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"TALES" FOR MARCH

The March issue of "TALES" will contain a complete novel, entitled

"In the Land of Legends"

By Bernt Lie

Nothing quite like this strange story by a famous Norwegian author has ever appeared in English. Its setting is unique. It is a romance of the Land of the Midnight Sun, and its charm is as unmistakable as it is elusive. It tells the story of a painter who goes to a little village in the far north of Norway to paint the wild landscape of that country, and there falls in love with a young girl who has lived her entire life under the Midnight Sun. Bernt Lie has caught the wonderful atmosphere of the northern country with all the skill of the painter-hero of his own story, and the result is a tale of unique charm and interest.

Besides this complete novel, the next issue of TALES will contain nearly twenty stories selected from various European languages and representing at their best many of the most famous living authors; among them, Paul Bourget, Leon de Tinseau and Michel Provins (French), Giovanni Verga, Mathilde Serao and Neera (Italian), Maxim Gorky (Russian), J. P. Jacobsen and Peter Nansen (Danish), Karl Emil Franzos, Fritz von Ostini and Karl Schonherr (German).

OUT OF THE PAST

BY FEDOR VON ZOBELTITZ

IN the wake of the automobile the dust rose in two swirling clouds that flanked the road. The day was still very hot, although the sun had already begun its descent. A few clouds floated overhead, and behind the hills a black mass loomed like a mighty curtain that was being raised by invisible hands. It was not intensely black, but of a fallow, muddy yellow that gradually faded into pale opal tints.

"Are you asleep, Fahrenheit?"

The man addressed opened his eyes. "Far from it," he replied; "I am very wide awake, but I would be delighted if I could take a bit of a nap. The fact is, I am about sick and tired of this African landscape. Besides, my feet are asleep and my joints ache. And this dust! Captain, could you possibly find another place for your legs?"

"No," answered the first speaker testily, "I cannot. I am taking up just as little room as possible, and I would like to remind you that this is an automobile and not a *cabin de luxe*. There is room in this car for four people—but, though there are only three of us, you are occupying double space and still complaining."

"Certainly I am complaining! You described the charms of this country in glowing terms. Now just look at those three scrawny cypress trees! The Bedouins are simply covered with dirt, and the whole region smells of garlic and onions. Algiers seems to be mainly dust. I have swallowed so much of it that my throat is parched. Won't you fish out your bottle of brandy, captain?"

The captain drew a brandy bottle from under the seat, waved it temptingly before the man's eyes and then replaced it. The old sea-dog laughed until the tears came to his eyes. "At least that is something new to you," he said; "that is a will-o'-the-wisp."

"Don't be cruel, captain," pleaded the third passenger; "he has been punished enough. Look at that mass of black clouds. I hope we shall be able to get under cover before the storm breaks." Then he asked of the chauffeur: "How far are we from the ravine?"

"About half an hour's run," the man replied, glancing at the approaching storm and increasing the speed of his machine.

Captain Dietrichsen, of the steamer *Therapia* of the German Levantine Line, had brought his vessel safely into the harbor of Algiers the day before, and was planning to leave that port for Tunis early the following morning. He had in his charge a party of tourists on a spring cruise from Hamburg to Constantinople; and the two other men on this automobile jaunt were of the party. One of them was Major Graetz, a retired cavalry officer and landed proprietor in Germany. His doctor had ordered him south to convalesce after an attack of influenza, and the other passenger, Fahrenheit, the apothecary in his native village, having engaged his own passage, had persuaded the major to join the party,

so that he might have someone to play cards and quarrel with occasionally.

The steamer *Therapia* was booked to remain at Algiers for two days, and the passengers availed themselves of the opportunity to stroll about the white city and see its picturesque life. On the second day the captain had proposed to Major Graetz and the apothecary that they take an automobile trip to Blidah, at the edge of the Atlas Mountain, to see the so-called Monkey Ravine.

After a three hours' ride the party had arrived at Blidah in time for dinner at the hotel. Afterward the journey was resumed along the road that skirted the Atlas until the party reached an inviting hostelry surrounded by a wide veranda and capped by a signboard that bore the inscription: "Ruisseau des Singes." A stop was made, and the apothecary was the first to leap out of the car. He stretched his arms, and then announced:

"Now I want to see the monkeys—that is what I came for."

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a gust of wind almost carried him off his feet. The mass of black clouds had rolled down into the valley, and now the storm burst. It grew pitch dark, the gloom illumined now and again by lightning flashes, and the travelers sought refuge in the inn.

In the public room, seated in a dark corner, a sturdy young fellow was sipping absinthe. As the three tourists entered he arose and tossed a coin on the table in settlement of his account; but when he heard the travelers conversing in German over the refreshment they had ordered, he replaced the money in his pocket, resumed his seat in the corner and ordered another absinthe. He leaned his head against the wall, and his eyes were half closed as though he were fatigued, but from under the shading eyelids flashed occasional glances that proved him to be wide awake and very attentive.

When the fury of the storm had somewhat abated Graetz strolled out on the veranda to enjoy the view while his fellow-travelers were still chatting over their grog. At once the young man got up and followed Graetz out. On the veranda he doffed his hat, stood modestly aside and bowed rather awkwardly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said, addressing Graetz in German, "but may I speak to you a moment?"

Involuntarily Graetz put his hand into his pocket, judging the man to be a beggar; but the young fellow drew back with a gesture of pride, at the same time affording Graetz an opportunity to see the frank features of the man who had accosted him.

"You are a German?"

The man nodded.

"From which part of the country?" Graetz continued.

"From the Province of Brandenburg. I have been knocking about a great deal, and now I'm anxious to return home. I gathered from the conversation I overheard in the public room of the inn that you leave Algiers tomorrow morning on a German ship, and I wonder if there is room for me in the steerage?"

"I should judge so, but you can find out definitely from the captain, who is one of our party. Yet I ought to warn you that we are bound for Constantinople."

"Then I could go ashore at Constantinople?"

"Yes, if you have a passport—they are very strict about such matters in Turkey."

The young man's face clouded. Evidently he had not thought of this detail.

"If necessary," he said, "I shall remain on board the ship until we arrive at Hamburg. I have saved a few hundred francs, and that will be enough to see me through. My one object is"—here he lowered his voice and spoke with anxiety—"to get out of this cursed country as soon as possible. If there is a vacant seat in your automobile, I beg you to take me with you so that I can get to Algiers before the ship sails." A note of entreaty was in the man's voice, and his features betrayed a deep anxiety. It was evident

that he was fleeing from something, and this displeased Graetz, who disliked any show of secrecy.

"If I am to help you, my good fellow, I must know more about your case; I must be told why you are in such a hurry to leave Algiers."

"Will you walk a few paces with me?" asked the young man. "I don't trust the innkeeper."

Graetz nodded assent, and the two strolled a short distance toward the ravine.

"To make a long story short, I am a deserter. For three weeks I have been wandering around this region, and if I am caught I shall never see Germany again." His eyes filled with tears, and he clasped his hands imploringly. "Please take me with you!" he went on. "No one would suspect me of being a deserter if I were in your company, and once aboard ship I would be safe. I mean to pay my way. I am not a tramp. I will show you my military passport to prove my story. I could stand it no longer in the French Foreign Legion; it is a dog's life. Besides, I am homesick, and I'll go mad if I don't get out of this country."

"Did you desert from the German army, too?"

"No, sir. I served two years in the Elector's Regiment of Dragoons."

Graetz looked carefully at the speaker for a moment; then he said: "That was my regiment, and I still belong to its reserve. What is your name?"

"Friedrich Brettschneider."

"Ye gods!" cried Graetz, and laughed at the coincidence. "Fritz Brettschneider, you can thank your lucky stars you've run across me. Look at me, man, don't you know who I am?"

The young man raised his eyes, but for a while scarcely trusted his sight. Then, as though he still harbored some doubts, he said questioningly: "Major Graetz?"

"Well, at last!" said the major. "Have I changed so very much? But this matter of your desertion really bothers me. I have very little sympathy with deserters—it is a breach of faith, and I am an old soldier myself."

"Major, if you knew how the soldiers of the Foreign Legion are treated you would have no scruples about the matter. We treat dogs better in the German army. I was faithful to my duty, but I could not stand being flogged. My back is marked with scars and welts; and because I happen to be a German I was treated all the more cruelly. Not a day passed without some brutality, and I was on the verge of suicide."

"I can well believe it, Brettschneider, and I do not mean to leave you in the lurch. We will take you with us to Algiers, where you can board the *Therapia*. Meanwhile it is not wise to mention your desertion to the others of the party—I will talk to the captain about it myself. Come, we must leave immediately."

Brettschneider drew a knapsack, containing his effects, from under the corner of the veranda where he had hidden it. Then, when the others had taken their seats in the automobile, he got in beside the chauffeur, Graetz threw a coin to the servant, and the automobile started on its return trip.

II

THE shades of night had settled down over the scene, as the automobile cluttered through the streets of Blidah. The chauffeur slackened the speed of his machine a bit when he discovered that the brake was not in working order. Suddenly he pressed a bulb and the horn howled a note of warning into the night air. Then he steered the machine to one side and brought it to a stop only a few paces from another motor car that was standing disabled in the middle of the road.

The two chauffeurs began exchanging frankly uncomplimentary opinions, and Graetz had ordered his chauffeur to proceed, when a shadowy object approached the automobile. It proved to be a young woman, wearing

a long waterproof coat, who addressed the travelers in French that betrayed an English accent.

"I beg a thousand pardons if I trouble you," she said. "I engaged this automobile in Blidah to take me to Algiers, but something has happened to the motor and it won't budge. Could you gentlemen possibly take me with you?"

The apothecary grunted a protest: "A pretty mess—this makes the second one we are picking up! *Non!*" he cried, "*impossible!*" Then he turned to the major and said in German: "I think you had better explain to this lady that she would have to sit on the lap of one of us."

"That would not bother me in the least," answered the woman in German, to the surprise of the travelers. She raised her veil and disclosed a very charming face—red lips, dove-gray eyes, features irregular in profile, but of a fine type. "No," she continued, "that would not bother me in the least. It is absolutely necessary that I get to Algiers, for I am to sail on tomorrow's steamer."

"On which one?" asked Graetz.

"On the *Therapia*."

"Ah," exclaimed the captain cheerily, "now I know who you are—the one passenger booked to leave from Algiers: Mademoiselle de la Rocque."

"You are right, but how do you happen to know?"

Dietrichsen saluted and, bowing, introduced himself: "Captain Dietrichsen, of the *Therapia*."

The young woman stretched out her gloved hand, which the captain kissed. The hearts of all the travelers beat more violently, and three pairs of hands were stretched forth to help her into the automobile. In a minute more she was comfortably seated and they were about to proceed, when the chauffeur of the other automobile approached them.

"One minute, gentlemen, while I pay him!" She opened her purse, and to Graetz's amazement her fingers rummaged about in a lot of thousand-franc notes. "I seem to have no gold," she murmured.

"May I pay the man for you?" asked the major.

"I should be grateful if you would—please give him twenty francs."

The man was paid, the automobile tooted a warning signal, and the travelers continued their trip. The moon had risen, lending the landscape an especial charm; and under the spell of conversation with the charming stranger, the remaining hours of the ride passed pleasantly.

"Are you going to Constantinople?" asked the major.

"I go ashore at Odessa—thence to St. Petersburg. Do you remain at Constantinople?"

"That is my intention. Later I am going to take a trip through the Balkans."

"Oh, but that is a tedious journey," she replied. "I know the trip: Adrianople is a dirty hole—Philippopolis only wakes up when the Bulgarian ruler comes—Sofia is a village with new houses. Why, Russia is a thousand times more interesting. The refined Russian knows how to live, he is an artist in his knowledge of life. London is bored with decency, Vienna is asleep, Paris amuses itself, and St. Petersburg lives. I sha'n't mention Berlin, because I know very little about it; but I have been told that Berlin is ruinous to the digestion."

The captain protested, but Graetz cut him short with the question: "How does it happen that you, a born Frenchwoman, speak such excellent German?"

"I am not a Frenchwoman born, but simply of French extraction. My forefathers settled in Canada. My grandmother was a German, my mother part Russian, which accounts for my polyglot chatter. It also accounts for the mixture of various temperaments that keeps me wandering restlessly about the world."

It was midnight when the automobile arrived in Algiers and sped down the Boulevard Carnot to the water front, where the travelers alighted and

descended the steps to the launch that was to carry them out to the *Therapia*, anchored some distance from the landing-place. Arriving on shipboard Mlle. de la Rocque found that her baggage had been received and stowed away, so she accepted an invitation from Graetz and the captain to go up with them to the upper deck.

Graetz, finding the young woman very interesting, plied her with questions, and soon learned that she was an orphan, unmarried, that her father had been a wine merchant; also that she was devoted to sports.

"Have you any horses on your estate?" she asked Graetz.

"Plenty of them, and I am devoted to riding — I am an old cavalryman."

"And I a devoted Amazon. If ever I stay in one place for six weeks, I always keep a horse. I am an adept in horse-trading—only this morning I sold two saddle-horses to a French officer."

"In Algiers?"

"No, in Blidah. I had to go there, for His Excellency Count Gudovich, Russian Consul-General in Algiers, was my uncle. He was killed a few days ago by falling from his horse and was buried in Blidah, so I was asked to dispose of his saddle-horses."

Her relationship with the Russian consul-general interested Graetz, who had read of his death. "So he was one of your relatives—did you live at the Consulate?"

Mlle. de la Rocque shook her head. "No, my uncle was a bachelor, a man of about fifty. I happened to be one of the riding party when the accident occurred. His horse shied at a beggar in the road, reared and fell over backward."

The young woman seemed suddenly to have lost the mood for further conversation, for she immediately bade the captain and Graetz good night and descended to her cabin.

"Charming!" said the captain, gazing after her. "I can tell you something about her, for she gave me her passport to have it viséed in Tunis. She was christened Marie Angélique, and is twenty-two years old. Her birthday occurs on the eighth of June, the day on which we pass the Dardanelles, and we shall have to celebrate the event."

"To be sure," assented Graetz; "but it is time for me to turn in," and he bade the captain good night.

Once in his cabin, the major turned on the electric light and then slowly undressed and went to bed. His head was filled with thoughts of the girl he had met that day. He was just about to fall asleep when he was startled by a sound. He sat up in bed and listened —it seemed to him that he had heard Mlle. de la Rocque's voice calling him by his Christian name, Otto. For a while he listened eagerly, then, convinced that his preoccupied brain had played a prank on him, he angrily stretched himself out and fell asleep.

III

When the steamer turned her nose into the Bay of Tunis the weather had grown so foul that the *Therapia* had to anchor at some distance from shore. A steam launch had been sent out to meet her by the agent of the line, but the sea was running so high that it was deemed inadvisable for the passengers to risk a landing; besides, report had it that all the hotels were crowded in consequence of a visit of the President of the French Republic. Dissatisfaction reigned among the passengers, and the apothecary was especially indignant, declaring that Tunis was in his itinerary and he must see it. The captain, overhearing this plaint, pointed to the launch that was tossing alongside and said:

"Why not go ashore in that, if you're not afraid? I can only warn you."

"I am not afraid," cried Fahrenheit. "Who is coming with me?"

"I," said Mlle. de la Rocque. "I wish you would take me under your wing."

But the apothecary's wife objected

strenuously and led her husband off in triumph to the salon.

"I have lost that knight," said Mlle. de la Rocque. "Will you risk the trip with me, major?"

"Gladly," answered Graetz; and the couple made the perilous descent to the launch.

"Major," called the captain from the deck of the *Therapia*, "I must remind you once more that we weigh anchor tomorrow morning at eight o'clock promptly—not even a quarter of an hour later!"

"Selah," cried Graetz, and the captain shrugged his shoulders and disappeared from the rail.

The little launch began to rock so violently that the couple had to cling to a support in order to keep their feet. It shot up and down like a gull floating on a swell, while the spray dashed over the two passengers, and suddenly the young woman grew silent and pale. The major teased her, but she grew more and more helpless, and presently he put his arm about her to support her. Thus the two sat in the launch, protected from the spray by a tarpaulin which a sailor had thrown over them. It was as though each could hear the other's heart beating, and Graetz was rather regretful than otherwise when the launch drew alongside the landing-place at Goletta.

The couple made at once for the railway station and took the first train to Tunis. They found the city crowded with sightseers, lured thither by the presence of the French President. The streets were a babel of all languages, and from houses and poles waved bunting and garlands. The two tourists made their way to the Grand Hôtel and found a vacant table at one of the windows from which they could watch the restless interweaving of color without. They ordered breakfast and chatted gaily; a holiday mood had taken possession of them both.

"Tell me, are you married?" Mlle. de la Rocque suddenly demanded.

Graetz found much amusement in this question, for, in his opinion, she might have guessed from his freedom with her that he was still a bachelor. He shook his head earnestly. "No, I am still eligible. And you?"

"I? Oh, no one has wanted me!"

This challenged the major's chivalry. "What!" he exclaimed. "No one has wanted you, Mademoiselle Marie? Pardon me——"

"Do call me Marie," she answered. "I like it, and it is much shorter. My father's name is far too long, for Savin de la Rocque is not all of it—the entire name is Savin de la Rocque de Dausett-Castay; then, as a final flourish, comes the long-lost title Marquise of Saint-Gosselin. A fearfully cumbersome name; so you had better call me Marie."

"Thank you; so be it. But would it not be more truthful to say that it was you who did not want anyone?"

"Perhaps; but the result is the same. Meantime I have grown fond of traveling about, and my heart still beats—perhaps an occasion may arise when it will beat faster."

Thus they chatted to the end of the meal, and then strolled out to the bazaars. The highly colored scenes of North African life fascinated Marie. She seated herself in the little cave-like booths, sipped the Turkish coffee that was served to her and had the merchants display their wares for her to choose from. She always bid one-half of the price demanded, and then the excitement of bargaining would begin. In broken French the natives would declare that such transactions meant ruin for them; they would call in their neighbors and all passers-by to bear oath to their honesty; they writhed as if in agony, then suddenly grew calm, put the chosen articles to one side and accepted Marie's offer. At first this interested the major, but presently he grew tired of it, and, while Marie was bargaining with a jeweler, he slipped into an adjoining booth and bought a neck chain of six strands with a filigree locket. When he returned to Marie she had finished her purchases.

"I have bought a trifle for you, and I wish you would accept it in remembrance of this day—or rather as a token of our friendship."

Marie blushed when he handed her the present, and her expression was one of warm gratitude. Although she smiled archly, there was a serious look in her eyes as she said, "My dear friend, that is a very expensive memento, but its value is much enhanced by its association. I shall wear it frequently, and when I do I shall think of Tunis—and of you."

Toward nightfall they returned to Goletta. From the docks the water presented an angry aspect, and none of the natives was inclined to ferry the couple out to the steamer. One of them advised the major to put up at an inn overnight and hire a launch to take them out early in the morning. Both of the tourists were drenched with rain, and when the major turned to Marie for advice she answered, "Let us stay here until morning."

The Hôtel de France proved a reasonably comfortable place. The servant had built a great fire in the open hearth in the public room, and the two tourists fortunately had it all to themselves. Here they sat and chatted like two comrades—the major smoking his last Havana cigar while Marie munched almonds and fresh figs.

"What more could one want?" she said. "Certainly we are better off here than out on the high seas."

"This is very bearable," answered Graetz, "but I hope that tomorrow may bring us reasonable weather."

"Yes, and I have no money left. This afternoon I spent a thousand francs in the bazaar. If we are compelled to remain here I shall have to borrow from you."

"At any other time that would be a pleasure, but I am in quite the same state of finances that you are. I spent a couple of hundred francs, and the balance of my money Captain Dietrichsen has for safe keeping."

"Charming," said Marie, smiling. "The captain has my passport, too."

"My boots are gradually shedding their soles," Graetz complained whimsically. "If I remain here I shall have to have some new ones.

"And I shall need clothes and linen," added Marie. "How in the world will we manage! But let us hope for the best. Be sure to wake me in time—knock at my door until I answer, for I sleep like a log. Good night, my friend."

"I will show you to your room," said Graetz, and there, for the first time, he kissed her hand.

When he went into his own room Graetz opened the window. The wind almost tore it out of his hand, and he had to close it again at once. Peering through the pane into the night he saw that the storm had lashed the surface of the bay into a foaming waste of mountains and valleys. The major's hopes sank despite the rising barometer. Yet he smiled, for the adventure had its charm—and the charm was sleeping in the adjoining room.

IV

MARIE slept so soundly that she did not wake up when the major knocked at her door early the next morning. He had gazed out of his window at five o'clock only to find the storm raging as fiercely as before; and when he descended to the public room he was told that the French fleet had weighed anchor to seek shelter elsewhere and that there was no sign of the *Therapia*. When Marie did not answer his knock he decided to let her sleep until he could get some definite news about the steamer. Procuring an umbrella, he waded through the mud to the docks, where the storm was lashing the spray over the roofs of the warehouses. The quays were deserted, and Graetz, seeking a sheltered point of vantage, scanned the bay through his field-glasses. No ship was in sight, but in the far distance he thought he made out a cloud of smoke. Whether or not this arose from the steamer he could not determine, but this much was sure: the *Therapia* had put to sea.

When he returned to the hotel Marie gaily came to meet him. "Good morn-

ing, major. Why didn't you call me as you promised?"

"Good morning," answered Graetz. "I knocked at your door, first with my fingers, then with my knuckles, then with my fist, and finally I beat a reveille; but all to no purpose."

"I am very sorry I did not hear you. What about the *Therapia?*"

"The *Therapia* has sailed without us."

"Impossible!"

"But true, nevertheless. Besides, even if the steamer were riding at anchor, we could not hire anyone to brave the storm and ferry us out to her."

"Forsaken!" groaned Marie, seating herself on the steps. "My hat looks like a melon that has been sat upon by an elephant! My trunk is not here, and I have very little money left. Do you think we could sell the stuff we bought in the bazaars yesterday?"

Graetz laughed. "Perhaps that will be the only thing left to do. But let us get some breakfast first and gather our wits afterward."

The major ordered eggs, cold meat and tea.

"Don't be so reckless," whispered Marie. "Who knows whether we have enough money to pay for all that!"

Just then the head waiter came over to their table and handed the major a card that bore the name Aristide Drakopulos. Graetz nodded, and an enormously corpulent man in a dripping havelock was ushered in, holding a wet umbrella in one hand and a soaked hat in the other.

"I am very glad I've discovered you," he wheezed asthmatically in French. "Major Graetz and Mademoiselle de la Rocque; am I right? I am the local agent of the Levantine line, and I have a letter for you that was delivered to me this morning by a pilot."

He handed the major a packet wrapped in oiled paper, through which could be seen the familiar handwriting of Captain Dietrichsen. The captain wrote that he was in despair because he feared that the violent north wind might drive the ship from its anchorage, and in consequence he had been compelled to put to sea under a full head of steam. He said that the agent, Drakopulos, could be counted on for all necessary aid; and he advised the couple to take the next boat for Constantinople, where the *Therapia* would wait for them.

The major handed the letter to Marie and then turned to Drakopulos to find out what service the latter was willing to extend to them. Drakopulos advanced five hundred francs—which sum would be ample until the major could establish his letter of credit by telegraph—engaged passage for them on the next boat for Constantinople and then suggested an exhaustive program of excursions.

The storm blew over, and the brilliant sun added the one thing needful to complete their contentment. They had comfortable quarters at the hotel and ample money at their disposal; so they had nothing better to do than to wait for the arrival of the steamer *Bourrasque*, spending their days sightseeing in Tunis, the "Burnoose of the Prophet," with its minarets and cupolas made glorious by the blue sky overhead.

These were happy days, and the major did not for an instant regret the sailing of the *Therapia*. He and Marie spent the days together, the hotel servants constantly referring to them as "madame" and "monsieur." They sauntered together through the bazaars, the markets and the cemeteries, and spent their evenings either in some theatre or in front of the hearthfire of the hotel salon. He had grown very fond of her companionship, but he refused to acknowledge to himself that he was in love with her, although he had come to look forward with regret to the inevitable hour of separation that must follow their arrival in Constantinople.

On the day before their departure the couple were strolling along a mountain path, having forsaken the terrace of the Grand Hôtel de Carthage, from which they had overlooked the spot where, at one time, Hamilcar's palace had stood. She had pointed this place

out to him and had sketched for him the plot of Flaubert's "Salammbô," with its scene laid in Carthage during the time of Hamilcar. The major was very much impressed by her knowledge, and now the two walked silently side by side until the stillness was broken by his sigh.

"It was a sigh," he admitted, "and it was an expression of regret for the morrow—tomorrow we take up our journey again, and this lovely episode will have come to an end."

"It has been lovely," she admitted. "Particularly because it was not planned."

"Do you know," he confided, "I am like some somnambulist who has suddenly been awakened? And you are the one who has awakened me."

"If that were true, my friend, I should be very happy, for then I should feel sure I had done a good deed. But I believe you have been awakened by this trip; you have come to realize that there are other things in the world besides your estate, your fields and your forests."

"No," he objected obstinately, "it is you alone. During the last week I have changed entirely. Formerly all my interests were tied up in the prices of wheat and wool, in my experiments in beet culture and in hunting. You say that the trip has done much for me, but a more important factor is the company in which I have been traveling—and by that I mean you alone. I regret having to return to the others, and I wish that I might be able to wander about with you alone until—" He stopped abruptly. They were standing at the entrance of a basilica ruin, and the bottom of the excavation was considerably below the level of the path. "Shall we go down?" he asked.

"Yes, I saw a little corner there the other day that I wanted to photograph."

There was no ladder at hand, so the major jumped down, and then reached up to assist her. "Hand me your kodak—and then jump. I'll catch you."

Marie hesitated an instant, and a strange giddiness came over her. She stooped and sprang into his arms. He did not waver, but held her close in his embrace and carried her for a few paces. Her face was against his shoulder, and from the coils of her chestnut hair a delicate perfume arose. He felt the outlines of her young body, her forehead was almost touching his cheek. A mad desire surged up in him to cover her face with kisses—her eyes, her cheeks, her forehead, the curls at the nape of her neck.

All about them was a great silence. There were no laborers at work in the ruin, and only an occasional lizard crawled over the loose stones.

Then the sound of bells broke the solemn silence of noon; from the cathedral the bronze tongues clanged forth their call. This roused Marie, who turned her head and, with swimming eyes, looked at the major. She smiled sweetly and stammered, "Oh, Otto! release me—you will crush me!"

The sound of the bells was like a hymn to Graetz. Now he knew that he loved her and that he was beloved by her. He knew that he might have kissed her and that she would have flung her arms about his neck and kissed him in return. But, with all this feeling of joy, he still remained a stoic, as he told himself: "No flash of passion! I love her far too much, and I do not mean to let her escape me. First let me make her my wife."

She sprang nimbly ahead into the ruins, while he followed with heavier tread. Parting the bushes, she led the way to a grotto at the farther end of which was a marble sarcophagus.

Seating herself on a block of stone, she invited Graetz to find a seat for himself. "Please let us stay here awhile. The cool freshness of this place is delightful after the burning heat of the sun—and I like the quiet peace."

Then they chatted of other things, principally of his family and his youth. He admitted that he had been an unruly lad, so his parents had entered him in the cadet corps, after which he had

joined the Elector's Regiment of Dragoons. But his father, having grown old, needed someone to manage the estates, so he had retired as major. Then she told a melancholy story of her own unhappy youth, and Graetz answered, "But do not forget that some day or other you will find a new home."

"Perhaps, but who knows when? You said a few minutes ago that you were waiting for the right woman—I am waiting for the right man, but he has not appeared."

A feeling of extreme diffidence possessed Graetz. His instinct was to confess his love to her, but he hesitated, knowing how the other travelers on the *Therapia* would comment on the stay of the couple in Tunis. Caution and conventionality held him back, and he remained silent. He did not notice how Marie's eyes were fixed on him and how her face seemed to change. It was no longer the pert profile of a merry girl; her expression was rather that of an older, more mature woman.

"Come, let us go," said Marie.

His hand separated the bushes, and the couple once more stepped into the glow of the sun, leaving the peace of the grotto behind them.

V

THE steamer *Bourrasque* sailed at the appointed hour, and in Smyrna Graetz received news from Captain Dietrichsen in a letter handed to him by a clerk of the German consul. The captain was evidently worried about his two passengers, so Graetz sent him a reassuring message at Odessa. Likewise the major telegraphed to his cousin, Count William Limbach, at Constantinople, announcing the date of his arrival there and asking that rooms be engaged for him in the Pera Palace Hotel. The *Bourrasque* proceeded northward, passing through the Dardanelles, and did not stop again until she cast anchor at the Quay of Galata.

From the moment the ship touched the dock at Constantinople its decks became a seething mass of baggage carriers, porters and guides. Marie had ordered all her trunks to be brought on deck, and now she seated herself on the biggest one and called to Graetz: "I shall not budge until you find a dragoman from the Pera Palace Hotel."

This was not an easy matter in the whirl of humanity that crowded the decks. He had worked his way to the gangplank, when someone touched his arm and a voice roared lustily into his ear: "Otto, old chap, how are you!"

Graetz turned and saw a Turkish officer in whom he scarcely recognized his cousin, a former German hussar. Nevertheless it was Count Limbach Pasha, Brigadier-General of the Turkish cavalry, who boasted the title of Excellency. They embraced each other, and Limbach asked a hundred questions about home.

"But first I want to introduce you to the very charming traveling companion who made my stay in Tunis bearable," interrupted Graetz.

"You're a nice one," taunted Limbach, "to get stuck like that—it's like some schoolboy on his first railway trip. Captain Dietrichsen told me all about it, all about the pretty little Canadian——"

"Marie, allow me to present my cousin, Count Limbach, Pasha and Excellency. Mlle. de la Rocque——"

Limbach bowed and was immediately captivated by Marie's pretty eyes. Then he called to his dragoman and beckoned to a couple of porters, meanwhile punching Graetz in the ribs and whispering insinuatingly: "You lucky dog!"

Graetz was much distressed at his cousin's insinuations, but there was no time then to explain matters. While the porters were carting off Marie's trunk Limbach told her that Captain Dietrichsen had given him her passport to have it viséed. "But I tell you, mademoiselle, I had a lot of trouble with it. I ran from Pontius to Pilate, to the English legation, and the Eng-

lish consulate, to the head of the police — until finally my friend the Grand Vizier spoke the necessary word. Without this they would not have admitted you into the paradise of Mahomet at all!"

Marie thanked him profusely, but Graetz was somewhat disturbed by his cousin's tone of familiarity. The same thing impressed Marie, who at the first opportune moment whispered to Graetz: "I fear I am being misjudged." Graetz pressed her hand and assured her that matters would be put right at once.

After the business of the customs had been settled, the party proceeded to the Pera Palace Hotel, where Limbach had engaged comfortable quarters for them. Graetz postponed unpacking his trunks, however, and looked up his cousin at once, in order to have the necessary conversation with him.

"Well, old chap," was the count's greeting when the two met in the Moorish parlor of the hotel, "let's look at you again! You look very well—no trace of your late illness. And as for your little traveling companion—well, I congratulate you! I tell you some men have luck in this world! But be careful, Otto! I know the game. Sentiment grows out of flirtation and love out of sentiment—and then it is too late——"

"You misunderstand the whole affair," Otto replied. "There is no flirtation at all in this case. I should have engaged myself to Marie in Tunis if I had cared to brave the gossip of the *Therapia's* passengers. I wish simply to discuss the matter with you as an old friend and a relative—and then I mean to propose to Marie. I hope there will not be a long engagement, for I wish to take her home with me as my wife."

An expression of surprise flitted across the count's features, and he snapped his fingers a couple of times. "Oh, the deuce!" was his comment.

Graetz led his cousin to a settee in a corner of the room where they would be undisturbed.

"Sit down, Will," he said, "and discuss this matter sanely, for I assure you it is a matter of very serious moment for me. You see—" he stammered and stopped—"well, great heavens, I can't explain it to you in detail—I love the girl—not *en passant*, not merely because she is charming—I love her with all my heart and I want to marry her. So much is positive."

The count nodded and puffed his cigarette. "If you have settled it all so positively," he retorted, "what is there left to discuss with me?"

The major was a bit abashed, for he knew that his cousin was justified in his remark.

"Will, I know that I am old enough to settle so important a question for myself, and yet I should like to talk it over with you. You will get to know Mlle. de la Rocque better, and I am convinced that you will approve of my choice. I am twelve years older than she is, but I scarcely think that matters."

"That does not matter in the least. But—my dear Otto, I really thought that this was nothing more than a little liaison, an *affaire du voyage*. I did not suspect for a moment that it was serious. Don't think that I am suspicious—not for a minute do I disbelieve anything that she may have told you about herself and her family. But marriage is a serious affair, and it is absolutely essential that the parties to it should be fully informed about each other's standing."

Graetz became excited by his cousin's attitude. "There is absolutely no reason why any of her statements should be doubted," he declared. "She is living on the interest of capital invested with Ritchie, of London."

"Wait a minute," interrupted the count. "Did you say Ritchie & Son? One of my very good friends, an English officer, is a son-in-law of the banker Ritchie. Through him it is easily possible to find out something about Mlle. de la Rocque."

Graetz shook his head. "That is all nonsense, Will. Ritchie may possibly tell his son-in-law the amount of

Marie's account there, but nothing more."

"But that would be enough. Mammon plays a very important role in life's affairs, and I am willing to wager five to one that if the young lady tells you the truth about her finances you may accept her other statements without a doubt."

Graetz jumped up excitedly. His cousin's attitude savored of brutality; in fact, the whole matter of money was a distasteful one to Graetz.

"I understand," the count admitted, "that all this is painful to you. Don't bother about it, but let me attend to the matter. I am acting on my own responsibility, and I would do it in the end even against your wishes. You have nothing to do but to wait two days. After that lapse of time we can discuss the rest of the affair."

The count breakfasted with Marie and Otto, and during the meal he proposed a ride to a neighboring village. Marie was quite excited over the prospect, as she had not ridden a horse for two weeks. The count had three horses in his stable, and ordered a white stallion to be saddled for her. Soon the little cavalcade was riding through the Grande Rue de Pera, and upon reaching the outskirts of the city they cut across the plain. Without a word of command the horses broke into a gallop, and the riders had to be on their guard, for the ground was covered with stones and shrubs. Not a word was exchanged as they galloped along. Marie rode between the two men, her eyes dancing with delight.

Suddenly a gully opened before them, and Graetz, fearing for Marie's safety, uttered a cry of warning, at the same time bringing his horse down out of its gallop. But the girl paid no attention to him. Instead, she spurred her animal on, and with a "He-hupp!" the animal cleared the gap. The count followed, and the major, feeling rather ashamed of himself, urged his horse forward and soon joined them on the other side. After this they rode in more leisurely fashion, through a wood of plane trees along the edge of the Bosphorus.

On their return in the afternoon the count hunted up his friend, and in his name sent a cable to Ritchie in London:

> Cable information about your client, Marie Angélique de la Rocque, from Montreal. Account, family, personality, all that you know. Private and confidential.

