

**A PRANKISH PAIR.
[UN PETIT MÉNAGE].
A FANTASY**

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A Prankish Pair. [Un Petit Ménage]. A Fantasy by Paul Ginisty & Reuben Briggs Davenport

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PAUL GINISTY & REUBEN BRIGGS DAVENPORT

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[*Un Petit Ménage*]

A *fantasy*

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→ Mrs. Sol Mordkin Mar. 9, 1948

TO
A WOMAN,
ENIGMA OF ENIGMAS,
THIS BOOK
IS
INSCRIBED.

PREFACE.

IF any excuse were needed for rendering this work into English, aside from its inherent interest, the morality of which may very likely be strenuously attacked, it is to be found in the fact that it is in motive, matter, and manner one of the curiosities of modern literature. Viewed from that stand-point, it would not be surprising if it were to be cited by many critics for a long time to come as a peculiar example of the French school of the present day, carrying the dominant tendency of a large class of current works of fiction to an extreme which has been rarely ventured upon before, and yet preserving all of the conventionalities, if not the exact proprieties, of a correct and unobjectionable style. For this very reason the rigorous censors of society may deem it the more deserving of anathema than if it were a work brutally conceived and shamelessly executed, like those that have given to Emile Zola his remarkable notoriety. Yet, I opine that when read calmly, coldly, deliberately, without the prurient desire to find between the lines what is obviously not in the lines themselves, a moral may be discovered at the end of the book; yes, long before its end is reached—a moral which the intelligent and candid reader will not be able to evade. With this explanation, I believe that the publication of "A Prankish Pair" requires no further justification.

R. B. D.

2d June, 1890.

A PRANKISH PAIR.

I.



DOWN in one corner of Brittany, the old priest stood erect before the young couple in the little church, scanning his phrases as he went, re-adjusting his spectacles on his nose, while he paused to take breath for a longer sentence :

*“Chetiu er e larun d'ein me buman :
en Eutru Doue e regl tout er bed-
men ; ean fur mastr baq bun tad.”* (“This I say to myself :
the good God regulates everything in the world. He is our
master and our father.”)

Robert Brice leaned upon one of the arms of the old easy-chair, which would have rejoiced the heart of an antiquary, and which had been covered over, for this solemn occasion with a piece of red velvet. Little by little, very amorously, and with sly roguishness, he edged along to the ear of his wife, who was twisting a corner of her white veil between her fingers, to keep herself in countenance.

“Marie-Ange,” he said, in a very low tone, “will it be over soon ?”

She tried to suppress a pretty smile and hid her face in the gauze, which she pulled back over her forehead with a coquetish gesture.

"Will you be still?" she exclaimed, with a mischievous accent of rebuke. "It is very fine, what he is saying now."

"You understand it then?"

"No, but I am sure it must be nice. Come, you see we are attracting attention."

The venerable Monsieur Le Gallo, rector of the parish of the Isle of the Monks, had got fairly started. He strove unctuously to soften his voice, which had always remained harsh, as he set forth with simple eloquence the happiness of those couples who loved each other in the Lord; giving touching pictures of a fireside sanctified by prayer; offering, somewhat prematurely, grave advice on the education of children, who should be brought up in a most Christian manner, remote from the dangerous doctrines of the age; felicitating the husband and wife on their sentiments of piety and fidelity towards the church—*en illis ha Jesus-Chrouist.*"

"Marie-Ange," continued Robert, just grazing her veil with his moustache, "you do not know the Palais-Royal Theatre? There is a certain Calvin there who reminds me astonishingly—"

"Robert!"

"What can you expect? Twenty minutes that Celtic harangue has lasted. Do you know that you are sweet enough to eat?—and I am hungry."

"Glutton!"

"Look here! I did not get married in order to fast!"

She was choking with laughter, yet much confused that she could not preserve a serious demeanor; and her eyes, as they met Robert's, conveyed a pardon at the same time that she reproved him. She thought her husband decidedly handsome, and very impudent, with his easy, Parisian polish, and his full dress, in the latest style, contrasting with the ridiculous garments of the spectators, made of coarse cloth and fashioned in the old style. A blush mounted to her cheeks as she sought to recall him to the proprieties; a blush that betrayed