

# BLANCHE TRÉGUIER.

THE first time I saw her she was cleaning a window. She was dressed in black, and had a little white cap tied under her chin. The frills of it stood round her face like a halo, and underneath the frills peeped some stray locks of hair ; hair that was neither red nor sandy, nor what we call golden, but the colour of the silk wound from the pale yellow cocoons that one sees sometimes in the silk markets in Italy. She came and went, answering somebody who was calling from below, while I, who had just arrived at St. Aignan by the night diligence, sat disconsolate on top of my boxes in the red-tiled *salon* on Madame Landerneau's first-floor, in No. 49, Rue du Chat qui file, waiting till Madame got my room ready, and brought me some hot coffee. "*Tiens!*" she had said coolly, when remonstrated with for not having been prepared to receive me when I had written to warn her ; "*tiens!*" Mademoiselle did write, it is true, and I don't deny it. But I said to myself, I dare say she will change her mind now the weather has turned chilly. You will not have long to wait, however, Mademoiselle ; your rooms are perfectly clean, only a little dusty."

I sat still, looking, I dare say, very tired and cross, staring absently across from my open window on one side of the court to the window that was being cleaned by the girl with the blond hair on the other side of the court. Presently she shot a glance across to me with a pair of beautiful, mischievous, unfathomable brown eyes ; a glance that took in all the situation, as they say, of the *salon* of No. 49 in an instant : thus—middle-aged lady, new lodger, plenty of boxes ; wanting bath, bed, breakfast, everything ; Madame Landerneau behindhand as usual, puffing and blowing, screaming at Marthe in the kitchen, looking high and low for her keys, which

are in her outside pocket, banging everything about, and wondering why people will come when she has made up her mind not to expect them. "Yes, yes ; I know all about it," said the brown eyes, as plainly as possible. Then with a parting flick of her blue duster, a parting glance up at the six window-panes shining without a speck in the morning sun, and a look of mingled pity and amusement across the court to me, she shut the window, and vanished.

Before the end of the week I had persuaded Madame Landerneau to dust my rooms thoroughly. I had placed rugs here and there on the red-tiled floor, and scarlet hangings round the chimney-piece to keep my fire warm. I had silenced two of the three antiquated clocks of which my landlady was so proud, and I had made her understand that whenever I went upon any of the short excursions on account of which I had made St. Aignan my head-quarters, she was to expect me back at the time I fixed for my return, and not have any opinion of her own on the point.

Sitting in the dusk after my solitary dinner, on my return from one of these excursions, I could see into my neighbour's room across the court. Her lamp was lit, and she was ironing busily. A row of ugly, old woman's night-caps hung before the fire, crisp and steaming. Three little white embroidered caps lay on the faded red sofa by the fireside. She had just finished ironing a fourth, and was in the act of trying it on, when I looked up. Thought I, "Some coquettish little bourgeoisie, no doubt. She will stick pink bows into her cap, and be very fine at High Mass to-morrow."

On Sunday afternoon, as I looked out of window debating whether it were best to take umbrella or parasol, I saw two ladies descend a staircase that belonged to a separate block of buildings



on the other side of the court. They had Prayer-books in their hands, and wore bonnets. They crossed the court and entered Rue du Chat qui file by the long narrow passage belonging to Madame Landerneau's house. I did not see the face of the elder lady: the face of the younger was that of my ironing woman, my window-cleaner, the bourgeoisie with the brown eyes and the blond hair. But the bonnet on her head this afternoon told me in language not to be mistaken that she was no bourgeoisie, but a daughter of a good house, as they say at St. Aignan. I believe that at that time, had a bourgeoisie ventured into the street with a bonnet on, her neighbours would have mobbed her, and torn her head-dress into shreds. St. Aignan has the railway now, and gas, and flagged pavements, and many other innovations, and the bourgeois have left off observing their old sumptuary laws; indeed, I believe all the young ones wear bonnets and kid gloves on Sundays; but it was far otherwise at the time of which I write.

