family. It was while staying with him that Mr. Belmore had first seen Selina, who was at the time residing with her aunt, Mrs. Grey.

It was not unnatural, however, that Constance, who was of a reflective turn of mind, should occasionally retrace the past, while wondering at the present. She now and again recalled the happy intercourse that had passed for many years between Merton Rectory and Cedarton, an intercourse uninterrupted until Selina had, on the death of her parents, come to reside at the latter place. Her brilliancy and beauty had dazzled everyone, and it was no wonder that she—Constance—was thrown even more into the shade than she was wont to be. Neither was she surprised that Selina should first have attracted and encouraged, as she thought, Annesley Gifford, and then his visitor, Mr. Belmore. But she was surprised at the ambition that induced her to sacrifice the one for the other and still led her to strive to maintain a certain ascendency over both. She could not yet read her cousin's nature, which was vain as well as ambitious, and which was not content until it had, so to say, vanquished the world.

But in so doing Selina slightly overshot her mark. Carried away by admiration and fashion, she forgot that even Mr. Belmore's large income was not inexhaustible, and his patience not perfect. He declared that what with the election and the sumptuous entertainments they were already going too fast, and must pull in. She laughed at the notion, as she did at most of her husband's remonstrances, and continued to have her way. But her way was not the right one, since it annoyed her husband. He was naturally more interested in country than in town pursuits, and felt more at home in the hunting field than in diplomatic circles, preferring the society of the country gentry to that of men of letters and statesmen. A good-natured but weak and obstinate man himself, he disliked those whom he felt to be superior to him. Thus, with no particular reason, he gradually took a dislike to Lord John Morpeth. It was sure that the great man was slightly overbearing and sometimes supercilious, and that he evidently preferred intercourse with the brilliant Mrs. Belmore to that of her less intellectual husband. Morever, Lord John was often cynical in his wit, and Mr. Belmore was sensitive, and fancied its shafts pointed at him when really aimed at nothing. Thus he would take offence when none was meant, and Lord John, on his side, whose temper was none of the sweetest, took pleasure in aggravating the harm he had at first unintentionally done.

Selina would laugh at these passages at arms, while Constance became the unwilling *confidante* of Mr. Belmore's annoyance.

"If he thinks to lord it over me he's mistaken," he would say. "And Selina's too clever by half. But then, how she is admired! Why, Conny, there's no one in London can hold a candle to her."

Before the end of the season Constance returned home, and as soon as Parliament was prorogued Mr. and Mrs. Belmore went to Belmore Hall. Annesley Gifford spent his holiday with his parents, according to his intention, and Lord John went abroad. So the conflicting elements were for awhile at peace.

(*To be continued.*)

FRENCH SCHOOL-GIRLS.

THE newspapers recently had many comments on the opening of a young ladies' college at Castel-Sarrasin, between Toulouse and Bordeaux, the first of many similar institutions to supplement, if not displace, the convent schools, where girls of the upper and middle classes could alone get education. Mr. G. A. Sala, in an article in a daily paper, had some interesting statements about "the French school-girl." French married ladies enjoy a suprising amount of freedom, which, it is to be hoped, they invariably turn to the best of uses; but French unmarried girls cannot be said to enjoy any freedom at all. They are not maltreated, for, although the French do not outrageously spoil their children as the Americans do, they treat them, as a rule, with unvarying kindness and tenderness, and consort with them on terms of much greater familiarity than is customary in children-loving but austere England. French fathers and mothers are *petit père* and *petite mère* to their youngest children, who are accustomed to "thee" and "thou" them from their infancy, and are not taught to dread them. On the other hand, they venerate them, and a grey-bearded Frenchman of fifty does not think it derogatory to his dignity, when writing to his mother, to subscribe himself *ton fils soumis et obéissant*.

But the French girl, until she be marriageable, is kept in the strictest seclusion. She may not walk out alone, or even in the company of her sister. She is never left alone with an unmarried gentleman. She may not write to a gentleman under sixty, unless he be of kindred to her. She is debarred from indulging in a hundred harmless pastimes and frolics in which English girls habitually indulge, and the enthusiasm which Frenchmen are wont to express for *les charmantes jeunes Meeses Anglaises* may be to a great extent explained by the fact that they very rarely have a chance of freely communing with unmarried young ladies of their own nation. Married women, and not girls, are usually the heroines of French novels of society, and when the novelist does incidentally allude to a young girl of gentle nurture he generally dismisses her as a *jeune fille rêveuse*. The truth is, that the author has so few opportunities of speaking to her that he has no experience to guide him in picturing to himself what she may be dreaming about. Precluded by the Median and Persian laws of *la famille* from describing female character in the upper and middle ranks of society, the romance-writers fly in despair to the *foyer* of the actress, the boudoir of the *cocotte*, or the garret of the *ouvrière*. There they are able to find an abundance of models and a plenitude of opportunities for the observation and analysis of social characteristics. *La famille* has concerned itself very little with female Bohemia, who have not by any means been kept in seclusion in their girlhood.

That the segregation of unmarried girls from general society in France has been concurrently attended by very imperfect educational training is undeniable. Were it not that the French are a naturally witty, shrewd, and self-possessed people, a French girl of the upper middle classes might appear to an English or American young lady to be a lamentably ignorant specimen of "femininity." She may have picked up a few scraps of English in her *pensionnat*, but she is never taught even the rudiments of Latin; she would think it unpatriotic to speak German; her knowledge of the history and literature of her own country is limited, and that of the history and literature of other countries usually *nil*. A little linear drawing constitutes the sum of her acquaintance with mathematics, and she may be deemed fortunate if she has managed to gather a slight smattering of physical science, and that not of a very accurate kind, from the writings of M. Jules Verne. If she has been educated in a convent, the good nuns have probably taught her that three-fourths of the things which she will enjoy with such eager zest when she is married and free are essentially wicked, and it is not at all improbable that if she has been brought up in a nunnery in the provinces, her clerical instructors have instilled into her such ideas on politics as to make her regard the existing Government of her country with horror and aversion.

An English school-girl happily knows much more about hardbake and almond rock than she does about Conservatism or Liberalism; and from the age of sixteen to twenty she is too much occupied with matters of dress and amusement and affairs of the heart to trouble herself about which political party is in office, or which is in opposition. If she has any politics at all they are "papa's;" unhappily, as French society is at present constituted, the politics of a French young lady are in most cases directly the reverse of those of her papa. They are mamma's, and mamma's politics are those of M. le Curé. The only wonder is that, educationally hampered and restricted at every turn, incessantly watched by the Argus eyes of parents and priests, the young Frenchwoman, when she has passed through the probationary stages of a school-girl and a *demoiselle à marier* should bear herself with the confident *aplomb* and hold her own in the brilliantly self-assured manner customary with her after marriage. The formalities at the Mairie and the ceremonial of the nuptial benediction at the church seem instantaneously to have transformed her into another personage, and she takes her place, be it in society or behind the *comptoir* of her husband's shop or *café*, with a perfectly easy, self-reliant, and satisfied air. Yesterday she was all timidity and taciturnity. To-day she would confront M. le Préfet without hesitation, and is loquacious even to garrulity. She is free; and that may have something to do with the rapidity and the completeness of the metamorphosis.

Whether increased educational facilities by means of public school or collegiate training of a liberal and secular kind will exercise a favourable influence on the character of the always fascinating but often uneducated young Frenchwoman remains to be seen. The progress of the experiment at Castel-Sarrasin will be watched with much interest on both sides of the Channel, but the gibers and jokers must hold their hands for a time, and refrain from prematurely sarcastic disparagement of a new generation of *les femmes savantes*.