VI

GRAETZ spent a sleepless night. Tortured by thoughts of the count's questionings, he arose early and lit a cigar. When he had finished smoking he threw the stump out into the courtyard, where a swarm of hungry dogs pounced upon it, thinking it some scrap of food. Watching this, he noticed a flock of sparrows quarreling over some bread crumbs on the neighboring balcony, and leaning out, he caught a glimpse of Marie in a red silk dressing-gown, coaxing the sparrows with bread crumbs. When she saw Graetz she started, as if doubtful of her toilet; then she nodded pleasantly.

"Good morning, neighbor," she called. "Has the sun driven you out of bed, too?"

"The sun, bad dreams, and some other things," answered Graetz. "I should like to chat with you for a quarter of an hour, but I am sure the organ-grinder has discovered us, and he'll soon belabor us with his most popular pieces."

The organ-grinder began the torture by grinding out a well-known European waltz, and Graetz, hoping to silence him, threw him a coin; but the money had the contrary effect, and the man, gesticulating his thanks, began to play his music-box with greater ardor. Marie shrugged her shoulders laughingly, then placing her hands to her mouth called over to Graetz: "What shall we do today?"

"Whatever you command," the major shouted back.

"Let us go boating. I'll tell you more about it at breakfast-time,"

cried Marie. She nodded, then touched the tips of her fingers with her lips and waved her hand toward him. Graetz blushed and was about to answer this salutation when Marie disappeared.

The day was a very sultry one, but on the water the heat was not so oppressive. The oarsmen were adept youths, and the caique flew across the surface of the water. At first Marie and the major chatted about a number of trivial things; then they became silent and stretched themselves out side by side in the bottom of the boat. It was a charming ride, and the boat glided smoothly toward Scutari, whose stretch of houses was a vari-colored garment draping the cypress woods. While the rowers waited at the landing-place, Marie and Graetz threaded their way through the narrow, crooked streets of the lower city toward the cemetery. Here the tombs, crowned by a forest of cypress trees four centuries old, offered a marvelous contrast to the glowing Oriental life of the city's streets. Under the neglected tombstones and patches of ivy the dead slumbered, while above, hidden by the green of the cypress surface, thousands of pigeons guarded the peace of eternity. Silently the two had wandered through a ravine straight into the heart of this burying-ground, to the neglected section, where they met no one. In this place the tombs had nearly all fallen to ruins. Seating herself on one of these stones, Marie supported her chin on the handle of her parasol and looked over at Graetz, a merry smile playing about her lips.

"I should like to read your character," she began, "for I do not believe it will be difficult to tell exactly what you are."

"Do," he returned, "and after you have finished telling me what I am, then I shall tell you what I should like to be."

"You are rather happily constituted," said Marie, "without many skeptical tendencies or great desires. Too much sun or too much rain upsets you—but your worry then concerns your estates and not yourself. Your case is the usual one of still waters running deep, and I know there is a hundred times more in you than shows on the surface. You are a good man" —Marie arose, walked toward him and laid her hands on his shoulders—"of that I am positive; but now that I have become your friend I want to see you in a better light. It is no virtue to be good—every weakling, every fool can be that. I wish that you might be a bit more ambitious. This sounds silly, but it is not so; 'they are but beggars that can count their worth,' Juliet says, and you, my dear friend, are richer than you suspect."

"Ah, Marie," cried Graetz, taking her hand in his and kissing her finger-tips, "I fear you are mistaken, I fear you are finding more than I can show forth.'"

"If that were true, then it would prove that I have no eyes, no senses. Perhaps outward circumstances have hardened me a bit, or perhaps you have grown too phlegmatic to understand your own case. It is a pity you have no friend who can rouse you out of your present condition—and it is a pity you have not found a woman who can form the complement to your being. May I seek her for you? I know someone who could help you——"

She said this laughingly and tried to withdraw her hands, but he held them prisoners. He decided not to miss this opportunity, determined that no silly sense of conventions should sway him. He held her closely in his arms as he had once before in the ruins of Carthage; but this time he did not release her—instead he kept her in a close embrace.

"Yes, Marie," he said, with flashing eyes, "seek her for me. But don't look too far, for the one you seek is very near at hand. You know her, and you know, too, that she is the right woman. Don't protest. I want to kiss your lips—I love you——"

Marie grew deadly pale, and the light faded from her eyes. Had it

not been for his support she would have fallen. He had expected a cry of happiness from her, but he held in his arms a woman whose eyes were closed and whose lips were sealed.

"Marie, what is it?" he groaned, pressing her head against his breast and kissing her. Gradually a faint glow returned to her cheeks; then she opened her eyes, and the glow turned to a deep red. She flung her arms about his neck and kissed him.

The boatmen were squatting on the ground at the landing-place, throwing dice, when the couple returned. Graetz was laughing. "Thank God!" he said, "your high spirits have returned!"

"Yes," she answered, interlacing her fingers with his, "they have, and I am happy. I was even happy a few minutes ago, even when I was only half conscious. It is said that happiness can kill, but it only stunned me. Now let us start back."

Count Limbach was waiting for Graetz at the hotel. He had been shown up to the major's room and had fallen asleep there while waiting for him. He handed Graetz a despatch which the latter read with anxious eyes:

English Embassy, Constantinople. Confidential for Putnam. Marie de la Rocque of first Montreal family. Parents dead, father esteemed merchant, known personally to me. Wine merchant, business now in other hands. Daughter's account with me nearly £60,000 safely invested. She sometimes draws more than amount of interest, travels great deal, appears eccentric, but reputation spotless. Know only complimentary reports.

RITCHIE.

Graetz passed his hand slowly over his eyes and forehead. He was not excited, but a sense of deliverance came over him. Here, then, there was no shadow—only sunlight.

"Accept my congratulations," said the count, extending his hand. "Now I can sincerely wish you happiness and give you my blessing."

"Thank you," returned Graetz. "Your blessing is appreciated, and I need your consent to my marriage. I must confide to you that I have anticipated you and that this morning at three minutes after eleven I declared my love to Marie in the cemetery at Scutari, and as a consequence have engaged myself."

"Is it possible!" cried the count. "So you could not wait! My God, but you are consumed by an impetuous fire of youth, even though it is accompanied by incipient baldness! My dear fellow, I envy you. There—take my blessing."

"Thankfully, dear Will. Now listen: Today is Tuesday, and according to my idea of things, a week is long enough to celebrate my engagement. So I would like to be married next Tuesday, and I want you to help me through the formalities."

The count raised his hands to heaven and called on all the gods and the prophets to condemn this grotesque hurry. But the major was obdurate, and as the telegram had quite decided the count in favor of the match, he agreed to make all the necessary arrangements.

Meanwhile Marie stood at the window in her room, staring blindly at the enchanted landscape that stretched out before her eyes. Her heart beat violently, and again a pallor overspread her features. She smiled, but not with happiness. She had achieved what she desired, had won the man she craved. She had wooed him, he had not wooed her. She should have gloated in her triumph, for she was happy and her life seemed to promise a future that was worth while; yet her happiness was not complete, its sweetness was tainted by a drop of bitterness.

There was a knock at her door, and Otto's voice cried: "May I come in?"

When she opened the door Graetz and the count stood outside. The count entered first, bowed and took Marie's hand.

"Dearest cousin," he said, with much dignity, "I am the one man who represents your bridegroom's family in this strange country. I welcome you, in the name of the family, and rejoice endlessly that my cousin

has chosen so fortunately. In the names of Graetz and Limbach I beg the privilege of kissing you. The man who stands beside me has no objections to offer."

"Count," answered Marie, "you have spoken so beautifully that I must seek simpler language. My answer shall be a kiss."

She rose on the tips of her toes and kissed the count. Otto was delighted at this bit of sentiment, and flung his arm around Marie, saying: "You don't know how happy I am, love. The count is going to arrange everything, and inside of two weeks we will be on our honeymoon. When summer comes I will take you to your new home."

He felt a tremor pass through her body. The count had discreetly walked to the window, where he stood thoughtfully watching a ragpicker raking over a pile of refuse, while the dogs were barking enviously at his heels.

VII

THREE days later the *Therapia* was anchored in the port of Constantinople on the return trip from Odessa. Captain Dietrichsen utilized the first opportunity to go to the Pera Palace Hotel and inquire after Graetz and Mlle. de la Rocque. It so happened that both of them were in the hotel at the time, and when Graetz told the captain of his engagement the old seadog threw his cap in the air and broke out in an Indian warwhoop. He insisted that they accept his invitation to celebrate the occasion by a supper on board the *Therapia*.

During the course of this meal one of the stewards told Graetz that a steerage passenger wished a moment's conversation with him. When Graetz heard that this passenger was the deserter, Fritz Brettschneider, who was making the return trip to Hamburg, he consented to see him. Brettschneider appeared and politely expressed his joy at the news of the approaching marriage. He wished to be the first one from Kütnersdorf, the major's native village, to offer his congratulations.

The evening passed merrily, the captain telling some wonderful snake stories and Count Limbach relating numberless probable and improbable adventures that he had experienced in Tripoli. The evening finally came to an end, and the couple left the ship amidst the thundering hurrahs of the crew.

As Marie was descending the gangplank she stopped abruptly at sight of two men conversing in the light of a street lamp on the quay. One of them was dressed in Turkish costume, wearing a fez, while the other, a smart man with pointed black mustaches and weather-browned face, was dressed in European costume and wore patent-leather shoes. It was at sight of the latter that Marie started and turned pale, only recovering herself when the man moved away.

On the quay the count ordered carriages, and then bade the bridal couple good night.

The crew of the ship and the steerage passengers had also celebrated the event. A punch had been prepared for them, and poems were recited and songs sung until suddenly the cook grew sentimental and had to be carried to his cabin. Then the first officer ordered the company to bed, and all obeyed save Fritz Brettschneider and the barber. The latter proposed that they go ashore and see something of night life in Constantinople cafés. At first Fritz hesitated because he had no passport; but the barber assured him that there was no danger, and the two sped down the gangplank as nimbly as cats.

In a few minutes Brettschneider and the barber entered the Café Grec, which was crowded with people. There appeared to be few Turks present, but on all sides one heard conversation in Greek, French, Armenian and Italian, interspersed with an occasional English word. On the platform in the back of the room an orchestra of Bohemian musicians was accompanying four gaily dressed women, who shrilled

their songs, punctuating them with bold gestures.

Suddenly Brettschneider started, for he thought he saw Peter Tittman, a German who had been in the Foreign Legion. Tittman had deserted or disappeared before Fritz had left the service. Fritz looked again to make sure, and satisfied himself that there could be no doubt about it, although now Tittman, with his pointed black mustaches and weather-browned face, was dressed as a gentleman, with patent-leather boots and white gaiters. For a minute Fritz hesitated to approach him, for he knew Tittman's reputation was bad and his conscience very flexible. Still, for the sake of old times, Fritz went over to his old acquaintance and was received with boisterous cordiality. Tittman was in company with a Turk, wearing a fez, to whom he said something in French, and then drew another chair to the table, inviting Fritz to be seated.

Over a friendly glass Tittman recounted his experiences in Algiers, where he had remained a long time even after he deserted. He had been waiter, crier at fairs, barber and longshoreman. Then he had knocked about for a long time until he was picked up by the Dobelli Circus, with which he had traveled through various countries. Of late he had drifted into horse-trading, at which he expected to make a fortune.

Involuntarily Fritz compared his own position with that of Tittman. They were both the sons of German farmers, both had entered the Legion in Algiers at about the same time, and now Tittman was flourishing and gaily attired, was planning to make his fortune, while Fritz, swayed by homesickness, was longing for his place behind the plow on his miserly uncle's fields.

Fritz was depressed, and when the barber beckoned to him from the other side of the room he paid his account and made his way back to the ship.

Thanks to the count's energy, the wedding was celebrated on the appointed day. The ceremony was performed at the consulate, and the count's brilliantly uniformed and lavishly gowned friends made it a very pretty scene. Afterward there was a dinner, the later courses of which the bridal couple had to forego in order to catch the Paris express. At the railway station the noise and confusion were deafening. The count accompanied the newly wedded pair to their compartment, and at that moment stopped to greet a Turkish officer who was passing along the platform.

"Who was that, Will?" asked Graetz. "He had the face of a bandit chief; I have always imagined Rinaldo Rinaldini to look like that."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," answered the count, smiling; "he is one of my esteemed Turkish 'friends'—an estimable 'gentleman'—His Excellency Kissim Pasha, chief of the Padishah's detective force."

Then Marie cautiously leaned forward, stealing a glance out of the compartment window and concealing herself behind the curtain.

"And who is the man with him, the one in European dress?" she asked in an excited whisper.

"The one with the pointed black mustaches and the weather-browned face?" The count shrugged his shoulders as he gazed after the pair. "I don't know, cousin; but of a certainty he is as much of a scoundrel as his excellency."

The porter locked the doors, and the passengers said their farewells. The train started, and the count waved a final adieu to the couple, crying at parting, "I wish you both all the happiness possible!"

"All happiness!" repeated Marie in a whisper. "Oh, God, all happiness!"

Alone in the compartment Marie flung her arms about her husband's neck and kissed him affectionately. He was very happy.

VIII

TOWARD the west, where the estates of Stockhausen and Kütnersdorf meet,

there lies in the meadow a mighty, rugged block of stone, which the natives have christened "The Devil's Pulpit." The proprietor of the Stockhausen estate, the elder Graetz, had at one time thought of increasing the usefulness of this meadow by robbing it of its parklike character; but his son and neighbor, the squire of the Kütnersdorf estate, objected seriously because his young wife admired the depression of ground about this "Devil's Pulpit," so he abandoned the idea. Viewed from the height of Fox Hill, the whole landscape reminded one of an English park.

The horseman who was at the moment gazing at this stretch of land was the master of Stockhausen, the elder Graetz. He was of large physique, almost of the portliness of a Falstaff, with a finely shaped head well set on his mighty shoulders. His white, closely cropped hair was covered by a cap, beneath the visor of which gleamed a pair of snapping eyes that were in striking contrast to the tanned features. At his age, seventy years, he paid little heed to matters of dress, wearing a bright green blouse, enormously ample trousers and high boots that might have stamped him as a farmhand. His horse was a mighty animal, equal in size to a Percheron, and the old man sat his mount like a stripling.

He gazed about him, but his glance invariably returned to the direction of Kütnersdorf, where a second village seemed to be forming. Here was a whole colony of new houses of varied sizes, at which the old man gazed again and again, shifting his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other and muttering: "Well, I don't know—but I am sure it's a crazy scheme!" Then he slapped his horse on the neck and said: "Now, Caroline, let's go and find something new."

The beast understood and started off at a leisurely trot which did not jolt the old man out of his reverie. His longing drew him to Kütnersdorf, for today he expected to become a grandfather. Annafreda, his beloved wife, had driven over early in the morning, leaving him with the injunction: "You had better stay at home, Carl. Over there you would simply be in the way. Besides, you speak so loudly that even when you whisper it sounds as if someone were hallooing for help. When it is all over I'll telephone you, and then you can come."

But at home his restlessness had been too much for the old man, and he had ordered Caroline to be saddled, and was now roaming about the estates. He rode over to the carp ponds and killed time by chatting with the man in charge of the fisheries. Then he struck into the main road and there encountered Judge Uhlenhausen, who got out of his carriage and walked over to Graetz.

"Graetz," he said, "I have been wanting for a long time to talk to you about your son Otto. Has he gone clean mad? How about those new houses he has built for his men—has he money enough for that?"

"His wife is doing it," Graetz shouted.

"What—his wife?"

"Yes, she has ordered that whole model village to be built—living houses for the men, a bathing establishment, a library—everything. She inherited the money from her uncle Gudovich, who was Russian consul-general in Algiers; and now she wants to spend it all to better the condition of these people. I am for bettering the state of the workingman, too, and I am liberal—but I am not daft on the subject."

"Daft!" cried Uhlenhausen, emphasizing his remark by slapping Caroline on the flank. "Daft—that's exactly what it is. I didn't want to express it quite so frankly, but it is nothing more nor less than a magnificent form of insanity. Between ourselves, my friend, your daughter-in-law is a very charming person — lovable, graceful, and what a horsewoman! But, my old friend, she's like all Americans—just a little bit—" he tapped his forehead, whistled shrilly and snapped his fingers.

"You mean a bit unsettled," said Graetz. "That doesn't bother me; on the contrary, I like it. Sometimes it acts like a bolt of lightning in this stagnant atmosphere. But everything has its limit, and this colony of new houses is going to make the workingmen rebellious."

"That is exactly what it will do, Graetz, for we can't all of us build palaces for our laborers. But that is not the only thing: Your son Otto has a henchman in the village, a certain Brettschneider, in whom he places unlimited confidence, and this man is notoriously a Social Democrat. Your son has resigned from the Conservative party, and I advise you to caution him about these matters before it is too late."

The conversation was interrupted by the village doctor, who came rattling down the road in a rickety buggy, to which was harnessed a decrepit white horse.

"Good morning, gentlemen," cried the doctor. "What, Squire Graetz, you on the highway and your wife telephoning like mad to get you at the house!"

Graetz became anxious. "Is it all over?" he asked. "How did it pass off?"

"Gloriously," answered Dr. Harbs, plying his horse with the whip. "My best congratulations, grandfather!"

"Doctor!" cried Graetz, "I say, boy or girl?"

"Twins!" cried the doctor from out of a cloud of dust. Then he drew rein, and standing up in his buggy he shouted: "Two boys!"

At this news Graetz was not to be held. He rode Caroline across field, made her jump a ditch, and under the lashes of the squire's whip she fairly raced to Kütnersdorf. Once the village was in sight, he allowed the foaming animal to slacken into a trot. The village curate and the schoolmaster shouted their congratulations to him as he clattered up the main street. Arriving at his son's house, he flung himself from his horse and hurried up the stairs. On all sides the servants bombarded him with congratulations, and then Otto appeared and embraced the old man stormily.

"I congratulate you, grandfather!" he cried. "A pair of them—and such boys!"

Tears streamed down the old man's cheeks, and at this signal all the servants standing about began bellowing.

"How is Marie?" the old squire asked in a choking voice.

"Thank God, she is doing very well," answered Otto.

Then on tiptoe the two men went to the mother's room. On her face was an expression of sweet happiness, while beside her lay the babes. Again the old squire grew sentimental, the tears pouring from his eyes as he kissed Marie's hand. Then Annafreda winked at him, and the two men started to leave the room.

In a faint voice Marie called to Otto to turn back. As he knelt down beside her bed she reached out her hand to him and whispered, "I love you very much, and I am happy."

IX

SEVERAL evenings later Fritz Brettschneider cut across the fields to the house of Farmer Schulze. As he entered the yard he heard a woman's voice calling, and turning saw the blond head of Frida Schulze, who was beckoning from the cowshed. Farmer Schulze would not allow his daughter Frida to have a moment's confidential talk with Fritz, so the latter, availing himself of the opportunity presented by the deserted yard, hastened over to the shed and quickly closed the door behind him. At the same moment two soft arms were laid about his neck and fresh, warm lips met his own.

"Where are you going?" asked Frida.

"You must know; to your father."

"That will do no good, Fritz," said Frida, beginning to cry. "Do you know who has been here?"

Brettschneider held the girl tight in

his embrace. "Don't cry, Frida," he said, "or I shall not be able to contain myself any longer. I am in a devilish mood and out of sorts with everything." He kissed away his sweetheart's tears. "Tell me, who has been here?"

"Dr. Wanowski."

Fritz began to swear. So this sneaking Polish quack had not been subdued by the beating Fritz had given him. Wanowski had come into the district five or six years before. He was small of stature, lame in one foot, his head was noticeably large in proportion to his body, and, save for a defect in his right eye, his expression was one of great intelligence. When he settled in the neighborhood he hoped to open a sanitarium in Fridau. But the neighbors objected, and so he removed to the nearby village of Rocknow, where he bought a villa and set about building up a practice. The better class of citizens would have nothing to do with him, so he sought to establish a hold by curing the poor farmers free of charge. The report spread that he had rid a half-witted girl of hallucination by treating her hypnotically, and this story had attracted the attention of Major von Albinus, an eccentric retired officer who had bought a picturesque ruin near Rocknow. The major busied himself with spiritualism and occultism, and at his invitation Wanowski took up his quarters in the Albinus castle ruin. The major had a weak heart and allowed Wanowski to try his cures on him.

"Fritz, is it true that you gave him a beating?" Frida asked, clinging anxiously to the young man.

Brettschneider laughed bitterly. "I can tell you it was a pleasure to do it. The Polack had had a bit too much to drink one day and began to abuse Graetz and his wife. I warned him to hold his tongue, and when he did not pay any heed I simply let him have a couple. But we must talk seriously. Let's run away and get married if your father continues to be so obstinate in his refusal. We will manage to get on somehow."

"No, no; it's impossible, for I couldn't help reproaching myself afterward if things went wrong. Your Uncle Brettschneider can't live forever. Now, if you were to run away and he were to die and leave his property to another relative, I should reproach myself very bitterly. No, Fritz, we simply must wait and be patient. My father's anger at you began when your uncle turned Social Democrat. For that reason he hates him and will have nothing to do with him; and only the other day he declared that you belonged to the Social Democracy, too. Dr. Wanowski has been hanging around a lot of late, pestering me; but I can't abide the man. He has got into my father's good graces by prescribing a new cure for his ailment, and that gives the doctor an excuse to come to the house a great deal. Why do you want to speak to father now?"

"Graetz has sent me to discuss some matters of the coming election, and incidentally I shall speak to your father about our own affairs."

"Please be prudent, Fritz, don't lose your head," begged Frida. "Now slip out carefully so that no one may see you." Once more she put her arms around Fritz's neck and kissed him heartily.

When Brettschneider knocked at Farmer Schulze's door he was invited to enter and found Schulze sitting at his table, composing an agricultural report.

"Good evening, Brettschneider," said the elder man. "Are you coming only to pay a visit or have you something to tell me?"

"I have something to tell you," answered Fritz, "for I am sent by Major Graetz, and it concerns the coming election. It is not at all likely that our candidate, Count Barby, will defeat the Social Democrat, but we must make a good fight, and we are seeking a confidential man to aid the cause of the Conservatives. Graetz has appointed me his adjutant——"

"You are a turncoat, Brettschneider, for you used to be a Social Democrat. And no one trusts a turncoat," inter-

rupted Farmer Schulze, in a voice that betrayed no emotion.

Fritz grew livid and sprang to his feet. "That is equivalent to calling me a traitor, Schulze! If it were someone else who made that accusation, I assure you I would answer him in quite a different way. It is true that once I was persuaded by my uncle and Tittman to vote the Social Democratic ticket; but that was a long time ago—when I was a silly boy. Is that to be raked up against me for the entire balance of my life?"

"There, don't work yourself into a frenzy over it," answered Schulze; "but I can see very little difference between Social Democracy and the German Social Party, as you people call yourselves. All your efforts to improve the condition of the workingman are nonsense. I had a very good hand and paid him good wages, but he told me the men in Graetz's model colony got more, so I increased his wages. Then he came and said that the men up there got extra wages when they worked overtime at harvesting; then that his room was not good enough for him and he found fault with the food. Finally he came to get my consent to be married. I simply kicked him out. You have him up there among you now, Brettschneider, but up to the present I haven't been able to get anyone in his place. In a very short time we will be unable to get man or maid to work for us down here. And it is all the fault of your employer, Graetz, who is turning the heads of the working people. Of course, if we were as rich as your people are, we could give our workingmen decorated rooms to live in and dress them like fancy dolls; but, being poor, we can't afford this. You spoil the people so that the farmer can get no one to work for him—that's what you German Socialists are doing. How can you expect me to work for you at election time?"

"Very well, Schulze, I will take your answer back," answered Fritz, "and we can easily look for someone else to interest himself in our cause."

Still Fritz remained standing, twirling his cap about in his hand. His voice assumed a pleading quality as he again addressed the farmer: "Schulze, won't you give me Frida for a wife? She will accept no one else. Yes, I know what you want—you demand positive assurance that my uncle has named me as his sole heir. That satisfaction my uncle will not give me, because he is superstitious and imagines that if he were to make such a statement he would die soon afterward. But he has told me in conversation that I am his heir."

"Brettschneider," answered Schulze, "I do not believe you would lie, but I am convinced that your uncle is lying. He tells you that you are to be his heir because he is afraid of you; but I know that his will is made and that in it he has left everything to his sister."

"How do you know that? If the will is filed it is sealed!"

Without answering, Schulze arose and called to his wife: "Mother, is the meal ready? Brettschneider is here, and perhaps he will have a bite with us."

Brettschneider shook his head, while his face quivered with emotion. "No, thank you," he replied, "I'd better go," and he hurried out into the yard, with a hasty good night.

As he was passing his uncle's house he saw a light in the window. He was not in his uncle's employ any longer, and was living up in the model colony; but he was still on good terms with the old man. He thought he could well afford to visit his miserly relative at this time, for he was greatly worried about the matter of his inheritance, since his whole future seemed to depend on it. Accordingly he directed his steps toward the light that gleamed from behind the trellised window.

X

ALTHOUGH seventy-four years old, and asthmatic in the bargain, the miserly old Brettschneider kept only one man and one maid, looking after

the details of his property himself. He trusted none of his servants, and it had been a perfect godsend when his nephew Fritz returned to him three years ago. During the days immediately following Fritz's return the old man was in a delirium of joy; but he was a shrewd bargainer, and, luring Fritz on by the bribe of a possible inheritance, he worked the poor boy to the extent of his powers. Fritz slaved from early morning till late at night, got no wages, and finally used up the last bit of his little savings for necessary clothing. He was the laughing-stock of all the farmers in the neighborhood, for any farmhand in the province received better treatment than Fritz. So matters went until Christmas-time —and even then the old miser kept his purse-strings taut. On Christmas night Fritz demanded wages. For answer his uncle, who was drunk, pounded the table with his fist and yelled at the top of his voice:

"Wages? You, the heir of the house! Who ever heard of such a thing!"

A violent scene ensued, and the consequence was that in January Fritz entered the service of Major Graetz. The latter had taken a personal liking to Fritz and soon made him the overseer of his workingmen's village. Shortly afterward Fritz had made peace with his uncle by appearing one night with a bottle of wine under each arm. When these were emptied Fritz went to the tavern and fetched two bottles more, and when uncle and nephew parted company that night the old man forgivingly held out his hand, but his small, bloodshot eyes twinkled treacherously.

Uncle Brettschneider's inhospitable living-room faced the village. An old leather-covered sofa stood opposite the door, and on this the old man sat, while opposite him was Dr. Wanowski. The latter's elbows were planted on the table, and between the two stood two glasses filled with rum.

Wanowski's long fingers clutched the glass that the miser Brettschneider had just refilled. "Where did you steal this excellent Jamaica?" he asked.

The old man grinned. "Good, isn't it?" he answered. "Some time ago I got three kegs of it instead of some interest money that was due me. But this is about the end of it."

"Old man, I have told you several times that you ought to quit this boozing. Good red wine would do you no harm—but I guess that's too expensive for you. For whom are you hoarding your money? For that good-for-nothing Fritz?"

The old man shifted his pipe to the opposite corner of his mouth. "Doctor," he said, "I really ought not to save my money for anyone, but I can't get into the habit of spending it. My father was the same way—I am simply a miser by heredity."

"Well, your heirs will appreciate it. Your sister is very anxious to buy a house, but she has no money. She's waiting. Every time I see her she asks: 'Is the old man still alive?'"

Old Brettschneider swore a horrible oath, pounded the table and grew black in the face with rage. "That beast," he snorted, "has cheated me twice! Rather than give her a single penny, I will take the money into my grave with me."

"But that is impossible, so after all Fritz will inherit the money. Well, I am glad that you are a good man—one can see that you are—but Fritz is an ingrate. He ran away. When he returned you were generous to take him back. Then he ran away again at a time when a man of your age stands most in need of help——"

At this moment the house door creaked.

"Somebody is coming," said Wanowski. "Good-bye, Brettschneider—I'll send you some medicine for that cough."

There was a knock at the door, and Fritz entered. He stopped when he saw Wanowski, and the latter bolted out of the room without a word of greeting.

Wanowski walked down to the village tavern, where his team was awaiting him. It was really Major von Albinus's landau, and the coachman wore the livery of the house; but

Wanowski lorded it over the servants in the old ruin as though he were the master there. The eccentric major was really nothing more than a weak fanatic, a miserable prey to neurasthenia, and Wanowski was a clever enough scoundrel to realize this and make a dupe of the man. The Pole's volcanic temperament was coupled with the conscienceless instincts of a criminal. He was infatuated with the farmer's blond daughter Frida, and would have done murder to win her.

XI

A FEW days later Fritz received a letter from Peter Tittman, mailed in Sofia. Tittman begged for the loan of some money. He recounted his adventures—how he had traveled about buying horses for the Prince Mohammed Selim, out of which deal he had hoped to clear two hundred thousand francs; but gradually reports floated in to the prince that his agent had been guilty of dishonesty, and these tales were corroborated by a sheik from Tripoli. As a result Tittman had been dismissed and ordered to leave Turkey inside of twenty-four hours. He vented his wrath on the prince's stable-keeper, whom he beat fearfully. In punishment for this he was thrown into prison, and on his release was given a very strong hint to disappear from the scene. To emphasize this he was attacked one night by a gang and so brutally beaten that he lost his left eye in the mêlée and afterward spent two months in a hospital. After this he went to Sofia, where he had the misfortune to fall in with a crafty Bulgarian, with whom he closed a business alliance that sent him to prison for eight months more. Now Tittman begged Fritz to find him quarters in Kütnersdorf—if possible, with Uncle Brettschneider, for whom he was willing to work. Meanwhile he asked Fritz to send him three hundred marks to enable him to pay some debts and get out of the country.

There were a great many statements in the letter that Fritz could not explain satisfactorily. Nevertheless, there was a vacant room in Uncle Brettschneider's house, and the old man was very much in need of someone to help him. So Fritz decided to talk to his uncle about the matter.

Marie Graetz was happily recovered, and when one evening Graetz told her that some pheasants had been seen, she was all eagerness for the hunt. At dawn the next morning the hunting cart was awaiting them, and the mist had not yet lifted when the hunters reached the bottom of Fox Hill. Here one of their overseers met the couple and conducted them across the meadow, and presently Graetz, allowing his wife the courtesy of the first shot, touched her on the shoulder and pointed toward the game. Marie raised her gun and fired.

Up on one of the ledges that projected from Fox Hill sat a young man with easel before him, busy over a water-color sketch.

"The devil!" he grumbled, when he heard the shot. "I thought in this early morning stillness I would surely find peace and quiet, but there is someone down there who is bent on killing."

He arose to quiet his horse, which was grazing nearby, and just then a second shot was heard. The young man took the precaution to hitch his horse, and then walked to the foot of the ledge to get a glimpse of the hunters. He took out his field-glasses and saw the figures of a gamekeeper, the stalwart hunter, and beside him a woman. Upon her he focussed his glass, and soon he plainly discerned her features. "It is not possible," he gasped in amazement. "But the resemblance is striking."

He scanned her features carefully, one by one. They were those of Antoinette Laize, the famous horsewoman he had seen in the Dobelli Circus. He had been told that this was the estate of Major Graetz, and that the latter had married a pretty Amer-

ican whom he had met on a trip to the Orient, yet he could not explain how this American could be identical in appearance with Antoinette Laize. His curiosity soon got the better of him. The young man deserted his painting, swung himself into the saddle and started down the hill. He made the descent safely enough until his horse balked at a ditch at the bottom of the hill. Graetz, seeing the horseman, approached him while Marie was busy watching a pair of storks.

"A thousand pardons," the painter called across the ditch, lifting his hat, "but my beast refuses to take this. Have I the honor of addressing Major Graetz? I am Dr. Alexander Hackert."

"Did I understand aright—Dr. Hackert?" asked Graetz, saluting the stranger.

"Quite right. Formerly dragoman of the Russian consul in Algiers, now stationed in Santa Fé de Bogotá. There you have my biography in a few words; and now I would like to shake hands with you, but my beast refuses——"

"Ride him to the left a bit; there you will find a bridge across the ditch," advised Graetz. Then he welcomed the newcomer heartily.

"You are not entirely a stranger to me, doctor," he said, "for your cousin gave me a letter of introduction to you to use when I was in Algiers. But my time there was so short that I could not avail myself of it. Now I would like to introduce you to my wife. In meeting her you may possibly renew an old acquaintance."

Dr. Hackert was about to reply, but caution sealed his lips. As the two men walked toward Marie the latter started, the smile dying from her face and the color leaving her cheeks. She pressed her gun tightly against her breast as though she felt that an enemy was approaching her.

"Marie," called Graetz, "see whom I have found! Did you not tell me once that you had met Dr. Hackert in the house of your uncle Gudovich in Algiers?"

Marie waited until the man stood directly in front of her. She acknowledged the newcomer's presence with a slight bow, and when she raised her eyes again they met the gaze of the young diplomat with an expression in which were mingled pleading, fear and desperation. She smiled amiably, however.

"I believe I have heard your name mentioned, doctor," she answered, "but according to my recollection we have never met before."

"No, madame," Hackert rejoined, "we have never met before." He spoke with the utmost calm, respectfully kissing the hand Marie had extended toward him.

"Isn't that strange," argued Graetz, "for certainly you spent a great deal of time at the Russian consulate?"

"Socially I seldom came in contact with His Excellency Count Gudovich," replied Dr. Hackert readily. "We did not get on very well together, which was principally my fault. Did madame spend much time in Algiers?"

"Several months. The late consul-general was my uncle. Are you visiting in Wendhusen?"

"Yes, madame. An eternity ago I promised my cousin to visit him. Unfortunately, I cannot remain long, for I must be in St. Petersburg by the middle of next month."

"Then we shall meet on the tenth of the month in Wendhusen?" asked Marie.

"I hope to be so fortunate, madame. My cousin has told me that on that day an important political meeting is to take place there. But I am interrupting your sport."

Once again he kissed Marie's hand and shook that of the major. As the doctor placed his foot in the stirrup, his eye sought Marie. She had remained standing and was staring back at him. As their glances met, she lifted the forefinger of her right hand and touched her lips. The doctor swung himself into the saddle, bowing his head markedly. It may have been an involuntary movement, but Marie placed a different meaning upon it.

"What in the world is the matter

with you?" Graetz asked anxiously, when they were seated side by side in the cart on their way home. "You look miserable. You should have remained at home and rested a week longer. This is all my fault!"

Marie succeeded in smiling. She laid her hand reassuringly on her husband's arm and said: "There's nothing at all the matter with me, dear, save that I am hungry. We should have got some breakfast before we started."

This quieted Graetz, and he began to chat happily. "What a remarkable meeting with Dr. Hackert! Strangely enough, I was sure you had met him in Algiers, and even now I cannot understand why you did not, since you were at the consulate so much."

