

*Mademoiselle  
l'Anglaise*



**Phyllis Bottome**

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## “Mademoiselle l’Anglaise”

By PHYLLIS BOTTOME

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**I**N the new Latin Quarter beyond Montparnasse you may, if you like, be very respectable. You leave the Boule’ Miche’, cut up the Boulevard Raspail, and cross by the lion—a large and rather lumpy lion—at the top of the Boulevard Arago.

The plane-trees, in splendid rows of four, sweep down to high iron gateways, behind which lie the gardens. Long before the boulevard becomes the working-quarter and out of sight of the farther haunts of the *Apache*, a little to the left of the big gray jail, you may enjoy every consideration, including a garden and a studio as private as the Faubourg St.-Germain.

It seemed exactly the place for Lucia Dale, for she intended to be very private indeed. She was alone and beautiful and young, so that it was

discreet to be private; and then she wanted to work. She wanted to work from the earliest light to the latest; she wanted to be strenuous, to achieve, and not to become in the least French while she was doing it.

She did not like the French; she was sure that they were an insincere, light, and unreliable nation. She admitted that they could paint; she even acknowledged that, as far as art went, France went with her, the rest of Europe some way behind, and the British Isles hardly in the order of the “also ran.”

Lucia admired a little grudgingly the Latin sense of form. She had crossed the channel for it, and accepted Paris for it,—accepted, that is to say, what she had to accept of Paris,—and taken for a year the little house beyond the iron doors for nothing else but to acquire this lacking attribute. When once she had got the sense of form, she meant to hurry back to England with it under her arm, and keep it forever upon those inhospitable and shapeless shores.

Meanwhile she talked French very well, but did not encourage conversation. Society is mixed in the gardens. It is mixed as to race: there are Russians, Greeks,—there were Austrians and a German once,—Poles, Americans, and the French themselves; but the mixture of race is as nothing compared with the inequality of social position.

The Russians don't know the Poles, the Austrians and the German cultivated a deep mutual distaste, the French don't know one another. They only know that they would rather not. The Americans alone, with their kindly, unintimate heartiness, were accepted by every one.

They had lived for years in Paris, the husbands—there were three sets of Americans, and they were all emphatically married—were hail fellow well met with all the quarter. The wives, equally kind, but perhaps more guardedly innocent, accepted with admirable tolerance a bowing acquaintance even with the Poles, who were not at all clean, and with the Russians, who talked all night.

The American ladies did not talk any language but their own, which made it simpler. Even in their own language it was wonderful what they failed to understand. The concierge, with whom they were great favorites, told them what she thought was good for them. She told them of the arrival of Lucia Dale.

“This one,” she explained, “is quite alone. She is English. One would say she is too young and too pretty to be alone by herself, but one would be

wrong. She has an eye of ice and of iron; she inspires fear. And the questions she asks about drains! One would suppose the English slept in them, they are so particular.”

“Poor thing!” said Mrs. Herbert P. Birdseye. “I’ll run right across and ask her if I can help her settle.”



The concierge barred the way; she crossed her arms over her high and shelf-like bosom, emphatically shaking her head.



“You are kindness itself, Madame,” she asserted, “but the Englishwoman is of a coldness inconceivable; she has already said that she does not like Americans.”

“Oh dear!” said Mrs. Birdseye, “but that’s dreadful! How in the world am I to help her?”

“For that!” said madame. “She does not need help; she is of a competence. Also, a *bonne* is to come in by the day. She has made her own arrangements. No one from the quarter! It appears she has an uncle who resides across the river, an English curé. The *drôle*, he has, I am told, a wife! I said, ‘Hein! we have all sorts in this garden, but not a curé with a wife! They place themselves elsewhere.’ She said, ‘I do not think he will come here at all, but I give him to you as a reference!’ A fine reference that! But she has a good banker. She is indeed something of the solid, that little one. And on one side of her live the Russians, and on the other, that bad subject Monsieur Gervase!”

Here the concierge smiled broadly, for if there was a soft spot in her capacious, but iron-clad, bosom, it contained as sole lodger that bad subject Gervase-St. Anne-Marie de Martel, commonly known in the quarter as “M’sieur Gervase.”

Monsieur Gervase was a sculptor, but that was only one of the things he was. He was all the things he shouldn’t be, and, most surprisingly, many of

the things he should. As a son he was immaculate; but he was a son only on Sundays. The rest of the week he was occupied in leading at least nine lives with intense zest and some confusion as to the twenty-four hours and the ten commandments. On Sunday he crossed the river and went to mass with the Comtesse de Martel, kissed the hands of his aunts, and behaved with a propriety to touch the hearts of several otherwise amusing young cousins.

The Comtesse de Martel was a woman with a great deal of religion and a certain amount of tact. She was perfectly satisfied with the Sundays of Monsieur Gervase, and once in a blue moon, after a carefully given warning, she descended upon the gardens.



The day before she arrived the quarter arose and came to the assistance of Monsieur Gervase, especially Fanchette and Loulou, his favorite models; they cleaned out the studio for madame and placed in a row a charming series of statuettes, borrowed for the purpose from the delighted Americans. The real work of Monsieur Gervase bore not the least resemblance to these pious heads of pretty infants, and room was made for it in the studios round the gardens.

