A GOVERNOR'S WOOING.

"Can you receive Madame Bionet, sir?" asked an attendant, as he opened the door of the deputy governor's office.

It was a large, sunny looking apartment, with a very high ceiling, two windows draped with green damask curtains, walls and wainscots of the same color, and heavy bookcases of mahogany. The lightly wind from the open windows stirred the papers of the official furniture, and the mirror over the mantelpiece reproduced with exactness a black marble clock, two bronze lamps and a pair of gilt candlesticks.

Herbert Boinville, the deputy governor, was seated, with his back to the fireplace, at a large mahogany desk which was strewn over with deeds and various papers. He raised his grave, melancholy face which was framed in a brown beard, tipped with a few gray hairs, and his black eyes, with tired looking lids, glanced at the card which the servant had handed to him.

On this card was written in a trembling hand, Veuve Bionet (widow Bionet), but the name conveyed no information to him and he paid it down again with a sigh.

"It is an old lady, sir," said the attendant, in explanation; "shall I send her away?"

"No, let her come in," replied the deputy governor in a tone of resignation.

The usher straightened himself up in his uniform, bowed and disappeared, returning the next minute to show to the visitor who stepped on the threshold and dropped a well-behaved courtesy.

Herbert Boinville half rose from his chair, and with cold politeness signed for a seat, which she took after making another courtesy.

She was a little old lady, dressed in shabby mourning. Her black merino gown had a greenish tinge, and was wrinkled and burned; a limp crape veil, which had evidently served through more than one period of mourning, hung down from a black felt hat, an old fashioned bonnet, and beneath a fringe of false brown hair was a round, wrinkled face with bright little eyes, a small mouth and no teeth.

"Sir," she began, in a somewhat breathless voice, "I am the daughter, sister and widow of men who served their country. I applied some time ago to the department for help, and I have come to see whether there is any hope."

The deputy governor listened without moving a muscle of his face. He had heard many supplications of this kind.

"Have you received any assistance?" he asked coldly.

"No, sir," she replied. "I have managed to get on until now without asking. I have a small pension."

"Ah!" he interrupted in a dry tone, "in that case I am afraid we can do nothing for you. We have a great many applicants who have no pension to rely upon."

"Ah, listen, sir!" she cried desperately, "I have not asked you anything. I had three sons, and they are all dead. That one we bought mathematics, and one day during the winter, when he was going from the Panthéon to Chapsal college he caught a violent cold, which settled on his lungs and carried him off in two weeks. He had supported me and his child by teaching; the expenses of his illness and death used up all our little savings, and I had to raise money on my pension. Now I am alone in the world with my grandchild, and we have nothing. I am 67 years old, sir."

Tears had gathered under her wrinkled eyelids as she spoke, and the deputy governor was listening more attentively than he had done at first. A peculiar singing intonation of the speaker's voice, and the sound of certain provincial expressions seemed to his ears like some familiar music; the old lady's way of speaking had for him a flavor of home which produced a most singular sensation in his mind. He rang his bell and sent for Madame Bionet's "papers," and when the usher came had laid a thin package before him in examining the yellow pages with evident interest.

"You are from Lyonnais, I am sure," he said at last, turning toward her a fine lion face, and on which a faint smile was seen; "I suspected it from your accent."

"Yes, sir, I am from Argenson," she answered. "And you recognized my accent! I thought I had long since lost it. I have been speaking alone! France like a dying coop.

The deputy governor looked with interesting compassion at this poor widow whom a bench wind had torn from her native forest and cast into Paris like a withered leaf. He felt his official heart growing softer, and curiling smile he said:

"I am also from Argenson. I lived near your village for a long time at Clermont." And then he added gravely, "Keep up your courage, Mme. Bionet. I hope we shall be able to help you. Will you give me your address?"

"No, it has to be Suzee, near the Capuchin convent. Thank you, sir, for your kindness. I am very glad to have found a fellow countryman," and she rose and courtesied the widow took her departure.

As she so she was gone M. Boinville rose, and going to the window, stood looking down into the garden with his face against the glass. But he was not looking at the tops of the half leafless chestnut trees, the dreary gray sky, the wet roofs beyond the east, beyond the plains and the chalky hills of Champagne, just a large forest, but a valley where a quiet river flowed between two rows of poplar trees, to a little old town with tile roofed houses. There his early childhood had been passed and later his vacations. His father, who was registrar in the office of the canal juge, lived a narrow, monotonous life, and he had spent his early years with him, at work and active discipline. He had left home when in his twenty-first year and had returned only to attend his father's funeral.

Possessing a superior intellect and an iron will, and being an indefatigable worker, he had risen rapidly from rung to ladder, and at 48 years of age was made deputy governor. Austere, punctual, reserved and coldly polite, he arrived at his office every morning at exactly 9 o'clock and remained there until 6, taking work with him when he went home. Although he was possessed of keen sensibilities, his bearing was so reserved and continuously stoical that he was thought cold and stern. He was very little of a society man, his tastes devoted to business, and he had never had enough leisure to think of marrying. His heart, indeed, had once asserted itself before he had left home, but it was for their mutual misfortune that the girl he loved had refused him in order to marry a rich tradesman.

This early disappointment had left in Herbert Boinville a feeling of bitterness which even the other successes of his life could not wholly efface, and there came with a time of melancholy in his being. The old lady's voice had aroused and recalled the thought of the past, and his spirit was overwhelmed by a flood of recollections. Wills to stand there motionless, with his forehead pressing against the window pane, he was stirring, as one would a nest of dead leaves, the long smothering memories of his youth, and he [illegible] into perfume rose the thoughts of bygone years and days.