"But you heard him say, Otto, that he did not get on with Gudovich." Marie's heart was beating wildly, and a hundred voices were crying in her ears. When she alighted from the cart at the castle it required all her self-control to keep from fainting. But she changed her dress, soon appearing for breakfast in a red dressing-gown. This hour was the happiest of the day for Graetz, who glanced through his mail while she was preparing the tea and toast. The mail contained a postcard from Count Limbach, who was preparing to leave Constantinople and asked if there were some old place in the neighborhood of Kütnersdorf that he could acquire. This started them to reviving old times, and Marie drew from her husband a confession of the great love he had felt for her even when his diffidence prevented an expression of it. He also admitted that, even if the information about her cabled by her bankers at the count's request had not been favorable, his love would still have triumphed.

The shadows faded from Marie's eyes and her voice rang with the sound of triumph. "And now I will confess to you, Otto, that I underwent a trial too. I wanted you, but a doubt arose in my mind whether we were suited to each other; whether my restless nature would content itself in one quiet spot. My answer to these doubts was that I must have loved you, else I could not have yearned for you as I did. Still, at that time my love was scarcely more than an honest liking for you. But today, beloved one, I love you with all my heart; I love you more than anything else in the world!" and she threw herself impulsively into his arms, her tears mingling with her kisses.

Presently the servant entered to tell madame that the nurse was bathing the children. Marie and the major went at once to the nursery, where the twins were crowing and kicking in the tub. He seated himself in a chair, while she helped with the bath. The maid drew aside the curtain, letting the full warm glow of the sun into the room, which seemed to be filled with the spirit of happy childhood. Graetz did not stir, but his breath came fast. His feeling of happiness was so great that it almost oppressed him. He could not speak, but the glance that he sent over to Marie seemed to say: All this happiness I owe to you!

XII

MARIE was alone at home. Her husband had gone to attend a conference and the children had been put to bed. In her own room the hanging lamp was lit, and Marie seated herself at her desk. A secret drawer was open, displaying packages of documents. Marie called this place of hiding the mausoleum of her muses, for here were buried all her efforts at poetry, short stories, and even the beginning of a novel. Now she scanned these manuscripts and smiled at their shallowness and triviality. She put them aside and in rummaging about found her diary, a handsomely bound book secured by a lock. Under it lay an envelope containing a photograph, at sight of which she paled. She could not understand how this picture happened to survive, for she remembered distinctly that in Constantinople, immediately after her engagement to Graetz, she had consigned numberless mementoes to the flames of the fireplace in her hotel

room. This picture must have escaped her eye and later been thrown into her trunk with the manuscripts.

As she held it her hand trembled. It was the picture of a well-built man whose age was not definitely fixed by his appearance. He was probably forty years old, but might easily have been more than fifty. He was attired in riding clothes, and a Great Dane lay stretched at his feet. The face was an imposing one, the features fine and proud—high forehead, shrewd eyes and a strong mouth and chin.

Marie gazed at the photograph, and her warm fingers caressed the smooth, cool surface. Suddenly she grasped it firmly and tore it in two. She arose, walked over to the stove and thrust the picture into the flames. Then she returned to her desk and took up her diary. She was about to consign this also to the flames, but she hesitated at the thought that it contained the records of so much of her girlhood. Yet these pages held a dangerous story. She hunted for the tiny key to unlock the book, deciding that she would glance through its pages once more and then send it the way of the photograph.

The diary began with her first journey. Here her sense of happy freedom was mingled with recollections of her beloved father, then so recently dead. It also contained allusions to her mother, who had persistently remained a stranger to her and had scarcely awaited the end of the mourning period before remarrying. The jubilant happiness of an eighteen-year-old girl who feels her freedom for the first time was voiced in these notes of travel. In Damascus she recorded the purchase of her first horse, which she had bought to ride on inland tours. Her passion for sport was inborn, and there followed whole pages of recollections about her horses. In her travels she had stopped at Tiflis—Marie's eyes followed the records more closely:

TIFLIS.—Have been living at the Hotel London for a week. Have seen everything here, and find this Oriental street life much more interesting than all the old museums and cathedrals. Have been wanting to leave here, but the Dobelli Circus fascinates me. It is a big circus—good acrobats, wretched horses—all except the white mare, Masuhma, ridden by Antoinette Laize, a remarkably fine rider. It is a pity the horse was spoiled in training. I would like to train a horse myself as I think it ought to be done.

Antoinette does not appear any more. She is confined to her room by sickness. One of the stablemen tells me that Masuhma is Antoinette's personal property. Went to Laize to see if she would sell the mare. She is a German and tells me she was married, but her husband had to flee the country because of some trouble. To support herself she had to become a circus rider. Don't know whether or not it is true, and it concerns me very little. She is a charming creature, educated and refined. She is very sick—I fear she has consumption. Will not sell her mare, Masuhma. Loves it with a passion that is touching.

Laize tells me a great deal about her circus life. Says the Dobelli Brothers, who own the circus, are very successful; it is the one big circus that travels all over the Continent. I have attended several rehearsals in the circus. There is a peculiar fascination about it. None of the other women is worth anything as a rider, and I fear Antoinette Laize will not recover.

She died in my arms. It was terrible. Have spoken to the Dobellis, and have bought Antoinette's horses. Antoinette was buried yesterday afternoon.

BATUM.—I had to follow the circus here in order that my horses might have proper care. I enjoy it. The Dobellis have chartered a steamer to take us to Odessa, and I mean to accompany the troupe there!

ODESSA.—Have survived the fearful trip —wretched steamer. The circus gives performance here. Attendance very good. I have grown interested even in the box-office receipts! Every morning I practice riding in the arena. The mare, Masuhma, knows me, and I am able to make her perform the tricks her old mistress taught her. Up to now I have not paid any attention to Dobelli's overtures to engage me. Yesterday he saw me riding Masuhma and praised me, finally asking me if I would not take Antoinette Laize's place and appear in public. He said I resembled her and rode "high school" better than she did. I laughed at him; but at night I dreamed of my first public appearance.

Both of the Dobelli Brothers are pestering me with offers. I can't get the nonsense out of my head, and my horses are keeping alive my interest in the circus. I love Masuhma as I would a human being, and I must follow the circus in order to have her

properly looked after. This whole circus life is fascinating me.

Is it not remarkable how one's common sense is upset by a round of applause? This morning I rode my most difficult tricks on Masuhma, and the whole troupe was watching me. When I took the final hurdle everyone cried "Bravo!" Then the Dobellis began their persuasions anew. I should like to indulge my whim and ride in public just once! No one knows me here. This idea gives me no rest.

KIEV.—I have become "Mlle. Antoinette" and the "star" of the Dobelli Circus. Have refused to accept any salary, but have asked, in lieu of it, that they look after my horses. Have signed no contract, which leaves me free to go whenever I like. I am always as happy as a child in anticipation of the evening performance. No actress could relish her success more than I do when I take the last hurdle and race into the stable.

Marie rapidly turned over several pages, only stopping at the entry headed Nîmes.

NÎMES.—The circus performances here are to be given in an amphitheatre which is not yet ready for us, so the show cannot open until tomorrow. I am a bit fatigued, and some of the fascination is gone. Masuhma is not in good condition, and is not as fresh as she was. I will give her time to rest here.

Am I guilty? No. But my conscience worried me a bit and I am very sad in consequence. Lieutenant Cuvry committed suicide yesterday. Everyone says it was on my account. I refused him three times and returned his flowers and presents. I only spoke to him once, but frequently saw him in the circus. I hardly knew the unfortunate man, yet I weep over him.

Have decided to take a sea trip. Masuhma's death has made me very wretched. I'm perfectly sure it was a piece of revenge perpetrated by the stableman Pierre.

ALGIERS.—Have arranged with the Dobellis to remain with them a month longer, and then I leave this life forever. I am too fond of my own liberty to be happy in the circus any longer; besides, I have lost pleasure in my work.

Carlo Dobelli is a trickster. Despite our agreement he has made public my real name. Last night a gentleman followed me into the stable and presented himself as one of my relatives—Consul-General Gudovich. He asked formally that I grant him an interview, "in the interests of the family."

"The interests of the family" have conquered. Gudovich is my mother's cousin. He talked to me a long time, and finally I promised to leave the Dobellis. The circus people are in despair, but I am resolved to leave them. Gudovich is a lovable man.

Through Gudovich I am getting into society here. He is a widower, very rich. Have been his guest several times. The company of guests was small—made up of Russians and Frenchmen.

Boris Gudovich and I take rides together—they are happy hours. He has asked me not to call him "uncle," but "cousin"—I believe he is vain. I asked him several times whether scandal would not connect our names, and he said the best thing to do was not to take the trouble to contradict such gossip. He is a very remarkable man, knows several languages and literatures. Boris talks charmingly and is a courtier in manner.

Boris is peculiarly sensitive to tenderness. Last night I asked myself what I would do if he were to ask my hand in marriage. The thought stirs me. Do I love the man? If sympathy is the truest foundation of love, then I love him.

We spoke yesterday about my circus caprice, and he admitted that he could understand it. He said it was only his egotism that made him insist on my leaving the circus, and then added: "It makes me very happy to think that you have come unstained through an experience which might easily have tainted you. Yet I ask, Marie, what was it that kept you pure—was it the conviction of your conscience or a moral fear?"

Only a few lines. Every nerve in me is still quivering. He has confessed his love to me—has declared he cannot live without me. It was an expression of raging passion, yet an ennobled one—a storm in the ruddy glow of morning.

He does not wish our engagement to be announced officially. He hates social formalities. Wishes to quit the service and retire to his estates in Poland. Until that time everything is to remain as it is.

But it cannot remain so.

Marie put down the book and covered her face with her hands, while a trembling fit possessed her.

Long ago she had arrived at the conclusion that she had never really loved this man. He had brought to bear upon her all the treasures of his intellect and had undermined her powers of resistance. He had craved her because

of his passion and conquered her by all the tricks of his worldly experience and his brilliant mind. In this he had sinned against nobility—he had been a scoundrel.

He died in consequence of a fall from his horse. Just before his death he added a codicil to his will, but the will itself disclosed later that he had a wife living, from whom he was separated but not divorced.

Again Marie thumbed the remaining pages of the little book. Each one was filled with expressions of despair, self-reproach, resignation and fearful bitterness. She read:

I have learned not to love, but to hate.

I wish I might forget hatred and contempt, and learn to love.

I have been brought low and wish to raise myself again. I have cried a great deal, and now I want to laugh. I wish to begin life anew.

This was the last entry before a lot of empty pages. Then came the simple inscription:

Constantinople, June 29. My wedding day.

On the following page was noted:

Have made no entry in this book for a whole year. One happy year! I have found what I have sought—forgetfulness, peace and love. Today came the first note of warning—the inheritance from St. Petersburg. I wish the lawyers had never found me. Otto advises me to accept the money, so we are building model homes for the workingmen. How I love you, Otto! You are my savior, my better self, my guide. And I will be grateful until the end.

Marie heard the sound of horses' hoofs and the noise of wheels. Then the house door opened, and she knew that her husband had returned. She threw the diary into the secret drawer and locked it.

"Not today," she whispered, "but tomorrow—or the day after—it shall be burned in my first hour of leisure."

XIII

TOWARD five o'clock on the afternoon of the tenth teams deposited the various prominent families of the neighborhood in the park of the Hackert estate. The heat of the day had not yet abated, and groups soon gathered under the shade of the fine old linden trees, where refreshments were being served. At first the topic of politics was avoided as if by mutual agreement; but soon the company divided itself into groups according to their special interests.

Dr. Hackert was not long in finding Marie, and approached her with a freshly plucked rose.

"May I offer you this in respectful admiration, madame?" he said, holding out the rose to her.

"Many thanks," Marie replied, fastening the flower in her girdle. She hardly dared look at him and tried to hide her confusion by a commonplace question, "Do you like living here among us?"

"Very much," he answered, "and especially today. I see by the supper plan that I am to have the honor of sitting at your right, madame. That honor I had once before; but that was many years ago."

Marie drew a long breath. Here, then, this dread thing was to happen; he was recalling the past.

She raised her eyes to his, and a great sadness shone in them. "Go to my husband, and tell him about the past," she whispered in a voice devoid of all emotion.

He shook his head, and the smile faded from his face. Leaning toward her, he asked seriously: "Why insult me, madame? I am not a scoundrel! I could have held my peace, for I understood your pleading glance the other morning. If I recall those days now, I do it with a purpose. Perhaps my advice can be of service to you. I leave this country tomorrow, and it is doubtful if I shall ever return. Have you nothing to say to me, no word of explanation to offer?"

"Yes, I have. Everything in me is pleading for expression, for an explanation. I do not want you to—good God, if you knew how I suffer!"

She had grown as pallid as the

marble of the sundial by which they stood. Her voice had not risen above a whisper, and yet its intonation was that of a suppressed cry. A deep sympathy took possession of the man, and he tried to voice all the gentleness of which he was capable.

"Control yourself, my dear lady," he said. "I am not an enemy. The gentlemen will soon begin their political discussion—if you care to speak to me then, you will find me near the pavilion."

With bowed head Marie walked down the path toward the pavilion. A train of desperate thoughts obsessed her. "What is this thing we call happiness?" she cried to herself. "Just a brief flash of sunlight—and then night closes in again. Is my guilt so great that I must pay for it with my life? Oh, Boris Gudovich, if only you had taken me with you! I might have hated you, but now I cannot be angry with you, for I am guilty—I alone, for you loved me. My God, how did it all come about? It was insanity—and yet I know that that wild period set me free. I would like to kill every memory of it; still, there are some that are delightful—that first evening in Tiflis—those days in Nîmes—and then Algiers!"

Marie gritted her teeth, and the color fled from her lips.

"Boris — scoundrel!" Now her thoughts were framed in whispered words. "I was ready to do penance. I love my husband, I have made him happy and we have two dear children!" A flood of emotion blinded her. She recognized these truths as she did the fact that now her very existence was at stake.

Hearing the sound of her footsteps, Dr. Hackert looked up and advanced to meet her.

"It is very good of you, madame, to keep this rendezvous. I have been reproaching myself for having proposed it. What can you have to say to me? A word of explanation? Why should you—I have no right to demand it. And yet I am glad that you have come, hoping it may be in my power to calm you. I beg you once more to trust my discretion."

Marie bowed her head. She struggled for breath, and her answer came with difficulty. "I believe you. You could crush me, but that would not be the worst—although I am only a woman who treasures her present happiness. But a much more serious matter is the happiness of my husband. If he knew, it would crush him—and that would rob me of peace even in death!"

He raised his hand protestingly. "Heaven forbid! Your words make me regret that I ever accepted my cousin's invitation to come to Germany. For heaven's sake, calm yourself—no one will do you any harm. Let us close this interview now. I offer you my hand and give you my word of honor that no one will ever know from me the conditions under—that I had ever met you before."

He held out his hand. Marie took it and held it for an instant. Hackert noticed that hers was hot with fever, and he felt the throbbing of her pulses.

"I am going to leave you, madame," he said.

"Not yet, I beg of you. I must have a word with you—and I believe over there behind the bushes we will be unnoticed."

They turned down the path, and Marie spoke almost in a whisper, her inflections swayed by the tremendous emotion that possessed her. She spoke of the sudden death of Antoinette Laize, recalled the latter's wonderful Arabian mare Masuhma, the horse that perished in Nîmes in consequence of a stableman's trick, described the thousand brilliant features of the trip through Southern France and the Orient among the vagabonds and artists of the Dobelli Circus. "Ah, yes, doctor, don't shake your head. It is possible. I am not defending myself, for I was a wild girl without parents and entirely at the mercy of my own caprices. And yet that wild episode did me no harm. I remained as I had been. I had plenty of ad-

ventures, but they left me unharmed. The whole affair was a jest, a wild revolt against convention, a crazy caprice —until we came to Algiers." She remained standing. "There in Algiers!" Her face grew ashen, and her lips refused to frame words. "Good God!" she groaned, "good God!"

Dr. Hackert put out an arm to support her, and as he looked into her anguished face and fear-laden eyes, he felt the nervous quivering of her frame. He was deeply affected.

"Be brave," he begged. "I have heard enough—I don't want to know any more."

"But I want to end the story," she whispered.

"Stop!" he commanded. They stood opposite each other. He had seen her frequently in Algiers, at the home of the consul-general, and there her piquant appearance had impressed him—he had found her a pretty, lively and charming person. It was rumored that she came of very good family, and she would certainly have married if Gudovich had not crossed her path. But now things were changed. She had ripened into a woman of great beauty. An indescribable charm hung about her, and for the first time he realized what a lovely being she was. Now, too, she had aroused his sympathies by the fact that she was playing a desperate game with fate. Of those who knew of her past he was the first to cross her path; but in this fate might repeat itself and not be so lenient again. Poor woman!

He released her, saying: "Let us part."

Marie looked at him earnestly, and when she spoke her voice had regained its composure. "Doctor, a last question. I am convinced that my husband's entire happiness is centred in me. I am the most faithful of wives, living and working for him alone. We belong absolutely to each other, are merged into one being, so tenderly do we love each other. I ask you if you believe it just, according to law and right, that this love should be killed because of a memory?—for it is nothing more than a memory that binds me to those days of the past. Is it not possible to atone for this sin by repentance and by deeds? Did I actually cheat my husband? During those early days I did not know him. I was my own mistress, and as such I owed an accounting to no one but myself. Now, is it just that some preacher of morals can come and say to my husband: 'I want to open your eyes—your wife has cheated you!' Have I actually betrayed him?"

"Yes," answered Hackert, his voice mellow with tenderness. "You ask me, and in return I frankly tell you the truth. But I am by no means a Puritan. You are right when you insist that at the time when you indulged this caprice you had to answer only to your own conscience. Yet your guilt began when you married and kept from your husband that which you should have confessed to him. At that moment the lie began to shape itself—not the direct lie, but the lie of silence. I am almost a stranger to you, but the memories of which you spoke bind us closely. If you could see into my heart you would realize how sincerely I feel for you. Take the advice of a friend, the advice of a worldly man: Gather up your courage and confess everything to your husband. I know him far too little to judge of the possible consequences, but you tell me that he loves you and that his whole happiness is wrapped up in you. In that lies your protection."

He stepped to one side, not wishing to look at her in this moment of trial. Her pallor had vanished, and in its place had come the glow of shame. This stranger appeared to her as a judge, and his condemnation sent the blood coursing through her veins. She struggled to frame an answer, but it was impossible for her to voice the thoughts that came to mind. She held out her hand. "I thank you a thousand times, doctor," she said simply.

The two walked back silently side by side. In her heart waged a tumult

of emotions: Confess—even now? At the first his passion might have triumphed over any confession, but now surely he would not forgive her. He would cast her out—and all her happiness, his happiness, would be slaughtered by a single word. Not even her death would help him to forget. No, she could not!

The couple approached the pavilion, and the sound of laughter and shrieks was borne to them. Hackert stopped. For the last time he kissed her hand, saying in an unsteady voice: "Good-bye, madame. Think over my advice, and be assured I know absolutely nothing. It is very unlikely that we two shall ever meet again. Good-bye."

The shrieks and laughter came nearer. Marie listened, and suddenly she heard plainly the neighing of a horse.

"Look out!" exclaimed Hackert, drawing her to one side. "What the deuce has happened?"

A young horse, quivering and covered with foam, plunged through the bushes, pursued by a bevy of girls.

"Catch it!" cried one of them, spreading out her arms. But the beast was too excited to notice any such obstacle. It galloped along the path, stopping for an instant when it saw Marie and Hackert. With a loud neigh it threw up its head, turned about and galloped back toward the girls, who began to shriek anew and scattered in every direction.

One of the men appeared, carrying a long-lashed stable whip, and the whole company pursued the beast down to the meadows.

"You will never get it that way," said Marie. Then she directed the company to form a wide circle about the animal, while she made a noose of the long whiplash. Plucking a handful of grass, she held it out and approached the horse. The animal showed curiosity, stood still and raised its head. Marie watched it closely, as it laid back its ears and snorted. Suddenly it gathered itself for a jump, and at the instant it raised its forefeet Marie flung the noose about them, tugged sharply at the stout lash, and brought the animal tumbling to the ground. Instantly she pounced upon it, got a firm hold of its nostrils, and, with a quick turn of her wrist, had the animal helpless. The grooms came running up and soon had the beast bridled.

"Bravo!" cried Hackert. "Quite a lasso feat, as the books call it!"

It was midnight when Graetz and his wife arrived at their house.

"I should like to stroll through the park before going to bed," said Otto to Marie. "Will you go with me?"

"Gladly," she answered.

They walked beside the pond in which the frogs were croaking noisily, and continued their stroll between the hedges of wild grapevine and across the little bridge.

"You're out of sorts," Marie remarked after a long silence.

"A little—and it angers me that I am so. But it will blow over. Tell me, child, what is this story I hear about the runaway horse you lassoed this afternoon?"

"Oh, it was nothing. One of the animals had broken loose, and I simply used the long whiplash as a lasso, and then held the animal till the men came. It is a very simple trick. Anyone who has ever handled horses knows it."

"It sounds simple enough when you tell it, but according to the accounts of my neighbors at supper it seemed much more. But, dear, please don't do such things in the future. It looks as if—well, it looks like a circus rider's trick."

Her arm quivered in his, and she did not answer.

"You are not angry with me, sweetheart, are you?" he asked.

"No," she answered, "no doubt you are right."

They continued to stroll about the park. Otto had put his arm about Marie's shoulder, and his hand caressed her cheek. Suddenly he felt a warm, moist drop on his hand, and gazed in astonishment at her pale features. Her eyes were full of tears.

XIV

BRETTSCHNEIDER appeared on the station platform just as the train stopped.

"Brettschneider, here I am!" It was the voice of Tittman, and it came from a tall, emaciated fellow who climbed laboriously out of the third-class compartments, pulling a wooden trunk after him.

Fritz started at the sight of Tittman. His clothing hung loosely about him; he was bent, his hair was white at the temples and his mustache, instead of being smartly pointed, now drooped disconsolately over his chin. His left eye was covered by a patch of dark cloth that was fastened with a string about his head.

They stopped to get a drink, and the innkeeper greeted the newcomer: "Well, Tittman, have you come back for a change? Do you mean to stay here?"

"No," answered Tittman, "I am only here for a bit of rest. I am bound for Paris, but before that I must go to Bucharest and Belgrade."

Everybody stared in admiring wonder, but Fritz did not allow himself to be affected by this sort of boasting.

"Do you think you will be able to help my uncle on the farm?" asked Fritz.

"Oh, yes, of course. I must rest for a few days, but after that I shall be all right. Your uncle and I always got on splendidly together."

He chattered on, but a feeling of oppression settled down upon Fritz. Something told him that he had done a very foolish thing in helping Tittman return.

When they arrived at Uncle Brettschneider's house the old man, very much under the influence of liquor, was yelling and cursing at the farm-hand.

"Oh, there you are, Tittman!" he cried, when he caught sight of the new arrival. "Come into the house, Peter —ho! ho! Peter, Petrus, Peterkins— come in and have a drink. I've just uncorked a new bottle in your honor!" He shook Tittman's hand and stared into his face. "Peterkins, what have you got that black rag on your face for —a bad eye?"

"No eye at all. I left it in Constantinople. But with the other one I can see through a wall."

The farmer laughed till he almost suffocated with coughing. "Come on in," he groaned, "and we'll get a good drink." He pushed Tittman into the house and stumbled in after him.

Tittman quickly established himself in old Brettschneider's house. At first he liked it very little. His room in the attic was small, the ceiling low, the bed too short and the rest of the furniture wretched. The wash basin stood on an old chair, and instead of a candlestick he used an empty wine bottle. He spent as much time as possible in the open air, going into the woods and lounging about on the moss. Here he remained for hours, building new plans. He was convinced that he would not remain for any length of time in Kütnersdorf. The place and its quiet bored him, and already he had evolved new schemes. But the necessary capital was lacking, and he was plotting to get financial help from old Brettschneider, who, though a miser, was eager for big profits.

Peter's loafing did not please the old man in the least. So long as Tittman had a few marks, he and old Brettschneider got on; but when this money came to an end the old man grew disagreeable and refused even to let him have brandy unless he paid for it. So there was nothing for Tittman to do but to go to work, to walk behind the plow, and attend to the work of the farm. For this he was given his board, but no wages. At last Peter sorely needed money and applied to Fritz, offering as a bait some wild scheme to open a gambling-place in a resort on the borders of Bulgaria. But Fritz declined absolutely to lend him another penny; and when Peter turned to old Brettschneider for help he was told: "Peter, so long as I am alive, you

will not get a penny from me. But if you stay with me and help me on the farm, I will leave you a thousand marks in my will."

This sounded more encouraging, especially as Dr. Wanowski had said that if the old man continued his heavy drinking, he would not last six months longer.

Wanowski still hung restlessly about the village. Toward the end of August he had paid a chance visit to old Brettschneider and there met Tittman. He took an instant fancy to the latter because Peter made some scurrilous remark about Fritz.

It happened on this day that old Brettschneider had had so serious an attack of coughing that he had to go to bed. Wanowski examined the patient, shrugged his shoulders and then prescribed some new medicine. He asked Tittman to accompany him to Rocknow and carry back the medicine to the patient. This proposal suited Peter, who put on his best clothes and made ready to go. Old Brettschneider could scarcely speak; he was lying in bed, gasping for breath, his mouth wide open. Tittman ordered the maid to look after the patient and joined Wanowski, who awaited him below.

The two men chose a course behind the village by which they could gain the woods as soon as possible.

"The old man is in a bad way, doctor, is he not?" asked Tittman.

"Very bad," answered Wanowski. "Heavy drinking has undermined his system and brought on asthma. A violent attack of coughing may suffocate him."

"Is that likely to happen soon?"

"At any moment—and then, again, he may live for months. He has a very tough constitution. But now tell me something about your travels. You must have had a very interesting life. Apropos: you complained about Fritz Brettschneider a while ago—is he not your friend?"

"He was my friend. I have helped him hundreds of times, but now when I am in a hole he will have nothing to do with me."

"He is a low scoundrel," returned Wanowski, nodding approvingly.

Then the discussion turned to politics and the workingmen's model village. Wanowski condemned the whole scheme, declaring it nothing more than a prison for slaves. Tittman listened attentively and began to brood. Here was an opportunity to wreak vengeance on Fritz Brettschneider, for if the workingmen could be got to rebel, Fritz would lose his position in the village.

Already Tittman felt his power as an agitator. "I'll stir up these men," he boasted. "Just keep your eye on me, doctor, and see how I put a match to the fuse. There are three young chaps up there that I sit and drink with occasionally, and I'll begin with them. The devil! If I only had a bit of money!"

Wanowski stopped. "I'll lend you some," he said quietly, drawing out his wallet and handing Tittman a hundred-mark note. "Return it to me whenever you can—there's no hurry."

Peter muttered some words of thanks. He could not understand the doctor's action. Then a smile spread across his features when he remembered that Fritz and Wanowski were courting the same girl.

Suddenly the sound of running animals came from out of the bushes, and three deer raced across the path. They had been frightened by the noise of a horse galloping along the stretch of wide road just beyond. This road was probably half a mile long and stretched through the Graetz estate, lined on both sides by birch trees.

Wanowski caught Tittman by the skirt of his coat and held him. "Stand still," he whispered. "It is Major Graetz's wife, and she must not see us together."

Concealed by the high bushes, the two men watched Marie. She was mounted on a magnificent horse that aroused Tittman's interest immediately. The woman rode magnificently, and Tittman saw at once that she was an experienced horsewoman. She was exercising the beast for her amusement,

and she rode him in a circle, putting him through a variety of paces.

When Tittman saw the rider's features he involuntarily uttered a cry.

"Pst!" warned Wanowski, who was crouching on the ground in front of him. Peter took the hint and did not stir, but his glance followed every motion of the rider.

Marie was so absorbed by her sport that she did not hear Tittman's cry of astonishment, but continued her wonderful riding. She brought the horse to a standstill, then started him immediately into a gallop. Shifting her weight as far back as possible in the saddle, she urged the horse to stand on its hind legs while its front feet pawed the air in regular rhythm.

"The deuce!" cried Tittman as she galloped past them. "Doctor, who—who is that?"

Wanowski stood up and gazed at Tittman in astonishment. "Don't you know?" he asked. "That is the wife of Major Graetz."

"The wife of Major Graetz!" Tittman repeated the words, laughing boisterously. "What a joke! My dear doctor, who this woman is now I do not know, because I have never before seen the wife of Major Graetz. But I can tell you who she was: Antoinette Laize, the 'high-school' rider who was with the Dobelli Circus, in which I worked for six months!"

Wanowski stared at the speaker. "You're crazy, Tittman!" he blurted out.

"My word of honor—I'll put my hand in the fire if——"

"Be quiet," cried Wanowski, "she's coming back."

Marie came galloping down the road, and suddenly brought her horse to a full stop. For a while she breathed the animal while she looked carefully up and down the road. There was no one in sight. Then she gathered up her skirt and held it high. She wore high boots with extremely low heels. Leaning forward, she gathered up the stirrup and flung it over the pommel of the saddle. For a minute she rode with loose rein, then urged the horse to a gallop, and suddenly leaped up on the saddle, where she stood, the skirt of her dress fluttering behind her.

"Come with me!" whispered Wanowski, drawing Tittman quickly across the road. On the other side they struck a footpath that soon carried them into the deep forest.

"Now tell me what you know," said Wanowski.

Tittman had taken off his hat and was stroking his hot forehead.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he murmured. "It seems to me old Brettschneider told me that the wife of Major Graetz was a rich American—or Canadian, or something of the sort. Perhaps she is—that woman always had money, too. But, doctor, on my word of honor, on my sacred word of honor, we were together in the Dobelli Circus, where I was stablemaster. That was probably four and a half or five years ago."

"Where?" demanded Wanowski.

"At first in the South of France. It happened that I was on my uppers in Marseilles and didn't know which way to turn. At that time the Dobelli Circus was giving performances there. I offered my services as stablemaster and rider—I've always been a good rider. They took me, and there—well, there I found Antoinette Laize."

"Are you willing to swear that this Antoinette Laize is one and the same person with the wife of Major Graetz?"

"I've told you that I've never before seen the wife of Major Graetz. I've never been up at the Graetz castle. But if the horsewoman who just passed us is the wife of Major Graetz, then I'm willing to swear that she also was the rider, Antoinette Laize, with the Dobelli Circus. Did you notice how she suddenly leaped up on the saddle? That was her encore trick. Standing like that she raced around the arena several times before she left the ring. It used to please the Frenchmen tremendously—they howled with delight."

For a moment Wanowski was silent, while his brain was seething with

thoughts of revenge against Major Graetz, who was a leading member of the opposite political party and disliked Wanowski very much. Now had come the latter's opportunity for revenge. "Now I have it in my power to make your social and political position impossible, Major Graetz," he muttered, throwing his head back defiantly.

"I must know more, Tittman," he continued. "How did this Antoinette conduct herself? What was her reputation—and did she have any love affairs?"

"No—that is—you want to know the truth, don't you?"

"I should like to."

"Very well. The truth is this woman was considered unapproachable. I knew that an officer had committed suicide in Nîmes on her account—or, at least, he attempted to do so—that was a big scandal. She must have had a big fortune, for it was rumored that she got no salary but remained with the circus merely for the love of the thing. I had a row with her once—that was in Marseilles. I had been drinking a bit and tried to be too free with her—the woman resented it and lashed me with a heavy whip. Actually! A few days later her white mare Masuhma died of lockjaw. They said I had driven a rusty nail into the beast's hoof, but, of course, that was a lie."

"Of course it was," answered Wanowski smilingly. Then he continued: "Highly interesting, this story, my dear Herr Tittman. It is a secret out of which something can be made. The only weak point about the whole tale is—her virtue. You say she had no love affairs at all."

Tittman squinted his one eye at Wanowski and nodded.

"Yes, she had," he said. "After we had finished our tour in Southern France we went to Africa. In Algiers Antoinette created a furor. But one day she was missing from the ring, and then we heard that she had found an admirer—the Russian consul-general. Other reports had it that he was her uncle. I left the Dobelli Circus at that time and know nothing more about the affair."

"That's enough," answered Wanowski. "'Uncle'"—he laughed and made a note in his memorandum-book. "Russian consul-general in Algiers—five years ago—we'll be able to find out all about that."

He was silent for a few minutes. Tittman walked obediently at his side, like a pupil who is awaiting instructions from his teacher.

"My dear Herr Tittman," began Wanowski, "I know your life's history pretty well. At present you have been thrown on a sandbank from which you would like to be floated off, even though you have to employ extortion. I beg of you, don't trouble yourself to contradict me—I know something about mind-reading. If you are honest with yourself you will admit that just a moment ago you were thinking: How much is this secret worth? As a matter of fact, Herr Tittman, it is worth more than gold—although plenty of gold will be showered upon you if you don't wreck the whole business by your imprudence. Will you take my advice?"

"Gladly, doctor," answered Tittman; then he added in explanation: "I am a poor devil—and when one has had as hard luck as I have——"

"He knows no scruple, eh?" concluded Wanowski. "Don't make excuses to me, for I understand you thoroughly. Now listen to me! You say you have never seen the wife of Major Graetz?"

"Certainly not."

"Does she know that you are in the village?"

"Possibly; but she can hardly suspect that Peter Tittman is the former stablemaster Pierre—that was my name with the Dobelli Circus."

"Splendid. Then you must be careful not to come within her sight. Do you understand? The lady must not see you, must not recognize you until I have gathered the necessary information. You will be able to manage that?"

"Very easily, unless some accident happens."

"You must try to avoid any accident. Meantime I have a further commission for you. You spoke before of some young fellows in the model village that you thought you could influence."

"I am sure I can, doctor."

"Very well, then, get to work with all possible caution. If we could bring about a rebellion in the village it would be a great triumph for our party."

Tittman nodded eagerly. "Is the doctor——?"

"Never mind that, my friend," interrupted Wanowski. "There is no reason why I should give you lengthy explanations." His tone changed suddenly and his eyes flashed. "Man, you must be blind," he said fiercely, "if you have not noticed before this that I am an exile here as you are. I came here an educated man, a hundred times cleverer than the whole blithering assembly. But I did not please them! Why? Ask the good people! Perhaps because I was a Pole and a Catholic, because I had a crooked back and was lame in one leg—I don't know; they have treated me like an outsider—and for that they shall pay!" He laughed. "I am growing dramatic! But forget it, Tittman. Let us talk sensibly to each other. Above all things, my dear fellow, keep a silent tongue in the presence of old Brettschneider. I don't trust him."

XV

In the midst of the excitement preparatory to the election came harvesting time. Graetz, although ill at ease about the election, had not the heart to deny his men the usual harvest festivities. It had been arranged that at night there was to be a supper and a dance to which all the members of the model village were invited. In the afternoon the ceremony of presenting the harvest wreath took place. Graetz and his wife received the members of the model village, who approached the terrace of the castle, headed by a band. After the presentation, which was accompanied by the usual speeches, the signal was given for the musicians to play. But to the amazement of almost everyone they hesitated; then one of the men stepped forward and, nervously twisting his hat about in his hands, asked of Graetz: "May I speak to you in the name of the people of the model village?"

Fritz Brettschneider, suspecting what was about to be said, made an impatient gesture, but Graetz nodded encouragingly, believing that the speaker had some words of praise for the village.