Fanchette or Loulou, as the case may be, would knock upon one of the studio doors and say: “Madame La Comtesse de Martel calls upon Monsieur Gervase on Sunday. Would you be so kind as to permit ‘Woman at Dawn’ or ‘The Drinking Lady’ or the ‘End of Pleasure’ to spend the day with you?”

After the departure of madame, Monsieur Gervase would give a great entertainment, and “Woman at Dawn,” “The Drinking Lady,” and the “End of Pleasure” would return to him with their accommodating hosts. The concierge would shut her ears to late pianos, errant voices, and steps infirmly returning to curiously inaccessible front doors. “After all,” she would say to the Americans next day, “*le bon Dieu* made youth. When one opens a bottle of champagne, if it is good, a little spills, is it not so?”

Monsieur Gervase was hard at work smoking a cigarette upon his doorstep. It was a lovely morning in April, 1914. The purple iris round the fountain was blooming gaily, the little red daisies were open wide-eyed to the sun, across the court a pink almond blossom flung its delicate tracery against a pale-gray wall, the birds sang in a tumult of excitement over the unfolding spring. Lucia Dale came to the door and shook off the crumbs from a snowy white table-cloth.

She herself was very like the early spring. Her figure was slender,—a little too slender, almost spare,—but Gervase forgave her her slenderness for the grace of her sloping shoulders and the line of her exquisite throat; it was like a slim column in a sun-haunted cloister. Her hair was very fine and silky, with a dozen different lights in it; her face in repose was only a promise, an unkindled, delicate promise. She had particularly cold gray eyes, as the concierge had discovered, but above them was a sweep of dark lashes, and fine arched eyebrows a shade darker than her hair.

Gervase thought she had an admirable way of whipping crumbs from a table-cloth. He was inspired by a desire to help her. He said, taking his cigarette out of his mouth and bowing—he had no hat on:

“*Bonjour*, Mademoiselle. We are, I presume, to be neighbors?”

She folded the table-cloth methodically; over it she regarded Monsieur Gervase with her fine cold eyes.

“Certainly you presume, Monsieur,” she replied. Then she shut the door.

Gervase’s face burned like fire; it was as if she had struck him. He could not remember such a thing ever happening in the gardens before. He could not believe any woman would do such a cruel thing on such a day, least of all to him, Gervase.

It was not gracious, it was not kind; it was essentially English. His mother was right: the English were a race of barbarians like the Germans, whom they pretended to dislike. He would not presume again. Probably she had not even noticed how his tie, his pocket-handkerchief, his socks were in themselves a study in how to please her. He had made it on purpose for her. For her and for her alone he had appeared smart upon his door-step at the unnatural hour of eight o’clock in the morning! Well, it was a mistake; such a nationality was not worthy of such a sacrifice.

He retired into his studio, dragged on his apron, and worked extremely badly for several hours.

For a fortnight he sedulously avoided Mademoiselle l’Anglaise. This is not to say he did not notice her. You cannot very well help noticing your next-door neighbor when your door-steps touch; and if she was disagreeable to speak to, she was beautiful to notice. She moved easily and lightly about the gardens like a goddess off a frieze. Her coats and skirts, the only things the English mind has ever mastered in the service of woman, were of the best that mind could accomplish.

She went out only in the early mornings for about half an hour and again when the light failed toward the close of the long golden afternoons, but she was always in by seven o'clock, and she was always alone. Sometimes, perhaps twice a week, a middle-aged, gray-haired lady came to tea. Gervase approved of this. She had snubbed him, and it gave him a sense of security to think she had included the whole masculine universe in her snub.



The concierge for the first time in her career was unable to give him any further information on the subject of Mademoiselle l'Anglaise.

“*Voyez-vous,*” she exclaimed, “as a rule, when they don’t speak, the *bonne* expounds. This one has a *bonne* very elderly and thin—thin to a degree that suggests a perpetual Lent, out of whom one extracts nothing. Monsieur Gervase, I tell you this for your good: avoid thin women! There is nothing to them—nothing but the severity of the thing blighted. What others have left alone should never be sought. It is a pear with a wasp in it that tastes sweetest. Of mademoiselle herself I say nothing. She pays her rent regularly and makes no complaints. How can I tell you where she goes in the afternoons? Paris is free. But I should strongly advise you not to follow her.”

“Certainly I shall not follow her,” said Gervase, with some audacity, curling his short mustache. “By and by I shall accompany her. I do not follow women.”

“*Méchant!*” exclaimed the concierge with delight. Still, she did not believe he would ever accompany Mademoiselle l'Anglaise. “Ice melts,” said madame to herself; “but iron and ice never.”

Then one cold April day when all the almond blossoms had been drenched and blinded and flung madly to and fro about the garden there was a hurried, frightened knock at Monsieur Gervase’s door. It was a shrinking, timid, ineffectual knock, and Monsieur Gervase flew to the door to answer it. It is only a woman who knocks like that, and of women only one who is superlatively shy. As far as Gervase knew, and in this direction he knew very far, there was only one very shy woman in the garden.

He flung open the door, to find his next-door neighbor standing bareheaded in the rain.



“O Monsieur!” she cried, “I cannot find the concierge, and the stove is exploding!”