One winter's day, when the snow fell thick, and the white glare from the roofs filled and chilled my sitting-room beyond endurance, in spite of my scarlet curtains and my log fire, a timid, uncertain knock came to my outer door. Madame Landerneau and I had had a "difference" that morning about answering the door. She was paid for attendance, which she supposed to include getting my coffee of a morning, making my bed in time for me to get into at night, and stopping to have a chat whenever she brought me a letter or a newspaper. She had no objection to answer the door either, if she were in the way. If not—if she happened to be upstairs in her apple-room, or downstairs among her wine-casks, or nodding, or gossiping with a neighbour out of window—why, then any reasonable lodger would get up and answer the door herself. I had been roused that morning from a delicious sleep and a dream about a chime of bells, by a pedlar who had entered my

room after knocking and ringing in vain at the outer door, and who insisted on selling me lithographs, and soap, and hair-pins, and brushes. After that it was necessary to come to an understanding with Madame Landerneau. "Oh, of course, since Mademoiselle insists upon it," she said, and as she went away I heard her muttering to herself and grunting, "Ugh! as obstinate as a Bretonne!" Madame Landerneau was a Normandy woman, and believed no good thing could come out of Brittany.

I sat still, wondering whether the door would be opened or not. After the third appeal to the bell I owned that Madame Landerneau had proved the stronger, and got up meekly to open the door myself. I was rewarded by seeing a princess in disguise—the girl with the brown eyes and the blond hair, hair that looked as if all the hairdressers in St. Aignan had been spending the morning over it. She stood and curtsied low, with mingled grace and pride, a princess if ever there was one. I curtsied too, and bid her enter.

"Mademoiselle," she said, as she dropped into the seat of honour, my biggest arm-chair, "a letter was brought to us this morning which was directed to me—or rather to a person with a name much resembling mine. The postman, seeing no street marked, concluded it must be for me. I am Blanche Tréguier, and I did not know there was another person of the same name in St. Aignan or out of it. We did not know the handwriting, and, hearing there was a strange lady lodging in this house, my mother thought I had better show her the letter, as she might be its owner."

The letter was mine; my correspondent, a woman who never remembers street or number, and keeps no address-book. It is a wonder how any of her letters get to their owners. It was a wonder I got mine, then.

"My name is Blanche Tregaye," I said, "and I, too, did not know that there was another of the name in St. Aignan or out of it. I am Cornish,



Mademoiselle; you should be Bretonne, I think."

"Yes, I am Bretonne," said the girl, with proud humility. "But—I have very few relations."

Was she afraid I was going to claim relationship? Had she been Cornish, I should certainly have called her "cousin." But I had not even Cornish cousins. I was without a relation in the world. I told her so.

"That must be rather dull," she said, gazing away I know not where with her unfathomable brown eyes. "I should not like that. On the mother's side I have a few relations, and—I have Mamma."

"If it is agreeable to Madame Tréguier, I will do myself the honour to make her acquaintance," I said, feeling curious to know what the mother of my princess in disguise was like.

Blanche Tréguier answered that her mother would be enchanted; but there was a want of alacrity in the tone in which she said the words which warned me it was possible Madame Tréguier would be anything but enchanted.

Madame Tréguier, my landlady informed me, was a widow lady who kept the *bureau de tabac*—tobacconist's shop,—tobacco being a Government monopoly, the places in which it is sold are not styled shops, but *bureaux*—in Rue de l'Épéron. She was as poor as a rat, but would take nothing from anybody, friends or relations; she preferred keeping her bureau and being independent, like a bourgeoisie. The girl was well enough, she always had a smile for you as she passed. But the mother was a regular Bretonne, proud down to the end of her skinny fingers.

I found Madame Tréguier, indeed, very proud. Had it not been that Blanche, with all her pride, had a certain winsome way about her, I think I should have not repeated my visit. I believe Madame Tréguier considered me a doubtful character. I was a woman who lived alone, who had arrived at St. Aignan by the diligence; with plenty of boxes, it was true, but no maid. She did not know that I

had only travelled in the diligence because I wanted to know what it was like, that I never intended to trust myself to it a second time, and that I had no maid because I had broken loose from my English Sarah after bearing her tyranny for fifteen years. Everybody was getting emancipated, and why not I?