The speaker hesitated, squirmed a bit, and then suddenly fixed Graetz with a glance. "I have been selected by the village to make some complaints," he said. "We ask that you discharge Brettschneider, for we do not need an overseer—he spies on us. And then, sir, we admit that your intentions toward us are well meant, but what becomes of the freedom of the individual? In the village, begging your pardon, it is as though we were in barracks. We know that you are no despot, but in the name of my fellow-workmen I wish to ask that our personal freedom be not restricted."

"My dear fellow," Graetz replied, with a smile, "we will not discuss the subject of personal freedom. Personal freedom is regulated by circumstances —that is the case with everyone, from the Kaiser down to the poorest of workingmen. The only thing that I gather out of your speech thus far is that you have been carefully coached. Who has coached you?"

"Peter Tittman, the damned scoundrel!" cried a shepherd's bass voice.

There was a great commotion, and the assembly divided itself into two parties, one of which was satisfied with the existing condition of things, while the other complained bitterly about the restrictions on the use of liquor in the colony and the moral supervision that was maintained over them. The discussion grew warmer until the spirit

of rebellion was fully launched. Graetz controlled himself admirably until some of the younger men lost their heads, when he turned to the one nearest to him and, gripping him by the collar, gave him a severe shaking.

"Hold your impudent tongue!" he cried angrily. "I am your master, and I demand respect! Is this your way of showing gratitude for all the trouble I have taken to make you comfortable? I'll listen to your complaints if you make them quietly. What have you to say?"

One of the men suggested that the matter be put in writing, which was agreed upon, and the procession was dismissed.

Fritz immediately left the castle and took the shortest cut into the village to old Brettschneider's house.

"Where is Tittman?" he asked of the farmhand, who was chopping wood in the yard. The man pointed to the stable. Fritz entered, and closed the door behind him. Tittman, who was sitting on the edge of a trough reading a letter, looked up at the creaking of the door.

"Why, what a surprise, to see the young Baron von Brettschneider! To what circumstance do we owe this honor?" he asked sarcastically.

Without replying Fritz advanced, caught hold of Tittman and jerked him from his place.

"Have you gone mad?" Tittman yelled.

"You shall see," answered Fritz. "You miserable scoundrel, answer me: Was it you who stirred up the model village?" He caught a whip from the hook and, raising the butt end of it threateningly over Tittman, demanded: "Answer me, you scoundrel, or I'll crack your skull."

Tittman grew livid with fear, for he knew that he was no match for Fritz. He made a leap to reach the door and cry for help, but Fritz caught him and threw him to the ground.

"Answer me!" he yelled.

"Let me go," groaned Tittman. "I can do as I please, and it's no affair of yours, you spy!"

Kneeling on his victim, Fritz boxed his ears. "One is for calling me a spy—another is for stirring up the village—and the third one is for luck!" Then he jumped up, but Tittman remained lying on the ground, his cheeks red and swollen. He did not cry for help, but the glance he directed at Fritz carried a malignant threat.

When Fritz entered the house he found his uncle in bed. The old man looked wretchedly emaciated and sallow. His condition was such that he was scarcely able to take nourishment. When he saw Fritz his eye lighted with pleasure.

"It is good to see you again," the invalid groaned. "I wanted to send for you. I am left here quite alone. Tittman does nothing at all for me. Please go into the living-room. In the bottom drawer of the cupboard you will find an envelope containing some money. Leave that there, but bring up the document that is with it."

Fritz obeyed, and when he returned old Brettschneider painfully raised himself to a sitting position and unfolded the paper.

"It is a copy of my will," he said. "I want you to read it, Fritz, because I know I shall not live much longer."

Fritz scanned the contents of the will, his heart beating nervously. He read that he had been appointed the sole heir and that his uncle's fortune amounted to thirty-seven thousand dollars.

"Are you satisfied, Fritz?" asked the old man, who had been eagerly watching the expression on his nephew's face.

Fritz pressed the dirty, emaciated hand of old Brettschneider. "I am very grateful, uncle," he answered, on the verge of tears. He was told to return the document to its hiding-place, but while he was out of the room the old man was seized with a choking fit. His face turned black, his body quivered and his eyes bulged out of his head. Fritz hurried back and loosened the collar about the old man's neck. In vain he searched for some restorative, and while doing so he

glanced out of the window and saw Wanowski and Schulze passing by. He was on the point of raising the window and calling to them for help when Tittman entered the room. Forgetting his hatred, he called to Tittman: "My uncle is dying. Dr. Wanowski is just outside—ask him to come in—but hurry!"

Tittman started at the sound of his enemy's voice; but he obeyed, returning immediately with Dr. Wanowski. The latter took no notice at all of Fritz, but devoted himself to the invalid until the attack had subsided. Much as Fritz disliked the doctor, he could not resist asking him the question: "Is my uncle's condition so very serious?"

"It is, most assuredly," answered Wanowski. "And it is disgraceful the way the old man is neglected. You are his relative and ought to look after him."

"I am not master of my own time, doctor, but I will talk with Major Graetz and see if I cannot arrange to sleep here at night. I shall have a bed put here in the living-room, so that I can be at hand in case he needs me."

Tittman turned around as though about to make some remark, but his glance fell on Wanowski, who simply shrugged his shoulders.

XVI

THE election was over, and on the following day Graetz, much discouraged over the prospective defeat of his party, was awaiting news. He looked up at the sound of horses' hoofs and, shading his eyes, he saw two riders approaching. One of them he recognized as his father, while the other was a neighbor, Von Gerlach. He walked toward them and greeted them as they dismounted.

"Let us walk back a few paces, my boy," said the elder Graetz. "We have something to tell you."

"So I judge," answered Graetz. "And I am sure it is nothing pleasant. Fire away, father."

The elder man took off his cap and mopped his forehead. "The election is decided," he said, "and we have been defeated."

"I owe that to my own men," laughed Otto bitterly. "I had counted on three hundred votes, and they gave me only nine."

The old man nodded. "And now for something more serious," he continued. "I beg of you, my boy, be calm. A scoundrel has made a slanderous remark about your wife!"

Otto started, every muscle in his body tense. A flush suffused his features. "Who?" he cried.

"Pardon me if I interfere," interrupted Herr von Gerlach, "but I was a witness to the scene and am the one who recounted the news to your father, so that we might decide what to do. Last night our election committee met in Rocknow. Several men were present, including Wanowski and one of his pals, a man named Robinski—the latter under the influence of liquor. When your name was mentioned he said: 'If Graetz is victorious in this election I'll settle him with a letter that I've just got from St. Petersburg; and I'll bet the dose will be strong enough to hold him!' The letter was a reply to some gossip concerning your wife—an assertion that your wife had at one time been a circus-rider and that the money she inherited from Russia was a sum that had been left her by a Russian admirer, the late Consul-General Gudovich."

Otto gasped for breath. His face was white with rage. "Oh, the hound!" he groaned.

The elder Graetz put his arm about his son's shoulder, begging him to control himself, while Von Gerlach pressed the sufferer's hand heartily.

"Major," said Von Gerlach, "I should not be here now if I had not been the first to take your part at that meeting. Some of the others present did the same thing, and the scene got to be a pretty lively one. Finally Robinski was asked to leave. This morning I received a challenge from him. But I am under the impres-

tions, Herr Tittman," began the doctor. "Do you sleep in the attic room?"

"Yes, doctor."

"And do you sleep soundly?"

"No, very wretchedly."

"Old Brettschneider died some time during the night. I should say that he had died some time between four and five o'clock this morning—certainly not later. There must have been cries for help. Did you hear anything?"

Tittman nodded. "Yes—about four o'clock I heard a noise down here as though a chair had been knocked over. After that I heard something that sounded like groans, but I paid no further attention. Afterward I heard the sound of footsteps through the house and then the door slammed. I knew that must be Fritz Brettschneider, who always goes to work at that hour."

"And you did not enter the old man's room at all?"

"No. As I told you, we quarreled and had not exchanged a word for two weeks. This morning I fell asleep again after all this had happened. Later I went into the kitchen and made my coffee. Then I went down to the meadow with the help."

"Thank you, Herr Tittman, that will do."

When Peter had left the room Wanowski seated himself at the table.

"Listen to me, Brettschneider," he began, "and let me finish what I am about to say. It will do you no good to get violent, because if you attack me it will simply increase the suspicion against you. Let me summarize: You were waiting for your uncle's death—everybody in the village knows that. Only a few weeks ago you told Schulze that you had seen a copy of the old man's will and that you had been made his heir. Schulze did not believe you, and because he did not believe you he refused to give you permission to marry his daughter. You also know that your uncle might have remained alive for a long time and that there were chances of your losing Schulze's daughter by waiting—for you knew that Schulze had promised me the hand of his daughter Frida. You calculated that, while your uncle might not remain alive forever, he might still live too long to suit your purpose, for you were in a hurry——"

Wanowski stretched out both hands in front of him as though he feared the young man might attack him. But Fritz did not stir, he stood in the middle of the room, motionless but very pale, his eyes flashing fire. It was just this calmness that Wanowski did not trust. He arose, stepped back and supported himself with his hands on the back of the chair.

"Brettschneider," he continued, "we are enemies. The force of circumstances give me an advantage over you at this moment. Your uncle has been murdered, and all suspicion points to you—even the apparently unimportant evidence of Tittman. I shall make no accusation, but if I am examined I will tell the truth. Now, I need not tell the truth if I do not want to." His voice dropped to a whisper. "We are here alone. I propose an agreement: I pledge myself to give a certificate of death as the attending physician of your late uncle, testifying that he died as the result of an attack of asthma. The law will not interfere. After he is buried, you take possession of your inheritance, sell this property, and leave the country. In return, you agree to give up all claim on Frida. Give me your word, and the matter is settled."

Every nerve and muscle in Fritz's body was quivering. His instinct was to hurl himself at Wanowski and annihilate him. But that would have been sheer lunacy. He knew that he must remain calm, even though he were being accused of murder. At first he thought Wanowski was lying and that his uncle had really died of such an attack. But then he saw the fingermarks and the distorted expression on the dead man's features. He shuddered, and tore his hair in desperation. He did not know where to turn for help, and his desperate glance swept the room. He was innocent—that he knew. When he left the house early

that morning the old man was still asleep; and now—his train of thought was interrupted by the sight of Graetz, who, accompanied by his wife, was riding down the village street.

Fritz rushed to the window and flung it open.

"Herr Graetz!" he cried, "I beg your pardon, Herr Graetz! Could you possibly come in? My uncle is dead, and Dr. Wanowski says I have murdered him!"

XVIII

THE moment Fritz saw Major Graetz he realized that here was his deliverer. Hearing Fritz's voice, Graetz called to someone to hold the horses; then he dismounted and, asking Marie to accompany him, entered the house. Fritz opened the door to admit them into the living-room, and noticed that Tittman had come in. In a low voice Fritz firmly ordered Tittman to leave the room; but just as deliberately Tittman replied: "I mean to remain." Then he leaned against the wardrobe and carefully watched Wanowski.

Graetz greeted Wanowski with a curt nod—he had but little kindly feeling for the man; but when his eye fell on Tittman he asked: "Who are you?"

"My name is Tittman."

"Oh, yes; you are"—the major's sharp scrutiny surveyed him critically.

"We will need that man as a witness," explained Wanowski diplomatically.

Marie had walked over to the window and was standing with her back to the light. Her face had grown ashen pale. The moment she entered the room she had recognized Tittman; but at the same instant the hope flashed over her that he would not recognize her. Some years had passed since they had met, and the present conditions were so utterly different. Tittman seemed not to recognize her. Once more the woman asked if this could really be Pierre, the stablemaster—the brute who had killed Masuhma, the scoundrel whom she had once lashed with her riding whip. She looked at him closely again and realized that there could be no doubt about it. Then there arose in the soul of this woman a wretched bitterness at fate that had pursued her remorselessly through all these years. Slowly she raised her left hand and pressed it against her throbbing heart, while she once more sent a furtive, questioning glance at Tittman. Before this look he bowed, not a muscle of his face quivering. Surely he had not recognized her!

"Now, Brettschneider," said Graetz, throwing his riding whip on the table, "tell me what has happened."

Fritz began his narrative: He had found his uncle dead in bed. Dr. Wanowski, who happened to be in the village, had declared that the old man had been strangled to death. Wanowski had also said that every suspicion pointed to him, Fritz. Then Wanowski had offered to cover up the crime if Fritz would give up all claim to his sweetheart and leave the country.

It was difficult for Graetz to follow the narrative, for Fritz was so excited that the words of his story were fairly spouted forth, each sentence interrupted by an assertion of his innocence. Wanowski listened quietly to the end. Then he replied condescendingly: "It would be laughable were I to defend myself against this accusation. I do not deny having asked for the hand of Frida Schulze in marriage; but if this fellow dares attempt to make me his companion in crime——"

He got no further, for Fritz flung himself on Wanowski.

"Do you mean to lie—lie!" he gasped, shaking the doctor.

Graetz tore the two men apart. "So long as I am here, Brettschneider," he commanded, "there must be no violence. Control yourself, and remember that my wife is present."

Fritz became apologetic at once, and Graetz turned to Wanowski. "Have you positive proof that the old man was murdered?" he asked.

"Positive—there are finger-marks on his throat. But come and convince yourself."

Wanowski opened the door, allowing Graetz to precede him into the bedroom. Then he went to the bed and turned back the covers. As he did so a small object slipped out of the folds of the pillow and fell to the floor.

Graetz stooped and picked it up. "It is a cuff button," he said.

"But this did not belong to the old man," said Wanowski, looking closely at the button. "He never wore cuff buttons."

"Perhaps that will give us a clue," suggested Graetz. Then he called Fritz. "Do you know whose cuff button this is?"

"Yes," answered Fritz promptly, "it is my own. This morning when I dressed I left it in the living-room, in which I slept. Later I missed it and came back to hunt for it, but could not find it."

"Ah-ha!" said Wanowski and smiled.

"Brettschneider," said Graetz, looking sternly at Fritz, "this cuff button was found in your uncle's bed. That is a remarkable fact, and you certainly must know how it got there."

Fritz stared first at Graetz and then at Wanowski. "My God!" he stammered, "am I crazy? You found the cuff button here in my uncle's bed?"

"Exactly," said Wanowski, and his eye was filled with bitter hatred; "and I think I know how it came to be in the bed, too. You lost the button when you smothered the old man in the pillows. Your uncle may have defended himself as best he could. A chair was overturned—Tittman heard that from the room above."

Fritz twirled the cuff button about in his fingers while he tried to piece together the events. He knew that the old man was snoring when he left the house early that morning. He had heard him and consequently had not gone near the bed. There was only one other explanation of the finding of the cuff button, that someone had purposely placed the button there as evidence against him. And then suddenly a thought occurred to him—without saying a word he ran into the living-room, opened the lowest drawer of the cupboard and began rummaging in it. He found the copy of his uncle's will—but the envelope that had contained the money was gone!

"Major," he declared, when he had returned to the bedroom, "as God is my witness, I am innocent. But I know who murdered my uncle—it was Tittman!" And with rising voice he went on: "Tittman, you are the murderer! You saw where the old man hid his money, and you stole that money. Then you sought to shift the suspicion on me!" Fritz quivered in every part of his body as he stood with clenched fists before Tittman.

"You're crazy!" the latter answered sarcastically. "If I had wanted to rob your uncle, I could have done it a hundred times!"—an expression of amazement came over his yellow face. He had stepped forward a bit, but now he retreated until he had backed squarely up against the wardrobe. Marie was walking toward him. About her mouth there was a tense expression of resolution as she pointed at his coat button.

"Scoundrel, you are lying!" she declared. "There—there are some strands of hair from the head of the murdered man!"

Graetz and Fritz sprang forward and saw several gray hairs caught in the button of Tittman's jacket.

At the sight Fritz lost all control of himself. He hurled himself at Tittman, then threw him to the floor, and tore the jacket off his back.

"Take care of that, major," he called, "it is important evidence!"

Then he placed his knee on Tittman's breast, tore open his waistcoat and from the inside pocket drew out an envelope which he flung to the ground.

"There is the money you have stolen, you hound!"

"Get up, Tittman," ordered Graetz. "You see that your lies cannot help you now. Let us have the truth."

"I am not lying," Tittman insisted, getting up from the floor, "and this is all nonsense. You've got to prove those hairs are from the old man's

head. And even if they are, the old man and I quarreled only the other day, and we laid hold of each other. I may have torn out some hairs at that time, but that does not prove anything. And the money was given to me by the old man—that I can swear."

"All those details will be examined into at the trial," interrupted Graetz. "Brettschneider, see that the man is taken to the lock-up for the present."

"Oho!" cried Tittman. "Into the lock-up! By whose order? I am not one of your men! It is your wife who wants to revenge herself because I know—because I know who she is! Eh, Mademoiselle Antoinette, you recall our engagement at the Dobelli Circus, don't you? Ye gods, that was a happy time! And how all of us mourned when you left the circus just because His Excellency Gudovich wanted to have his sweetheart all to himself——"

An awful silence followed. Marie closed her eyes, and it seemed that every drop of blood was leaving her brain. A pang of pain rent her heart, and she knew that with these satanic words everything had been wrecked, her happiness, her love and her life.

Graetz turned upon Tittman, fire flashing from his eyes and his right fist clenched over the scoundrel's head, but Tittman dodged back, and with a hoarse cry of fear crept over to Wanowski.

"Come," Marie said gently, placing her hand on her husband's arm, "don't soil your hands by touching him."

"You are right, my child." Then he turned to Fritz: "Brettschneider, be careful that the man does not escape."

Marie and Otto started to leave the house, but at the door they were met by the Burgomaster of Rocknow, accompanied by two gendarmes and Dr. Harbs. The burgomaster was trembling with excitement.

"Major, have you seen Wanowski?" he asked. "They tell me he is here."

"He is there," Graetz replied, pointing to the house. "What is the matter?"

"Albinus has hanged himself," whispered the burgomaster mysteriously. "Hanged himself from one of the chandeliers in his salon. His old servant brought me the news. He said Wanowski had driven his master to death by experiments and medicines. Dr. Harbs found mixtures and prescriptions in the house that make Wanowski a subject for State examination."

"It is undoubtedly true," corroborated Dr. Harbs. "There were narcotic poisons, belladonna, opium and other things in most reckless combination. I hold that Wanowski used this stuff to work his patient up to a point of greater nervous excitement, so that he might be susceptible to hypnotism, for I am sure Wanowski used hypnotic suggestion for criminal purposes, and I will prove that——"

"You have come in good time," said Graetz, "for there is another villain to be caught. Marie, please ride home in advance of me. I will follow as soon as I have helped the burgomaster do his duty."

Marie mounted her horse and nodded good-bye to the company. Otto reached out his hand, and she held it as though she were bidding him a final farewell.

Slowly, with loose rein, Marie began her ride homeward. The foliage of the trees in the castle grounds was beginning to turn, the wild grapevine draped the masonry of the terrace with its deep red tints. Marie looked at all this with tear-dimmed eyes.

"We did not ride very far," she said, as she dismounted, to the servant who was awaiting her, "for your master found something to occupy him in the village. Please tell him when he comes in that I am tired and am going to rest awhile. Tell him that he may expect me in his study later."

She went into the nursery where the twins were sleeping and kissed them without awakening them. For an instant she stood between the two little beds, and then suddenly fled.

In her own room she opened the secret drawer of her desk and took out the diary, which she had not yet had

the courage to destroy. Then she wrote a letter:

BELOVED HUSBAND: Every sin finds its punishment. I am guilty of having hidden a secret from you that I was ashamed to confess—not only ashamed but also afraid. More than once I was on the point of confessing, but I had not the courage to proceed.

I have been guilty of an indiscretion—not a sin. Giving way to my craving for adventure and my love for sport, I at one time became a member of a circus company. The accompanying diary will give you all the details of this. It will also tell you more, for in it you will read how I fell into the power of a man who committed a crime against me.

Read this diary, and then judge me according to your conscience and your heart. I await your judgment. Otto, I shall wait until five o'clock, wait until then for my judge—or my deliverer. In eternal love,

Your MARIE.

She laid down the pen and, taking the diary and the letter, went to her husband's study. There she placed the two documents on his desk. As she re-entered her own room the clock struck thrice.

As he entered his study Graetz's eyes fell on his wife's letter, which lay on his desk. He opened it in surprise, glanced through it in feverish haste, and then collapsed in his chair.

So, after all, this story that had been circulated about his wife was not mere slander. It was truth; his wife had been a circus-rider, and—he supported his throbbing head and glared at the text of the letter:

I fell into the power of a man who committed a crime against me.

In his wrath he rose from the chair, filled with an instinctive impulse to demand of his wife that she tell him all, that she confess everything, and then he would cast her out. His house was to be no abode for adventuresses. He gritted his teeth in fury—then came the reaction, and his eyes overflowed with tears. She was the mother of his children, and—oh, God, how he had loved her!

He paced up and down the room, and at last seated himself at his desk again and began to read the diary.

He read and read, oblivious to his surroundings. He felt that this document had not been composed for curious eyes; it was not a piece out of a sentimental play—not the basis for a novel; these pages reflected the impressions of a young being who fluttered between emotional pinnacles and abysses without finding a resting-place.

In the entries of this diary Otto read the story of his wife's soul development. She had never had a mother's love to guide her, and her father's influence over her was only superficial. When, as a well-educated girl of eighteen, she obtained the freedom of travel, it was natural that she should enjoy this in her own way, and that in the course of her globe trotting social conventionalities should shrink into insignificance. When she joined the circus it was only in response to a caprice that had but an outward effect on her life. Her inner being was first touched when she got to know the man whose superior intellect soon mastered her wavering spirit.

Then came the change, with the horrible realization that she had been in the power of a scoundrel. After this followed the longing for a definite purpose—a longing that grew to stormy passion. "I wish to begin life anew," Otto read; and then, still further on, he found: "How I love you, Otto! You are my savior, my better self, my guide! And I will be grateful until the end——"

He sat at his desk, his face buried in his arms. He realized how much he owed to her. She had raised him from the level of commonplace life into heights of freedom. It mattered little that he lost the battle in his community, for in the midst of desertion, and while under the hail of the enemy's arrows, she had put her strong arms about him and given him courage to continue his work anew.

He was fighting a hard battle. Was she really the victim of a crime? What if she were lying—what if her diary were a lie? No, she was not lying! He took her photograph from his desk and kissed it.

"My Marie," he said tenderly, "my beloved, sweet Marie!"

In him rose a sun of forgiveness whose warm, clear rays scattered the darkness of his thoughts. Of a sudden it seemed as if his own sorrow were a small matter, as if his whole grief were a fear for the world's judgment. Again he held his wife's picture and gazed at it.

Then it all cleared. This was not a moment of acceptance, of resignation, it was one in which he achieved the might of independence. Otto realized that a scandal was unavoidable. The duel with Robinski might silence the loudest tongues, but there would still be those who would indulge in whispers. Perhaps after all it might be best to take his father's advice and begin life anew in Poland.

The clock struck five. Otto sprang to his feet and hurried from the room.

As he opened the door to Marie's chamber, she turned about and faced him with a look of dread and fear. As she did so an object fell from her hand, and Otto saw a gleam of sunlight flash across polished steel. His face blanched at the sight, and he caught her in his arms.

"You foolish child!" he cried. "I love you—how I love you! And you were about to forsake me at the very moment when our life is really just beginning!"

She clung to him and, half conscious, felt the return of bliss.

It was like the ruddy dawn of a new day.

MISTAKEN RETICENCE

BRIDEGROOM—Here, my dear, is a collar of pearls I've had made for you. It contains as many pearls as you are years old.

BRIDE (*aside*)—How I wish I had told the truth!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

MORE TO THE POINT

WIFE—The cook tells me you tried to kiss her.

HUSBAND—She lies—and what's more, she told me you were the worst housekeeper she's ever seen.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

HIS PREFERENCE

FIRST VALET—Why don't you smoke those cigars your master gave you for Christmas?

SECOND VALET—I like these that he didn't give me better.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

THE RUBY

BY HENRI LAVEDAN

PAUL FREYSIN, thirty-two years old.
CLAIRE FREYSIN, twenty-four years old.
ANDRE BRIGNON, thirty-eight years old.
A Cabman.
A Servant.

Half-past seven at the FREYSINS'; a pretty dining-room, rather lavishly furnished; M. and MME. FREYSIN, seated opposite each other at table, have just begun dinner

CLAIRE—You do not seem to have much appetite?

PAUL—I helped myself twice to sole.

CLAIRE—You seem preoccupied. What are you thinking about?

PAUL—About you. (*To the* SERVANT, *who has just brought in a dish and is listening slyly*) Leave us.

He goes out.

CLAIRE—What kept you so late?

PAUL—I had a lot of things to do.

CLAIRE—What were they?

PAUL—They would not interest you.

CLAIRE—I'll wager you spent at least ten francs for cab hire.

PAUL—No, I didn't take a cab at all.

CLAIRE—You walk! You! As lazy as you are?

PAUL—Yes, I walked.

CLAIRE—Walked afoot?

PAUL—The whole time. I must have walked ten miles. The sun was shining, and I felt just like a good spin. It was delightful.

CLAIRE—Where did you go?

PAUL—Straight ahead—to the auction hall, to the club——

CLAIRE—Didn't you go to André's?

PAUL—To Brignon's? No, I keep that for rainy days.

CLAIRE—I asked you to go there and inquire about Jeanne—she has had an attack of neuralgia.

PAUL—I had other places to go to besides the Brignons'.

CLAIRE—They are very good friends of ours, awfully good-hearted——

PAUL—Yes, they have hearts of gold, I don't dispute it. Why didn't you go there?

CLAIRE—I didn't go out till a quarter of an hour before dinner. I had things to do at home all the afternoon. Otherwise, of course, I would have gone. And it was Jeanne's birthday, day before yesterday—we forgot to send her a remembrance. It's your fault; you should have thought of it.

PAUL—Why in the world should I remember Mme. Brignon's birthday, when I sometimes forget even yours? I have no memory for such things.

CLAIRE—The cases are not the same. I am your wife, you don't have to be as attentive to me as you do to strangers. And for such devoted friends as the Brignons——

The SERVANT comes in again with an aggressively delighted manner, as if he were presenting a bill.

SERVANT—Monsieur——

PAUL—Well, what is it?

SERVANT—It's a cabman.

PAUL (*surprised*)—A cabman?

SERVANT—Yes, sir. There's a cabman in the kitchen, and he says he wants a word with monsieur—no one else will do.

CLAIRE (*to the* SERVANT)—What is it about?

SERVANT—He won't tell anybody but monsieur, madame.

PAUL (*angrily*)—I don't understand this at all. I'll go and see about it.

CLAIRE—No, it is not your place to

go to the kitchen. (*To the* SERVANT) Bring him up here. (*The* SERVANT *goes out. To her husband*) Are you sure you haven't mislaid or lost anything today?

PAUL—Oh, quite sure. We'll see what it is. (*With forced gaiety, to hide his uneasiness*) This interests me.

CLAIRE—Me too. (*The* SERVANT *has no sooner brought in the* CABMAN *than* PAUL *turns pale and shows signs of nervousness.* CLAIRE, *who is watching him, takes notice of this.*) Are you ill, my dear?

PAUL—Not at all. (*To the* SERVANT) Go, you may leave us. (*The* SERVANT *goes out—he will listen at the door. To the* CABMAN) What do you want?

CABMAN (*grinning good-naturedly*)—Don't monsieur remember me?

PAUL (*emphatically*)—Not at all.

CABMAN—That ain't so astonishing, monsieur wasn't paying attention. The fares never look at us, but we always look at the fares, and it was me that monsieur engaged.

PAUL—You?

CABMAN (*pointing to* CLAIRE)—Monsieur was with madame.

CLAIRE (*pierced by the most horrible suspicions, smilingly to her husband*)—Why certainly, don't you remember? Where are your wits?

CABMAN—Ah, madame remembers me, doesn't she?

CLAIRE—Perfectly.

PAUL—But, I say——

CLAIRE (*authoritatively, looking her husband straight in the eye*)—Let the man speak.

CABMAN—Madame looked a bit bigger and more important, but now I remember her all right.

CLAIRE (*to the* CABMAN)—Well?

PAUL—Oh, come, come! Will you explain to me——?

CLAIRE—No! (*To the* CABMAN) Go on.

CABMAN (*to* MME. FREYSIN, *drawing from his pocket a small article wrapped up in his handkerchief*)—Well then, I just come around to give you back your earring you lost just now.

PAUL—But that isn't——

CLAIRE (*to her husband*)—Be silent! (*To the* CABMAN) So, it was you—it was you who found it?

PAUL—But——

CLAIRE (*to her husband*)—I tell you to be silent!

CABMAN—Is madame satisfied?

CLAIRE (*who has taken the jewel, a ruby surrounded by brilliants*)—Yes, and my husband is, too. Just think, such a handsome ruby! (*She examines it.*) Yes, that's it—it must have come unfastened in the cab.

PAUL—Of all unlucky things! I——

CABMAN—Yes, I found it just after monsieur got out.

CLAIRE — Well, how did you know——?

PAUL (*who cannot remain in his seat*)—What is the good of all this? It only makes us late.

CLAIRE—No, wait! I want to know. It amuses me.

PAUL, conquered, sits down in great dejection.

CABMAN—Madame remembers that you both engaged me at three o'clock near the gate of the Parc Monceau, and then we made a trip through the Bois, the lakes, Longchamps, Saint James——

PAUL—Yes, yes—we haven't asked you to tell us about all that. We know it. You're not telling us anything new.

CLAIRE—Undoubtedly. But I tell you it amuses me, all the same.

CABMAN—Then madame left monsieur at about six o'clock as night was falling and kissed him good-bye.

PAUL—Oh, this is too much!

CABMAN—Oh, there's nothing wrong in that. You were within your rights.

CLAIRE—There, you see how careful we should be?

CABMAN—And then madame said to monsieur—that's how I knew you were his wife all right— "Be home soon so as not to keep dinner waiting." Monsieur had himself driven here then, to No. 135 Boulevard Haussmann, and he gave me a fine tip.

CLAIRE—Oh, it was worth it.

CABMAN—Monsieur came into the house. Of course, I felt very kindly toward him. Then I got down to light my lanterns. There was a little

breeze blowing from the Étoile, so I opened the door of my cab to shield the match, and then I saw that ruby earring on the floor, shining like a cigar. It couldn't belong to anybody else, for I had just come out of the stable when I picked you up and I hadn't had any other fares, so I says to myself: "Old man, you're hungry, get your dinner first and then afterward, for dessert, while the horse is eating his oats, you can take it back to them this evening."

PAUL—Are you through?

CLAIRE—You're an honest man. (*To her husband*) Isn't he, Paul?

PAUL—Yes, yes.

CLAIRE—He deserves a handsome reward.

CABMAN—Oh, I didn't do it for the money.

CLAIRE (*to her husband*)—Give him two hundred francs.

CABMAN (*dazed*)—Two hundred francs!

PAUL—Oh, come now, you know, Claire——

CLAIRE—Give—him—two—hundred—francs! What, don't you think that is enough?

PAUL—Oh, yes, yes. Here they are.

He takes two notes from his pocketbook and hands them to the CABMAN. His hand is trembling.

CABMAN—Oh, thank you, sir. Thank you, madame. Two hundred francs! My goodness, I knew it was a handsome earring—but this is fine! Well, I'll be glad to serve you again, sir. I'm always prowling around the quarter. No. 6777—will you remember it?

PAUL—Yes, oh, yes! We'll remem——

CABMAN—And then if you go to scattering your jewelry around in my cab again—why, I am at your service, sir, now that I know the price. Monsieur—madame——

He goes out, smiling and grateful.

CLAIRE (*quietly, but with fire in her eye, to her husband, while she holds up the ruby*)—Well, well, well! What have you to say to this little affair?

PAUL—I? Why, I——

CLAIRE—Yes, you, you! I hardly think you are going to deny it? Are you caught? Are you fairly caught? Right in the act? Is it a case of *flagrante delictu?* Yes or no?

PAUL—I'd rather not answer you. It is more dignified. You're in a fine humor tonight. Let us drop it, won't you? It is a mystery that will be cleared up some day, have no fear, and then we shall know all about it. Just the same, you've hurt my feelings. For no reason at all, for less than nothing, on the maunderings of a drunken man——

CLAIRE—The cabman?

PAUL—Oh, he is dead drunk. I could smell the wine on his breath from my chair. That's why I didn't say anything, why I seemed to accept everything and paid up without a word. I had the patience of an angel. Oh, I had to have it. With the state that alcoholic brute was in, I knew that a single word of contradiction from me, an imprudent gesture, and he'd fly off the handle—he was capable of the most terrific violence.

CLAIRE—Then you didn't take his cab?

PAUL—I—I do not remember.

CLAIRE—Oh!

PAUL—And anyway, what if I did take it? Couldn't I have taken it alone? Couldn't that man have been mistaken?—with possibly some idea of blackmail? (*Striking himself on the chest*) Hasn't a man thirty-five years old——

CLAIRE—Thirty-two.

PAUL—Haven't I the right to take a hack, without all this hullaballoo being made about it? That idiot finds a ruby in his wagon, in which two thousand people ride every day, and at once it is proved that I have a whole gang of mistresses.

CLAIRE—One is enough for me. To which of the "people" does this ruby belong?

PAUL—You are crazy!

CLAIRE—You don't want to tell me? Very well, I shall find out.

PAUL—Claire! (*The bell of the strect door rings.*) Did you hear that?

CLAIRE—Yes, someone has rung the bell.

PAUL—Who in the world can it be at this hour? I hope you won't want to see them?

SERVANT (*entering*)—It is M. Brignon.

PAUL—Oh, the fool!

SERVANT—As you are always at home to him, I thought——

PAUL—Is he outside?

SERVANT—In the waiting-room.

PAUL—Show him in.

The SERVANT goes out.

PAUL (*quickly to* CLAIRE)—Nothing of all this before him, I implore you! At least let the world have no suspicion of the sorrow you are causing me.

CLAIRE—Have no fear. Poor friend, he is uneasy because he hasn't seen you in the last few days. We didn't send Jeanne our good wishes on her birthday, so he comes to ask about us.

The SERVANT shows in M. BRIGNON.

BRIGNON (*very much out of breath and excited*)—Am I disturbing you?

PAUL—On the contrary, my dear fellow.

CLAIRE—How is Jeanne?

BRIGNON—In a minute. First, tell me at once, you haven't found a ruby, have you?

CLAIRE—Oh!

PAUL—No.

CLAIRE—Yes—I—that is, we——

BRIGNON—You have it?

CLAIRE—Here it is. (*She displays it.*)

BRIGNON—That's it, that's Jeanne's ruby! Oh, what luck!

CLAIRE (*to her husband*)—What did I tell you?

BRIGNON—You found it on your steps, didn't you?

CLAIRE—On our steps. I was coming in, and I saw something shine——

BRIGNON—That's a miracle, it really is! She told me she had come to see you, after having gone through all the big stores. She rang the bell three times, but nobody came to the door.

CLAIRE—Yes, we were out, both of us. Why don't you speak, Paul?

BRIGNON—She must have lost it as she went down the stairs.

CLAIRE—Or as she came up.

PAUL (*to* BRIGNON)—But I don't remember that jewel.