Gervase followed her with delight, while she explained and apologized, into her little front door. He blessed those seldom endearing stoves of the gardens! He knew their ways, the crumpled rose-leaves of the artist’s life. This one was not exploding,—they never really did explode,—but it was thinking seriously of doing something very tiresome, and meanwhile it roared splendidly like a lion, and sent up terrifying small spurts of flame.

Mademoiselle

l’Anglaise hovered courageously about him while with a knowing touch or two, a practised eye, and a sculptor’s sure, effectual hand, Monsieur Gervase calmed down the *crise*

that was afflicting the stove.

“My servant is out,” mademoiselle stammered. “How kind, how clever of you, Monsieur! I regret so to have troubled you, but I—I cannot talk Russian, and besides—it is *quite* all right now, isn’t it?”

Gervase concealed a smile.

“Should I incommode you, Mademoiselle,” he asked gravely, “if I remained five minutes just to see if it continues all right?”

“Oh, thank you; must I really bother you?” she said regretfully. Monsieur Gervase looked at her; he had singularly expressive eyes. The severity of Mademoiselle l’Anglaise shook a little.

“But of course,” she said quickly, “please stay. I should like it. It has been very wet all day.”

“Personally, I like wet weather,” said Monsieur Gervase, firmly. “There is something in it—how shall I say—responsive?”

Mademoiselle turned away, but it did not appear that she was offended; on the contrary, she crossed to a little table and returned with a box of



cigarettes.

“It cannot be that you smoke!” cried Gervase in horror. “Or that distinguished, gray-haired lady who calls here for tea? It would be sacrilege.”

Mademoiselle l’Anglaise laughed. It was a bubbling, happy little laugh, and when it happened, every promise of her face found its fulfilment; there was even a dimple.

“It is quite true my aunt doesn’t smoke,” she admitted; “but I have cousins.”

“I have not seen them,” said Gervase, sternly.

“They come,” said mademoiselle, with the dimple still lurking in her cheek, “on Sunday afternoons, when you are out.”

This might have been a mortal blow for Gervase, but something had saved it: she had noticed when he was out.

He glanced about the studio with speculative, delighted eyes. It was like no studio that he had ever seen before. It reminded him of his mother’s garden in Brittany. Madame de Martel had a passion for neat parterres, tidy hedges, and rows of delicate sweet-peas.

There was a great deal of space in the studio, and there was perfect order, and then there were pictures. Great Heavens! He hadn’t supposed she could paint like this! There were water-colors, pastels, oils, all very small and very fine, with delicate, firm lines, and a bloom about them like the freshness of youth. As a rule they were landscapes worked up from old sketches, carried in her eye or in her heart, perhaps. Her sense of color seized upon his senses. This slim, austere little person rioted in color! He felt like seizing her by the hands and dancing with her round the studio.

“*Parbleu!*” he cried, “you can work!”

She looked quickly at him, with a sudden letting down of barriers.

“You think so?” she asked with a little catch in her breath. “You think I can do something good one day? For that it would be worth while having had to come to France.”

“Ah, Mademoiselle,” cried Gervase, with a little gesture of ironic despair, “poor France!”

For a Frenchman, to hate France is as if you hated his mother. Mademoiselle l’Anglaise flushed a little.

“Forgive me!” she said. “I should not have said that. Do you really think I can paint?”

Gervase looked away from her, at the canvases before him; he pulled them about with practised hands. It was some time before he answered her directly. The stove sank into brooding normality. It wouldn't exactly burn, and the idea of going out had not yet occurred to it.

“Yes,” he said at last, “you can paint. One sees that, but your figures are bad. Where have you studied?”

Mademoiselle l'Anglaise sat down in an old, black oak chair; against it her hair looked like sunshine above pine-trees.

“I don't like drawing from the life,” she asserted calmly.

Gervase flung enraged hands above his head.

“Mademoiselle,” he cried, “it is an infamy! You have no business here at all; you should reside in a convent on the top of a mountain, where nothing passes but the sunset and the dawn. This is an outrage to art. You do not love the figure! You do not wish to draw from life! What, then, do you wish to draw from? You are not, one sees, a Futurist or an Imagist; what, then, are you? Do you not know that life is as big as the sky, as crushing as a volcano, as hot as fire, and as good as the sunshine? What are you doing here at all? Why are you alive? Of what use is it to have meals, to sleep, to be beautiful and young! You make me feel sick. You deprive me of force. I could cry aloud when I look at you, and you have no excuse; for God gave you everything, including an artist's eye! *Mon Dieu!* what waste!”



She sat looking at him. Gravity dawned into amusement in her eyes, and then swept back to a deeper seriousness.

At the end of his speech Gervase flung himself back into an arm-chair, shivering. For a moment she really thought he was worse than the stove. She was not in the least afraid of him, however.

“You see,” she said, “I don't agree with you at all. I do not like life very much, not what you mean by it; but I do love style. I would make great

sacrifices for it. You are an artist yourself, I know, and I am sure you are telling me the truth; so that, if you really think it necessary, I will study in a studio from models. I shall not like it at all. I am very much afraid of people I don't know, and I dislike them awfully."