Suddenly he returned to his chair, drew Madame Bionet's petition to him and wrote upon it the words, "Very deserving case." Then he rang his bell and sent the document to the clerk in charge of the relief bureau.

On the day of the official assent to Madame Bionet's petition Mr. Boinville left his office earlier than usual, for the idea had suddenly taken hold upon him that he owed himself to his aged country woman.

Three scanted frames. The case was but a drop in the enormous charity of the enlightened land, but to the poor widow it would be a great deal.

Although it was December the weather was mild so Herbert Boinville walked all the way to the Rue de la Santé, and for the time he emerged his contentment that lonely neighborhood was wrapped in gloom. By the light of a gas lamp near the Capuchin convent he saw "Number 17" over a half open door in a rough stone wall, and, entering, found himself in a large narrow garden. He could just distinguish in the darkness square plots of vegetables, some groups of rose bushes, and here and there the shadowy outline of fruit trees. At the other end of the garden, two or three dim lights showed the front of a plain, square building, and to this the deputy governor made his way, and had the good luck to run against the gardener, who directed him to the widow Bionet's lodgings upstairs.

After some scrambling on the crazily steps M. Boinville knocked at a door on the which a line of light was to be seen, and gave his surprise often, the door being opened, he saw before him a girl of about twenty years holding up a tighted lamp and looking at him with astonished eyes. She was dressed in black and had a fair, fresh face, and the lamp light was shining on her wavy chestnut hair, round dimpled cheeks, smiling mouth and blue and blue eyes.

"Is this where Madame Bionet lives?" asked M. Boinville after a momentary hesitation, and the girl replied, "Yes, sir. Is kind enough to walk in. Grandmother, here is a gentleman who has come to see you."

The gentleman stated himself to an antique armchair covered with Utrecht velvet, and cast a rapid glance round the room, which evidently served as both parlor and dining room. It contained very little furniture; a small chest of white drift wood, next to which stood an old fashioned cabinet, clothes press, a round table covered with oilcloth and some rush bottom chairs, while on the wall hung two old colored lithographs. Everything was very neat and the place had an old time air of comfort and rusticity. M. Boinville explained the object of his visit in a few words and the widow exclaimed:

"Oh, thank you, sir! How good you are! It is quite true that pleasant surprises never come single. My grandchild has passed an examination in telegraphy, and while she is waiting for a position she is doing a little painting for one and another. Only today she has been paid for a large order, and so we made up our minds," and the grandmother, "to celebrate the event by having only old home dishes for dinner. The gardener down stairs gave us a cabbage, some carrots and potatoes to make a potee. We bought a Lorraine sausage, and when you came in I had just made a tot-fit."

"Oh, a tot-fit!" cried Boinville. "That is a sort of cake made of eggs, milk and farina. It is twenty years since I heard its name and more than since I tasted it."

He has become strangely animated, and the young girl, who was watching him curiously, saw a look of actual greediness in his brown eyes. While he was lost in a reverie of the tot fait Clandette and her grandmother turned away and began discussing, and at last the girl whispered:

"I am afraid it would not do."

"Why not?" exclaimed the old lady. "I think it would please him." And then, seeing that he was looking at them wonderingly, she went toward him, saying:

"M. Boinville, you have already been so good to us that I am going to ask of you another favor. It is late, and you have a long way to go—we should be so glad if you would stay here and taste our tot fait—should we not, Clandette?"

"Certainly," said the girl, "but M. Boinville will have a plain dinner, and, besides, he is, no doubt, expected at home."

"No one is waiting for me," answered the gentleman, thinking of his usual dull, solitary meals in the restaurant. "I have no engagement, but—he hesitated, looked at Clandette's smiling eyes, and suddenly exclaimed:

"I accept with pleasure."

"That is right!" said the old lady briskly. "What did I tell you, Clandette? Quick, my girl, set the table and run for the wine, while I go back to my potee."

The girl and already opened the press and taken out a striped tablecloth and three napkins, and in the twinkling of an eye the table was ready. Then she lighted a candle and went down stairs to fetch the wine, while the old dame set down with her top full of obedience, which she proceeded to crack and place upon the dish.

"Is not that a bright, lively girl?" she said. "She is my consolation, and she shows me like a flower on an old wall."

Here the speaker rattled the chestnuts on the stove, and then Clandette reappeared, a little flushed and out of breath, and the tot woman were and brought in the potee, and set it, steaming and fragrant, on the table.

Seated between the sheer old grandmother and the serious, smiling girl, and in the midst of half timed conversation which somewhat resembled the monotony of his youth, Herbert Boinville, the deputy governor, did honor to the potee. He grew, and made quite free with the wine, and conversed familiarly with his new friends, returning the gay smiles of Clandette, and chatting with good humor of the small of the garden inside and pleasure which the old lady said.

From time to time the widow would rise and go to attend to her scenery, and at last she returned triumphant, bringing in an iron baking dish in which was the goodly wedding gateau known as tot, consisting of orange flower water.

Then came the toasted cheesecakes their brown, crispy outside, and the old lady brought from her press a bottle of Rignole, a liquor made of brandy and sweet wine.

When Clandette had cleared the table the grandmother took up her knitting mechanically and sat near the stove, chatting away as fast, but she saw plainly to the emotional effects of the warmth and the liqueurs and his ease. Clandette put the lamp on the table, and she and her lover had to talk to entertain each other. The girl, sprightly and light hearted, did nearly all the talking, she had been brought up at Argenson, and described the neighborhood with such amusing detail Boinville seemed to be carried back to his native place. As the room was warm Clandette had opened a window, and the fresh air from the fields with the odor of the pine grove and the gurgling sound of a fountain, while further off was heard the bell of the Capuchin convent.

Herbert Boinville had an indefinable, for which the Spaniards and the Italians [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]