives of her father, who was much exasperated at the course that his son-in-law had taken.

La Fayette landed at Charleston, South Carolina, on the 19th of April, 1777, and thence proceeded to Philadelphia. Presenting himself before Congress, he said : "I come to request two favors of this house ; the one is to serve in your army in the capacity of a private volunteer ; the other to receive no pay." Struck by the disinterested friendliness of this act of La Fayette, Congress immediately made a major-general of the young volunteer, and Washington became his life-long friend.

On returning for a visit to France the young soldier met with great honor, in which Madame La Fayette shared. On one occasion a large company were invited to meet him at the house of the Duke Choiseul. Voltaire, on perceiving Madame La Fayette, fell on his knees before her and eulogized her husband. In his various visits to France La Fayette was invariably received with great distinction, which, while it caused feelings of pleasurable pride to Madame La Fayette, scarcely atoned for the separation. At length the day came when, crowned with honors and the gratitude of the American people, La Fayette once more took up his residence in

France. But stormy times were coming, and did come, when the French Revolution breaking out, such horrors as the world has never witnessed afflicted unfortunate France and deluged the country with its best blood.

It is needless to say that La Fayette did all in his power to avert the storm he saw coming. He endeavored to befriend Queen Marie Antoinette, and when the mob threatened Versailles, he escorted the queen and dauphin to the balcony, and presented them to the people, tearing the tricolored cockade from his hat and affixing it to that of the young dauphin.

Affairs became complicated; party after party rose into power and fell again. Royal heads were struck off on the scaffold, and the prisons were filled with the nobility and others. None were safe in those fearful times, and among the arrested was Madame La Fayette, whose only crime was her noble birth. La Fayette, in endeavoring to check the Prussians, who were marching on Paris, found himself a prisoner; and thus the unfortunate couple were as widely separated as if the sea rolled between them.

At this time, while Madame La Fayette was in prison, her son, George Washington, had been sent to his godfather, General Washington, in America, for safe keeping; while the two girls were placed with an aunt of their father at Auvergne. The horrors of Madame La Fayette's imprisonment were almost unendurable. She lived in daily expectation of being led to the scaffold. Her grandmother, the Maréchale de Noailles, aged eighty, her mother, and her sister Louise, who had married her cousin, the Vicomte Noailles, had all been guillotined, and Madame La Fayette expected to share their fate. While in prison she wrote with a tooth-pick, and some Indian ink she had secreted about her, the life of the mother, for whom she had the greatest veneration and love.

During the terrible months of anxiety, with the axe ready to descend upon her neck, this heroic woman prayed unceasingly, even if she wept occasionally. She was calm in the midst of the misery around her, striving to comfort others when she so much needed consolation herself. Her husband's property was confiscated, he himself in a distant prison, and death staring her in the face. Yet, she faced it all serenely and with undaunted courage. At length the fearful reign of terror was over, and the prisoners who had not already fallen were released from captivity. For many months, however, Madame La Fayette was unable to procure her release; but at length, after nineteen months of imprisonment, she found herself once more free. Suffering in health from the effects of her long confinement and the discomforts suffered, Madame La Fayette proceeded at once to Almutz, where her husband still languished in prison. If she could not succeed in effecting his release, she wished to share his captivity if permitted.

Washington had made every effort to effect the discharge of La Fayette. Neither Washington, nor the American people, were likely to prove ungrateful to La Fayette, and it was a young American, a South Carolinian, Francis Huger, (pronounced Ugee) who in connection with Dr. Bollman, made the dangerous attempt to rescue the Marquis, and were also made prisoners in consequence. The efforts of Madame Lafayette were unceasing. She sold her jewels to procure the money to make the journey with her daughters to see the Austrian Emperor, and obtain from him her husband's liberation. This was refused, but the rest of the family were allowed to share the imprisonment of the husband and father, and this was felt to be a great boon. After eleven months of this reunited life behind the bars, the order for release arrived, coupled with a decree of exile for General La Fayette. Madame La Fayette made a personal appeal to Napoleon on behalf of her husband, that he might return to France, but was sternly refused. She, however, determined that he should remain with his family, and procured for him a passport under an assumed name, finding a refuge upon an estate of her own, the Château La Grange, a charming country seat about forty miles east of Paris. Napoleon was very angry at the ruse, but allowed the family to remain undisturbed, and the remaining years of their lives were spent in this retreat.