"All the better for those you do know," said Gervase. He was calm again now, and eyed her with some friendliness and more amusement. "But, yes, if you want to be an artist, you must work from the life," he continued. "What you have done here is good. It shows more than promise, it is to some extent even achievement; but it is a little achievement,—how does one say it?—it is not up to the measure of your capacity. For that you must get rid of fear. Fear, dislike of life, these are shabby things, silly, prudent little obstacles that all artists must overcome." He leaned forward, and held her with his audacious, sparkling eyes. "Mademoiselle, don't be afraid; like life a little. It is sad, it is bad, but it can be very amusing. And, after all, it is what we have got. Let us make the best of it. Permit me, Mademoiselle, to assist you to like life a little?"

Mademoiselle l'Anglaise met his eyes; she looked into them for a long time, and she did not tell him that he had presumed again. She knew quite well that she could trust him, and also what she could trust him for; and she made up her mind then and there to trust him to that extent and never any further.

Gervase had no idea what was passing in her mind. He saw only that she was in some queer woman's way testing him, and that in her eyes the test had succeeded. She rose tranquilly and held out her hand to him.

"Monsieur," she said, "I thank you very much for your assistance, and I think the stove is quite safe now."

THE gardens watched with intense amusement the approaches of Monsieur Gervase. It was admitted that Mademoiselle l'Anglaise had yielded a little of her rigor, but there was a division of opinion in the gardens as to how much further she would yield it. Monsieur Gervase himself shared this uncertainty.

He had known many women, and he had respected only one. He paid his tribute to the sanctity of women in the person of Madame de Martel. For her he had idealism and a fastidious homage. The rest of her sex simply amused him. They amused him very much; they were, in fact, his chief diversion, and for a time he included in their ranks Mademoiselle l'Anglaise. She was

different from any of the others, and the amusement she afforded him had a peculiar flavor; but it was some time before he became aware that she had ceased to amuse him at all.

The change began perhaps when the guarded coldness of her eyes softened to meet his, and when her quiet welcome, always a little austere and grave, began to give him the sensation of awe. She was not really stern; she was very gentle and kind, and she was so sincere that she brought the tears to his eyes. It seemed to him that she walked about in the world of shams and dupes, as immaculate as a blue-eyed Madonna out of a Tuscan picture. She had that starry innocence that undermined celestial faith, which goes with flowers and angels, and it was in Paris that she walked about, not heralded or guarded by any angel, a little, graceful, unprotected English girl. Gervase ceased to think of how far he could go with her or how soon he could break down her delicate barriers. A new idea occurred to him. He became very much absorbed in taking care of Mademoiselle l'Anglaise; he took care of her even against himself!



For one thing, he would not let her walk back alone from the life schools through the grands boulevards at five o'clock in the afternoon. The first and the second day he met her at the door of the schools, and she accepted his escort with her sweet, shy friendliness; but on the third day she eluded him and returned earlier.

And then Gervase knew that he wasn't amused at all. He wasn't even angry; he was simply abjectly afraid. It actually meant more to him that she should be safe than that he should get his way. Frightened, he dashed back to the gardens.

"Has Mademoiselle l'Anglaise returned?" he asked the concierge, fiercely.

"But of course," said the concierge with great tranquillity. "Why should she not return?"

Gervase dismissed the question angrily.

"She has no business to be out alone," he muttered. For a moment it seemed as if he would knock down one of the Poles for standing on his own

door-step and looking across to the house of mademoiselle. Gervase knocked sharply at her door. Mademoiselle l'Anglaise was flushed a little, too, and she seemed relieved to see him.

“Oh, it's you!” she said quickly. “You'll come in, won't you?” She had previously told Gervase she could not receive him unless her aunt was present.

He came in and stood before her, angry as the French alone are angry, with the gentlest sharpness, as fine and cutting as a knife-blade.

“Mademoiselle,” he said formally, “I shall not intrude long upon your kindness. I have come to make a little assertion. I do not find you generous.”

“O Monsieur!” she murmured, as if for the first time she was a little frightened of him. She had never seen his eyes look cold before. “What is it? What do you mean?”

He moved away from her a little.

“You have twice placed me in a position that I find unbearable. I cannot permit it to occur again.” He was very pale and spoke with intense calm. “Why do you refuse my company? Is it that I am personally distasteful to you?”

“Oh!” cried Lucia. “Why, you are my only friend in Paris. You know you are not distasteful to me, Monsieur.”

“It is true I had that idea,” he said more gently; “but then, Mademoiselle, if I am not distasteful to you, if we are friends, why do you contrive to rebuff me? You do not only hurt my pride, which is a serious wrong to a Frenchman, but you frighten me.”

“Oh, but how can I frighten you?” she asked nervously. “I—I haven't even tried.”

He was still firm, though the softness of her voice shook him more than his own anger.

“You have quite succeeded without trying,” he said quietly. “You are alone in Paris, and Paris is up to a certain point safe; but I, who know and love her, wish her never to offend you. By declining to accept my care of you, I fear greatly that you may be offended.”



Lucia met his eyes with her direct simplicity.

“Yes,” she agreed, “sometimes I am offended; but I was thinking of getting a big dog.”

Gervase laughed helplessly.