BRIGNON—Naturally—she has had it only since day before yesterday. You see, I gave it to her for her birthday.

CLAIRE—You do things handsomely.

BRIGNON—She's such a good little woman, and she loves me so much. So you can imagine her feelings when she discovered just now—she wept, she wanted to go to the police office—all sorts of foolishness. I soothed her as best I could, sent her to bed because she was utterly worn out with all her shopping in those accursed stores—and once she was safely in bed, I picked up my hat without saying a word to her and rushed over here to you. I had just a glimmer of hope——

CLAIRE—What a lucky idea it was!

BRIGNON—Yes, and here it is! I am sure you will excuse me, my dear friends, but I must leave you, for I am in a great hurry to take it back to her. Oh, but won't she be surprised and delighted when she knows that I came around here and that it was you who——

CLAIRE—Yes, I sincerely believe she will.

BRIGNON (*to* CLAIRE)—I'll give her a kiss for you—(*getting up and glancing at* PAUL)—for both of you.

PAUL (*choking with uneasiness*)—That goes without saying.

BRIGNON (*to* CLAIRE)—Have you any special message you wish me to give her?

CLAIRE—Yes. Tell her that I shall not fail to go and talk it all over with her tomorrow, but that another time she should be more careful, because if an accident like that were to happen while she is in a public cab——

BRIGNON—Good-bye, my friends, I shall see you soon again.

He goes out.

CLAIRE (*looking at the door as it closes after him*)—Poor, poor man!

Without even looking at PAUL she goes to the door of her bedroom, which she opens and closes behind her, double-locking it.

PAUL (*alone, limp as a rag*)—Well, by gad!

THE UGLY DUCKLING

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

AT five o'clock on a Sunday evening, Volodia, a frail, pale-looking and timid youth of seventeen, sat in the arbor of a summer villa belonging to the widow of General Shumikhin. He was feeling very dull, and his joyless thoughts ran in three different directions. First, he had to pass his examination in mathematics in the morning, and he knew that if he failed this time he would be expelled from the gymnasium. He had already been two years in the same class, and had had an average of but fifty-five per cent. in algebra for the past year. Secondly, his visits to the house of the Shumikhins, who were rich and aristocratic, was a continual source of pain to his self-esteem.

It seemed to him that Mme. Shumikhin and her nieces looked down upon him and his mother as upon poor relations and hangers-on. He felt that they did not respect his mother and laughed at her.

He once accidentally overheard Mme. Shumikhin tell her cousin, Anna Feodorovna, that his mama was trying to look young and pretty, that she never paid her losses at cards, and that she was very fond of other people's shoes and cigarettes. Every day Volodia begged his mother not to go to the Shumikhins'. He tried to show her what a wretched role she was playing at their house, urged, entreated and even became impertinent; but she, a frivolous, spoiled woman, who had squandered two fortunes—her own and that of her husband—and who had always been very fond of society, did not understand him, and Volodia had to accompany her to the hateful villa twice a week.

Thirdly, the youth was unable, even for a moment, to rid himself of an unpleasant sensation which was entirely new to him. It seemed to him that he was in love with the cousin and guest of Mme. Shumikhin, Anna Feodorovna. She was a vivacious, loud-voiced, laughter-loving little lady of thirty, strong, healthy, pink, round shouldered, with a fat chin and a continual smile on her thin lips. She was neither very pretty nor young—Volodia knew it, but somehow he did not have the strength to cease thinking of her or looking at her when she would shrug her round shoulders while playing croquet, or fall breathless, with closed eyes, into an easy-chair, after laughing and running up and down the stairs, and pretend that she was suffocating. She was married. Her husband, a sedate architect, visited her once a week at the villa, where he would spend the day, returning to the city later. Volodia first became aware of his strange feeling toward Anna Feodorovna on suddenly conceiving a violent dislike for her husband and finding he was glad every time the architect returned to the city.

Sitting now in the arbor, and thinking of the next day's examination and of his mother, he felt a longing to see Niuta (the name by which Anna Feodorovna was known among her intimate friends), to listen to the rustle of her skirts and her laughter. This longing was not at all like that pure and poetical love portrayed in the novels he had read, of which he dreamed every night before falling asleep. It was a strange, incomprehensible feeling. He was ashamed and

afraid of it as of something bad and unclean, something that one is loth to confess even to oneself.

"This is not love," he told himself. "A mere boy does not fall in love with a married woman of thirty. It is simply a little intrigue—yes, nothing but a little intrigue."

Thinking of the intrigue, he recalled his unconquerable timidity, the absence of a mustache, the freckles on his face, and his narrow eyes, and in imagination he placed himself beside Niuta. The two pictures seemed to him so incongruous that he immediately began trying to imagine himself handsome, bold, witty and dressed in the latest fashion.

He was sitting in the darkest corner of the arbor, his head bent and his eyes riveted on the ground, wholly absorbed in his day dreams, when suddenly he heard a light step. Someone was coming along the avenue. Soon the sound of the footsteps ceased and something white appeared in the entrance to the arbor.

"Is anyone in here?" a woman's voice asked.

Volodia, recognizing the voice, lifted his head with a start.

"Who is in here?" asked Niuta, entering the arbor. "Oh, it is you, Volodia? What are you doing here? Thinking? How can you always be thinking, thinking, thinking? You'll lose your reason this way!"

Volodia rose and looked at Niuta in confusion. She had just returned from the bathing pavilion and carried a sheet and Turkish towel upon her shoulder; from out the white silk kerchief that she had thrown over her head peeped her damp hair, adhering to her forehead. The cool, moist smell of the bathing pavilion and of almond soap emanated from her. She was breathing quickly from her rapid walk. One of the buttons of her white blouse had opened so that the youth could see her bare neck and part of her bosom.

"Why are you silent?" asked Niuta, looking at Volodia. "It is not polite to keep still when a lady speaks to you. What a dullard you are, Volodia! You are always sitting with your mouth shut, thinking yourself a kind of philosopher. You have no fire or life in you! You are horrid, you are really. At your age one ought to be alive, jump about, talk, court women, fall in love."

Volodia gazed at the sheet which was held by the white, plump hand and thought——

"Really, it is strange," said Niuta in astonishment. "Listen! Be a man! Why don't you at least smile! Ugh, you disgusting philosopher!" she laughed. "Do you know, Volodia, why you are such a dullard? Because you do not pay attention to women. Why don't you court them? It is true that there are no girls here, but that needn't prevent you from courting the ladies! Why don't you, for instance, court me?"

Volodia listened, wholly absorbed in deep, strenuous thought. Silently he scratched his temple.

"Only very proud people love solitude and silence," continued Niuta, pulling his hand away from his temple. "You are proud, Volodia. Why do you look at me askance? Please look straight into my face! Well, you seal!"

Volodia tried to speak. He wanted to smile, but instead his lips gave a twitch, his eyes blinked, and his hand went again to his temple.

"I—I love you!" he said.

Niuta lifted her brows in astonishment and laughed.

"What hear I!" she sang out in the mock manner of an opera singer. "How? What did you say? Repeat it, repeat it——"

"I—I love you!" repeated Volodia.

Then without volition on his part, without thinking or considering what he was doing, he made a half-step toward Niuta and grasped her hand above the wrist. His eyes grew dim and moist with unshed tears; the whole universe had turned into one enormous Turkish towel which gave out the scent of a bathing pavilion.

"Bravo, bravo!" He heard merry

laughter. "Well, why are you silent? I want to hear you speak! Well?"

Seeing that she still permitted him to hold her hand, Volodia looked into her laughing face and placed his two hands awkwardly and clumsily about her waist. She raised her hands, showing the dimples in her elbows, and stood calmly talking while she began to arrange her hair under the white silk kerchief.

"Volodia, a man should be tactful, amiable and gracious, and it is only possible to become so under the influence of women's society. But what a bad, malicious face you have! You must speak, laugh. Yes, Volodia, you must not be a misanthrope. You are young and will have plenty of time for philosophizing. Well, let me go now. I have to go into the house. Let me go, I say."

She freed herself easily from his arms and singing something in a low voice left the arbor. Volodia remained. He smoothed his hair, smiled, walked up and down a couple of times, and sat down on the bench again, smiling. He felt terribly ashamed and wondered at the same time how his shame could reach such intensity and sharpness. He kept on smiling, out of sheer shy helplessness, whispering incoherent words and gesticulating.

He was ashamed that he had been treated like a little boy, ashamed of his timidity and ashamed also that he had dared to put his arms about a decent married woman. It seemed to him that neither by age, appearance nor the position he occupied in society was he warranted in doing what he did.

He sprang from his seat, left the arbor and went into the less frequented part of the garden, so as to be as far as possible from the house.

"Oh, to be able to get away from here at last!" he thought, bowing his head in his two hands. "My Lord, to be gone from here at once——!"

The train on which Volodia had to leave with his mother did not leave till eight-forty, so that he had to stay at the villa for three hours longer, but he would gladly have gone to the station now, without waiting for his mama.

At eight o'clock he went back to the house, his whole appearance displaying resolution: What is to be, will be! He decided to walk in boldly, look straight into everybody's eyes, speak loudly, and not mind what might be said to him.

He crossed the terrace, walked through the big drawing-room and stopped at the farther end of it to catch his breath. From where he stood he could hear the rattling of the tea-things in the dining-room. Mme. Shumikhin, his mother and Niuta were talking and laughing.

"I assure you," he heard Niuta say, "I could not believe my own ears and eyes! When he began to tell me of his love for me and—can you imagine it?—put his arms around my waist, I hardly knew him. And do you know, he has manner! When he told me that he loved me, his face took on a wild expression, like that of a Circassian."

"You don't say!" exclaimed his mother, breaking into a long laugh. "You don't say! How he does remind me of his father!"

Volodia hurriedly turned back and sprang out into the fresh air.

"How can they! How can they speak of it in everybody's hearing!" he tortured himself, beating his hands and lifting his horror-filled eyes to heaven. "To speak of it calmly and aloud— And mama laughed, mama! Dear Lord, why did you give me such a mother? Why?"

But into the house he must go at all hazards. He passed up and down two or three times until he had calmed down somewhat and then returned to the house.

"Why didn't you come in time for your tea?" Mme. Shumikhin asked sternly.

"I beg your pardon. I am at fault. It is time for me to depart," he murmured, with lowered eyes. "Mama, it is already eight o'clock!"

"Go yourself, dear," his mama said

languidly. "I will remain overnight with Lily. Good-bye, my child."

She made the sign of the cross over her son and said in French, turning to Niuta:

"He resembles Lermontov a little, does he not?"

Volodia took his leave, managing somehow not to look into anybody's face. Ten minutes later he was already on his way to the station, and was glad of it. He felt now neither fear nor shame, and he breathed easily and freely.

A short distance from the station he sat down upon a stone to rest, and looked at the sun, which was already half hidden by the embankment. At the station lights had already appeared in several places, with one light of a dull green, but the train had not yet arrived. Volodia enjoyed sitting quietly, listening to the noises of the approaching evening. The shade of the arbor, the light footfalls, the smell of the bathing pavilion, laughter and the touch of a woman's waist—all rose up in his imagination with striking clearness, and they were all no longer of such great import nor so terrible as they had at first seemed to him.

"Nonsense—she did not pull away her hand, and she laughed when I put my arms around her," he thought; "that means that she liked it. If it had annoyed her, she would have been angry."

Volodia regretted now that he had not been bolder in the arbor. He suddenly felt annoyed that he was so foolishly leaving for home. He was certain if he had another opportunity he would not be so timid as he had been.

And what should prevent his bringing about another meeting with Niuta, like the one in the arbor? He could easily get another opportunity. At the Shumikhins' they generally went for a walk after supper. If he joined Niuta and took her into one of the dark avenues of the park, he would have his opportunity!

"I will go back," he thought. "I can leave here by the first train tomorrow morning. I shall tell them that I missed my train."

So back he went. Mme. Shumikhin, his mother, Niuta and one of the hostess's nieces were on the terrace playing whist. When Volodia told them that he had missed his train they were greatly excited at the thought that he might be late for the examination in the morning. They advised him to get up very early. While they were playing he sat and waited, looking at Niuta with eyes full of longing. He had already thought out a complete plan: He would come up to Niuta, take hold of her hand and put his arm around her. Of course he would not need to say anything, since everything would naturally be understood between them.

Contrary to their usual habit, no one left the house after supper—they did not care to take a walk that evening, preferring to return to the card table.

"How foolish it all is!" Volodia thought in vexation, on going to bed. "However, it does not matter, I can wait until tomorrow. Tomorrow I shall see her in the arbor again. It does not matter."

He did not try to fall asleep at once, but sat up in bed, his hands clasping his knees. The thought of the morrow's examination was repugnant to him. He came to the conclusion that he would fail in the examination, but he no longer saw anything dreadful in being expelled from the gymnasium. On the contrary, he felt it would be very good. Tomorrow he would be as free as a bird. A schoolboy no longer, he would take off his uniform, dress in civilian clothes, smoke openly, and come here and flirt with Niuta whenever he pleased. No longer a pupil of the gymnasium, he would be the "young man," with what is called a "career" and a "future" before him. All roads were open to him, he could enlist, become a telegraph operator, a pharmacist—were there not plenty of positions in which a young man could easily establish himself? An hour passed, then another, and still he sat and thought.

Toward three in the morning, at daybreak, the door of his room was cautiously opened and his mother came in.

"You are not sleeping?" she asked, with a yawn. "Sleep, sleep, I came in only for a moment. The medicine chest is in this room. I just want to get some medicine."

"What for?"

"Poor Lily has another spasm. Sleep, my child, you have your examination tomorrow."

She took a bottle from the chest, walked over to the window, looked at the label and left the room.

"Maria Leontievna, this is not medicine!" Volodia heard a woman's voice saying a few moments later. "You've brought a bottle of perfume. Lily wants morphine. Is your son asleep? Ask him to find it."

It was Niuta's voice, and Volodia grew cold. He dressed himself quickly, put on his coat and went to the door.

"Do you understand? Morphine!" Niuta explained in a whisper. "It is probably written in Latin on the label. You must waken Volodia and he will find it."

His mother opened the door and Volodia saw Niuta. She wore a blouse like the one she generally put on when she went to the bathing pavilion. Her hair was in disorder and hung down loosely over her shoulders, and her face was sleepy and looked almost dark in the dusk of the dawn.

"Here is Volodia; he is not sleeping," she said. "Volodia, please find the bottle of morphine in the medicine chest! That Lily is a real plague—she is always ailing."

His mother murmured something, yawned and walked away.

"Why are you standing there?" said Niuta. "Why don't you look?"

Volodia walked toward the medicine chest, knelt before it and began to examine the bottles, jars and boxes. His hands were trembling, and it seemed to him as if a cold wave were running through his whole body. The odors of carbolic acid and the various herbs which he handled made his head swim, and he felt as if suffocating.

"I believe mama went away," he thought. "That is good—very good——"

"Hurry up there!" Niuta said in a drawling voice.

"Right away—this must be it," said Volodia upon reading on one of the labels the word "Morph." "Take it!"

Niuta stood on the threshold, with one of her feet in the corridor and the other in his room. She was trying to arrange her hair, but it was a difficult task, as it was both long and luxuriant. In the white, sunless light that streamed through the window of his room she looked bewitching in her white, loose blouse, with her sleepy face and preoccupied gaze. Intoxicated and trembling all over, and remembering with a thrill of delight that in the arbor he had already had his arms around this alluring creature, he gave her the vial with the morphine and said:

"You are really——"

"What am I really?"

She entered the room and smilingly repeated:

"What am I really?"

He looked at her silently, and once more, as in the arbor, took her hand. And she looked at him and smiled, as she waited to hear what he would say further.

"I love you—" he whispered.

She ceased to smile, became thoughtful and said:

"Wait, I believe someone is coming, let me see. Oh, these schoolboys!" she said in a low voice, going to the door and looking into the corridor. "No, I do not see anyone," and she returned.

There was a long, silent pause.

"Well, it is high time for me to go," Niuta said at last, with a look of disgust. "What a wretched, miserable looking—pshaw, the ugly duckling!"

To Volodia she seemed suddenly to have become wholly transformed—her long hair, loose blouse, her walk and voice!

"Ugly duckling!" he thought after

she had gone out. "It is true; I am disgusting—everything is disgusting!"

Outside the sun was already rising, the birds sang loudly, and he heard the tread of the gardener and the creaking of his wheelbarrow. Soon after came the lowing of the cattle and the sound of the shepherd's pipe. The rays of the sun and the noises that reached his ears were telling him that somewhere in this world there was life—pure, exquisite, poetical. But where was it? No one had ever told Volodia anything about it, not his mother nor any of the people about him.

When the servant came to waken him for the morning train he pretended to be asleep.

"The devil take it all!" he thought.

He rose at eleven o'clock, combed his hair before the mirror and gazed at his plain face, pale after the sleepless night.

"Perfectly right," he thought. "An ugly duckling!"

When his mother saw him she was horrified at his missing the examinations.

"I overslept myself, mama," Volodia said. "But you must not worry. I shall hand in a doctor's certificate that I have been ill."

Mme. Shumikhin and Niuta rose at one o'clock in the afternoon, and Volodia heard Mme. Shumikhin opening the window of her bedroom noisily and Niuta replying to something she had said in her rough voice, with a peal of ringing laughter. He saw the drawing-room door open and a long line of nieces, cousins and hangers-on—among them his mother—wending their way to breakfast, and the clear, smiling face of Niuta, as she looked up into the bearded face of her husband, who had arrived only a few minutes before.

Niuta was dressed in the costume of a Little-Russian, which did not suit her at all and gave her a clumsy appearance. Her husband, the architect, was making trivial and silly jokes; and the meat balls which were served at breakfast contained—at least so it seemed to Volodia—too much onion. It seemed to him also that Niuta laughed too loudly and too significantly, and looked in his direction as if to give him to understand that what had taken place did not bother her in the least, and that she did not even notice the presence of the ugly duckling at the table.

At four in the afternoon Volodia accompanied his mother to the station in the carriage. Disgusting memories, the sleepless night, the impending expulsion from the gymnasium, and the worry of his conscience—all these kindled in him a morose and painful wrath. He gazed upon his mother's thin profile, upon her little nose and her raincoat—a present from Niuta—and murmured:

"Why do you powder? It is unseemly for a woman of your age! You are trying to look pretty. You never pay your losses at cards, and you smoke other people's cigarettes. Disgusting! I do not love you! No, I do not!"

He insulted her, and she turned her rolling eyes on him in fright and clasped her tiny hands.

"What are you saying, child?" she said in a horrified whisper. "Great God, the coachman may hear you! Keep quiet! He can hear every word!"

"I do not love you. No, I do not love you!" he continued, breathing hard. "You are immoral and heartless. Do not dare to wear that raincoat again! Do you hear? Because I will tear it to pieces!"

"Restrain yourself, my child!" his mother began in a tearful voice. "The coachman will hear you!"

"Where is my father's fortune? Where is your own money? You have squandered everything, everything! I am not ashamed of poverty, but I am ashamed that I have such a mother! When my comrades ask me about you I always blush!"

In the train Volodia stood upon the platform of the car during the whole journey—two stations—and shivered. He did not want to enter the car because his mother sat in it—his mother

whom he hated. But she was no exception—he hated everybody, himself, the conductors, the smoke from the engine and the cold to which he attributed his continual shivering. But the greater the distress he felt in his own heart, the stronger became his conviction that somewhere in the world there were people who lived a pure, noble, warm, glorious life, full of love, tenderness and joy. He felt it and was so saddened by the thought of his own worthlessness that one of the passengers, after looking attentively into his face, asked:

"Are you suffering from a bad toothache?"

Volodia and his mother lived in the city in the house of a poor noblewoman, Maria Petrovna by name, who rented a large house and sublet it to lodgers. His mother occupied two rooms. In the room in which stood her bed and which had two large windows and two large pictures in gilt frames hanging upon the wall, she herself lived. Volodia lived in the one next to hers—a small, dark room, its only furniture a sofa upon which he slept. It also served as a wardrobe for his mother's clothes and all kinds of cast-off rubbish with which she, for some reason or other, was not willing to part. His lessons Volodia generally prepared in the "sitting-room," the large room in which the lodgers gathered for their meals and their evenings.

On his return home Volodia lay down upon the sofa and covered himself with his quilt to stop his shivering. The many hat-boxes, willow baskets and all kinds of rubbish with which the place was littered reminded him that he had no room of his own, that he had no place of refuge where he could hide himself from his mother and her guests and from the voices that reached him now from the common "sitting-room." The knapsack and books which lay about recalled the examination at which he had not appeared. And, somehow, without any visible reason, he suddenly recollected Mentone, where he had lived with his father when a child; he remembered Biarritz and two little English girls with whom he used to play in the sand. He felt an inclination to bring back to his memory the color of the sea and sky, the height of the waves and the frame of mind in which he was at that time, but he did not succeed. The little English girls appeared before his mind's eye as he saw them then, but everything else blended in confusion, turned into vapor and vanished.

"It is too cold here," Volodia at last decided, and rising, he put on his coat and entered the "sitting-room," where they were having tea. Around the table, upon which stood a samovar and glasses, sat three persons: his mother, a music-teacher—an old woman who wore glasses—and August Mikhilich, an elderly and very stout Frenchman, who had a position in a perfume factory.

"I have not had dinner today," said his mother. "I wish the maid would bring some bread."

"Dunia!" called the Frenchman.

It turned out that the girl had been sent upon some errand by the mistress of the house.

"Oh, it does not matter in the least," the Frenchman said smilingly. "I shall go for the bread myself, immediately. Oh, it is nothing!"

He laid aside his strong-smelling cigar in a place where he could easily find it, took his hat and went out. After he had gone out, Volodia's mother began to tell the music-teacher of the good time she had had at the Shumikhins' and how well she was received there.

"You must know that Lily Shumikhin is a relation of mine," she was saying. "Her late husband, General Shumikhin, was a cousin of my husband, and she herself was born Baroness von Colb."

"Mama, it is not true!" Volodia exclaimed irritatedly. "Why do you lie?"

He knew very well that his mother was speaking the truth, in her narrative, about General Shumikhin and the Baroness von Colb. There was not one particle of untruth in what she

had said; but, nevertheless, he was conscious that she was lying. The lie was in her manner of speaking, in the expression of her face, in the look of her eyes, in everything.

"You are lying!" Volodia repeated, and hit the table so powerful a blow with his fist that the dishes shook and his mother's tea was spilled. "Why are you telling people about generals and baronesses? It is all a lie!"

The music-teacher became very much embarrassed and coughed in her handkerchief, pretending that she was choking, while his mother broke into tears.

"Where shall I go to get away from all this?" Volodia was thinking.

He had already been in the street; and he was ashamed to go to his comrades on account of his non-appearance at the examination. And again, for no reason whatsoever, the two little English girls came to his mind.

He walked up and down the "sitting-room" and entered the room next to it, which was that of the Frenchman. The room was filled with the strong scent of glycerine soap and all kinds of oils and perfumes. The table, window-sills and even the chairs were littered with bottles, vials and glasses filled with liquids of various colors. Volodia took a paper from the table, opened it and read the heading: *Figaro*. The paper emitted a strong and very pleasant odor. Then he took from the table a revolver.

"You must not mind him," the music-teacher was comforting his mother in the next room. "He is still so young! At his age young men always allow themselves too much liberty. That is something we must get used to."

"No, Eugenia Andrevna, he is too much spoiled!" his mother was saying in her sing-song voice. "He has no one to keep him in hand, and I am too weak and cannot do anything. Oh, I am the most unfortunate of women!"

Volodia placed the muzzle of the revolver in his mouth and put his thumb on the hammer. Then, with his finger, he found still another projection and tried to press it. Taking out the muzzle from his mouth, he wiped it on the skirt of his coat and examined the lock attentively; he had never before in his life had firearms in his hand.

"It seems to me that this ought to be raised," he reflected. "Yes, it looks like it."

He heard August Mikhilich enter the "sitting-room" and begin telling something with a hearty laugh. Volodia again placed the muzzle of the revolver in his mouth, held it with his teeth and pressed with his finger. A report followed—something hit Volodia a powerful blow in the nape of his neck and he fell upon the table with his face among the flasks and vials. Then he saw his father just as he remembered him in Mentone, in a high hat with a broad black riband—he was wearing mourning for some lady. Suddenly he took hold of him with his two hands and they both flew into a kind of dark, deep abyss.

Then everything became confused and vanished.

HIS BUSINESS HOURS

BENEVOLENT OLD PARTY (*to boy who is leading a blind beggar*)—My poor boy, how long has your father been blind?

BOY—Since this morning. Papa's always blind from eight in the morning till six at night.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

THE COST OF FAITHFULNESS

BY ROBERTO BRACCO

COUNT Gigi Lorenzetti entered Mr. Rodway's library not without a certain embarrassment. He was asking himself: "What can the tiresome old man want of me?"

In the dim room, in which rich, heavy hangings deadened every sound, Mr. Rodway stood beside a massive desk, as richly carved as a cinque-cento choir stall. He had risen formally to greet his guest, and resumed his seat immediately, inviting the count by a gesture to take a chair facing him.

"As soon as I received your note," the young man began, rather ill at ease, "I hastened here."

"No need of haste," Mr. Rodway quietly answered with a painfully correct accent, in which, notwithstanding a mastery of Italian resulting from thirty-three years of persistent effort, a somewhat telegraphic style of utterance still suggested the curt English tongue. "No need of haste. I begged you to come here in order to offer you a position."

"A position to me!" exclaimed Count Gigi Lorenzetti, in a tone in which were mingled surprise and a contempt that was felt rather than expressed.

"You do not accept?" said Mr. Rodway.

"But—really—I fail to understand," the young man said stiffly, throwing out his chest as if to display the irreproachable elegance of his slim, tapering figure, and watching with some uneasiness the pale and expressionless eyes of Mr. Rodway, who was leaning back in his high carved chair and stroking his thin gray beard with slender, aristocratic hands.

"You do not understand?" the Englishman asked without moving. "Very well. I will speak plainly. Are you ready?"

"For what?"

"For perfect frankness?"

"Certainly."

"Very well, then. You are making love to my wife."

"I!" exclaimed the count.

"You."

"That is slander!"

"Pardon me," returned the Englishman. "I am a gentleman. I have never slandered anyone."

"But I swear that——"

"You are making love to my wife, but my wife is not your mistress."

"That goes without saying!" the young man hastened to declare, with an imperceptible gesture of disgust.

"But you dress very well."

"What has that to do with it?" questioned the mystified count.

"Italian women like well-dressed men. In the man an Italian woman sees the tailor. My wife is an Italian. You are also very handsome. You have teeth as beautiful as a woman's beautiful teeth. I have very beautiful teeth, too, but they are false. My wife says they are my own. That is not true. You are fair-haired. I was red-haired and now I am gray; fair-haired never, although an Englishman. And you are still young. I was once young. Now I am no longer young. My wife says I am. That is not true. You still have adventures. I do not know whether that is true. You tell of them; it amounts to the same thing."

"But I protest, Mr. Rodway——"

"Let me explain fully."

"Pray do," begged the count.

"My wife is thirty years old. She says she is twenty-five. That is not

true. But there is too great a difference between thirty years and sixty-one. I am sixty-one. On a careful calculation, your chances for success are good. My wife says she has always been faithful. That is true. But all unfaithful wives have been faithful before becoming unfaithful."

"Mr. Rodway, I can no longer permit——"

"You wish to defend my wife? Pray do not incommode yourself. I am defending her. Her character is excellent. But I have never allowed her to associate with men of your stamp. You have forced yourself into my house."

"I was presented, sir," the count waxed indignant.

"You have forced yourself into my house," Mr. Rodway went on without noticing the interruption. "This is an exceptional occurrence. The test is dangerous for her. I already notice some symptoms in her behavior. I cannot order you out of the house, because that would be impolite. I cannot keep my wife under lock and key, because no such lock and key have ever been invented. I do not wish my wife to betray me. I offer you a position."

In the young man's mind the quick succession of surprises had not prevented a feeling of gratified vanity, and although the words of this original man sometimes smacked of offensiveness, he could not but experience a secret satisfaction and pride at being set on a pedestal as a predestined victor by the husband whose honor was threatened. The offer of a position perplexed and disturbed him; nevertheless, in view of the strangeness of the whole proceeding, it put into his conceited head the vague hope of a solution not merely peaceful, but advantageous. He at once assumed the modest air of a man resigned to his own involuntary triumph, and began to speak with great seriousness:

"Before a man like you, sir—a man of intelligence, with such a profound knowledge of the human heart, in the unusual position in which I find myself, I can only bow my head without discussion. You know your wife much better than I do."

"That is true."

"And I have never ventured to hope to know her more intimately."

"That is not true," pronounced Mr. Rodway quite impassively.

"But I do not presume, sir, to oppose the measures which you in your wisdom see fit to adopt. I am subject to your orders. Only, I still fail to understand what you mean by a position."

"Are you a landowner?"

"A landowner? Well, strictly speaking—no. But——"

"Have you a profession?"

"None."

"Have you an income?" he pursued implacably.

"Not even in my dreams. Where could it come from?"

"Have you a rich uncle?"

"Not even a poor one."

"You have nothing, then."

"I have—debts." The count permitted himself a smile.

"That is not much."

"True," he replied, with a shrug.

"Still, you dress well."

"You have already been so kind as to tell me that."

"You dress very well."

"Yes, I cannot deny that."

"And you lead an enjoyable life," asserted Mr. Rodway.

"Sufficiently so."

"You could enjoy yourself still more and dress still better if you had an income of five hundred lire a month?" was the next query.

"That is self-evident."

"I will give it to you." The Englishman's tone was decisive.

"But I should not be able to accept."

"You may become the representative of my banking house."

"Where?" inquired the count.

"Not here."

"But where?"

"Wherever you wish."

"If I had to choose, I might choose Milan, for example. But I should not be a good representative."

"You would be a perfect representa-

tive because you would represent—nothing."

"And your banking house——?"

"Has no urgent need of you."

"And so I should have——"

"A position with nothing to do." Mr. Rodway's voice took on a satisfied tone.

"A humiliation!"

"That is not true!"

"I should be an object of luxury for you."

"That is true. For a husband of my age not to be betrayed by his wife is a luxury."

The young man's imagination was kindled. He discerned hitherto undreamed of possibilities in the proposal.

"But if I were disposed to accept your proposition and leave Naples," he began, "you will understand that I should be relinquishing a position——"

"What sort of a position?"

"My life as a society man is well known. I am invited to dine out every day. I am invited to the theatre every evening. If I enter a café or a restaurant, there is always some good friend who pays the bill. My tailor makes it possible for me to dress very well, as you say, because he takes a personal interest in me. I serve as his show-window. He thinks I make him the fashion, that I have style—an air—what you will! Why say more? At all events I never pay——"

"That is true."

"But I do all the things that are done by those who are stupid enough to pay. In short, Mr. Rodway——"

"You want more than five hundred lire for giving up this position," suggested the Englishman.

"You grasp my meaning, sir," Count Lorenzetti concluded elegantly, taking breath and daintily arranging his cravat with his gloved hand.

The Englishman meditated. "This young man is shrewd enough to see than he can make a better bargain," he said to himself. "He is right. My wife's faithfulness is certainly worth more than five hundred lire a month." And he muttered to himself, in his native tongue, the *leit-motif* of his married life: "Faithfulness costs money."

"You are saying—?" the count prompted him.

"Nothing. Shall we say six hundred?"

The count, after a moment's reflection, spoke with decision. "I cannot consider it."

"Seven hundred, then? And that is final."

"Final? Well, to accommodate you, let us say seven hundred."

"I shall pay you two years' salary in advance," Mr. Rodway went on.

The count bounded from his chair as if stung. He could not conceal a momentary exultation. Then, dubiously: "You are not making sport of me?"

"I never make sport of anyone." And Mr. Rodway filled out some blank spaces on a paper previously prepared and handed it to the young man, saying: "Please read and sign."

The count read: "I, the undersigned, acknowledge the receipt of 168,000 lire as salary for two years, paid in advance, and in consideration of said payment, bind myself to remain in Milan for two years from February, 1900, as representative of the firm of Rodway & Co."

While he was reading, Mr. Rodway drew the money in crisp new bank bills from the recesses of his desk and placed it in sight of the young man. The latter, with an air of well-bred deference, wrote his signature, being careful not to omit the title of count, and gathering up the bills with nimble fingers, put them in his pocket.

"And when will you do me the honor to depart from Naples?" asked the Englishman.

"Tomorrow, or, at the latest, day after tomorrow."

"Very well."

The count was just on the point of rising to take his leave, when Mrs. Rodway, in a tailor-made costume the close-fitting mannishness of which set off the full perfection of her feminine

charms, entered the office, invading the gloom and gravity of the place with the bright flashing of her small black eyes and the piquant profile of her tip-tilted nose and little red mouth whose short upper lip disclosed sharp, gleaming teeth. A whiff of perfume that seemed the essence of all floral essences announced her entrance.

"Oh, you here, my dear count?" she exclaimed. "What are you doing with my husband?"

"Nothing," the young man hastily replied, with a deprecatory air, and he shook hands with the lady in the most approved modern style, somewhat about the level of his shoulders, which at the same time he elegantly raised.

"What?" said Mrs. Rodway inquisitively, removing her veil and an audacious little toque that suggested a cock's comb. "You have come to call on my husband?"

"And on you, too," explained the Englishman, watching his wife closely. "It is a farewell visit."

"Ah, you are going away?"

"Yes, I am going away."

"You are going to forsake us? Only for a short time, I trust?"

"For a long time," said Mr. Rodway with marked emphasis, seeking meanwhile to discover in the countenance of his wife some involuntary sign of emotion.

But she was intent upon subduing certain rebellious little curls loosened by the removal of her hat.

"And where are you going?" she inquired.

"I am going to Milan."

"Oh, I envy you. Such a delightful city! I have friends there. Shall I give you some letters of introduction?"

The Englishman, who had suspected more than he had revealed to the young man, thought, "My wife speaks as if she were indifferent. That is not true. But the count is behaving as if he were sure of being in high favor with my wife. And that is true." And since he was eager to know the full extent of the danger which was to be averted by the banishment of this insidious, fair-haired deceiver, he resolved to leave them alone for a few moments and watch.

Not only were his feelings as a husband involved; there was the instinctive desire of a cool and level-headed business man to see whether the financial transaction just closed was justified. So, under pretext of pressing business with his secretary, he excused himself.

After a few minutes of mutual reserve, the count approached Mrs. Rodway, who, having finally arranged her hair to her satisfaction, drew a little tortoise-shell box from the pocket of her mannish coat and took from it a powder-puff. In a soft, insinuating, somewhat uncertain voice, he murmured:

"Well, what have you to say?"

"Of what?"

"Of my leaving."

"I have nothing to say," she returned, lightly brushing her cheeks and chin with the powder-puff.

"You are sorry?"

"Naturally."

"Very sorry?" insisted the count.

"Why should I be?"

"Then you are not very sorry?"

"I shall not die of grief."