The château is a large castle-like looking structure of dark stone, three stories in height, the center building having two wings joined to it at right angles, with a circular tower at the extremity of each wing. As one enters the estate he will find the drive-way bordered with trees, many of them evergreens, which the marquis carried from this country. The château itself is embowered by shrubbery, giving it a very picturesque, country-like appearance. The old arched gate-way, with the mantling ivy over it planted by Charles James Fox, the red roofs of the circular towers, and the dark woods beyond, form a scene not easily forgotten.

La Grange was a portion of the patrimony of the Marchioness of La Fayette. She was the daughter of a house which had eight centuries of recorded history, and which, in each one of these centuries, had given to France soldiers or priests or statesmen of a national importance and European renown. The estate contained about five thousand acres, divided into fields, pastures, orchards, vinelands, and woodlands, each one accessible by private roads, and nobly shaded. Madame La Fayette did not long enjoy her restored home and family life. Her health had been so greatly impaired that it superinduced paralysis, which confined her to her chair in which she was wheeled from room to room. She died expressing her devoted love for her husband. "What happiness," she said, "to have been married to you."

Never was a wife more sincerely mourned than Madame La Fayette. Her husband says of her, "She was so one with me that I could not distinguish my own separate existence. I thought I loved her dearly, and knew how much she was to me; but it is only in losing her that I find out how little there is left of me." They had been married thirty-four years.

France has produced some noble women, but none of more heroic character than Madame La Fayette. Tender, amiable, and affectionate, she was yet firm, resolute, and courageous. She faced the horrors of the Revolution; and though she did not mount the scaffold, was still the victim of its atrocities.

Lady Morgan, the famous authoress, was a visitor at La Grange many years after the death of Madame La Fayette, and describes the charmed life led by the inmates. Few of the nobles of that country can now afford to live in the style that La Fayette did, with twenty or thirty guests dining daily under the groined roof of the old stone hall, at a table where each dropped into his place without ceremony; where all ostentation was banished; no plate allowed for ornament; an excellent French dinner and delightful conversation forming the entertainment. The marquis welcomed all strangers to his *salon* with the grace of his country, and not a few of the guests were descendants of the most renowned families in France. Other visitors came there too. "All the clever men of Paris come here constantly," wrote Lady Morgan to her sister; "among them Ary Scheffer, Auguste Thierry, Béranger, Carbonel, the composer, and Auguste de Stael, the favorite son of the celebrated authoress."

At the Château La Grange Lady Morgan enjoyed those rich delights which society such as she met there affords, when coupled with the contemplation of virtue and domestic felicity. La Fayette, after a stormy life, was closing his days in peace among his family. The warm-hearted Irish woman fully appreciated the unanimity of a French home *de province*. The perfect system that pervades families; the obedience of the young; the rapt devotion of the old to the younger members; the part the old servants take in everything; the unaffected freedom which never dispenses with politeness, this she could fully comprehend. "I never saw," she wrote to her beloved Olivia, "such a beautiful picture of domestic happiness, virtue, and talent."

As the host and his guests strolled through the woods of La Grange one day, Lady Morgan asked the General if it was true that he had gone with Marie Antoinette to a masked ball in Paris, the queen leaning on his arm. "I am afraid," he answered in his peculiar low voice and with an arch smile, "that it was so. She was so indiscreet, and, I can conscientiously say, so innocent." Thus was the fame of poor Antoinette vindicated.

Sunday was a festival day as well as a day of rest at La Grange. At eight in the morning in the summer-time the great hall, whose walls had been perforated by Turenne's bullets during the war of the Fronde, was filled with the peasantry, the domestics, two or three *gens d'arms* who had stopped to look in, and all the company that might be present; peers of France, authors, artists, the general and his twelve grandchildren. The *concièrge*, or porter, acted as the musician, and as he struck up a ronde the whole company formed themselves into the national country dance of France. The peasantry were often feasted in the park, after they had returned from church, and everything about the place had the air of Arcadia in the Golden Age of the poets.