But I found the way to Madame Tréguier's heart at last. One day I put on a wonderful cashmere shawl sixty years old, and paid Madame a visit in her bureau, where she sat in a cloud of smoke. She rose up quite flurried and distressed.

"You here, Mademoiselle? This is no place for you. The duties of my position keep me here, but I have a drawing-room for my friends upstairs. You will find Blanche there."

But I sat down resolutely in spite of the horrible smoke, saying that I was in the mood for an hour's chat with her, and had sought her where I knew she was to be found. That hour's sitting, and my ancient shawl, won Madame Tréguier's poor proud heart. "I like those old patterns so much better than the modern ones," said the poor woman, taking up one end of the faded garment. "This reminds me of the shawl my grandmother—she was a Plouergast—had given to her on her wedding-day. She often told me about it."

I said I loved old things, and would like to see it. "Alas, I have it not," she said, with a blush and a sigh. Some time afterwards I learnt that the shawl, along with other heirlooms of still greater value and antiquity, had been sold to her cousin, a Plouergast, and wife of the Préfet of Clermont, to enable her to send Blanche to the Sacré Cœur for a year. That year of schooling, just at the time of her first communion, was all the regular instruction the child had ever had. It was a comfort to poor Madame Tréguier to think that her property had not passed out of the family; and it was a comfort too to think that Blanche had for a short time been associated with girls of her own



rank. The first communion was, naturally, an epoch in girls' lives. They dated later events from it, and remembered in after-life who had been their companions on the first communion-day.

"If Blanche is ever able to mix in society," said Madame Tréguier, "she has the nucleus of a set of acquaintances. My position can never be humbler, and I *may* rise. I do not see how, but I like to think it possible, for Blanche's sake."

Meanwhile, Blanche's existence was dull and colourless enough. Her young companions of the *Sacré Cœur* had forgotten her. Now and then a friend of her mother's, neither so poor nor so proud, nor perhaps her equal in birth, would spend a dull half-hour in the little sitting-room. Once a month Madame allowed herself a Sunday evening out, and then Blanche accompanied her to a whist-party at Madame la Présidente's. But the poor child confided to me that she hated whist, and would stay at home, only that then her mother would have to carry the lantern herself. Poor things! their energies were all bent to the solving of the sad and difficult problem: How to look like gentlewomen on a thousand francs a year!

"I sometimes think," said Blanche one day, "that it is a great pity I was ever born. If I were out of the way, my mother would be able to spend twice as much upon herself. I shall be glad when I am twenty-five, because then I shall be able to go to market alone, since it is only round the corner of the next street. When I think of all the money that old Filomène Batz has had for going to market with me ever since I was a child of eleven, I feel quite angry; and really, when I pay the old creature every month, though 'tis but a trifle, I feel as if it were my heart's blood. If I had all the money in a box that Mamma has paid her these years, how happy I should be!"

"And what would you do with it, my pet?"

"I should put it by, and add to it little by little," she said in an eager whisper. "And in some years from

this I should have enough, adding what I get by embroidery, to buy Mamma a shawl to wear when she goes to church every morning. I can't bear her to go to the five o'clock mass, the servants' mass, as she does all the year round," said Blanche impatiently. "If she had not me to maintain, she would be able to have a real cashmere, and pay some one to take care of the bureau while she went to High Mass, like all the St. Aignan ladies. Oh, I know, I have calculated it many times. When I think of all poor Mamma has endured," she continued, "it makes me so sad, that I can't say my prayers properly. And of course Mamma must feel her position much more than I do mine, for I am only a baron's daughter, but she is the daughter of a marquis."

We were in Madame Tréguier's kitchen and Blanche was at her wash-tub when she made this speech. So these were all Blanche's aspirations at eighteen!