"Die?" he exclaimed. "You are exaggerating so as to avoid questioning your heart. But I, Bertha, I understand you. Oh, it is not conceit and delusion. When I reflect how, after a life in which women have succeeded each other as do the flowers in the buttonhole of my frock-coat, I have been afraid to know you intimately, knowing well that this time I should have to yield, I find it natural that you should have yielded too."

"My dear count," exclaimed Mrs. Rodway, rising with a comical assumption of affectionate sympathy, "are you sure you are quite well?"

The young man was disconcerted for a moment, but soon regained his assurance. "Oh, it's of no avail," he persisted. "You may jest, and if you wish, I will jest. We may indulge in a little comedy with each other, but you—" He was on the point of saying,

"you love me," but feeling instinctively that this might sound unduly conceited and trite, he said instead: "You do not love your husband!"

Instantly the capricious little face assumed an air of hauteur and evident displeasure. She said nothing, but in spite of her self-control she could not conceal the fact that her disdain for her husband was as great as her indifference to the count.

The young exquisite, growing pale at her contemptuous silence, bowed his head in humility. The pause that ensued might have been painfully long, had not Mr. Rodway, who had seen and heard enough from his hiding-place behind the heavy folds of a portière, intervened with well-feigned unconcern.

"Have you written the letters of introduction for the count?" he inquired of his wife.

"No, I will write them now."

"Do not put yourself to that trouble, signora," the young man stammered. "You can send them to me in Milan, at your convenience. I must not stay any longer."

"*Bon voyage!*" said Mrs. Rodway rather curtly, as she left the room.

Another pause ensued, during which the Englishman took a ledger from his desk and regarded it thoughtfully. The count, recovering his assurance, somewhat brilliantly remarked:

"So I leave tomorrow?"

The Englishman eyed him: "Do you wish to consider a proposition?" he asked.

"You mean——?"

"I mean that I will tear up the agreement you have just signed. You remain in Naples. I take back half the sum I have just given you."

The young man assumed a haughty air. "You surprise me, sir," he replied. "Count Gigi Lorenzetti never breaks his word."

"That is not true."

"And a merchant like you never breaks his contract!"

"That is true."

"I have the honor to bid you farewell."

The count took his departure with dignity, and Mr. Rodway continued to gaze at his ledger. There was one page in it headed, "For preserving my wife's faithfulness," on which he was in the habit of entering his expenditures for theatre tickets, jewels, dresses, bonbons and other trifles, and he had intended entering under the same heading the sum just disbursed. But after witnessing the meeting between the count and his wife, and convincing himself of the young man's harmlessness and her faithfulness, he could not bring himself to enter under this head a sum expended to secure what he would have had in any case, without the expenditure of a soldo.

His sense of business accuracy was woefully at a loss, when suddenly a bright idea struck him. He wrote down, as he had intended, "Paid to Count Gigi Lorenzetti 168,000 lire," but he changed the heading of the entire page. He erased "For the preservation of my wife's faithfulness," and wrote in its place, "For being the old husband of a young wife."

PLENTY OF TIME

TRAVELER (*in railway restaurant*)—Waiter, I've been working at this tough steak for fifteen minutes, and am still unable to eat it.

WAITER—My dear sir, you needn't hurry—the train is twenty minutes late.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

CONDEMNED

BY CHARLOTTE EDGREN-LEFFLER

THE Russian regimental band, famed for its excellent music, had drawn a large audience to the concert in the Brunns-Park in Helsingfors. The musicians made a pretty picture in their white uniforms, heavily embroidered with red and gold. The music, now soft, sad Russian folk songs, now bright and joyous waltz or march strains, rolled out on the clear autumn air in waves of rich melody.

The audience, promenading in the park or sitting at little tables in the veranda, was not the least interesting nor the least varied part of the picture. The strong contrast between the two races meeting there was very noticeable in spite of the general air of jollity. Russian uniforms were everywhere, and the Russian women were easily distinguished by their striking gowns and rather conspicuous behavior from the Swedes, with their more quiet, reserved manners.

Two young men were walking up and down in front of the veranda, amusing themselves with criticisms of the people within range of their eyes. They were both licentiates of the university. Rydberg, the elder, had made a special study of natural history, while the younger, George Holm, was instructor in esthetics.

Suddenly Holm halted, looking toward the veranda, and exclaimed: "Who is that lady there, at the left of the large table? What a beauty! Evidently a Russian. Do you know who she is?"

"Why, don't you know her?" asked Rydberg. "That is Mme. Popov, the widow of old General Popov, who lived here for many years."

"So that is she? I had heard of her beauty, but I didn't know she was so beautiful as that."

The younger man stood motionless, gazing at the lady in unconcealed admiration. He was of strikingly attractive appearance; a man of the true Swedish type, tall and slender, with a fine free carriage of the head, yellow hair and clear blue eyes, which were often veiled in dreamy softness. Women seldom failed to notice him, and the beautiful Russian did not appear at all offended by his admiration. He caught a quick glance that almost intoxicated him with its evident encouragement.

A Russian officer, sitting with the lady, became impatient and threw a look of distrust at Holm.

"We'd better move on," said Rydberg to his friend. "How can you be such a fool as to stand here gazing at her? You risk getting an invitation to a rendezvous tonight, and it might have most unpleasant consequences."

"Tell me what you know of her," demanded George, as they walked down the wide avenue of trees.

Rydberg laughed softly, with evident amusement.

"What's the joke?" asked George impatiently.

"I know a very good story about her," said Rydberg. "My sister went to school with her."

"Then she belongs here in Helsingfors?"

"Yes. Her father has some small Government position; they are not at all well off, I believe. When the beautiful Alexandra Pavlovna had just turned sixteen, she surprised her schoolmates with the announcement that she was to marry old General

Popov. As the girls showed their astonishment at her taking up with such an old man, she answered: 'Oh, well; there are always the adjutants, you know!'"

The story did not seem to amuse George. He was hurrying to reach the end of the avenue, so that he might turn back again.

"Don't you think that's a good story?" asked Rydberg. "It's so beautifully characteristic of the Russian women."

"Did the general leave her any money?" asked Holm, instead of answering the question.

"I don't know. She lives with her parents and spends all her pension on clothes. She is quite a personage in Russian society here."

"Yes, I remember; the family of the governor-general used to think a great deal of her."

"The governor-general did, you mean," returned Rydberg shortly. "They do say that is why her husband asked to be transferred to St. Petersburg."

"He must have been unique," threw in George. "Was he jealous?"

"Did you ever hear of a Russian general who was jealous? He goes his way, and his wife goes hers. But old Popov thought he might cut a certain dash in St. Petersburg society if he came there with such a wife, for alone he wasn't much of a personage."

Just then George loosened his arm hastily from Rydberg's and lifted his hat. The beautiful widow was just passing them, talking with an elderly lady. Her eyes were on the ground and she played carelessly with her fan, seeming not to notice the men at all. But just as she passed them she dropped her fan, and as George bent to pick it up, their hands met. Slowly she raised her lids with their long, heavy lashes, and a burning glance from her great, superb eyes rested full on his face. A slight smile rippled the curves of her full, red lips and revealed her rather large white teeth. She took the fan, bowed slightly, and passed on.

George stood as if turned to stone, staring after her. It was all over in scarcely more than a minute, but it seemed to him as if he had always loved this woman and that the one aim and hope of his life was to win her. The single, well-aimed glance seemed to show him all her love could promise.

It was not the first time that a glance or a pressure of the hand had inflamed his fancy. Rydberg, who had all the characteristic Finnish coolness, had often laughed at his friend for his easily kindled enthusiasms.

"Let me tell you something," Rydberg said, as they turned home later in the evening. "Have a care of the beautiful Sasha. You know I never interfere in any of your love affairs, though I don't always approve of them. But this one may become really dangerous. A woman like that might win a fatal influence over you."

"Fatal—yes, that is the word," cried George in an ecstasy. "I burn to read my fate in those great dark eyes."

"Oh, Lord, you're beginning already to talk poetry," cried Rydberg. "Well, don't forget—I warn you."

"You may say what you like. I intend to make her acquaintance."

"I've always been afraid you might do something stupid some day," remarked Rydberg drily.

"You're right there," said George, as he took his friend's hand at parting. "You know, some philosophers say that the greatest foolishness is at times the greatest wisdom."

In reply Rydberg merely shrugged his shoulders and walked on.

Holm ran up the stairs to his apartment, and turned the key twice in the lock, as if he feared his friend might follow him with his well-meant advice. He wanted to be alone with his dreams, and for the greater part of the night he paced his room, living over every detail of his love for the beautiful Russian.

"He's got an inspiration, as he calls it, I suppose," sighed the old woman

who took care of his rooms, when she heard his step again, as on many a sleepless night. "He'll have a new poem ready by tomorrow morning."

Holm was a poet of considerable power, and his old servant, when she brought him his morning coffee, often heard him reciting verses made during the night. His friends expected much of him, and some of his work had aroused an enthusiasm throughout the country that made the critics hail him as a worthy successor to Runeberg. He was the son of a poor clergyman and had come to the university almost without means, but his charm of manner and evident talent had made the way easy for him. It was not difficult for him to get loans and credit everywhere, and he soon became accustomed to a luxury of living that contrasted sharply with the simplicity of his early home. He was of an old Swedish family, brought up in the strict Swedish tradition, and soon joined the group of intelligent students who made it their ambition to revive Swedish thought and culture in Finland. Together with Rydberg, Holm became one of the leaders of the group, and he and his friend, working in sympathy side by side, supplemented each other admirably through the difference in their qualities.

II

WHEN Holm rang for his coffee next morning, after a few short hours of sleep, which had not refreshed him, the old servant came in with a letter.

"Good morning, Herr Doctor," she said. "So you have Russian friends now?"

"What is it?" Holm asked impatiently.

"A Russian servant girl brought this letter. You can't imagine how untidy she looked. But the Russians are all that way, servants and princesses—all exactly the same."

Holm tore the letter open and saw the signature he had hoped for: "Alexandra Popov." The note contained only one line written in French, in a style of doubtful elegance and an orthography that was not above reproach:

> I am charmed with your poetry. Come and read something to me tomorrow morning.

The note was dated the preceding evening.

George drank several cups of coffee with brandy, dressed in great haste, and ran from the house. But when he reached the address in the Kaserngata, he found it was only ten o'clock. He knew he dared not go in at this hour, but did not know how to get through the term of waiting. He threw himself into a passing cab, trying, in his bad Finnish, to make the driver understand that he should go to the Thölö Park on the outskirts of the city.

In the park, George climbed up to the observation tower, where the superb view held his attention for a few minutes. A delicate mist lay over the water, but the sun was beginning to pierce it, and the little waves danced toward the shore in golden gleams. He had often looked down thus on the city, built on a narrow tongue of land stretching out into the wide horizon of the Gulf of Finland. And he had often thought how small this thickly settled spot of earth looked amid the immensity of water surrounding it.

Today it was like an intoxication to realize that this tiny tongue of land meant all the great wide world for him now. Life, love and happiness lay waiting for him there, as boundless as the far horizon and the glistening sea. He hurried to his cab and drove back to the city.

She lived in an unpretentious house with a gloomy entrance. A slatternly servant girl opened the door and showed him into a little drawing-room, where he waited for twenty minutes. All around were signs of the notorious untidiness of the Russians. The handsome carpet, almost new, had been ruined by evident carelessness; a chair

roller had cut a long gash in it, and about the stove were holes made by burning coals. The heavy silk curtains were draped back with common cotton cords, and on the low Oriental couch lay a gold-colored ball gown with torn lace trimmings. Beside it, on a tiny inlaid table, were a fan, a faded bunch of flowers and a pair of openwork lace stockings. Across one window stood a little dressing-table covered with bows of pink silk. An expensive, but ragged, lace veil hung over the heavy silver frame of the mirror. On the table stood an open powder box and a bottle of perfume which had been upset and had poured its contents out upon the silk.

Instinctively George stepped to the table to place the bottle upright, and blushed as he found himself throwing a hasty glance into the mirror, as if he thought he might find there some image of her presence in the négligée shown by the articles in the room. Then he heard hasty steps in the next room and was suddenly overwhelmed with confusion. He felt certain that the servant had ushered him into the wrong apartment and that this was her dressing-room. He took up his hat and hurried out into the anteroom.

Then he heard her voice in the other room. "Mr. Holm, where are you?"

He came to the door.

"Out there?" she said, laughing. "Did you wait out there all this time?"

He felt guilty, not knowing how to answer her.

"But I heard you in here. Oh, I see, you thought this was my dressing-room; you saw the table there. You see, my bedroom is so small that I have to bring my dressing-table out here when I dress for any particular occasion. I went to a ball last night after the concert. I didn't want to go, but my friends insisted. But please do sit down. Yes, it's not very comfortable here, not what I had in St. Petersburg. We had a fine apartment there, with beautiful large rooms. Were you ever in St. Petersburg? No? You really should go. It's quite different from this miserable little town, I can tell you."

He found his voice with an effort. "But you were born and brought up here in Helsingfors, were you not?"

"And so you think I should be provincial?" She pushed the ball gown to one side and sat down on the couch. "Please hand me that footstool," she went on, as he sat silent.

He pushed the stool under her feet, and she settled back comfortably in the cushions. The servant came in with the samovar and tea glasses. Sasha served the tea, lit a cigarette, and leaned back with a sigh of content.

"Now I'm ready. Will you begin?" He touched his tea glass and opened his manuscript, but could not bring himself to read. He sat silent instead, looking at her. Her presence seemed to cast a spell upon him. He could not take his eyes from her, and she did not interrupt his silence by a word or gesture. She sat with downcast eyes, as quiet as if sitting for her portrait. She took a puff of her cigarette now and then, but without raising her head, which rested lightly on one hand. A slight tremor on her deep red lips seemed to indicate a smile.

Her toilet gave no excuse for the long time of waiting. She wore a sort of national costume affected by Russian ladies during their summer country sojourns, because of its lightness and comfort. It consisted of a wide, loose blouse, with open neck and elbow sleeves, richly embroidered in bright colors; an apron of similar design covering a short, plain dark skirt, and a tiny red cap, from which two heavy black braids hung down her back. Her feet, in red velvet slippers, were neither small nor particularly well formed. Her hands, too, were not small, but they were very white, as was her strong, well-rounded arm, bare to the elbow.

Holm had time to look at her as she sat silent before him. He saw that she was no classic beauty, and yet he felt an unquiet fear that she could lead him to commit some great folly

if she should raise her great, fiery eyes to his, for their glance had burned itself into his soul.

The quiet of the room was suddenly broken by the sound of the doorbell. Sasha raised her lids just perceptibly.

"Ah, now we will be disturbed," she sighed; "and it was so nice here!"

George rose hastily. "Shall I say you are not at home to callers?" he asked.

She threw a glance toward the door and hesitated. A man appeared on the threshold—the Russian officer who had been with her at the concert.

He threw a glance of searching distrust at George, as he bent to kiss the hand that Sasha held out to him without rising, but with a smile that angered Holm.

"Monsieur Holm, poet, Colonel Baschylov, former adjutant to my husband." She murmured the introduction and sank back in her cushions again.

George rose and took his hat.

"Are you going?" she asked.

"I do not wish to disturb you," he answered in a tone tinged with irony, which, however, she did not seem to notice.

"It is you who are the disturber," she said in French to Baschylov. "Mr. Holm was just about to read me some of his poems."

The colonel murmured that they must not let his presence interrupt them. But Sasha suddenly pealed out a loud, though musical laugh.

"You don't really want us to read poetry to you, do you, Peter Feodorovich?" she said.

Without waiting to hear the colonel's answer Holm bowed formally.

"You'll come back again, some other time?" she asked.

He made some remark about being very busy, and went out with an angry toss of his head.

III

SEVERAL days later George read a new poem to a few friends. The glowing words sang of a love that hid itself from the world; of secret meetings and stolen kisses; of passion that inflamed the blood, but came not from the heart; of a love born with the seeds of satiety in it—that drew sweetness and fire from its very consciousness of quick-coming death.

But the poem failed to please. Rydberg criticized it unfavorably, and the others present seemed to share his opinion.

"Cynicism is not a fit mood for a lyric poem," said one. "One must believe in a love to sing of it."

"Besides, the form is weak," said another.

"No poet is always up to his own highest standard," said Rydberg, patting his friend on the back, as he saw his brow darken at the criticism. "You are not in your usual frame of mind, and your poetry suffers. This is apparently a memory of Brunns-Park," he added in a lower tone.

"Ah, I thought so!" cried George. "There is the reason for your disapproval."

"Do you think so? And how about the others?"

"It was you who spoke first. They follow your lead in everything."

He took his hat and coat and went out, angered by the general lack of sympathy. He was so spoiled by his many triumphs and had such a craving for applause that he could not endure the slightest contradiction; and as the mood of the poem was the mood that now ruled him, he could not judge it as he was wont to judge his own work.

His road led him past Sasha's house, and as he saw lights in her windows he resolved to go up and read the poem to her. She, at least, would appreciate it.

She was not alone; Baschylov and several other Russian officers were with her. Holm wanted to turn back, but the door of the drawing-room was open and Sasha saw him as he was parleying with the servant. He saw the sudden light in her face, as she hurried out into the hall and held out both hands to him.

"Oh, I'm so glad you have come!" she cried. "I have waited for you every day."

"But you are not alone," he replied coldly. He had not laid off his coat and stood with his hat in his hand.

"I'll send them all away," she said hurriedly. "Do come in."

But Holm did not care to meet these Russians, whom he had always avoided.

"I came to read the poem I made for you the other day," he said. "When can I find you alone?"

"In an hour," she answered eagerly. "I promise you they'll all be gone in an hour. You will surely come back?"

As he still stood irresolute, she suddenly took the manuscript from his hand. "I'll keep this as security," she said.

She had shut the door behind her, so that those in the drawing-room could not hear the conversation outside. Now she returned to the room with the roll of paper in her hand.

"This bothersome lottery list!" she exclaimed, throwing it down carelessly on her desk. "But it was really a very nice-looking man who brought it this time."

"Don't you want our subscriptions?" asked Baschylov, taking out his card-case.

"No, thanks," she answered roguishly. "This time there's a prize I really want to win. I will choose a number after due deliberation."

She chatted merrily a little while longer, then began to complain of fatigue.

"I think I really must bid you all good night," she said.

When they had left her she threw herself on the divan, with her face full in the bright light from the lamp. There Holm found her when he returned. He seated himself before her with scarcely a word of greeting. Then, with his eyes resting on hers, he began to repeat his poem. He whispered the glowing words with trembling voice, as if he were improvising under the spell of the time and place. During the hour he had roamed the street, waiting for this meeting, he had repeated his verses again and again, and each time they seemed to him weaker and more imperfect. The unfavorable criticism of his friends had robbed his work of all its charm. But now, as he whispered it here to this listening woman, the poem was born again in all the beauty with which it first came to his brain.

She sat leaning forward, listening with half-parted lips, but as he neared the end and spoke the cynical doom of the love he had praised so highly a moment before, she threw her head back and crossed her arms over her breast. The light shed a glow on the upturned throat and the high curve of her breast.

When he had finished there was a pause. He waited—waited with tense expectancy for a word from her. But as she did not move, he knelt beside her and said:

"I must read my sentence in your eyes."

She did not move, though he bent close over her. "You must know yourself that the end is bad," was all she answered.

He rose, and laid both hands on the back of the sofa beside her head. "You believe in a love that does not end, then?" he whispered, touching her hair with his lips.

"I believe in nothing," she said. "I never worry about the future; the present alone belongs to me entirely. And when I love, I do not ask for how long. I would press all life's happiness into one single second, if it were possible."

"And then?" he asked, with trembling voice.

"Then!" She half rose, laughing. "You can only write of love," she said. "You don't understand what love is, or you would forget that there is a 'then.'"

"Will you teach me?"

"To forget?" she asked. Her head sank back again until it almost touched his face. He bent over the glowing eyes in the upturned face. She did not answer his kiss, nor did she avoid it. She merely looked at him.

"Yes, teach me to forget!" he

cried passionately. "Teach me a love that believes in itself and in happiness!" And he caught her up in his arms.

IV

DURING the following weeks Holm was lost to his friends. He deserted their club, never went to see any of them, and was hardly ever at home. Occasionally he was seen in the Brunns-Park or at the theatre in the company of a group of Russians gathered about the beautiful widow. Several times he had ridden on horseback with her and with Colonel Baschylov, a man whom a Finn in Holm's position would ordinarily refuse to recognize on the street, for he belonged to the hated Russian police system and was under suspicion of acting as a spy.

Holm's friends did not discuss the cause of his absence among themselves. The Finnish nature is discreet and not given to meddling with personal affairs. And not one of them would ever think of speaking to George himself about the change in his life. Rydberg had joked a little about it in the beginning, but as soon as he had seen that it was no ordinary flirtation he never touched on the matter again.

He waited in silence for the day when Holm should return to his friends, no longer the same careless boy perhaps, but calmer and more mature. "He had to go through some big foolishness, I suppose," Rydberg said to himself. "It's a sort of cure for the unnecessary tumult in his blood. It may do him good, after all." But in spite of his philosophy, Rydberg was worried about his friend, and he waited anxiously for any sign of reaction.

George had no thought for anything but his new-found happiness. The present was all in all to him; he would not think of the future. The antipathy and distrust for everything Russian that is born into the soul of every Finn, together with the phlegmatic Finnish temperament, would have made such a love almost impossible in most cases. But unlike the majority of his countrymen, George was a man of impulses. From his Swedish mother he had inherited an excitable, imaginative nature. And Fate had thrown Sasha in his way at a time when his moods made him more impressionable than usual.

How she loved him! Her wild, primitive nature gave her an added fascination for his more refined temperament. His love sprang mainly from imagination and a certain nervous sensitiveness, but with her it was crude, untamed passion.

The change came soon, however. Entering Sasha's drawing-room one evening, he heard the sounds of rough, harsh voices, mingled with sobs, from the next room. In a moment the door was torn open and Sasha rushed in, weeping. In the adjoining room he caught a glimpse of a very corpulent lady in an old dressing-gown and a small bearded man in slippers. They were her parents.

"I can't stand it any longer!" cried Sasha, running to him. "If you really love me you won't let them treat me so. Go and speak to my father."

George was not at all anxious to be involved in this family quarrel. He closed the door to the next room, sat down on the sofa and drew Sasha to his knee.

"Calm yourself first, dearest. Then tell me what has happened."

"I won't stay in this house an hour longer," she cried, trembling with anger. "It was bad enough with mama's stinginess, but now papa is beginning to meddle in my affairs and scold me about the way I live. Today they both tell me that I am a burden to them and that they won't take care of me any longer. What shall I do?"

George did not answer. He was very pale, and ran his fingers nervously through his hair.

"Well?" she asked impatiently. "Haven't you anything to say?"

"If only my financial affairs were

in better shape—" he began, rising. "But I have so many debts——"

"Why, everybody has debts. My father always had debts, but I had pretty clothes. My husband had ever so many debts, and yet we lived like princes in St. Petersburg. Debts don't seem to worry anybody I know."

"Certainly not Russian officials," he interrupted. "Their incomes are usually very elastic. But debts do worry me, and I don't see what I can do."

She stood up and faced him with a cold glint in her usually glowing eyes. "Then we must part," she said.

"Part?" he cried in alarm. "What do you mean by that?"

"If you can do nothing for me, I must look for help elsewhere. I shall go to St. Petersburg, where I can find shelter with a family of old friends."

"You shall not!" he cried, seizing her hands. "You can't forsake me—me, who have given up everything that was dear to me for the sake of my love for you—you must not do it!"

"Then what do you wish me to do?" she asked. "You must see that I can't remain here. Suggest something else, then. I am ready to do whatever you say."

He walked up and down excitedly, thinking and murmuring to himself: "It is quite impossible—I know that—but I know of nothing else to do."

Suddenly he stopped before her. "Sasha," he said aloud, taking her hands, "will you share my future, however simple it may be?"

She looked at him in mute inquiry.

"Before I met you," he continued, "I had sent in an application for a position as instructor in the Wasa High School. I had decided to withdraw it, as I could not tear myself away from you. But now, as you have no other home—will you follow me there, as my wife?"

"How foolish you are!" she exclaimed, pulling herself away from him. "It's absurd for a poet like you to shut himself up as a school-teacher in a little town."

"Our greatest poet, Runeberg, lives honored and happy in a little town."

"Possibly. But then his wife is probably a little bourgeoise. Do you think I could live in a little hole like that as a simple teacher's wife?"

Her scornful tone wounded him. Runeberg's home in his little native town was for Holm, as for all his countrymen, the type of a true Northland home, a quiet, peaceful refuge, far from worldly tumult, made sacred by work, love and sympathy. Even in his stormiest youthful years, his imagination had played lovingly over the picture of a home like this, which was to be his refuge after the stress of life was done. And from his own experience, he knew of just such a home—the quiet, simple country rectory where he was born and whither he would always turn when he needed peace and inspiration for his work. And yet she dared to mock at such a home—she who was not worthy to cross its threshold!

But she was right. It was foolish of him to imagine he could tame her wild passions to the calm of such a refuge. He dared think of it no more, he felt his bark leaving forever the quiet harbor, and driving onward restlessly through wind and storm.

V

A FEW days later George received a note from Sasha asking him to come to her at once.

"I have good news for you," she said as she ran to welcome him. "I have been talking of you to the governor-general—he was a good friend of my husband, you know—and he told me he would find a good position for you. You are to be the official censor. I don't know what that is, but the count wants to see you tomorrow morning. He will tell you all about it—all I know is that it is well paid, and that is the main point for us."

George had let her talk without interruption, but now he rose with an angry gesture.

"I cannot accept this position," he exclaimed. "It is an insult to offer it to me—not from you, you do not understand—but from the count. He knows perfectly well that no Finn of any position or self-respect would accept it."

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Of course, I know you can't understand it. But this censorship is one of the most hated institutions in Finland. It was established at the emperor's command, and there is a tacit understanding that no Finn shall ever have anything to do with it."

"I have no sympathy with these foolish national vanities," she said scornfully.

"This is a bigger question," he interposed. "For us who love liberty it means an attack on our most sacred rights. And for me, one of the leading fighters for the freedom of our country from all despotism—it would be high treason for me to accept such a position. My friends would all consider it such."

"Nonsense — high treason!" she broke in with a bitter laugh. "Oh, I understand. You are taking it as an excuse! The hour has come that you spoke of in that horrid poem. Our love has lasted three weeks—that is too long for you."

"You know that is not so!" he cried. "You know that I love you more every day, that I cannot tear myself from you. But we need not be hasty. Let us wait awhile. Something else will turn up."

"But suppose I don't want to wait? Why should I continue this life that is so unendurable to me? Don't you suppose I have a thousand other chances to leave it?"

"Sasha!" he cried, grasping her wrist roughly. "You drive me mad when you talk like this! If you still love me as you said you did at first, there is no other way for you."

"No; only to be yours forever," she said with a sudden change of voice, winding her arms tenderly about his neck. "And there is only one way for you—only one, do you hear?"

His opposition gave way; he felt the breaking down of duty, patriotism, all the ideals of his youth, before the embrace of this woman. With her arms about him he could tread it all beneath his feet, and even the bitter contempt of himself, awakening in his heart, could not hold him back.

VI

George Holm and Alexandra Popov had been married for several months. A few days after he had begun his duties as censor Holm met his friend Rydberg on the street, but the latter passed him without a sign of recognition. George turned and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Why, don't you know me, Rydberg?" he said.

Rydberg turned and looked at him with the threatening glance his antagonists feared so much. "No, I don't know you," was his answer.

This was the beginning of the social ostracism meted out to the man who had been such a favorite but a short time before. All his former friends avoided him, and when he took his wife to call at houses where he had been welcomed formerly as one of the family their visit was neither received nor returned. He saw himself compelled to turn to the Russian society which he detested, for his wife demanded gaiety and pleasure. Here he was only the husband of the beautiful Alexandra Pavlovna. No one cared for his poetic talent, no one shared or even knew of his interests and sympathies.

He gave up his poetry altogether. Applause and praise were the air he must breathe, without which his muse could not live. In this atmosphere his verse appeared false and unreal to him.

His home gave him little compensation for the humiliations he had to suffer in the outer world. Sasha possessed all the carelessness of the Slavonic nature. She detested all cares or worries, and left her household

entirely to the constantly changing corps of servants. The disorder about him was a torture to George, who had been brought up in a most carefully regulated home and had kept his own bachelor rooms as dainty as a lady's boudoir.

His financial condition grew worse instead of better. Several of his former friends had recalled the loans they had given him for many years without interest, and his income was not large enough for the demands of his earlier debts and the extravagant tastes of his wife.

And then his love, poisoned by doubt from the beginning, had long since lost its power; and as it waned, his refined nature rose in rebellion against the untamed coarseness of his wife's half-barbaric temperament. Her love outlived his. Her kisses were still warm when his lips had grown cold to meet them. But when she discovered that she could no longer inflame his passion, when she saw his love vanish, anger seized her soul. She poured out reproaches upon him, but as she saw him sit quiet, with pale cheek and lips nervously trembling, she began to despise him. "He is a miserable weakling," she said to herself. And she took up her former friendship with Baschylov.

A young sculptor had just finished a bust of George, which he intended for the coming Paris Salon. One could not imagine a more attractive model than this true poet's face, with the sympathetic melancholy in the great eyes and the line of light scorn about the soft, almost womanish mouth.

The artist exhibited his work in the window of an art store, and it attracted constant groups of spectators. Passing one day, Holm heard some students making mocking jests about the Finnish poet who had once been an eager patriot and singer of freedom and now earned Russian gold as the oppressor of free speech.

From this day on George made wide detours to avoid passing the window again. It seemed to him that it was not only the spectators who mocked him; the statue itself seemed to stare at him with bitter contempt.

George had written his parents the news of the change in his circumstances, but had received no answer from them. He understood the silence and knew that his father would judge him as severely as had the others. His mother might have written, but he knew that the father's word was law in that household. As the Christmas season approached he could not control his longing for the home of his childhood. He wrote to his mother and asked if he and his wife might come home for the holidays. His father answered at once with a few cold words, saying that George's sister would be there with her husband and children and that there was, therefore, no room for him in the house.

No room for him in his father's house! He knew that his mother would have given up her own bed to have him there. But he knew also that these few words were all the silent Finnish nature of his old father could find for the formal break with the son who had so bitterly disappointed the hopes he had himself raised so high.

One cold April day, when the icy fog hung so low as to bring twilight in early afternoon, George took one of his accustomed long, lonely walks, and found himself passing a churchyard, where he heard a group of students singing at a newly covered grave. In response to his question a bystander informed him that the students were doing honor to a respected veteran of the war of 1809, an old man well known in the city. Holm's heart beat faster at the news. He had often taken part in such demonstrations, which were designed to prove the patriotism that present conditions made it dangerous even to feel, much less to show. And here he saw not only reckless young students, but many maturer men, and among them many of his old comrades. Every child in Helsingfors knew the story of this old man who had fought so bravely for freedom and whose wife and child had starved to death at

home while he lay fettered in a Russian prison. Only the complete isolation of Holm's life could explain his ignorance of the death of this patriot, and now, were he to take part in this ceremony, it would be not only as a stranger, but as an enemy as well—even as a spy, for any one of those present who recognized him would consider him a spy; and would he not think the same in their place?

Holm's desertion had robbed the students' singing society of their best tenor. Now they all started and turned their heads as the clear, bell-like tones floated high above all the other voices. But the faces turned from him again without a sign of recognition.

Still singing, the procession turned from the churchyard to the students' club. They were celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the battle of Sikajoki. Holm joined the train, but no one noticed him. He was once more among his old friends, but never before had he felt his loneliness so keenly. His pulses throbbed, his heart beat high in an excitement for which he felt that he must find some outlet. He had formerly possessed considerable oratorical talent and the power to carry his audience with him. Should he try it now? He might be able to show them that he was still theirs, body and soul. It might cost him his position, but what did that matter in such a moment!

As he stepped upon the platform a sudden silence fell on the crowd. Hesitatingly he looked over the assemblage. He felt the lack of the former inspiration, of the sympathy that had once fired him and made him sure of himself. He could not read the expression on all these faces; it seemed like a silent threat. With a trembling voice he began:

"Comrades——"

A hiss was heard in the farthest corner of the hall, and a cry arose: "Down with the traitor!" Other voices followed: "Down with Holm! Turn the traitor out!"

Then a sudden, terrifying silence fell again. Holm stood on the platform, supporting himself by one hand on the desk. He threw the hair back from his eyes and began again.

"Comrades, gentlemen——"

"Out with you!" It was a single, strong, harsh voice this time. But George knew it—it was Rydberg's voice—Rydberg, his best friend! His eyes met Rydberg's glance, a glance of pitiless scorn and hate.

He made no further attempt to speak. As he stepped down from the platform the hall swayed before his eyes; he staggered and nearly fell. They made way for him, and he walked slowly, with hanging head, like a discovered criminal, through their ranks. Most of them turned from him as he passed, more in pity than in hate. Rydberg bit his lips and his eyes were moist for a moment.

The door closed behind the once adored comrade, poet and singer. A long, painful pause ensued. Then Rydberg mounted the platform and spoke words that those present remembered long. No one had ever seen Rydberg so moved, never before had he spoken with such power. He emphasized the necessity of union among themselves, to save the independence of Finland and the old Swedish culture and avert the danger threatening from the mighty empire to the eastward. His words seemed like a justification of his action just before, and the deep sorrow that tore at his heart gave them power and conviction.

He himself, as well as all the others, knew that his future as a member of the university faculty was endangered by these words, if there were but one traitor in the hall. A feeling of deep solemnity fell upon all. One of their best leaders had just been turned out from among them as a traitor, and the other was making what might be his farewell address.

Outside, in the dark street, Holm stood leaning against a lamp-post. He opened his eyes now and then, to prove to himself that he could see nothing. Darkness, only darkness—not a ray of light for him.

The chill air finally roused him from

his dizziness. When he straightened himself up again he had made his decision. He entered a shop and bought a revolver. The cold metal in his hand seemed to quiet him.

When he reached home he laid the weapon on the table. Then he sat down at his desk, to write a poem which should be a cry of bitterness and despair against the injustice that had been dealt out to him and the unhappy misunderstanding that condemned him. But, warm as were his feelings, his words rang cold and colorless. He tried to reason it out, but he knew they were right. He seemed to hear the voices of his former comrades calling to him that he was no longer worthy to write of their thoughts and hopes, that he was no longer a poet. And remembering the words of a famous son of Finland, the air about him rang with the cry: "He no longer speaks our tongue!"

VII

WHEN George entered his wife's drawing-room the following day he found Baschylov there.

"Your presence at that student demonstration yesterday was a great piece of carelessness," said the latter to him. "There were speeches made that will have unpleasant consequences. The governor-general intends to follow up the matter with severity. Some of the most reckless speakers may be banished, and your former friend, Rydberg, will undoubtedly lose his position. It may be serious for you as well, for your presence there was most compromising."

"Rydberg lose his position!" exclaimed George. "That would be criminal! He is one of our leading young scholars."

"He is a dangerous man," interposed the colonel. "The count has long been suspicious of him. He is known to support the agitation."