“*Mon Dieu!*” he said, “what a precaution! And now are you still thinking of getting that big dog, Mademoiselle?” He came nearer to her, and laid his hand very gently on her shoulder. She did not draw it away from him, as he had half expected.

“But it means every day,” she said, her voice shaking a little, “and I *can* take care of myself, I really can. I wouldn’t let—any of my cousins come for me.”

“Please do not speak of care,” said Gervase in quite a different voice, “but say to yourself, ‘Every day I will give my friend a pleasure.’”

Lucia drew back a little. She still hesitated; she wanted to be wise and kind and, above all, to be just. She was very frightened of the boulevards at five o’clock in the afternoon, and she was not frightened of Gervase at all. She had a peculiar feeling about Gervase. It seemed as if she were safer with him than she had ever been with any one else in her life, and yet he was a Frenchman.

“I don’t know,” she said, “if you really—” She left this sentence unfinished, and began another: “And if you’ll promise to do anything else you’d rather do, and come for me only when you’re perfectly free?”

“Willingly,” said Gervase. “There could be no promise easier for me to make than that.”

Lucia looked relieved. “Well, then,” she said, “thank you. I won’t get the big dog. Will you stay to tea?”

Gervase shook his head.

“No, I—I don’t think so,” he said. He didn’t give any reason why he couldn’t stay to tea; he did not even seem to see her hand. He went very quickly to the door, and turned then to laugh back at her. “The place for the big dog,” he explained, “is on the door-step—*n’est-ce pas?*”

**A**ND all the brilliant, sunny months of May and June Gervase was good!

“He is like a little boy on the eve of his first communion,” the concierge remarked to the friendly Americans. “It is a goodness so spotless that one wonders if even the good God is not a little relieved when a smut falls. It is like this weather that never breaks—a peace before a storm.”

It was a hot night in July when the storm broke. The moon rose early and flooded all the quarter; it flooded the studio of Monsieur Gervase and made him as mad as his light heart.

That very day he had called Mademoiselle l’Anglaise “Lucia.” It had slipped from him, as they stood in the garden together, like some lovely dropped flower into a trembling stillness. He had waited for a rebuke, but no rebuke had come; only the delicate color of her face had grown deeper under his gaze, and because he was young and in love as he had never been before, curiously, deeply, with the very best that was in him, he had a terrible moment of intoxication.

He could not stay in the gardens alone; the world and all that was in it could hardly contain his joy. He rushed out into the quarter and searched for Fanchette and Loulou. He found them and a dozen of his most intimate friends, and dragged them back with him into the studio. They danced in the moonlight, and their cries and their laughter shook the gardens broad awake, and Gervase, a little, a very little, drunk with wine, and a great deal with some fiercer, subtler fluid, forgot everything but his joy.

He went out in the lightest of costumes,—it was even breathed that he wore no costume at all!—he curled up like a faun on the stone fountain, and with a mandolin under his arm he lifted up his clear, light baritone voice under the window of Mademoiselle l’Anglaise—the window which, in the English manner, was invariably open to any air—and sang “Santa Lucia” very loudly three times over, and his friends—most regrettably, for they were drunker than Gervase—joined in the chorus. Even the concierge observed next morning that it was out of place.



Lucia laid her burning cheek on the pillow and cried. She thought he meant to insult her. She remembered how light Frenchmen were, and also she heard, though it was four o’clock in the morning, the voices of Loulou and Fanchette. Somebody kissed somebody else just under her window. There were a good many of them, and the kisses may have had nothing at all to do with Gervase. On the



other hand, they may have had a good deal. Gervase was in the mood for vicarious kisses. He would, if there had been nothing else to kiss, have embraced the dirtiest of the Poles.



Lucia was barely dressed next morning when she heard his voice under her window, ardent and terribly assertive. “Lucia! Lucia!” he cried impatiently. Then she knew she had cheapened herself to him, and she grew very cold. Her eyes were like the Atlantic in an autumn gale, slate-gray and angry.

She opened the door, but stood in front of it.

“Whom are you calling?” she asked. “I cannot suppose it is myself; but there is no one here but me. My servant’s name is Josephine, and she has gone out.”

Gervase should have stopped then, but he was in a torrent of feeling that seemed strong enough to carry him over any obstacles.

“No, no, it was you,” he said urgently. “It is always you that I am calling. Do you not know it? Speak to me. I could not wait; I have not slept all night—Lucia!”

“I also have not slept very well,” she said. “You and your friends made sleep impossible.”

He saw then; but he had gone too far to stop, and it still seemed to him that if he went further she must understand.

“Don’t! Don’t!” he said quickly. “I cannot bear it now. I will explain everything. Do not stand there between me and my happiness. Give me your hand! I cannot live without it. Give me your hand!”

Lucia did not move. She looked at him with exactly the same eyes with which three months before she had regarded him across the table-cloth.

“Monsieur Gervase,” she said, “I do not know whether you are drunk or sober. There can be no doubt of what you were last night. You ask me to give you my hand. Am I to suppose that you wish to marry me?”

Gervase gazed helplessly at her.

“But, yes,” he muttered; “what else? Only you are wrong; it is not a wish; it is a fire.”

Her eyes never wavered.

“I am sorry,” she said, “very sorry; but I am afraid you made a great mistake.”

“Ah,” he said, “you do not love me!”

