

château is handsomer within than I can tell you ; such carpets and curtains and mirrors ; and I am sure if you saw the place you would think nothing sad or uncomfortable could come near it. But all the upholstery in the world will not keep out sorrow, and so you will think when I tell you what happened here only fourteen months ago.

This château belongs to an old bachelor, one of the most learned men in France. He has just finished a translation of Homer, all

about the siege of Troy. It sounds very odd in French rhyme ; but everybody says it is extremely well done. This old gentleman sometimes gives great dinner-parties to a number of other old gentlemen, and then he has a great show of silver plate ; and it takes the cook all day cooking, and the Intendant all day scolding, before things are in order. The Intendant is something like an English butler, and manages everything in a great house.



So one day in August, 1868, M. le Comte de X. had sent out fourteen invitations to fourteen learned old gentlemen, who were coming, some from Paris, which is an hour off by rail, and some from neighbouring châteaux, and early in the morning of this day the Intendant had a great deal to see to, and his wife also, she being the house-keeper. Now he and his wife were rather oldish. They had two grown-up daughters who were married long since. One kept the lodge of the park, and the other lived

in Paris ; but though the father and mother were very fond of them, there was some one they loved still more—their one little son Paul, born so long after his sisters that he was still only a boy of eight years old. He lived at the château with his parents, and went to school in the village.

So in the morning his father gave him a slice of bread and jam, and sent him out to play till lunch time. Paul set off, munching his *tartine*, and went past the dairy farm buildings, which are very handsome, and built