Those days have gone by at La Grange, but we think of them as we go from room to room or wander about the well-kept grounds. The property is still owned by the Marquis's grandson. The house is full of America. On the walls are portraits of Washington, Franklin, Morris, and Jefferson, and a marble bust of old John Adams adorns a niche of the hall. Objects brought from America or received thence as gifts, are seen everywhere, and there is one room containing nothing but souvenirs from this country, and which the general called by the name "America." The parlor has a well-waxed oaken floor, laid in geometrical figures, and on the wall is a painting of the siege of Yorktown in which La Fayette bore a distinguished part. On the center-table are a large number of American books in choice bindings, nearly all of them being presentation copies.

Beautiful home, forever associated with the heroic wife of a heroic man. La Grange, although located in France, is one of the famous shrines of America. The place has changed very little since the death of its illustrious owners. In the library are some of the general's most treasured relics, including a ring containing Washington's hair, his eye-glasses, and his carriage sunshade. Outside one sees everywhere the signs of his presence. There are the orchards that he planted, and the elms and maples that he set out, now flourishing and stately and diffusing delightful shade. In the kitchen-garden are many plants which his fostering care introduced and cherished there.

General La Fayette reposes now near his wife, in the quaint old cemetery of Picpus, in the convent grounds, in the Faubourg St. Antoine, in Paris. Separated by a small iron gate from the resting-places of the general and his wife, and the great family of the guillotined de Noailles and other historic names of France, are the graves of eleven hundred of the victims who fell at the Barrier du Trone on the fateful 4th of September, 1870. France makes heroes, and crucifies them.

VIVA.

## Poetry.

*(See Page Photogravure.)*

IT has been said that poetry is the loveliest form of pleasure. It is a consoler, an inspirer, rousing up the soul like martial music. It is the great enchanter of the world, turning what it touches to gold; giving added beauty to the flowers, and a brighter glow to the stars. What treasures the world would have lost had there been no Homeric Poems, and no Æneid of Virgil. How much that is stirring, consoling, inspiring would have remained unknown had there been no Dante, no Petrarch, no Milton nor Shakespeare, and, even in our own times, no Tennyson.

Our beautiful engraving shows the effect that this great magician is capable of producing, old age and youth alike yielding to its influence. The young orator, clad in graceful garb, is reciting a poem by one of the "Kings of Melody," and, by his earnest eloquence, makes more impressive the words of the poet. The father and daughter listen with absorbed attention. The maiden may be another Genevieve, and a love story the interesting subject so eloquently declaimed.

"I told her of the knight that wore
Upon his shield a burning brand,
And that for ten long years he woo'd
The lady of the land.

I told her how he pined, and—ah!
The deep, the low, the pleading tone
With which I sang another's love,
Interpreted my own."

There is something charming in this scene, which is transpiring in some fine old castle. The repose and poetical sentiment of the picture is perfect; the countenance of the maiden replete with beauty, and the listening attitude of father and daughter very effective, as the young orator, inspired by the poem he is reciting, declaims, with eloquent gestures, the poet's "immortal thoughts." The painter, F. Dupont, has been most happy in the treatment of his subject, the result being a very attractive picture.

OUR beautiful frontispiece is the likeness of a charming child, the sunshine of her home, and the happiness of all its dwellers. It is readily perceived that she is one of those fortunate children whose sky has never been darkened by a cloud, and whose footsteps have found the flowers, but her feet have not yet been wounded by the thorns. As we look at her sweet face, with its trusting, innocent expression, the beautiful blue eyes raised above, and the look of gentleness pervading the countenance, we cannot but exclaim with Longfellow:

"Ah! what would the world be to us,
If the children were no more?
We should dread the desert behind us,
Worse than the dark before."

Our readers cannot fail to be pleased with this beautiful picture of youthful loveliness. It may bring before them again one of the lovely portraits hung in Memory's halls—some fair young "daughter of the hearth and home," who, before her happy childhood had passed away, closed her eyes on earth, to open them in heaven. Or, perhaps, she grew to maturity, and as wife and mother is filling her home with the fragrance of loving acts and gentle deeds.

The artist has made an admirable portrait of a sweet and engaging child, and we cannot praise the painter too highly who has given us so charming a representation of innocence and beauty.