

"I will tell you." Valérie spoke quickly, and drew Léonie with her as she moved away, "Julie, and Félicité, and Zénaïde, and Victoire—all go to-morrow, and if—Ursule," she made a sort of gulp at the name, "can do the devoirs of the first class, why she will move up there with you and me and Sophie."

Ursula stood where they had left her, with a proud smile on her face. "Do the 'devoirs?' That means the exercises," she said to herself.

The school bell rang, Madame came in again, and, when every one was seated, she began to give a lesson in dictation.

Ursula's cheeks burned. She could write French correctly, she could speak it fairly, but she had never heard it spoken by natives. Her master had lived so long in England, and had grown so accustomed to square his accents to suit English ears, that she felt like a drowning creature as she strove to individualize the words in Madame Henry's glib sentences. She did her best, but the room seemed to go round with her, and as to accents and niceties of that kind she had not a moment's thought for them.

"However, none of the others can have followed such rapid dictation as that," she thought. She was sitting between Sophie and Léonie; Valérie sat opposite, between two sisters—hard-faced, red-cheeked girls, with eyes like black beads, and glittering white teeth.

Presently Mademoiselle Prage came back with the "dicté" books.

Ursula grew crimson—tears gathered in her eyes; she saw "40" at the bottom of her page, and she knew that meant corrections. She looked up and met Valérie's mocking glance.

"How many, Ursule? I have eight."

"Forty." Poor Ursula hung her head.

"Ah, you will stay in the second class; you cannot work with us yet. Is it not so, Mademoiselle Prage?" she said to the governess, who was distributing the copy-books.

"We shall see," said Mademoiselle.

Poor Ursula! Had she come to France for this—to be despised by her equals, and set to learn with girls much younger than herself; girls there would be no credit in striving against!

Next morning came. To Ursula's surprise and Valérie's disgust, the English girl found herself in the first class; her schoolmistress thought that her mistakes were not caused by ignorance or stupidity, and though Ursula knew in her heart that the work given her was too hard for her, she worked away unflinchingly.

"It will be easier when I get used to the

accent. If I tell the professors that I don't understand the rules as they are given out, I shall be put in the second class, and that mocking Valérie will triumph." For her sensitiveness had warned her of Valérie's jealousy.

Valérie was vexed; Ursula's industry and determination to succeed made it necessary that she too should put out her strength and give up her careless, pleasure-loving ways. She grew almost to hate the pale, dark-eyed girl who grew daily paler and thinner, and always had a headache. But Ursula was very happy. Life held a bright new charm for her—a charm till now unknown. She had fallen in love with Léonie Rendu.

"If it were not for Valérie, I know Léonie would be very fond of me. I wonder why she always will come to spoil our talk, just when I have got Léonie all to myself."

Sophie had made one more effort at friendship, but Ursula remained cold and ungracious.

"Sophie is so ugly, and I hate all ugliness. Léonie must have a beautiful soul within such a charming body."

Ursula had now been a month at school. Her progress had been marvellous, and had attracted the attention of the professors who attended the school daily, as well as that of the superintendent, Madame Henry. Valérie grew more and more discontented. She was idle and unprincipled, but she had too much self-love to give up her position to a girl younger than herself.

It was a warm afternoon in May, but Ursula shivered as she stood beside Léonie in the court.

Some of the younger girls had formed themselves into a circle, and were singing *La Boulangère* at the top of their voices. Ursula put her hand to her forehead.

"Oh, what a noise!" she said.

Léonie slid her arm round her waist and kissed her gently on both cheeks. "You are so red to-day, and your cheeks burn. What is it, my dear friend?"

But even Léonie's affection seemed to worry Ursula. Just then Valérie came up.

"Imagine!—the little Leroux is just taken off to the sick room with measles. Is it not a horror?"

"The little Leroux!" Léonie untwined her arm from Ursula's waist, and drew away from her shuddering. "I saw you kiss her this morning, Ursule, and I warned you that her father had been a *roturier*."

"What has that to do with measles?" said Ursula crossly; her head ached so she could not control her words.

"I can't stay near you or talk to you; it is quite possible you will have measles too.