"What do we care for this Rydberg?" broke in Sasha impatiently. "He's the ugliest and most disagreeable man I ever met. The matter concerns you now. You think only of what your former comrades may say, and never consider what you may be bringing on me."

"I had nothing to do with the affair," said George bitterly. "My comrades did not allow me to compromise myself. I did not speak, and was present only a few moments."

"Then your course will be simple," said the colonel soothingly. "You joined the procession in the churchyard, and that will have to be explained. But it will only be necessary for you to go to the count and tell him that you disapproved of the demonstration and did not take part in it."

"I can't do that, for I intended to take part."

"Your intentions have nothing to do with it—what you did is the main point. You can appear as a witness at the investigation, and that will end it for you."

"Then you really take me for a scoundrel?" cried George.

Sasha had followed the conversation with eager attention. "Aren't you compelled to testify if they send for you?" she asked in a dry, business-like tone.

"No one can compel me," he answered. "I have only to declare myself as guilty as the others——"

Sasha pushed her footstool away with such violence that it rolled half across the room. "You would be just idiot enough to do that!" she exclaimed angrily, springing up from her chair.

"This isn't the first time you have thought me an idiot for doing what I consider my simple duty," he replied with emotion, as he turned from the room. Her violence of manner jarred on him horribly in his present nervous condition.

He walked the streets aimlessly until late that night, and finally found himself in front of the shop where his bust ornamented the window. The street was deserted save for a hurrying cab or two, and he halted for the first time to gaze at the noble head. He knew that

his appearance had so changed during the last half-year that he could look at his own portrait from a purely objective point ot view. As he was there, not as he was now—that was his true self that would be handed down to posterity. This bust should be left with his poems to his country and awaken admiration and sympathy for him when the sinful weakness of his later life should be forgotten. But to compel oblivion for his faults, he must leave some great poem to be a monument to his name. Had he not the strength to do it? All the more now that he had suffered the fiery baptism of sorrow, without which no poet ever enters into his kingdom.

Should he, could he ruin himself now, just when his reawakening talent needed freedom from material cares? Suppose he did go and accuse himself; would the respect of his former friends win him back all his calm, his lost happiness? No. And then, his testimony would be of no importance. The speeches delivered in his presence were not at all compromising; he could save himself without harming anyone.

When he finally returned home he found his wife weeping over an open trunk.

"What are you doing?" he asked.

"I am getting ready to follow you," she sobbed.

"To follow me? Where to?"

"How do I know? But the least that can happen to you is banishment. We will have to hide our misery and disgrace somewhere."

"You are absurd," he interrupted. "The matter is not so serious as all that. I may lose my position——"

"Isn't that disgrace?" she asked. "How could you get another position? You have separated yourself forever from your former friends and the Swedish party. Then why can't you be consistent and go over openly to the Russians? That's what I despise in you," she continued in growing excitement, "this weakness, this indecision, this lack of courage ever to do anything thoroughly. I loved you—you know how entirely, how deeply I loved you, how I drew you to me, how much I gave you—far more than any other woman could have given—at least more than any woman of your nation. And now I hate you, I despise you, I could strike you, just to show you how I despise you!" She stood before him like a fury, her eyes glowing with anger in her deadly pale face.

"Very well, strike me," he answered in a low voice, bending his handsome head. "Disgrace me, despise me; you cannot have more scorn for me than I have for myself."

"Words—nothing but words," she cried. "Show me some deed that will prove your courage."

With a hand that trembled he drew a card from his pocket and threw it on the table. It was Baschylov's card, on which was written in French: "The count will see you at seven tonight."

Sasha read it and looked up in astonishment, recognizing the import of the words. She threw a quick glance at the clock.

"Eight o'clock!" she exclaimed. "You were there? You promised to appear as a witness?" Her voice rose in a note of triumph.

He stood with his face turned from her, but now, with a sigh that was like a groan of pain, he sank down in the nearest chair and covered his face with his hands. Sasha dropped to her knees beside him, wound her arms about his neck and whispered close to his ear:

"You did it for my sake? Then you do love me still?"

He shuddered at her touch and tore her arms loose, pushing her roughly from him, then sprang up and hurried out. Her embrace aroused a shiver of disgust within him; it was the Judas-wage of his treachery.

Sasha stood with clenched fists looking after him, shivering in bitter humiliation. Then she threw herself on the sofa in a paroxysm of weeping. "He is a miserable weakling!" she sobbed. "I hate him! I hate him!"

A few minutes later she sent her servant with a note to Baschylov.

VIII

GEORGE spent most of the next twenty-four hours at his desk. The plan of his great work was finished, but he could not find the proper form for it. He longed for one hour of quiet, of cessation from this torture of mind and soul that sent the blood to his head and kept him trembling with nervousness. And he had had news that day that moved him deeply. He had seen in the paper that his father was in the city; he had gone to the hotel, but had turned back at the door, unable to enter. Now he sat and waited feverishly. Would his father come to him? He did not notice that his lamp had gone out; he sat in the darkness, his bowed head in his hands.

The street was filled suddenly with the noise of tramping feet. A crowd gathered and stopped before his window. He rose to see what was happening. A terrible din from without told him what it was: a number of students had come with a mock serenade to express their scorn and contempt for him. They beat tin pans and kettles, rang bells, and filled the night with their hideous noise. Something white swayed in the air above their heads; by the light of the full moon Holm recognized his portrait bust, crowned in mockery. He could see every line of the noble features and the soft sadness about the mouth. He covered his ears with his hands and paced the room.

A clear, high-pitched laugh cut through the discord, and he saw Sasha on the threshold, in a brilliant evening toilet.

"Your countrymen are certainly most polite," she said. "I really don't think you need regret having turned from ideals that find this sort of expression. But they will have their punishment. I am going to the ball at the governor-general's, and something will come of this, or I am not Alexandra Pavlovna."

"You are not going to face those people down there?" he asked in amazement.

"Why not? They will not dare insult a lady."

She had a candle in her hand, which she set down on the desk. Her glance fell on the mirror.

"Oh, just see how badly Marfa has arranged my flowers! Please fix them, you do it so well."

She bent her head gracefully. He had often arranged the flowers in her hair, and she had declared no one could do it so well. But tonight his hands were cold and awkward.

"Ugh! You are cold as an iceberg!" she exclaimed. "Are you going to sit up all night again? Won't you come for me?"

"No," he answered, putting in the last pin. "There is such a beautiful moon tonight, and the ice must be in fine condition. I feel like skating to Sweaborg."

"You are hopelessly romantic," she said, laughing. Then she took up a little hand mirror for a final inspection of her shoulders. "Is the ice firm all the way?" she asked carelessly, trying the flowers again.

He looked at her with a bitter smile. "They are all right," he said. "You can dance all night and not lose them." Then, more to himself than in answer to her last question: "There's a thin place near Sweaborg."

"Be careful," she threw out carelessly, as she left the room.

He stepped to the window to see her drive away. The noise outside ceased a moment as she appeared at the door. She stood there, erect, her long fur cloak hanging loosely from her shoulders, the jewels sparkling in her hair, her white face with its glowing eyes bright in the moonlight. With a queenly gesture of command she stretched out one hand, so that the bracelets on her bare arm glistened in the moon's rays, as she cried:

"Make way for my carriage there, please."

The students fell back, impressed by her dignity, and she entered the cab with the grace of a princess surrounded by her court. A man stepped from

the shadow and entered after her. George recognized Baschylov.

When the cab had driven away the noise began again, then stopped once more, so suddenly and unexpectedly that George returned to the window. The groups broke up, the bust disappeared, and a few of the students touched their caps. They had recognized old Pastor Holm, whom most of them had seen at one time or another in the university. Whatever they might feel toward his son, none of them had the heart to continue the disgraceful demonstration in the presence of the father. He was a small, thin old man, sternly erect in carriage, as unlike his son as possible, the only resemblance between them being a certain nervous trembling in moments of excitement.

George went to the door to meet him, but he could not speak. His father took off his overshoes slowly, with great care.

"You should have a mat outside the door," he said; "I will make the floor all wet here."

Then he turned to his son, but their eyes did not meet. The old man threw back his fur collar, smoothed it carefully, and then rubbed his glasses clean.

"I have come to ask you for information about a certain matter," he began. "They say you have been a witness against your former comrades. Of course, that is not true, but when I heard the noise out there I thought I had better find out from you—the rumor might reach your mother, and I want to be able to tell her—" he held his spectacles up to the light, and looked at them with creased brows and tightly closed lips. "You know how she worries about everything," he concluded, in a tone that was an attempt at lightness.

George did not answer; he stood with bowed head, his lips trembling.

His father looked at him sharply—and understood. He put on his spectacles and drew on his coat.

Finally George managed to speak. "Don't go, father, don't go!" he cried. "Tell me just one thing. I have done wrong, I have caused you anxiety—but if anyone can forgive me, must it not be my parents? Father, I am terribly lonely; I can't endure it any longer. I need your forgiveness. Give me just one word, and you shall not see me again—not until—until——"

The father turned and laid his trembling old hand on his son's shoulder. "God is the only judge," he said. "I am but His humble servant, and I am your father. I do not condemn you. If you wish to come home, come. We can talk it over there."

"Thanks, thanks," stammered George, raising the old man's hand to his lips. "Thanks—and—forgive me."

He kissed the old hand again. His excitement seemed to alarm his father. Pastor Holm drew away his hand, took his hat, and said once more, before he turned to go:

"I go home tomorrow. If you wish to, you can accompany me—we can talk it over then."

George sank down in the chair at the desk, and sat motionless for a long time. Then he brushed back the hair from his burning forehead.

"I must collect my thoughts," he said aloud. "I must write one poem at least—just one."

It was no longer to justify himself that he wished to write, but only to pay off part of his debt to his country. When his miserable life was forgotten his verses should win new fighters for the fatherland, but they were also to be his last greeting to his parents.

He took a fresh sheet and wrote:

To my country—to my parents—

But he could get no further. The thoughts surged through his brain, but would not shape themselves in metric form. He sought for some familiar measure, but only two lines of an old song came to him:

He who his country could betray
Has neither honor, home nor stay.

These words were found written on the sheet next morning. He himself had disappeared, but out on the water near Sweaborg an open place gleamed blue amid the white of the surrounding ice.

INCOMPATIBILITY

BY ERNEST D'HERVILLY

A FEW days after he had linked his fate forever with that of Mlle. Claire Bréon in the great hall of the mayor's office, in which there was a plaster effigy of Justice which nobody seemed to look at and which seemed to resent this neglect, M. Barmelou made this remark:

"My wife's tastes are not the same as mine."

In fact, at every meal Mme. Barmelou took a strange delight in constantly disturbing the peace of the wine in her glass by squirting into it a sudden jet of liquid charged with carbonic acid, a commercial compound arbitrarily called Seltzer water.

M. Barmelou, on the other hand, was content to mix with the juice of the grape a small quantity of water from the river on whose bank Napoleon sleeps "in the midst" of the French people, of whom he caused so many to be killed.

But tastes and colors are not proper matters for discussion.

M. Barmelou conceded that readily. So he left Mme. Barmelou free to assail her stomach every day with repeated doses from the siphon. As for himself, without saying a word, he was content to decline with an affectionate and courteous wave of the hand the discharge of Seltzer water that the charming companion of his life offered him so courteously and affectionately, while he continued to use only the water of the celebrated river, which is so conveniently brought into the houses of citizens by the service of the municipality.

However, on the same day that M. Barmelou remarked his wife's tendency to flood herself with the execrable solution of marble dust and chalk in the siphons, he made still another observation.

He perceived that she whom he loved, and to whom he had sworn to be as faithful as the turtle to its shell, manipulated the siphon with distressing carelessness, not taking the trouble to think of the propulsive force of the infernal liquid contained in that circular glass prison. She pressed on the nickel-plated trigger with extraordinary disregard of the unpleasant consequences that her lack of adroitness and foresight must infallibly entail.

Yes, Mme. Barmelou operated the lever of the siphon gaily while she chatted, with her mind on anything else, and suddenly a violent, uncontrollable jet would escape from the infamous apparatus and fairly bore into the smiling, peaceful wine that seemed to become furious under this sudden and undeserved attack, foaming up and almost always hurling itself out of its receptacle, destroying the whiteness of the napery, mingling with the salt, taking the bite out of the pepper and finally giving to the bread the strange taste that is so much appreciated—by parrots.

Each time that Mme. Barmelou handled a siphon the events just enumerated—with numerous variations, of course, but always very disagreeable to a man of order and good taste—were reproduced, whether the meal was luncheon or dinner.

At first M. Barmelou, affectionate and courteous, indulged in some innocent pleasantries on his beloved Claire's semi-diurnal awkwardness. He was even gallant enough to declare that

Mme. Barmelou's hand, covered with the innumerable rosy pearls produced by the cascade of wine under the impulse of the fierce jet from the siphon, looked positively charming; indeed, he went so far as to compare it with the hand of Venus rising from the sea.

Courteous and affectionate, Mme. Barmelou smiled, had the generosity not to get angry, although she was in the wrong, and promised in the future to pay greater attention to the manipulation of the absurd hydraulic apparatus which costs only ten cents, delivered in the house.

But as well might the wind have made the promise.

At luncheon on the day after she gave the promise, thereby restoring perfect serenity to her methodical and sedate husband's mind, Mme. Barmelou pressed the metal key of the siphon so carelessly that the Seltzer water, spurting up furiously from the bottom of the glass into which it had been precipitated like a miniature Niagara, flew all over the walls and gave a rosy tinge to the portraits—happily in oils—of various relatives, many of whom were decorated and held scrolls in their hands.

M. Barmelou was at first very much annoyed. These aquatic displays in his household were becoming more odious than ever to him. But M. Barmelou loved his wife. Moreover, he prided himself on being something of a philosopher. Further than that, he was not immovably set on having his relatives preserved in oil. Therefore, he remained silent, and continued rummaging around with a sippet, a little excitedly perhaps, in the bosom of a soft-boiled egg. That was all. He had made up his mind.

He said nothing that day.

He said nothing the next day. And for ten years, silent, affectionate, courteous, resigned, he witnessed the spouting of these geysers and the subsequent tropical downpours which Mme. Barmelou, always charming, smiling and care-free, presented as a spectacle twice each day with the aid of her siphons at the hour of the family repasts.

In time it became the accepted thing; and the siphon was the only cloud in the perfect azure of the Barmelou household. Aside from the Seltzer water, the couple were admirably suited to each other.

However, one evening—I was a witness of the event, and exactly ten years had passed that evening since M. Barmelou had remarked the difference between his wife's taste and his own—however, one evening just as Mme. Barmelou had performed her customary sprinkling of everything on the table, including the shirt front of your humble servant and the impassive face of M. Barmelou, the latter methodically folded up his napkin, mercilessly strangled it in a wooden ring on which could be read the word "Monsieur," rose, took his hat, and went out with the single word: "Farewell."

"Great heavens!" cried Mme. Barmelou, to whose mind, as to Saint Paul's on the Damascus road, a sudden light had appeared; "great heavens! M. Barmelou has left me forever!" So saying, she dissolved in tears.

"Do not be alarmed, my dear lady," I reassured her. "The force of habit will bring him back to you very soon. This is a mere outburst of vexation that has been bottled up for ten years, but——"

"He will never come back!" sobbed the guilty creature. "I know he won't. It is all my carelessness. Little by little the cup of his bitterness has been filled—by my siphon—and this evening it has run over."

"No, he will come back, my dear lady, believe me."

"Well, if he does come back," declared Mme. Barmelou, "I vow he will never again have reason to reproach me." And she immediately set about learning to keep her vow.

During the entire night, while she was waiting for the return of her husband—who really seemed to have vanished—Mme. Barmelou devoted herself to acquiring a proper skill in the manipulation of a siphon. She

emptied somewhere between three and five hundred bottles, and the Seltzer water mingled with her tears in the glass that she kept constantly refilling, tumultuously at first, but skilfully at last. When the pale dawn broke M. Barmelou had not yet returned, but Mme. Barmelou had learned for all time the art of using a siphon with as much elegance as ease.

M. Barmelou, who had passed the night at a friend's house, returned to his home next evening at the dinner hour without a word of explanation. He was vanquished—by habit, by ten years of habit.

M. Barmelou sat down at the table, a little embarrassed, but resigned and even secretly happy. His wife did not ask him a single question.

Suddenly, after the *hors-d'œuvres*, Mme. Barmelou prepared to serve herself with something to drink.

An imperceptible tremor passed over M. Barmelou's face, and with furtive eye he watched his wife's proceedings, quite prepared to be deluged.

But Mme. Barmelou, pale and serious, seized the siphon with a sure hand and, having put her glass under the faucet, pressed her plump thumb on the lever with remarkable delicacy. For once the Seltzer water trickled into the glass with the most admirable decency, coolness and silence. Not a drop of liquid fell on the cloth.

Not a drop!

M. Barmelou was so astonished that he almost went out of his mind. His eyes grew enormous, but he said not a word.

At luncheon the next day, and at the dinner that followed it, as also at the meals of the day after, the same astonishing performance was repeated. Mme. Barmelou handled the siphon like an angel.

Not a drop! The pepper retained all its bite, the salt was not liquified; as to the bread, as it was not sloppy with wine, parrots would have refused it with scorn.

But what did I previously remark? M. Barmelou was a settled, methodical man, very tenacious of his habits.

A week after his strange return and his surprise at his wife's unexpected adroitness, which thereafter never failed, M. Barmelou failed to appear one evening at the domestic repast.

In his place came a letter, which a messenger presented to the uneasy mistress of the house of Barmelou.

The letter contained these simple words:

MY DEAREST: What is the good of our continuing to live together? Why go on suffering? It is useless, both for you, whom I love, and for me, whom I do not dislike. Our characters cannot agree. You are changeable, I am stable. You have done much to make my life bitter. You have succeeded in doing so. After having made me acquire a habit that lasted ten years—ten years!—of seeing you twice a day scatter wine and Seltzer water over the family napery, you have all at once deemed it wise to deprive me of that habit, which I had wished to break, but had docilely come back to endure. At the present time the absence of that habit, which you have so cruelly exorcised by the aid of some mysterious magic, is unbearable to me, and I go. Farewell, this time forever.

And, in fact, Mme. Barmelou never saw her husband again.

They say the unhappy man became editor of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

A CONTRADICTION

JOHNNIE GAYBOY (*meditatively*)—The doctor told me I mustn't let anything excite me, and that I must stop drinking champagne. Now, I'd like to know how I can help getting excited if I can't drink champagne?—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

THE GALLERY OF THE CLOSED EYES

BY HANS MÜLLER

AFTER he had achieved fame and success in Paris, Braganza returned to Vienna. The painter had always found it difficult to make friends, and during his absence the few that he had already acquired in Vienna had grown away from him. His fame served to attract artists and art lovers; but after a while they realized that this rawboned, shabbily dressed painter had few social charms. So of all the doors that had at first been thrown open to him there remained but one to which he returned often. At the latchstring of this one he frequently tugged. It belonged to a strange man, much older than himself, the famous surgeon Bürgermeister, who had been introduced to Braganza as a noble lover of art; and after a few meetings the knowledge and taste of this independent, lively, white-haired old gentleman had both attracted and subdued the painter. He frequently accepted the hospitality of the professor, and in a comparatively short time a warm friendship arose between the two men.

One evening after an ample dinner the two men sat together, sipping a delicious wine and arguing the idle question which of the arts takes precedence over its sisters. Braganza grew animated in defense of painting, while the professor contended that if the question were considered seriously, music must be given the preference.

"Music," he continued, "is not an imitative art. It does not arise out of observation, but on the contrary, stimulates perception and is the purest expression of an artistic temperament. A picture is merely a reproduction of nature, while melody leads us directly to nature or lifts us to a sphere of higher naturalness. In fact, there is nothing for which it cannot prepare us. In comparison with this power, how weak is the art that you defend! What picture, even by the most famous master, begins to approach our own recollection of things seen? Is not each one of us the greatest painter for himself when he closes his eyes and allows memory or fancy to limn the picture?"

"I understand what you mean," answered Braganza; "yet no art lover would be willing to forego the sight of his pictures and content himself with an exhibition behind closed eyes."

"Who knows," murmured the professor, smiling; "and what a strange expression!" Then approaching the painter with his customary mincing steps he asked: "Shall I show you my gallery of closed eyes?" And without more ado he led the painter from the room.

As they stopped before a door that was draped with dark material, Bürgermeister reminded his companion that they were about to enter a darkened room that was not ordinarily shown to guests. The window curtains were drawn, and in the gloom the room appeared to be almost empty. Before striking a light the professor paced up and down before his guest and addressed him in a serious tone:

"I really do not know what prompted me to lead you into this chamber—a place that heretofore no one but myself has ever entered. What do I gain by revealing to you a secret that must impress you as being either childish or eccentric? But now I have brought you here, all that the

room contains shall be revealed to you."

He lit two broadly shaded lamps and invited the painter to step to the middle of the room. The light revealed a square chamber, the floor of which was covered with a heavy red rug. With the exception of two chairs, there was no furniture. The walls were of a grayish tint and were dotted with a goodly number of picture frames of all kinds: polished ebony set off by colored plush edges; dainty frames, scarcely bigger than a hand's span, hung next to pieces of deep and elaborate carving. And every frame was empty. As the painter's glance swept the room it seemed to him like an exhibition of a maker of frames who was actuated by an artistic desire to emulate the display of a picture dealer.

The professor allowed the painter to continue his observation until the latter turned to his host with a questioning look.

"Now that I have shown you this toy, you wish to know its use, do you not?" Bürgermeister said. Then, stretching himself up until he could lay his hand on the shoulder of his tall companion, he continued: "My long life has been crowded with moments that sprang from tremendous impulses, emotions that are unquenchable and glimpses of unmarred beauty. Now I have grown old and am a lonely man. Here, then, are the recollections of my whole life; minutes, as well as years, of my past; the happiest laugh and the saddest tear I have known. Nature has not given me a hand with the cunning necessary to wield a brush, but I believe that I have the eye of an artist—I have a fancy that composes great symphonies of color. My memories are paintings, my tears statues. Come, let me lead you through my gallery!"

He lifted one of the lamps and placed it before a big gold frame under which appeared the title: "Bay of Naples."

"This is the way I always see that wonderful scene," said the professor, gazing in rapture at the empty wall space. "It is always thus set in gold. Here is the wonderful, dreamy blue sea, bathed in sunlight, and over there is Capri—all just as I saw it the first time I was there. There in the sun's rays and the ripples of the water are mirrored all the hopes of a silly youth. My first vivid impressions are still undimmed, though I have gazed at it hundreds of times; but the picture must be inclosed in just such a wonderful gold frame, else the effect is incomplete."

In a mood half of merriment and half of depression, Braganza followed the professor about the room as he went from one frame to another, lost in deep thought and occasionally venturing some half-explanation that left a great deal to be imagined. "Halstädter Sea" was the title of one, "Marghereta Schick's Death" was another, while a plain black wood frame bore the title "Marie" and a small funeral wreath.

The professor said very little more, and the painter asked no questions. When they had come to the third wall the light of the lamp fell on a large frame adorned with plush that bore the word "Confession." Here the professor paused.

"This memory is connected with my life only by professional ties," he explained; "but there is a glorious loveliness about that woman as I see her before me, lying on her white pillow, her fine features sharpened by suffering. So vivid and moving is the picture in my memory that I have stood numberless times before this frame, scarcely able to control the emotion that threatens to overpower me."

Again the professor seemed to feel this emotion, and when the painter asked for further details of the picture the old man paused awhile. Finally he assumed an air of forced gaiety.

"Yes, I'll let you see this leaf from the diary of a physician!" he said. "But first shall we have a cigar?"

From the adjoining room he fetched a box of cigars, remarking with a smile that it was quite safe to smoke in this

gallery, as the pictures were painted with colors that did not fade. Then he began to relate the story.

"Many years ago," he began, "I was called to a woman whose life, I saw almost at a glance, could be saved only by recourse to an operation. When I first approached her I was so struck by her remarkably delicate beauty that for the first time in my life I feared my hand might tremble while wielding the knife. But the inflammation rapidly grew more violent, and on the following day I performed the operation. It was successful and promised to restore the frail creature to life; but the improvement was followed in a few days by a strange sinking spell. It seemed to me that a deeply suffering soul must have devastated the physical powers of the invalid. I visited her daily, not in any hope of changing death into life, but because—though never a complaint passed her lips—I believed that my presence brought to her a certain peace and relief.

"I remember as though it happened only yesterday how one morning, as I was alone with her, she begged me to listen to her story. She had no weak desire for death, but I had aroused in her a certain confidence which prompted her to want to tell me of her life. Distinctly I see every detail before me: The square sick-room draped in red silk; the winter sun shining through the high panes, and this lovely face, dignified by pain and already blanched by the shadows of death, and it is as though I were hearing today that gently modulated voice.

" 'The name that I now bear,' she began, 'is my maiden name, and not that of my husband. They may have told you that my husband is dead. That is not true, for he is alive, but we live apart. The estrangement is my own fault—and yet again it is not. When I first knew the man I married he was a young, talented artist, who had already achieved some success. He was naturally full of life and energy. My father opposed the match obstinately, but finally he was won over by the prospects of the artist's success and gave his consent to our marriage. How can I describe to you the days that followed, in which the deepest wish of our soul was gratified! Months passed in which we heard only the call of love; and in the enchantment of this love I would have lost myself for all time, had not my father roused me to the responsibility of my new position.

" 'Then I noticed with astonishment and pain that my husband's work was almost at a standstill. Huge paintings were begun, but remained uncompleted, while the commissions for new work that poured in freely were left unfilled. All creative energy was sacrificed in the tumult of our love, converted into mild subjection or dreamy happiness. It seemed to him the greatest sacrifice to leave me at all, and so he neglected his studio for days. If I accompanied him to his atelier and remained with him when he began to work, his energy and will would soon turn into childish longing that forced him into my arms. Nothing would awaken him; and when I reminded him earnestly of the past and the future, of all the hopes that were centred in him, and because of which he dare not cheat those who believed in him, then he would throw all seriousness to the winds and declare with a laugh that one must either drink or die of thirst.

" 'All of his friends spoke of the change that had taken place in him, and I was generally charged with the blame. My father was convinced that he had been deceived; that his consent had been won by promises of a future that were not to be fulfilled. Violent, warring emotions possessed me, and I must admit that in addition to my love I had a certain sense of satisfaction because the man I loved placed me above all things, made me the very centre of his life. But out of this tumult of feeling arose a resolution that mastered me: I must help my husband.

" 'I began by leaving him much to himself, and his love flared all the more imperatively. When I told him seriously that I did not wish to be the cause of his ruin, and that we must agree to separate for a time, he assured

me that no power on earth would keep him from suicide. I tried in every way to make him return to his former life, to reawaken his energy, but I succeeded only in drawing him closer to me. Then in the fever of my dilemma I hit upon a plan to estrange him, so that he would never more desire to be at my side. I would change his admiration into contempt by proving to him that I was unworthy of his idolatry.

"'At that time a young doctor was among the frequent visitors at our house. Before my marriage he had informed my father that he was in love with me and had asked permission to press his suit. Now that I had been taken out of his life he sought every opportunity to be in my company. Never before had I given him more than a fleeting thought, but now I decided to avail myself of his devotion. And in the delirium of martyrdom I encouraged this doctor in a way that could leave my husband in no doubt whatever.

"'My plan succeeded. Struck by the lightning bolt that made our past love seem a ghastly dream, filled with deep hatred, my husband repulsed me in silence. My former reticence he now interpreted as the satiated indifference of one who was longing for a new toy; and he thought of the interruptions to his career as an unworthy sacrifice. Then he left me. Not a word of farewell, not a sign of gratitude were granted me in parting. I bore it all silently; there was not a sob left in me. I seemed to stand on an altar on which an eternal sacrifice was offered up; I was the priestess in a huge, silent, icy cathedral. But later, after he was really gone and I could not find him again, I wandered day and night in the rooms that he had left, tortured by an insane longing. And when the poor man whom I had made my tool dared to ask me for all that really belonged to the great and mighty one now lost to me, there remained not a single tear in my eye to console me, not a single word to give me strength.'

"Shaken by the emotions called forth by her recollection, the poor woman expressed her gratitude by taking both of my hands, appearing to be infinitely relieved by the confession. I begged her to desist and reminded her of her feeble condition; but she scarcely heard me.

"'My act,' she continued, 'was not without results, for after a few months I received news of my husband's further success. He had controlled his sorrow and had found the way back to his art. Those were my happiest hours. Whenever I saw in the newspapers accounts of his fame or of the success of one of his new paintings —they all dealt with gloomy subjects, but the workmanship was of overwhelming power—then I knelt and cried until there came over me a sense of numbed quiet that is the greatest boon to wounded souls. But in those nights I suffered as no woman before me ever suffered. What spiritual happiness can ever make amends to me for the torturing knowledge that my husband thought me guilty, an outcast!'

"As she spoke to me thus, the grief in her cried out aloud. And her first hour of actual peace must have come only a few days afterward, when we placed her on her bier. It all happened years ago, but whenever I think of the beautiful, unhappy woman and the story she confided to me shortly before her death, then the picture of the 'Confession' shapes itself in my mind's eye; I see myself as an old priest sitting at her bedside, listening to this painful admission. And so, my dear friend, I have added this frame to my collection."

The professor ceased speaking and took his hand from his eyes. When he arose and approached the painter he was alarmed at the sight that confronted him. The man's eyes were burning and his bent body was racked by emotion.

"What is the matter?" asked the professor excitedly.

Braganza did not answer. He paced about the room unsteadily and, as though led by unseen hands, went from one picture frame to another.

This room was not, after all, the mere amusement of a cynical old scoffer, who painted his pictures in his own mind's eye; it was the chamber in which he suddenly found his own life mirrored with tremendous verisimilitude—his own happy, wretched life, his hopes and his despair. Here in this room his wife, whom he had long since regarded as lost, had been born again and now lived for him in shimmering glory, a great and patient soul. What were all his former successes and failures in comparison with the treasure that had been discovered in this room, whose walls were hung with empty frames!

For a long time he remained silent, unable to find a word to break the spell. Then he grasped the professor's hand and looked into the blue eyes of the old man.

"I must go now," he said simply, "but not until I have thanked you a thousand times for what you have told me. I mean to thank you in a manner more worthy—I mean to paint your 'Confession' just as you see it when you stand solitary before this frame. Then both of us will gaze at her features together, for then we will be able to do so without closing our eyes. I mean to make it real and beautiful, if God will give me strength."

"I doubt that you will be able to paint the likeness of those features so plainly as they exist in my memory," said the professor, smiling.

But he was surprised by the painter's voice as he cried: "Don't judge too hastily, my dear professor. Sometimes during the long, silent hours of the night the gentle, noble features of a woman come before a man's vision so vividly that in the morning he can paint them with faithful exactness."

EXEMPT

FREDDY (*aged seven*)—I wish I were you, uncle.
RICH UNCLE (*indulgently*)—Why, Freddy?
"Because nobody ever slaps your hands when you eat with your knife."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

INAPPROPRIATE

WAITER—Madame, will you have some whitefish?
GUEST—No, thank you; I am still in mourning.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

A DEFINITION

TEACHER—Tommy, what is a widow?
TOMMY—A woman that wants to get married again.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

THE HYDROPHOBIAC

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

NEVER had I known a man more out of place than was Black Sauriol in Pain-Court. Never had I known a human being more desolately cut off from the life around him, more isolated in spirit, more ill-fitted to the background from which he stood out so titanic, so grimly reticent.

One had only to know the sleepy little village of Pain-Court to wonder why so gentle a frame had ever come to hold so massive a figure. And perhaps it would be best to look first to the frame, and later to catch what outline one can of the figure itself.

In that most southerly and most sunny corner of all Canada, where the Great Lakes might be said to nurse in one gigantic arm the fruitful garden of Western Ontario, the lonely little French-Canadian village of Pain-Court stands shrouded and lost in the woody plains of Kent. Miles away on one side lie the long-redeemed marshes of St. Clair; miles away on the other twines and turns and wanders the slumberously uncertain River Thames. But unlike the cantons of the Lower Province, Pain-Court has no water and no water front. And just as it lies shut off from open water, so it lies shut off from the rest of the world. It is an isolated little colony of exiles, a century ago flung off in turn from an older colony of exiles—a colony which once gathered jealously together its cattle and grains and seedlings, and turned westward in quest of peace and quiet.

Today they are the same as they were that autumn afternoon, a century ago, when their herds came slowing down the valley of the Thames and their diminutive French wagons creaked over the dusty plains of Kent. They have mingled little with the English who surround and hem them in. Their old French tongue has become strangely outlandish and alien; for they have taken up a dialect and idiom of their own. They have remained a tiny nation by themselves, with their own traditions, their own songs, their own folklore, and with even a language more or less their own. Some darker-eyed, merrier-hearted daughter of the segregated little settlement has at times, perhaps, taken unto herself a husband of the English tongue, but with her marriage she merged into the outer race and left the cluster of close-shouldered French homesteads still untainted and free of foreign blood. On the sunny side of each quaint little whitewashed cottage clambers a grapevine unknown to all the rest of Ontario, a grapevine still deluded into dreaming that it blooms on its old-time, sun-bathed slopes of France. The very geese and fowl are foreign-looking and diminutive. The village rosebushes bloom with exotic odors and colors. The cattle have not their like in all the county, so small and strangely marked and oddly named they are! And as in the Normandy and Provence of two centuries ago, the Angelus still rings out over the level summer fields, golden with grain, and the only busy hearts in all that sleepy, quiet, companionable, contented little country village are those of the bluebirds and the meadowlarks and the mad frequenters of those numerous little rows of hives which stand in so many dusky orchards.

This is the town to which Black Sauriol came, then, twelve long years

ago, one brazen afternoon in late August, after a summer of unbroken drought had left the roads six inches in dust and the meadows pebbled with heat-cracks, with the cattle lowing about the half-dry wells and all the land as parched and dry and bleached as a mummy-cloth. That was the sort of country he liked, Black Sauriol declared, as his squinting, aquiline, deep-set eyes looked out over the white fields swimming in heat. It was fine and dry—dry as any stretch of country he had ever seen, he repeated, as he rubbed his great, hairy hands hungrily together and sighed contentedly at the clouds of white dust that rose with every passing team. And after pacing the village for a few days, he made his home in a little whitewashed cottage on the outskirts of the town, unknown, uncomprehended, unwelcomed, asking only to be let alone, caring little how the countryside took him or what it said about him.

It was eight long years afterward that I happened into Pain-Court and first beheld Black Sauriol. It was a hot, stifling mid-August afternoon, so I stopped at the strange house on my way and asked for a drink of water. Back in the heavy shadow of the closely shuttered room I saw a great, hairy figure rise slowly before me, like a startled bear rising in its cave. For Pain-Court long since had learned not to intrude on Black Sauriol and his silence; even the village children passed the place always with two fingers crossed, and the old folks, at the mention of his name, tapped their foreheads significantly. But I knew nothing of this at the time, and as I repeated my audacious request for a drink, I looked at the man more searchingly. He loomed above me three, even four inches more than six feet in height, his great gorilla-like arms reaching almost to his knees. His shirt was open at the front, and on either side of the hairy throat and chest I could see the huge muscles run, like water under a frozen rapid. His long, hungry-looking face was seamed and blanched, an unlifelike leathery swarthiness still attesting to the source of his name. His small, black eyes were deep-set and animal-like, full of a constant, furtive unrest, alert and watchful and unsatisfied. The flexile, bearded mouth drooped pathetically. The lower half of one ear had been frozen off, and the uncouth ruddiness of the bulbous nose, that once in the Far North had frozen and split, gave a mask-like touch of gruesome comedy to the otherwise silent tragedy of the face.