One spring morning, Blanche, who had been busy with her household work since five o'clock, came hastily into my sitting-room, exclaiming, "It is too detestable!" with a little angry stamp of her foot, as she stopped in front of me.

"What is too detestable?" I asked coolly, rather amused at the proud little thing's babyish petulance.

"Everything! My cap!"—she tore it off her head—"the pitcher! He—yes, he is a most detestable, forward, presuming young man!"

Was it possible any one could have been rude to Blanche? I began in my turn to feel angry, and begged her to tell me all.

Blanche, instead, began to cry bitterly. "It was not meant for an insult, perhaps," she sobbed, as soon as she could speak; "but it is quite as bad as if it were. I feel insulted whether he meant it or not."

By degrees I got her to tell me what it was. She had forgotten to fetch water from the well in the court the night before, and had been obliged therefore to go down that morning. She had waited till seven o'clock, because the



servants belonging to the four families who took their water from that well would have got their supplies by that time, and if no one saw Blanche drawing water, no one would be reminded of Madame Tréguier's want of a servant.

"Of course," said Blanche, drying her eyes for a minute, "I know they know we keep no servant, but if they don't see me doing menial work, I don't care."

"My poor little ostrich! And this time a servant did see you—a man-servant, was it?"

"No, ah no, it was a great deal worse than that," Blanche sobbed, leaning her head on my lap. "It was a gentleman who saw me! I had stopped to take breath, for the pitcher was heavy. And he was running downstairs, and then he said something—I don't know what—and seized hold of the pitcher. I never gave him leave. He actually carried it up to our door. I was struck dumb; I didn't even say 'Thank you;' and I am very glad I didn't. The impertinence of those young men!"

I tried to persuade Blanche that the young man had only been moved by a proper feeling of compassion at seeing a young woman toiling upstairs with a heavy pitcher. But Blanche did not choose to take that view of the matter.

"If he had supposed me to be a young lady he would have waited till I had given him leave, before venturing to touch anything belonging to me. I will take care never to be mistaken for a bourgeoisie again. I will wear a hideous woollen thing on my head instead of a cap, and I will fetch water before any one in the house is stirring, or else go without."

"And deprive your mother of her morning coffee, proud, selfish child?"

"I can't help it," said Blanche defiantly. "If I were rich, oh then I'd be humble enough! But my pride is all I've got, and I mean to keep it."

One day, about a month after this, Madame Tréguier sent me a message to beg I would come to her in her bureau. I went down, wondering what could be her need of me; for, though by going there once I had in a manner established

a claim on her friendship, I had never ventured there again, except to buy postage-stamps.

She told me in little disjointed hurried sentences, while people were going in and out,—for it was market-day, and all the country people were getting their snuff-boxes and tobacco-pouches filled for the week,—that she had had an offer of marriage for Blanche, and that she was in a puzzle, and wanted to talk it all over. I knew well enough the comfort of being able to talk a thing over, so I ensconced myself behind the counter, and actually sold two sous' worth of tobacco for Madame, while she told me what lay on her mind.

The name of the young man was Tristan de Kermartin; he was a sous-lieutenant in a regiment of the line. He was as noble and as proud as the Tréguiers, "but, thank Heaven!" said poor Madame with a sigh, "not in such narrow circumstances." But yet he was far from rich, and if Blanche married him, she would be obliged to be a careful housekeeper. M. de Kermartin had been most explicit as to his family and circumstances. The great hitch—that of Blanche's want of money—he did not choose to consider a hitch at all. As for the caution-money required by Government before an officer is allowed to marry, he had offered to supply it all himself.

"It shows that he really wishes to marry Blanche," said Madame Tréguier, with a mixture of pride and pleasure and sadness. "But oh! to think that I have not even a dowry of three thousand five hundred francs for my poor child!"