Something in Lucia winced suddenly under his words. She could not have told what it was, but it cried out like a creature mortally touched. She controlled it before she answered him.

“Monsieur, you are three things I do not like: you are a Catholic, you are—*méchant*, you are a Frenchman.”

Gervase drew himself together, and flung his bad head back defiantly.

“Yes, Mademoiselle,” he said, “and I was all these three things yesterday.”

“Then the mistake is mine,” said Lucia, coldly.

Gervase turned without speaking and walked away a little unsteadily into the sunshine, as if he were going blind.

Afterward Lucia remembered how she had sent him away from her, stumbling as if he had met darkness face to face.

Monsieur Gervase did not reappear in the gardens. It was a triumph for Mademoiselle l’Anglaise. Her rigor had not yielded; but the quarter did not like her any the better for that. Rigor was not its favorite quality in women.

Day followed brilliant, breathless summer day, and no one spoke to Mademoiselle l’Anglaise. They spoke among themselves, however, gathering by the concierge’s door night and morning; they spoke about Serbia and Austria and what Russia might be going to do; and then they paused and looked at one another, for they knew that what Russia did must mean France. Every now and then they looked anxiously up the street as if they saw something coming.

Mademoiselle l’Anglaise did not notice any of these things. Methodically and carefully she worked from the first light to the last. She read only the English newspapers, because she thought the French ones were improper. The English papers were full of Home Rule and coal-strikes. She thought the Liberal Government very wrong indeed and that strikes ought to



be stopped. She couldn't have said why, but it seemed to her as if Home Rule and strikes were rather like the way Gervase had behaved in the garden. She did not go to the life schools any more.

Then one night she could not sleep. There was a strange sound in the streets, as if Paris was awake, as if Paris might conceivably never go to sleep again. All night long there was movement, heavy, ceaseless movement. Paris tossed to and fro like a sick man, feverishly, incessantly, till the dawn.

The Boulevard Arago shook under the passing of huge wagons and rumbling motors; sometimes with a scream a flying taxi rattled and clamored through the heavier sounds. Sometimes a mail-van shot past with a noise like thunder, and always continuously, interminably, there were voices in the streets—wandering, returning voices, never very loud, but ceaseless, and strangely intent, as if some subject had taken hold of the night, and could not be dismissed.



In the morning the concierge forgot the milk, and Josephine never came. Mademoiselle l'Anglaise made herself a hasty breakfast and then went out into the garden. There was no one in the garden; every one was at the gate. The concierge was there, and the Austrians appeared to be having an altercation with the Russians.

From time to time the concierge intervened, and by and by two gendarmes appeared; and the Austrians marched off with them. The Russians went on talking fiercely and loudly; the Poles, in tears, kept asking for a taxi. It ought to have been very easy to get them one at that hour of the morning; but it appeared that there were no taxis. It is true that taxis flashed by, hundreds of them, like a flight of birds in a storm, but nobody seemed able to stop them. Mademoiselle l'Anglaise stood there for a moment or two before any one observed her. Then she asked a question.

“Madame,” she said to the concierge, “what is the matter?”

Every one stared at her as if she had flung a bomb among them. One of the Russians laughed, and observed in an undertone:

“They will know one day, those islanders, what is the matter; but we shall know it first, God save us!”

Madame turned her competent small eyes sharply upon Lucia Dale.

“It is a little thing you may have heard of, Mademoiselle,” she observed quietly, “called war. France moves.”

“Et l’Angleterre?” demanded a pretty little Frenchwoman, with red eyes. “Marchera-t-elle?”

Then Lucia bought a newspaper, and read it through very carefully. No one told her what had happened to Gervase-St. Anne-Marie de Martel, but she knew.

Every one supposed she would go back to her country; there was still time. And day by day France moved. There were four unforgettable days when Paris shot to and fro like a piece of complicated machinery let loose from control. Up and down, to and fro, tore the motors—gray army motors, civil-service motors, interminable, heavy-laden stores; and regiments, red-tunicked, blue-coated, white with dust, streamed interminably toward an unknown goal.



People stretched along the pavements in serried ranks, and jostled death in the streets. Endless queues stood for hours and days in front of railway stations and consulates under the brazen sky. Women fainted, children cried, men groaned, but there had ceased to be anything impressive about personal pain; it was swallowed up in one prolonged implacable effort to get ready, to get ready, to be in time.

The houses were mere gateways for the ceaseless, passionate movement of the throng. There was no noise and no excitement beyond the ominous, terrible speed of the state itself.

In the midst of this appalling larger movement homes fell apart, and were torn up by the roots; hearts broke, and hopes turned sick as quietly, as gently as leaves fall from the late summer trees.

Wives, mothers, sisters parted from their men forever, and no one said good-by. “Au revoir!” always “Au revoir!” piteously, with tears under the quiet voice. “Au revoir, Pierre! Au revoir, Jacques! Au revoir, mon brave!” There was no time for panic or for tears.

Mademoiselle l’Anglaise watched them. She could not help them, but she made no attempt to go away. Day by day, hour by hour, the question stabbed at her aching heart.

“Mademoiselle,” they asked her, “l’Angleterre marchera-t-elle?” And every day mademoiselle put her heart into the answer.

