

ELECTIVE AFFINITIES.

A Novel.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF GOETHE.

PART I.

CHAPTER V.

LETTER OF THE LADY SUPERIOR.

Your ladyship will forgive the brevity of my present letter. The public examinations are but just concluded, and I have to communicate to all the parents and guardians the progress which our pupils have made during the past year.

LETTER OF THE ASSISTANT.

Our reverend superior leaves it to me to write to you of Otilie, partly because, with her ways of thinking about it, it would be painful to her to say what has to be said; partly, because she herself requires some excusing, which she would rather have done for her by me.

Knowing, as I did too well, how little able the good Otilie was to show out what lies in her, and what she is capable of, I was all along afraid of this public examination. I was the more uneasy, as it was to be of a kind which does not admit of any special preparation; and even if it had been conducted as usual, Otilie never can be prepared to make a display.

After the pupils were dismissed, the examiners consulted together, and we teachers were partially admitted into the council. I very soon observed that of Otilie either nothing would be said at all, or if her name was mentioned, it would be with indifference, if not disapproval.

CHAPTER VI.

The carriage which brought Otilie drove up to the door. Charlotte went out to receive her. The dear girl ran to meet her, threw herself at her feet, and embraced her knees.

"Why such humility?" said Charlotte, a little embarrassed, and endeavoring to raise her from the ground.

"It is not meant for humility," Otilie answered, without moving from the position in which she had placed herself; "I am only thinking of the time when I could not reach higher than your knees, and when I had just learnt to know how you loved me."

She stood up, and Charlotte embraced her warmly. She was introduced to the gentlemen, and was at once treated with especial courtesy as a visitor. Beauty is a welcome guest everywhere. She appeared attentive to the conversation, without taking part in it.

The next morning Edward said to Charlotte, "What an agreeable, entertaining girl she is!"

time she would have to spare, she begged Charlotte to divide her hours for her, and to these she adhered exactly. She worked at what was set before her in the way which the Assistant had described to Charlotte. They let her alone. It was but seldom that Charlotte interfered. Sometimes she changed her pens for others which had been written with, but these, she found, would soon be cut sharp and fine again.

The ladies had agreed with one another when they were alone to speak nothing but French, and Charlotte persisted in it the more, as she found Otilie more ready to talk in foreign language, when she was told it was her duty to exercise herself in it.

At the same time she looked over again the more early accounts which had been sent her of Otilie, to refresh her recollection with the opinion which the Superior and the Assistant had formed about her, and compare them with her in her own person.

This examination led her to nothing new, indeed; but much which she already knew become of greater meaning and importance. Otilie's moderation in eating and drinking, for instance, became a real distress to her.

The next thing on which the ladies were employed was Otilie's toilet. Charlotte wished her to appear in clothes of a richer and more recherche sort, and at once the clever active girl herself cut out the stuff which had been previously sent to her, and with a very little assistance from others was able, in a short time, to dress herself out most tastefully.

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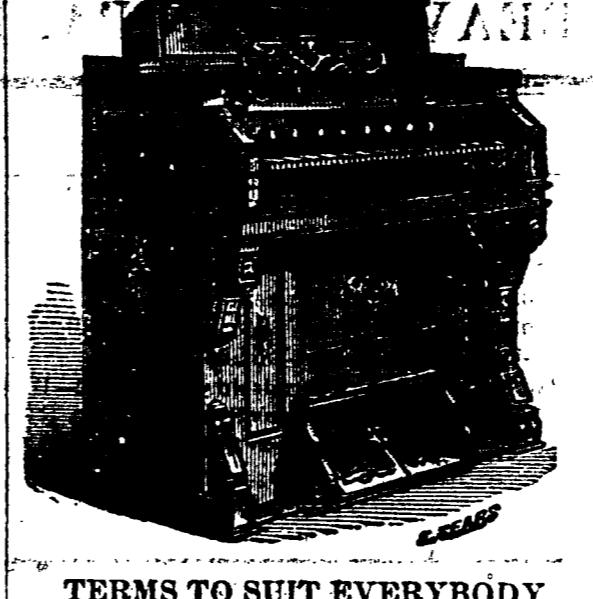
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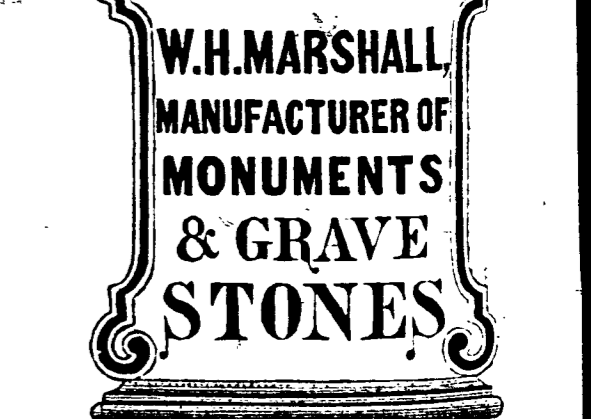
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