When Madame Tréguier had said all she wished to say, I left her, promising to run in again in a day or two. She was going to see her confessor about it, she said, and should probably abide by his decision. I believe M. de Kermartin's genealogy made her more inclined to him than anything else. When I went to Madame Tréguier's two days after, I found the confessor there, and a young man, a good-looking fellow, who was M. de Kermartin. Then it was all settled! I thought Blanche had



made up her mind easily enough, but of course it was no affair of mine. I felt glad I had heard all Madame's talk without offering a single word of advice. I would not for any consideration have accepted the responsibility of that young creature's weal or woe, in ever so small a degree.

"Mademoiselle," said Blanche, when the two gentlemen were gone; "do you know who he is? He is the detestable young man!"

Madame Tréguier looked mystified. "Blanche," she said, reproachfully; "M. le Curé told you you had but to say a word, and——"

"Oh, Maman, I am well content," laughed Blanche; "I daresay I may get used to him in time."

The wooing went smoothly enough, I believe, but I saw little of Blanche for some time. One day, when I was accusing her to myself of being fickle, and debating whether I would go and see her or stand upon my dignity and wait for her to come and see me, she came in suddenly, announcing that she had something very particular to ask me about.

"Mademoiselle, I want to earn some money! I've wanted to before, but now I really must. M. Tristan has been talking to Mamma about the caution-money. He wants—that is—he doesn't want to wait. But I—the more I think, the more I dislike the idea of his giving it. He would be buying me—and I'll be bought by nobody," said Blanche, scornfully. "If three thousand five hundred francs are necessary for me to marry, they shall come from my hand—and I'll be beholden to nobody for them."

"If you really wish to earn money," I said, "I would advise your setting up a shop, close to your mother's. You might set up a wool shop, or something of that sort, and get on very well, I daresay."

"But the capital?"

"I would supply that. I have the means."

"Dear, kind, good Mademoiselle! But no, I should be in your debt, and I could not bear that. It seems to me

I should not love you as I do if I owed you money."

"That would be unjust to me, Blanche."

"Perhaps. But I can't help myself, you know I can't. If I knew I could pay you back instantly, I'd take the money without hesitation. But there! what is the good of talking? I know Mamma would die rather than see me keep a shop. Try to think of something else, Mademoiselle, pray."

I did think of something else, to which Madame Tréguier was brought with some difficulty to give her consent. I found for Blanche a place as nursery-governess in an English family, where she would have forty pounds a year. Poor child! she danced for joy when I told her the situation was hers if she would accept it. I warned her that she would be homesick and worried, and vexed in a thousand ways; that she must make up her mind to endure without complaining.

"I'll care for nothing, so long as I earn this money for myself," was her resolute answer.

Four years after this, I went to St. Aignan to see the Tréguiers. Blanche was at home. Her employer's children had grown beyond her teaching, and she was going to look for another situation. M. de Kermartin was there too; he had come to beg that there might be no further delay. War had been declared with Austria; his regiment might be ordered to Italy at any moment. Of the three thousand five hundred francs Blanche had set herself to earn, nine hundred were still wanting. He entreated Blanche to accept the nine hundred and make him happy. If the regiment once received orders to march, it would be too late.

Blanche was immoveable. "I will never be bought for nine hundred francs!" she said, scornfully, when M. de Kermartin was gone, and I, feeling drawn towards him, began to plead his cause.

"He is good, he is faithful, as you say," she cried; "but I cannot do it. Alas! do not ask me, Mademoiselle."



Would she take the money from me? Call it a loan or a gift, as she pleased. I was ready and anxious to give it.

"What! Begin my married life in debt? Never!"

All our arguments were thrown away, and I believe both M. de Kermartin and I left St. Aignan with our hearts feeling sore towards Blanche. He was ordered off with his regiment to Italy.

My anger vanished, however, when Madame Tréguier wrote telling me that her daughter was wearing herself out with anxiety; and when Blanche wrote, confessing that she had been too proud, and that she wished, now it was too late, that she had taken my money. In August, I went again to St. Aignan. Then followed the days of Magenta and Solferino; days of illumination and speechifying and horrible carnage. Proclamations were made by the Maire. The army had performed prodigies of valour. The inhabitants were invited to decorate their house-fronts and light up their windows; and "*Vive l'Empereur!*" cried the tambour and his following of ragamuffins.