“I *know* that my country will fight.”

And on the fifth of August the concierge came to her door, and cried with tears and laughter:

“Mademoiselle, Mademoiselle, you belong to us now! England is with us!” And then mademoiselle said to her: “I—I also am with you!” and they cried together over the morning milk.

Paris was still now. There was no movement any more. The grands boulevards were empty; the big shops had their heavy shutters down; the huge *hôtels* were changing suddenly and secretly into hospitals. The Champs-Élysées was as empty as a desert.

The Americans—not the beloved inhabitants, but the tourist Americans—with cries for lost suitcases, with passionate insistence upon checks without value, with incredulous assertions of personal rights, had vanished, shrieking to the last, into merciful oblivion. The Paris Americans moved unwillingly, considerately, slowly; they left their hearts behind them, but they moved. The Russians left, the Poles left, unwashed to the last.

There was no one in the garden but the French themselves and Mademoiselle l’Anglaise, and it was then she found that she belonged to them.

She found it because the laundress refused to accept money for the washing.

“*Tiens*,” she explained, “it will be difficult for you to get money just now. I will take the washing just the same. What difference does it make? We are all of one family here.”

The concierge’s daughter came in and said:

“Since Josephine has not come back, it is I who will assist mademoiselle in the house. We cannot permit her to suffer.”

The little Frenchwoman with red eyes crossed the gardens every morning with her paper and with letters, unstamped, precious letters that came very slowly from *là-bas*.

“No,” she exclaimed frankly, “*he*” was not exactly her husband. If they had had time before he went—but they had not had time. And Mademoiselle l’Anglaise took her English papers across to her and translated for her what

England was doing, and they talked about the navy just as if madame were as much married as Lucia's aunt, who had gone away long ago, thoroughly annoyed with Lucia for desiring to remain.



It cheered the people in the garden to talk about the navy. It was always referred to as mademoiselle's navy, and respected very much.

Then one day the concierge said apologetically to Lucia, "Fanchette and Loulou—it appears they starve." Mademoiselle l'Anglaise said nothing, but in twenty-four hours' time she had started a work-room in her studio to provide the Red Cross with bandages, splints, and swabs. She taught Loulou and

Fanchette and a dozen other women of the quarter—poor light women blown here and there from a life of work to a life of sin and back again, but quite like other women, and desiring with all their hearts to serve their men. They were very happy in the studio of Mademoiselle l'Anglaise. She paid them well, and every day before they left she sat among them and told them all she knew, all she could find out, in those secret, breathless August days, of what was happening *là-bas*.

And when they knew that all France and the little band of undaunted, beaten, unbeatable English were falling back, horribly, swiftly, menaced and shaken, toward Paris, no one in the quarter stood more firmly in front of fear than Mademoiselle l'Anglaise.

"You will see," she said proudly, "they cannot get to Paris. Your men are there and mine—between us. It is enough. Do you doubt them?" No memories of 1870 quelled her, no reports shook her, and when bombs dropped at the corner of the street, she said, "This is the mentality of the Germans. It does not do to give them the satisfaction of noticing them. I shall go out and get the evening paper. Do not let us be afraid." And she went out and bought the evening paper and came back with it, laughing; for in her heart, and always before her eyes, France stood as one man, gallant and gay, audacious and tender, whose only fear was lest she might be offended. She knew he



had no other fear but that. She had no news of him, she asked for none, and no one spoke his name to her.

The concierge went once to see Madame de Martel, who would not leave her house in Paris; but Madame la Comtesse knew no more than the laundress across the way, who had four sons and a husband somewhere at the front. They got occasional post-cards, and when post-cards failed they waited. Usually they waited.

Then perhaps a terrible day arrived with a letter from the ministry of war, and then never any more at all. The laundress had three of these final communications, and went on washing, and at last Madame la Comtesse de Martel got one, too. It was a shade less terrible at first, for it merely said that Gervase St. Anne-Marie was severely wounded, and had been specially recommended for the military cross, for conspicuous gallantry.

As a special privilege, he was sent back as soon as he could travel to Paris. The American hospital took him, that hospital where all that science, passionate sympathy, money poured out like water, and skill flung without price for the service of France can do to lessen the tide of suffering is done daily and hourly by the untiring friends of France.

It was late October now; the Germans had been rolled back. Paris was breathing again a little, very lightly, with long pauses.

The Champs-Élysées was still quite empty except for the autumn leaves; they blew about like the light young lives, a golden crowd, resistless, gay, with only death to guide them.

It was Loulou who told Mademoiselle l'Anglaise.

Lucia found her weeping pitifully under the trees outside the iron gates. It was long after sunset, but the light had lingered to meet the stars.

“Loulou, you are in trouble. Tell me, is it your brother?” Lucia asked tenderly. Loulou shook her head.



“I kissed him,” she sobbed—“I kissed him here under the trees before he went. It was a little thing to do for him; but he liked it—he liked kisses.”

Lucia’s face whitened. She said nothing, but her eyes held the girl’s; she knew quite well who it was that liked kisses.

“Ah, but you—you knew him also!” cried Loulou. “I saw him with you myself one day, and you laughed. I remembered, for I had not heard you laugh before. They say he is blind.”



Lucia put her hand up before her eyes.

