

**MADAME DE
MAURESCAMP: A
STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE**

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Madame de Maurescamp: A Story of Parisian Life by Octave Feuillet & Beth Page

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OCTAVE FEUILLET & BETH PAGE

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MADAME DE MAURESCAMP.

A STORY OF
PARISIAN LIFE.

BY
OCTAVE FEUILLET,
OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY.

TRANSLATED BY
BETH PAGE.

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MADAME DE MAURESCAMP.

A STORY OF PARISIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

It would be extravagant to insist that all marriageable young ladies are angels; but there *are* angels among marriageable young ladies. That is not so rare, and things that appear at first extraordinary are perhaps less rare in Paris than in other places. The reason is simple.

In this potent hot-house virtues and vices develop side by side, and talents, by a sort of extravagance, attain the highest point of perfection and refinement. In no other part of the world does one breathe more bitter poisons, nor sweeter perfumes, and in no other

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place are there to be found more beautiful women, when beautiful, nor better women, when good.

They say that although the Marchioness de Latour-Mesnil was the most beautiful and best of her sex, she was not particularly happy with her husband; it was not that he was a bad man, but he liked to amuse himself, and he did not amuse himself with his wife. He had, accordingly, neglected her; this had caused her many secret tears, which he seemed neither to care about nor to notice. Then he died, leaving on her mind the impression that she had ruined his life; and, being both gentle and modest, she had the goodness to take this blame on herself, and attribute it to the insufficiency of her merits. Wishing to spare her daughter a similar fate, she endeavored to mould her character so that while she should be fitted to shine in society, she would be capable of retaining the love of her husband after marriage. This

sort of exquisite education is, in Paris, as elsewhere, the consolation of many a woman with a widowed heart.

Mlle. Jeanne Bérengère de Latour-Mesnil was happily endowed with all the gifts which her mother's ambition could wish for her. Her mind, naturally very open and active, from her infancy lent itself to the delicate, maternal culture. Later on, first-class masters, carefully overlooked and directed by her mother, succeeded in initiating her with the notions, tastes, and talents which constitute the intellectual capability of a woman. Her moral education was solely directed by her mother, who, by her precepts and the chastity of her life, made of her a creature as pure as herself.

As to merits, Mlle. de Latour-Mesnil had had the good fortune to be endowed with a great gift, which it is impossible in human frailty not to take into account. She was exceedingly pretty; she had the

form and the grace of a nymph, with the rather unrestrained movements and pink coloring of a child. She possessed both pride and modesty, and, although perfectly conscious of her superiority, she was easily embarrassed. Tête-à-tête with her mother, she was expansive, enthusiastic, and even something of a chatterbox; in public she kept herself immobile and mute, as a beautiful flower, but her magnificent eyes spoke for her.

After having, by God's help, finished this charming masterpiece, the Marchioness de Latour-Mesnil wished to rest from her labors, which she had certainly gained a right to do. But rest is not made for mothers, and the marchioness was soon a prey to a feverish agitation that some readers may not be able to understand.

Jeanne Bérengère was now in her nineteenth year, and it was necessary to provide a husband for her. This is an anxious and

solemn time for mothers. That this should agitate them could astonish no one; what astonishes us is that they should not feel their responsibility more. If ever a mother felt this natural solicitude at such a critical moment, it was Mme. de Latour-Mesnil, who had striven to bring up her daughter well; who had kneaded in her chaste hands this young soul and body, and inspired her with instincts intensely refined, purified, and spiritualized. It is unnecessary to say that a young girl thus perfectly brought up is separated from the majority of the men whom one meets in our streets, and even in our drawing-rooms, by an intellectual and moral abyss as great as that which separates her from a Zulu. One can easily understand that to give up her daughter to one of these men was to deliver her up to the worst sort of misalliances, and unworthily degrade her own work. Her responsibility was all the heavier since according to French customs