On one of these sad lit-up nights, when Blanche, after putting three wax candles in each window, had gone into her room to cry by herself, Madame Tréguier got a letter from the colonel of M. Tristan's regiment. He had got his captaincy, he had got the cross of the Legion of Honour; for he, too, had performed prodigies of valour. And now, with a broken arm and a head cut open, the poor fellow had begged his colonel to write and ask Madame Tréguier and her daughter to meet him at Toulon. The invalids were being sent home, and he would be among them.

"He must be out of his mind to ask such a thing," said Madame Tréguier to me. "He does not reflect on the expense. And even had I the money, how could I leave the bureau? He ought to know, that if I could afford to pay an assistant I should not sit behind the counter myself."

She would have written to excuse herself from coming, but I prevented her. I made her understand that I

wished to do something to show my regard for M. de Kermartin, and that my taking her place as her daughter's travelling companion would show it sufficiently. There was a moment's hesitation, but the request was put so as to shield her pride—it was not herself I was anxious to oblige—and she consented.

That night Blanche and I set off; poor Blanche made no objection to taking my money now.

"Had I but listened to you," she said to me, as the diligence rolled and jolted along in the darkness, "I might have been on my way to nurse my husband."

I did what I could to cheer her up. The best thing was the travelling as fast as express trains and posthorses could take us to Toulon. Leaving Blanche at the hotel, I went to the Ministère de la Guerre to find out whether the invalids of M. de Kermartin's regiment had arrived, and was told that a thousand, of which his company formed a part, would enter to-morrow.

"Will the invalids walk, Monsieur?" I inquired in surprise.

"Those that have legs will walk, those that have none will ride," was the answer.

Blanche's spirits rose when I told her that M. de Kermartin would probably march with his company.

"I ought to be thankful his legs are all right, at least," she said.

Early on the morrow we drove outside the Porte d'Italie, intending to wait there for the arrival of the soldiers. But we were told that no carriages would be allowed to stand till they had marched past. We had no alternative but to send the carriage back and stand waiting under a broiling sun in the midst of the filthy, noisy crowd that collected outside the Porte as the morning went by. Blanche made no complaint, but stood looking for the cloud of dust in the distance. At last they appeared, ragged, haggard, limping, the brave, victorious thousand. Every now and then, some one would rush forward from the crowd and clasp a poor fellow round



the neck and drag him back into a group of people, more than half women; and there would be vociferatings and embracing and words of tenderness intermingled with vile swearing. Blanche looked at one group. "I envy those creatures; nothing restrains them," she said bitterly, and turned away. The ragged victors marched past, Blanche with strained eyes looking from one to the other. When the last rank had entered the *Porte d'Italie*, she turned to me with a cry: "He is not here, he is dead!"

The crowd had receded; she and I were left alone. I took her inside the archway, and begged a corporal on duty to let us sit for a moment on the bench. He was civil, and ordered a soldier to fetch Blanche a cup of water. The man brought it in a tin cup. Blanche took it weeping: "Has my poor Tristan always had water to drink, even out of a tin cup, I wonder?" she said. I left her on the bench, and peeped out into the hot, glaring road. I saw a few poor stragglers on crutches. I went up to one of them and stopped him. "Tell me, *mon brave*," said I, putting a gold piece into his hand, "do you know anything of M. le Capitaine de Kermartin?"

The poor fellow stared dully at the money; he was past being thankful. "M. le Capitaine is coming in waggon number three, if he is alive," he said in a hoarse faint voice, and hobbled on after his comrades. We sat till the waggons appeared, and then we followed number three—Blanche giving a little gasp whenever a jolt or a roll occurred—on to the gate of the military hospital.

I took Blanche back to the hotel, and went out to find the chaplain of the regiment. He helped me to inquire of the right people, and also made inquiries himself; and we were told that M. de Kermartin had gone into hospital with fever, and that friends and relations would be admitted the next morning at ten o'clock. "If M. de Kermartin's illness takes an unfavourable turn, I shall be sent for to administer the last sacraments," said the chaplain. "Is there any message you would like me

to give, in case there happens to be a lucid interval before the last agony?"