“Yes,” she said stiffly, “blind.”

“And he has but one arm, the poor young man,” Loulou continued, “and he will never be able to model again! Ah, the things he did of us! The artist! and one never got tired with him. Always he had his joke. He made us laugh. That keeps one going, you know, Mademoiselle. And his poor mother! They say when she was told, she asked the good God to let him die, and she is his mother.”



The door shot open, and the concierge joined them. She did not even listen to Loulou; she put her arms around Mademoiselle l’Anglaise and said:

“My little one, my little one, cry, then!”

But Mademoiselle l’Anglaise did not cry. She clung for a moment to the concierge, and shivered all over as if she were in a cold wind, and then drawing herself away, she ran past her back into the garden.

“Idiot!” said the concierge, dispassionately, to Loulou. “Stop your tears! One would think you were not a Frenchwoman. Where is it that they have taken him? *Bon!* Now return, animal, to thy bed. It is not for thee to cry; of the two he preferred Fanchette.”

Mademoiselle l’Anglaise put on her hat and coat and her gloves.

It was long past visiting hours, but the matron received her.



“Yes,” she said doubtfully, “You can see him. By the by,” she added, “did he ever call you Mademoiselle l’Anglaise?”

“Yes,” said Lucia. The matron’s face cleared.

“Then it is you he asks for,” she said. “Certainly you may go to him; but be prepared. He cannot see you.”

“Will he live?” Lucia asked, looking straight before her. The matron hesitated, then she said:

“We are afraid that he will live.” Lucia asked no more questions.

He was by himself in a quiet little cubicle, all that was left of Gervase-St. Anne-Marie. His eyes and his head were bandaged, one arm had been amputated, and one leg was crushed. They had wished to remove this, too, but he had refused his consent.

“I prefer being one-sided,” he murmured to the surgeon. “I have never cared for uniformity.” And the surgeon, hoping death for him, had left it. But Gervase was very strong; he had not died.

Lucia knelt down by his side, and very gently bending over him she kissed his lips. She said his name, “Gervase!” He lifted his hand tremblingly toward his sightless, bandaged eyes; she caught it in her own and murmured:

“You know me?” Gervase smiled.

“No,” he whispered; “you have kissed me. I do not think I know you—Mademoiselle l’Anglaise.”

She came to him daily after that, and every day she kissed him. He could not see that, as she sat by him, she cried, because she kept so very still. For a long while he hardly spoke to her, but he always knew her. He knew her footsteps across the floor, he counted the hours between her visits. It was like some strange and glorious dream.

He knew the dream must end. Very gently he ceased to seek her rare caresses: when her hand lay on his he did not press it; he no longer moved his head, as some one thirsty, for her light, swift kiss. He said to himself: “The first day I sit up I will send her away. She must not come any more.”



They noticed that he seemed to dread the first time for getting up. His mother came daily; sometimes she talked to him of Lucia, of whom she had heard from the concierge. She told him of her work-room for the models, and of how she had lighted the quarter by her serenity, her courage. "She was worth a regiment," Madame la Comtesse told him. "One wonders a little why she stayed in France."

Gervase said nothing; he was waiting for her to come. She always came at six, when her day's work was over.

His mother looked at him questioningly.

"You are tired to-day," she said. "Next week I am going to take you to Brittany." Gervase winced; he was not used to being taken about by others. His mother's eyes filled with tears. She could not give him her eyes; that was what she was always thinking.

He was alone when Lucia came at six. For the first time she did not kiss him. The bandages were off his head, and she could see what they had done to him. She moved a chair near him, and put her hand over his.

"To-day," she said, "I told them—your old friends in the gardens—that you were to sit up. They were so glad. When you can drive, Gervase, I want you to—to come to tea with me in the garden."

"Mademoiselle," he said, clearing his throat, "your visits have been like those of an angel. I cannot express to you very well what they have been to me. And now, and now,"—his voice shook, but he went on relentlessly,— "I am to tell you—I am to ask you—not to come any more, Mademoiselle."

"Yes," she said calmly, but without withdrawing her small, firm hand.

He leaned back in his chair.

"It is," he explained after a pause, "you see, because I am strong now, quite strong, and do not need visitors. I myself go away next week."

She sat astonishingly still, saying nothing,—at least for a moment she sat still,—and then he heard the soft movement of her dress, and knew that she had moved. She was close to him now, kneeling beside his chair.



"Gervase," she whispered, "would you know the truth if you heard it? You would not think I was lying to you? You would believe me? I did tell

you the truth at least always, didn't I?"

He drew a quick, deep breath.

"Ah, don't make it hard for me!" he muttered. "I am—a coward, Mademoiselle! I was not afraid of the Germans, but of you I am afraid!" She laughed again, close against him now, with such a gentle, happy laugh. He had a quick ear for truth, and he knew it was a happy laugh.

"I love you!" she said. "I stayed for you, I worked for you, I waited for you. I love France. I thought that they would tell me you were dead. You are not dead."

Her arms were round his neck, her head upon his shoulder. He could feel her slender, light form pressed against his side; her heart beat with his heart.

He knew he was not dead.





THE END

### TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

A book cover has been created for this eBook.

[The end of *Mademoiselle l'Anglais* by Phyllis Bottome]