I asked him to come with me to the hotel where Blanche was. I explained to her what his errand was, and left them together; for I felt that such a last message was not for me to hear.

We waited long next morning at the hospital gate before the clock struck ten. It was at any rate better for Blanche to wait there than in our room at the hotel, fancying that my watch and the hotel clocks were wrong, and that she would be defrauded of one minute of the short interview allowed. We were conducted to a ward upstairs, and were just entering when a bell was heard ringing at the end of the corridor and our conductor bid us stand aside; the Host was coming. From every door in the corridor appeared figures, infirmiry attendants, convalescents, Sisters of Charity, who all knelt as it passed. Our conductor followed, and signed to us to follow. "Who is it for?" I whispered. "Some officer who only came yesterday," was the answer. The little procession stopped half-way down the ward, the Sisters of Charity knelt round a bed, we knelt too; such of the invalids as could move turned themselves on their narrow beds, and signed themselves reverently.

"Thank God! it is not Tristan," Blanche whispered, stealing her hand into mine. She remained on her knees till the little service was over and the priest had quitted the ward. "Let us go on now," she said, as she rose comforted.

The Sister who had been kneeling near us now came up and asked whom we sought.

"M. de Kermartin."

"Behold him!" she answered, indicating with her hand the bed on which the dying person lay to whom the last sacraments had just been administered.

"Are you sure? Oh, *ma sœur*, it is impossible, M. de Kermartin is quite a young man," we whispered both together.

The Sister went to the head of the bed and looked at the man's face. She



signed to Blanche to come nearer. "He has got a silk chain with a little medal attached to it, round his neck. Come, and see whether you recognise it. He won't know you ; don't be afraid."

Blanche stepped forward, dragging me by the hand. She went close, then gave a cry and started back. "Hush, no noise !" warned the Sister.

"My hair, my medal, my Tristan ! O Tristan, Tristan !" the poor child cried, flinging herself down by the bed.

"Hush, Mademoiselle, you disturb a dying man," said the Sister. "You must leave the ward."

But Blanche had got hold of a poor maimed hand that lay on the coverlet, and was kissing it and weeping over it. Instead of making her leave the ward the Sister turned away her head. "Poor thing," she said. "This is a sad case. His sister, doubtless. Madame, you will be able to tell the family that everything was done that could be done. But he came in too late. What with the fatigue and the heat, gangrene set in, and amputation of the broken arm did no good. He sank immediately. It will be all over in an hour or two. You had better take Mademoiselle away. She has been here quite long enough."

Just then there came a change over the face of the sufferer. He opened his eyes, and seemed partly to recognise Blanche.

"Poor Blanche, cruel Blanche ! *Vive l'Emp—*"

"The ward is to be cleared instantly. Mesdames, you must go. Not one instant longer," said the Sister, peremptorily, as Blanche prayed to be allowed to remain. As she took us out by one door, the surgeons entered by another.

That evening we two attended poor Tristan's funeral. I had thought of one thing which had not yet occurred to Blanche. I had made arrangements by which the grave became her private property for ever. For a fair sum of money one may have the certainty that the grave of a departed friend will rest inviolate. If this is considered a privilege not worth securing, the plot of ground is liable to be used for a new tenant after a limited number of years. I took Blanche home to her mother. There was only one little outburst from her, as we looked our last at Toulon from the carriage windows. "Ah ! he never knew how much I loved him ! I never knew myself till now. Henceforth my whole life shall be one prayer for him. That wretched money I was so proud to earn all alone, shall be spent in masses for his soul."

Ten years after Tristan's death I went to St. Aignan and saw Blanche, and we went together to the commemorative service in the church on All Souls' day. "I think he must be happy," she said, as we walked home. "I think ten years of praying must be worth something. But if it has been worth something, it will still be worth something. So I shall go on."