While I noted these things he brought me a mouthful or two of tepid water in the bottom of a little tin dipper, the only words from his lips being a commending, half-articulate sound, half groan, half grunt, as I tasted the rancid liquid and flung it indignantly into the dooryard dust. I noticed, however, as I held the dipper to my lips that he closed his eyes in horror, as though, it seemed to me, I had been drinking warm blood.

In Pain-Court itself, the next day, I heard enough of Black Sauriol. Yet his fellow-villagers, after having him under their eye for eight long years, could not agree as to whether he was French-Canadian or English or a mere half-breed—not a few being of the conviction that he was the devil himself. They agreed in only one thing, and that was in holding that he was a little weak-headed. He talked much to himself. When he was away from home and rain came on, he paddled insanely with his hands as he walked muttering back through the mud. Outside of his own little orchard and garden he did no work, though he seemed always to have money. Once a year, in midwinter when everything was frozen firm and solid, he traveled on snowshoes to the town of Chatham, from whence, in some mysterious manner, he always returned with money in his pocket. But in summer he could not be coaxed to venture near the town: he did not, he protested, like the look of the river there. He had been a fur trader beyond the Abitibi at one time; still later he drove a dog

team in the Athabasca brigade, and sometimes he talked wildly about the Far North, and the journeys he had made there and the sights he had seen. But he spoke very bad French, the village declared, and he was very light-headed, and told over the same things a thousand times. Perhaps he could say it better in English, for, *mon Dieu*, how he did talk to the English doctor, five years back, when he found Pierre Delorme dying of a sunstroke and carried him across his shoulder to Isadore Michel's, where he himself suddenly sickened, when he saw them douse the limp body with buckets of water from the well. And it was odd, too, how he had fallen in a fit, three years back, at the time of the spring floods, when the little dry swale that ran behind Pain-Court had become a raging torrent. And it was at nothing more than a dead pig, floating down the muddy current, with its four feet up in the air. Yet he had screamed like a woman at the sight of it, and fallen and groveled in the mud like a man possessed of devils.

So the garrulous and companionable little village of Pain-Court, finding in him neither friend nor companion, had left him to his own devices. When a *fête* took place in the little town the grim, silent figure of Black Sauriol wandered forlorn and friendless beyond the outer fringe of their merriment. When a village dance occurred he drifted like a shadow about the gloomy orchards, outside the pale of their lights and laughter, feeling now and then, with almost terrified fingers, to see if the grass were yet wet with dew. His face had even been seen pressed against window-panes at night, gazing in hungrily, yet disappearing down the darkness at the first lift of the latch.

After hearing all this, I went to his house; and as he would not talk, I left him tobacco, which he eyed furtively, and picked over, and then as furtively swept into his ragged pocket. I went again and again, but still no word passed between us.

It was one hot, breathless night at the end of August, with the heat lightning playing low on the horizon and a bank of ugly clouds coming out of the west, that I found him first stung out of his silence.

"We're in for a storm!" I said, as I beheld the grim, titanic figure peering westward from his unlighted doorway.

"My God, it is more rain again?" he said in agonized but perfectly audible English. I followed him audaciously into the house at that, and watched him while he closed windows and door and lit a grimy, smoke-stained lamp. His great frame shook a little, I thought, at the sound of the rising wind. As the first heavy drops splashed against the windows he cowered back in his corner like a beaten hound, with his knees drawn up to his chin and his huge, hairy hands folded tightly across them. It may have been merely the heat of the room—but beads of sweat came out on his leathery forehead and dripped slowly down his face.

I tried desperately to rationalize the man and his feeling, as I watched him there—to fathom the secret of his mad terror for such things—to account for this strange hydrophobiac taint that made him the toy of climate and season. But the mystery seemed without a key to me, and I had to be content to wait my time.

The rain passed, and I looked out and saw a silvery moon through a rift in the clouds. The heavy-odored night air, fresh and cool again, was like balm, and I stood in the doorway, drinking it in gratefully.

As I stood there I heard a whimpering voice over my shoulder. "This country is getting too wet for me," whined the huge man behind me wistfully. "I've got to get away from here, into a drier place!"

I turned on him sharply.

"*Why are you so afraid of water?*" I demanded.

"Why?" he thundered back at me, and I saw the muscles of either side of his great bared chest stand out belligerently. Then he slowly raised his hand and drew it across his wet forehead. "Why? I—I don't know," he said in a

weak and faltering whine, and fell to picking at his ragged shirt.

It was some ten days after this that I caught sight of him making his way home through the falling rain. As his ponderous figure splashed slowly down the muddy road he paddled with his hands, first with one and then the other, cautiously, unceasingly. On his face was a look that seemed half agony and half anxiety; and though he passed within a few feet of where I stood watching him, his furtive, deep-set, animal-like eyes did not see me.

When the weather cleared again, though, this madness seemed to pass away, and he grew more and more willing to talk, of an evening, over our pipes. Indeed, from that time on, in dry weather, he became gradually a more interesting companion, telling me of his trips through the Sub-Arctics, of his years as a fur trader, of mishaps and adventures in the great Northwest. He even talked, a little incoherently it struck me at the time, of gold-fields which he had staked out in the Far North, of miles of claims, all his. And when a railway was built through to that country, so that a man could travel all the way on dry land, he would go back and take up his claim. He was foolish to wait so long; there was gold there, everywhere, and it was all his—acres of it, miles of it, mountains and rivers of it! That was the trouble, he sighed—it seemed all rivers, that country. The only way to get at it was in midwinter, when everything was frozen up. Then there was no open water, and a man could travel in comfort.

"Sauriol," I said, with a sudden illuminating thought, "were you ever wrecked?"

"Wrecked?" he echoed thinly, as he drew his knees up to his chin and folded his great hands across them. "Yes, I was wrecked once." He spoke vacantly and slowly, like a man in a dream.

"*Where* were you wrecked?" I asked sharply.

"Where?" he echoed vaguely, drawing his hand across his blanched forehead, pebbled like leather. "Why, *we* called it Hunger River."

"But who were 'we'?"

He looked at me with the peevishness of a child. "Why, me and the Kwakuitl men. We had to sit there, years and years, so, with nothing but water around us—a little round rock, with just room for four men."

"Then why didn't you swim ashore, if it was nothing but a river?"

He looked at me in mild and puzzled wonder. "Swim ashore!" he reiterated, with his insane echo. Then he chuckled deep down in his hairy chest. "Young Hotailub *did* try to swim ashore—he was a better swimmer than the other three of us. But that river is very wide, nothing but water, three long miles on one side of us, over two miles on the other. It was more like the sea. And we watched Hotailub, for he was to come back with a raft, and half a mile off we saw his hands go up. We couldn't hear him scream, for he swam with the wind. But the three of us were left sitting on the rock there, so, for years and years—a bald little rock without a twig or a blade of grass, as smooth as an old man's head!"

"Then you were taken off—by natives?"

He shook his head slowly from side to side. "No; we were not taken off," he said vacuously.

"Then how, in the name of all that is holy, *did* you get off that rock?"

"I—I can't remember!" he whimpered pitifully. "I have a little trouble with my head, and it makes me forget things." And he lapsed into a dogged silence, from which I tried in vain to rouse him.

On the following day I spoke to the *curé* about Black Sauriol and his ways. That rotund and gentle little pastor of a rotund and gentle little flock had long since given up worrying about the man and his madness. To his mind it was all due to rheumatism; he had known a man once, on the lower St. Lawrence, taken the same way, who had suffered so much and grown so afraid of the wet and damp that it went to his head, and in his old age

he was almost as bad as a man who had been bitten by a rabid dog, hating the sight and touch of water. But I felt at heart that if it was rheumatism with Black Sauriol, it was some strange rheumatism of the memory, of the spirit, and not of the flesh. I tried to forge some link of continuity between his terror at the sight of the dead animal and his insane paddling with the hands, between his hatred of water and this strange wreck about which he had forgotten so much. But I could make nothing out of his tangle of irrationalities.

When next I went to visit Black Sauriol I found him with his huge hairy arms bared, hard at work, making a painfully laborious copy of what seemed to be a ragged and blackened old chart. He looked up from his slow and clumsy drawing, when he saw me in his doorway, with an unusual expression of relief.

"I hoped you'd come," he said, in the solemn guttural of his more lucid moments. "Before I left," he added pointedly.

I asked him where he was off to.

"Out of this cursed country of rain—getting too wet for me! I'm going to travel, to try the Southwest. They call it, I find, the Country of Little Rain."

"But how about your claim, your miles of gold-fields?"

"That's all come out clear to me—last night, in a message!" He looked at me with his burning, deep-set eyes. "*You* are going to put in my claim for me!"

I tried to laugh at him, but the creeping tide of madness that seemed rising and inundating the very house in which we sat, as he went on gravely with his drawing, choked the laughter out of my throat.

"But where is this claim?" I asked, to break the silence.

"Wait ten minutes, then you'll see the map," the deep guttural replied. And during that time he bent in silence over his chart, breathing heavily, tracing in the lines with unsteady but infinitely cautious fingers.

Then he sat back and looked at his drawing, mumbling in his throat, still with furtive side glances at me.

"Mine! That's all mine!" he growled passionately, as might a dog over a bone, planting his huge, hairy hand in the centre of the paper.

At a peremptory movement from him I went over and studied the little map. At first sight it meant nothing more to me than the frivoling of a sadly unsettled mind. Yet something about the tangle of lines looked oddly and indeterminately familiar. Even the rough turtle's head, which two of his rivers outlined, seemed strangely suggestive. And it was just above the nose of the turtle, where contributory streams ran into the darker line of the big river, that his great hand was planted authoritatively, as a sign that it "was all his." I studied the map once again, this time more seriously. Then suddenly, as I pondered over it, a flashlight of intelligence illuminated the whole mystery.

"My God, man—that's the Klondike!" I gasped.

He looked at me with careless and uncomprehending eyes.

"This is the Yukon here," I explained, "this darker line; the upper line of the turtle's head is Stewart River, the lower is Macmillan River; this eye is one of the Reid Lakes. And here, see, here where the Klondike empties into the Yukon, is Dawson City!"

"It's all mine!" he repeated in his majestic and solemn guttural. "I found it, years and years ago. I saw the gold there, and paid for it all, in good blankets and tea. That was to the Hoochi tribe, and to a few of the Stick Indians. I should have gone back sooner—but there were reasons, there were reasons!"

He turned to me fiercely.

"Now *you* shall do this for me! There is gold there, in plenty—gold enough for twenty kings. But men will be finding out. It's getting late, getting late! And there are reasons!"

The flame in his smoky little lamp, for want of oil, paled and sank lower

on the wick, leaving the room in twilight.

"My God, man, you'll be paid for it," he cried confidently, as he looked in my startled and hesitating face, "paid like a prince!"

He rummaged through the odds and ends on his dirty shelves for a bit of tallow candle. When the unwilling wick had caught up the flame it shed a thin and wavering half-light through the room.

I humored him, in my weakness, and as he planned and explained and dictated his mind seemed to grow more lucid. He sat back in the dusk, with the dignity of a king who had come into his own.

"But one thing I must know first," I insisted, hoping to overtake him while sanity still clung to him. "Why are you yourself afraid to go back? And what makes you such a fool about open water?"

He repeated his old vague cry: "There are reasons!" And his majesty ebbed mysteriously from him, leaving him there, a limp and bent and withered old man. I turned on him sharply.

"And those reasons have to do with how you got off the island—in Hunger River!"

"They were only two Kwakuitls," he whimpered piteously, "and I had to get home with my secret! I had to get home!"

"Then how did you kill them?"

He laughed softly down in his throat. "It wasn't the killing; it was what came after!" He drew his hand slowly across his wet brow.

"Go on!" I insisted.

He shook his head slowly from side to side.

"It's too long ago—and you wouldn't understand. You would listen, and walk out, and leave me, like the other men have done."

"Go on!" I still insisted, wiping the sweat from my own face.

"It has turned them and sickened them, all of them, from the first," he wheezed huskily, folding his hairy hands across his upthrust knees. "And it was two to save one!"

"Everything—tell me everything!"

He paddled with one hand, crazily, like a trained mastiff reaching out with a forepaw. Then he clinched his fingers together over his knees, and his body rocked a little, from side to side.

"There were three Kwakuitl guides—all the rest of them had died. We struck through to the Mackenzie—yes, it must have been the Mackenzie, but *we* called it Hunger River. Hotailub said that if we got down to sea water before the frost set in, we could beat down the coast to the land of his people. We had a shell of a birch-bark, with a moosehide sail. There was a white mist that morning on the river, and we struck the heel of a bald little rock, as smooth as an old man's head. We all floundered out and scrambled for land. And then the fog lifted, and we looked for the boat; it was gone. We were alone in the middle of the great river, the four of us, with just room to squat on the rock, so.

"On the second day Hotailub said he would swim for it. But he was weak, and half a mile out we saw him go down. Then the third day came. And still we waited and waited, and nothing happened. And we sat there, chewing buckskin clothes and moccasins. Then the fourth day came, and after that I lost track of time. I only know that long afterward it came to me, like a vision—it came to me, the way I was to get off!"

The deep-set, animal-like eyes searched the gloom of the half-lit room furtively, then he drew up his knees, gorilla-like, and went on.

"In the dark, when the two Kwakuitls were sleeping, I raised each head in my hand, quickly, and beat it down against the rock—each head, until it was soft and the hands stopped twitching. I tied the two of them together, firmly, at the throats, and at the knees, and at the ankles. Then I rolled them down the shelving rock into the water. While they lay there I tied them to a little spur of the rock, twice, with double strings torn from my coat. And then I waited."

"Waited?—waited for what?" I

gasped, suddenly sickened at the thick smell of the burning tallow.

"I waited and waited, watching them. It was only days, but it seemed years. And then I saw that the time had come. For they no longer lay dark and heavy under the water, but they floated and pulled at the double string, and swung round with each change of the wind. Then I watched for the breeze, and loosened them, and waded out into deep water."

"My God, man, you don't mean—" The horror of it was too much for me, and I stumbled out toward the open door, where the quiet country smells blew in, like incense.

"*They were my ship of deliverance,*" intoned the hairy brute squatting on the floor. "They were the weak who died for the strong. And one arm I placed over them so, and with the other I paddled, slowly, slowly, for I was weak, and the rain set in, and I had no strength to waste. And when one arm ached I paddled with the other, paddled, and paddled, slowly, with the water to my chin. And I knew it was night, and then morning again. But still I had to paddle on and on, counting the strokes. Ten times I made ready to drop away and get rid of the hunger and the ache in the arms and bones. But after what had happened, *I was afraid!* It was years and years I paddled—years and years. And when the current swept us against a shelf of sand I lay there, too weak to crawl away from them. A Chilkat squaw found me there, and dragged me to a fire."

The sputtering candle-end, as he spoke, burned out and left the room in utter darkness.

"She dragged me to the fire and gave me fish to eat. They fed me and took care of me, and I stayed with their tribe all that winter. But every night, the fools, they tied my hands with moose-hide. That was the only trouble—they tied my hands with moose-hide, so that I couldn't swim, when I lay there drowning."

Through the darkness I could hear the heavy wheeze of his great, panting chest and the soft pad, pad of his hands on the floor, as he paddled with first one hand and then the other.

CONSIDERATE

SOAKEM (*to his son, who has been detailed by his mother to "keep tabs" on his father*)—How many glasses of beer have I had, Willie?

WILLIE—Five, papa.

"Well, you tell your mother I've had just two."

"All right, papa. But if I have to tell a lie anyway, you might as well have another one."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

ON THE WEDDING TRIP

HUSBAND (*as the train is emerging from a long tunnel*)—Sweetheart, that tunnel cost a million dollars to build.

WIFE—Well, it's worth it.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

KARAKASHE PASHA

BY LÉON DE TINSEAU

LAST year I started from Paris for Vienna by the Orient Express. To have the sleeping compartment to myself I employed all the usual methods—intrigue, influence, even corruption in the form of a gold piece slipped into the porter's hand. I supposed I had succeeded, but just as the train was about to start a passenger appeared, followed by the porter, who was encumbered with many packages. I glared at the perfidious fellow; ah, if a glare could have slain him——!

He looked sheepish. "Monsieur," he whispered, "it is His Excellency Karakashe Pasha, a Turk worth twenty millions!"

"What do I care who he is or what he's worth?" I muttered peevishly. "The sultan himself would be as little welcome." And I swore under my breath, with the ferocious egotism of a tourist disturbed in his arrangements, that I would make things uncomfortable for this son of the prophet!

I began by claiming the lower berth, feeling a grim satisfaction in picturing the aerial flights the pasha would be compelled to make before reaching his couch. Thereupon I went into the dining-car for refreshment.

When I returned to my compartment the beds were not yet prepared. Seated at one end of the velvet sofa Karakashe Pasha, with his gray eyes fastened on the ceiling, appeared lost in thought. He saluted me silently, but with the courtesy of a high-bred gentleman—there was no denying the fact. Then he resumed his meditation, without seeming to perceive that I had lit a cigar without asking his permission.

He was tall and thin, with a remarkably intelligent face, the expression of which was melancholy without any trace of bitterness. His fez covered his head so that very little of his closely cut hair could be seen. His carefully trimmed, pointed beard was already more than grizzled. His aquiline nose recalled one of the characteristics of the Hebrew type; but his other features had not the uneasy, keen, piercing expression which distinguishes the children of Israel. In short, my companion would have interested, even attracted me had he not been, as it were, forced upon me.

The night passed without incident. When I awoke at Carlsruhe the pasha had already left the compartment and was probably occupied with his morning toilet. After all, he interfered with me very little. He soon returned, fresh and neat, and I took my turn in the dressing-room. The morning passed without our exchanging a word.

A little while after we passed Ulm I went into the dining-car, more for something to do than because I was hungry. The table I occupied was the last one free, and among all the diners there was not a soul I knew. As I was forcing down my soup my companion appeared, looking about him for a place.

"Monsieur," I said, seizing the chance to make tardy reparation for my wrongdoing, "will you do me the honor to take half of my table?"

He accepted quite simply and sat down opposite me. Immediately we began to converse and liked each other at once.

"I perceive," I said, "that you

are not restricted in your diet by the prophet's rule. You partake as freely as I do."

"Oh!" he replied, "my fez misleads you. I am as good a Christian as yourself—an Armenian Catholic. So you see I am not bound by the prophet's restrictions."

He spoke French perfectly, though with a vague, unfamiliar accent. I asked many questions about his country, prolonging my meal because I was interested. Several persons had recognized him and greeted him with courtesy, largely tinctured with respect, but he seemed to prefer my company to theirs and showed no rancor for my previous neglect.

After spending an hour together in the smoking-car we were on a footing of intimacy and confidence which surprised me so much that I could not refrain from speaking of it.

"Oh!" he answered, "I know you are no ordinary person. If you had plunged into talk when the train started you could not have drawn four words from me; but a Frenchman who can pass fifteen hours without speaking is not to be met with every day."

The name of Tissot, the ex-ambassador, who died soon after and whom I knew intimately, drew us still nearer. We exchanged cards. I expressed regret that I could not accompany my new friend all the way to Constantinople.

"I hope to see you there some day," replied Karakashe Pasha. "But you must not be surprised if you do not find me quite the same there as here. In my country we have to watch our actions, be guarded in our speech."

"But you!" I cried. "Why, you are a great personage, a pasha!"

"Yes," he returned, with a sad smile, "I am a pasha. But if you knew how I became one you would understand that I do not delude myself concerning what you are pleased to call my greatness!"

"Would it be indiscreet to ask for the story?"

"Not at all. Everybody knows it in the Orient, and many of your compatriots have asked to hear it. I must tell you that some have not believed the story and others have not understood it. Our two countries are so unlike! You Frenchmen are brought up to believe that your Revolution of 1789 influenced the whole world. Unfortunately—or fortunately, according to opinion—that is untrue; the incidents of my life prove it. My adventures are distinctively Oriental."

"I will try to understand you," I replied, "and I promise to believe you. Pray begin. I am eager to listen."

"Very well, then, though I must warn you that certain incidents in my life may surprise you, and if judged by your European ideas, may even shock you. I can see no remedy for all that. You probably find my fez ridiculous, while I think your hat hideous; so it goes. But I should never dream of converting you to my style of headgear, whereas you, as a European, are determined to make me wear your hat. That's the Oriental question for you, in a nutshell.

"You are already aware that I am an Armenian. The Armenians are not, with us, the most highly esteemed members of the population. I am too much of a philosopher to be surprised at that or to complain of it. Our race is the oldest on earth, and for races, as for individuals, age is a misfortune which the young often take advantage of to ridicule and oppress.

"My father's name was Gulbenkjian. He was a banker, and like many in the same business, had his best custom in the harems of the pashas, and even in that of the sultan. I have been informed that in Europe fortunes are not made by lending money to women. The contrary holds good with us. Behind their screens our ladies have as many whims as yours. They want new diamonds, they wish to dispose of a negro page or to purchase a Circassian slave. From morning to night these whimsical, simple-minded, childish creatures dream of nothing but loans and exchanges. I won't say the

interest demanded is not rather heavy, but remember that many doors must be opened and the eunuchs won't open them for nothing. At the base of everything in the Orient you will find backsheesh. Until that idea is accepted nothing about us can be judged sanely.

"Gulbenkjian-Bey was rich. I well remember the splendid mansion and magnificent garden in which my childhood was passed at Bechiktache. We overlooked the Bosphorus, a lovely view, somewhat like that of the lake of Zurich near the town. Now the new palace of Tcheragan has replaced the paternal house.

"There, until the age of eighteen, I led the austere life of an Armenian youth. Not that I was obliged to give my attention to difficult or complicated studies. I was taught to read and write my own language, nothing more. But according to our customs, in the presence of my father I was like a servant before his master, never seating myself before receiving permission, not daring to smoke, never entering the room where my father was without respectfully kissing the hem of his pelisse. Now that I have lived two-thirds of my life I often think with regret of those days—without pleasure, but free from preoccupations and fatigue. At eighteen I judged differently. The atmosphere of idle servitude oppressed me; I longed to see the world and make my own fortune.

"So I said farewell to the homestead and the fresh bowers of Bechiktache, and following the paternal counsel I left for Egypt, with abundant benedictions from my father and a less abundant sum for my expenses—the old gentleman was rather close-fisted. I was fortunately able to add some savings, for from the age of twelve I had begun to provide for the future, thanks to the industrious spirit that belongs to our race.

"On my arrival at Cairo I set out more seriously to prove my ability. It was not long before everybody knew the young Karakashe-Gulbenkjian-oglow, who was seen in the streets, before the cafés, at the doors of mosques, followed by a servant bearing a sack of merchandise. At some suitable spot I would stop and spread out on a worn rug my wares; trifles in amber, pipe stems, chaplets, amulets. But I should not be having the pleasure of traveling with you on this comfortable train if I had depended on smokers and devotees to enrich me. I soon made acquaintance with some compatriots belonging to the fair sex, and to them I owe the beginning of my fortune.

"Everywhere in the East, even in the smallest capitals, there are to be found women—and nearly all of them are Armenians—who make a regular business of acting as agents, go-betweens in love affairs, having their own customers and their own field of action. They carry a message to a young man or follow a lovely *hanoum*, spying for this one or that one, receiving money from all hands, sharing with the eunuch, giving him sometimes more than they have received in hope of repaying themselves amply at some future time; paying, if occasion requires, 'in their person,' as you French say, bearing the brunt of the ill-humor due to failure or impatience under delay.

"At twenty I was a handsome fellow, though I thought little of turning the fact to my advantage. We Orientals know nothing of love as you understand it in Europe. You will see presently that I was an exception, and you will judge if I had reason to be proud of it. But at twenty I was an Oriental out and out, an Armenian in the full sense of the word. There was not in all Egypt a pair of eyes for which I would have gone half as far as I would have run for a Turkish pound. This was well known, and it gained me public confidence, especially that of my benevolent compatriots. These women soon admitted me to a share in their transactions. With my pamphlets and my chaplets, I could enter into the houses of men, young or old, while the female agents accomplished their side of the affair. As you may easily imagine, I ran across some

funny situations, and it seems I had the knack of relating them in an amusing manner while altering them sufficiently so as to betray no one. When my true stories were exhausted I invented others. Now, let me inform you, monsieur, in case you ever come to the East on a diplomatic mission, that you can get anything you want from an Oriental if you succeed in amusing him. I amused them, and was, besides, very useful to them in aiding their vices. Just fancy how the money poured into my coffers!

"About this time I began to attract some notice from the great personages. The first one who received me into intimacy was a man whom you may have met, for he has become almost a Parisian: Ismaïl Pasha.

"I have always been renowned for my discretion, and to that I chiefly owe my advancement. So do not expect me to betray the secrets which were confided to me, though the greater number of them are today no longer secrets. Still I may say that Ismaïl Pasha, when I knew him, was a young man fond of pleasure, though intelligent and very ambitious. It was he who, almost single-handed, made the Egypt of today. You may decide for yourself whether I mean that as a compliment or for blame. One thing is certain, the Pyramids will never see another Ismaïl Pasha, any more than Versailles can ever behold another Louis XIV, and for the same reason: they cost too much.

"Up to this time I had made myself useful chiefly in arranging love affairs. By degrees my patron enlarged my sphere of action by employing me in political intrigues. The transition came about so naturally that we scarcely perceived it. With us, the methods employed to satisfy a caprice or to gain a throne are the same, and the risks are often equal.

"Ismaïl Pasha, when I knew him, was not the heir presumptive to the throne of Egypt. After the death of his uncle, Saïd Pasha, the crown should have passed to Achmet, Ismaïl's elder brother. One day in pursuing my little affairs I heard the great news which caused such a commotion in Egypt. Without wasting time in questions or idle curiosity I ran—faster than ever in my life, except on the day I gained my title of Pasha—to the palace of my employer. I rushed in like a madman and, throwing myself at his feet, gasped out:

"'My lord, I lay my respects with my devotion at the feet of the future khedive. Prince Achmet has just drowned himself in the Nile!'

"At these words, well calculated to amaze him, Ismaïl's eyes flashed and his cheek reddened; but he recovered himself instantly—for we were not alone—and replied like a true Mussulman: 'Allah only is great!'

"I have always believed that, among other things, it is to the habit of invoking the name of Allah that our statesmen owe their diplomatic superiority. Behind this sacred name as behind an impenetrable veil they conceal everything: joy, fear, hope, even the anxiety of the criminal. 'Allah is great!' It is like the spectacles which some people with too expressive eyes wear to conceal their thoughts. How can anyone guess what impression he makes when a man responds, 'Allah!' whether you pour gold in his hand, thrust a sabre in his breast, or give him a kick elsewhere?

"But pardon me this parenthesis. You will not be surprised to hear, monsieur, that Ismaïl Pasha never forgot that I was the man who brought him the news of Achmet's death. The great often think more of a piece of good news announced with tact than they do of an important service quietly performed. I became an influential personage. The time when I had peddled my wares seemed long ago. As for my other talents, I no longer employed them for the public; I worked only for my patron, who, for that matter, kept me busy, as he was given to pleasure. I began to mix with the best society and became a person of consequence. I learned French, which was much spoken in Egypt at that period—just as English is now,

if you will pardon the remark. Ah! monsieur, how many of your compatriots made millions on the banks of the Nile while I was there, and since! Our ministers of finance paid without counting, or counted recklessly. One might fancy they saw double. They paid for twelve locomotives where there were only six. Tons of rails, palatial furniture, wagons with most expensive springs, cubic meters of masonry melted in their fingers like pounds of butter in the hands of a cook. But what fairylike luxury prevailed! For example: I saw 'Aïda' in Paris from M. Vaucorbeil's private box. Well! Ask Verdi if it was not much better mounted at Cairo.

"Unfortunately, the same persons who counted so lavishly when dealing with Parisians clipped things down pretty well when it concerned the natives. Ismaïl Pasha had become khedive, but affairs grew more complicated every day. He had brothers and sisters, without counting an uncle, Halim Pasha, who was just twenty-four hours younger than himself. Now, as you probably know, at that epoch the throne belonged to the eldest member of the reigning family, taken collaterally. An accident would suffice to place Halim on Ismaïl's throne—and 'accidents' are common in the Orient.

"So my royal patron kept a watchful eye upon his collaterals; I had to help him, and I know. Yet as he rewarded my services less generously than he compensated the pirouettes of an Italian *danseuse*, it naturally followed that I demanded from those watched what was withheld by the watcher. It was twice as much trouble and rather dangerous, but profits increased in proportion. That was the most laborious period of my life, and if I should publish my memoirs—! But with us it is singularly dangerous to put anything into writing, or even to appear to have an over-long memory. That is why historians have such difficulty in getting facts concerning us. I began to be aware that I was playing a dangerous game. If you spend your days between the anvil and the hammer you must risk many a blow!

"The khedive's brother, Mustapha-Fazyl, found it necessary about that time, and perhaps for the same reasons, to seek a change of air. He prepared to leave for Constantinople and pressed me to accompany him. I knew Mustapha-Fazyl well, better even than he supposed, since I had been paid for studying him. I could have given the figure of his fortune, which was large; the names of his best friends, who were numerous; perhaps also the extent of his ambition, which was not insignificant. I might have surprised him by revealing that he was going to his chateau of Tchamlidjah less for the pleasure of breathing the balmy air of the Bosphorus than to test the atmosphere of the sultan's court. But I took good care not to display my insight. To know other people's secrets is something; but to conceal your knowledge is the height of skill.

"I said nothing, even to Mustapha-Fazyl, about my projects of departure. I said farewell to the viceroy, but not till the very day of my leaving, deeming it an advantage not to give him much time for reflection. I was, I admit, rather mortified at his indifference.

"'What are you going to do at Constantinople?' he asked.

"'Sire,' I replied, 'the old Gulbenkjian is sick and full of years. He wants to see me. God curses those who disobey their father.'

"I started feeling a trifle uneasy over Ismaïl Pasha's silence, but he was merely pondering how he could turn my visit to Constantinople to his own advantage.

"As for my father, I had really neglected him for the past seven years, though it is true that for his part he had not seemed to take any extraordinary interest in his son. I had received a letter from him now and then, but never so much as a piastre, though his wealth was steadily increasing. My own fortune was not so great as you may think. True, some very pretty sums had passed through

my fingers; but in the Orient those who mount the lower rungs of the ladder of success are obliged to share with everybody; at the summit the contrary holds good.

"So I carried back to my native land only moderate means, and according to our custom I was careful to tell everybody that I was frightfully poor. I impressed this fact on my father more than on anyone. As he took no notice of my protestations, I went so far as to say I counted on his assistance to enable me to live.

" 'Are you mad?' he replied severely. 'Since when does a son inherit during his father's lifetime? Do you suppose I don't know the windfalls you gathered by the Nile? What have you done with your earnings? If you've wasted them, do you fancy I am going to pay for your follies?'

"Despite our seven years' separation, I still understood old Gulbenkjian. I felt about for the weak part of his armor.

" 'Father,' I said, with a dramatic air, 'if you refuse me your assistance I can only spill my blood to wash away the dishonor to my name. I have speculated unsuccessfully and am on the verge of disgrace.'

" 'Speculated!' he gasped in a fury. 'You have speculated, and imagine you can awaken my pity by telling me of it? And I believed you were following my example and making your fortune by patience and industry, instead of which you have been a vulgar gambler! Go, sir; the means I have so painfully gathered will not serve to fill the gulf of your speculations. So much the worse for your partners—they will never see money of mine!'

"I retired crestfallen, but determined to bring him to terms. Two hours later an old woman who had been my nurse went weeping to tell him I had gone mad.

"You have already guessed that I was only pretending. My garments were disordered, my hair ruffled up, my eyes wild. I went from grove to grove through the park of Bechiktache, recognizing no one and running away with piercing cries if anyone tried to pursue me. I refused all nourishment, slept out of doors, and sighed lugubriously. In the morning my father, terrified, seeing himself already the scandal of the place and fearing discredit on his name, tried to capitulate. When I found he was in earnest I grew calm. An hour afterward my reason had returned, and a pretty large sum had found its way into my pockets.

"But the banker Gulbenkjian was not a fool. He suspected that my madness, which came on so suddenly and was cured so soon, was a bad precedent. Our relations grew strained, and finding myself with enough money I purchased a villa at Beïkos. I live there still, and there I hope some day to see you. In this quiet residence I gave myself up for a while to the enjoyment of living as I pleased, without troubling myself about business. Still, I had resumed fruitful relations with Mustapha-Fazyl. As I had retained links with Cairo, I could keep him posted as to what was going on in the palace of the khedive, and there was a good deal going on there that was interesting to him. But I had plenty of leisure, and I employed it in hunting through the forest of Alemdagh, which stretches between Tchamlidjah and Beïkos.

"There a romantic episode occurred —the only one of my life—that made me comprehend for an instant the sorrows, joys and disappointments of love. At the end of this infatuation, which today seems like a dream, I swore to renounce forever the emotions that steal from men the calmness necessary to success in life. I have kept my word.

"I had recently returned from Egypt and was newly installed at Beïkos. I was twenty-six years old, and—what is rare in my land—I was still unmarried. For one thing, I had had no time to think of marriage; and, besides, the intrigues with which I had been mixed up since my early youth were not of a nature to inspire me with respect for women.

"At that period the court of the khedive was possessed by 'Francomania,' and I had brought from Cairo a pronounced taste for everything French. I spoke the language fluently, and I liked to dress myself according to Paris fashions, especially on my hunting excursions.

"One morning, dressed as though I were going to shoot pheasants at Meudon—a pleasure I have more than once enjoyed—I was standing in the most picturesque part of the forest of Alemdagh with my back turned toward the road, forgetting the whole universe to watch, with my finger on the trigger, for the rabbit that I knew must soon appear. It bounded by and fell as I fired. But as I was about to pick up my game, I heard cries behind me and saw two ladies on horseback. The thickness of the moss had prevented me from hearing their approach.

"One was mounted on a magnificent animal. My shot had frightened him, and he was struggling with his rider in a way that tested her ability to manage him. The other woman was easily recognized for an English governess, even before she cried out in her own language:

"'Be careful, mademoiselle! You will be killed!'

"But the young lady paid no attention to her. She had taken it into her head to subdue her horse, and despite his rearing and plunging she was getting on very well, indeed. Still, I threw down my gun and approached, as much to prevent a possible accident as to apologize for having been the involuntary cause of the commotion. And it was well that I did, for at a furious bound of the horse the saddle girths broke and the Amazon fell into my arms.

"I had time to feel against my right arm the light weight of the graceful girl; but she was on her feet in a moment, and as her horse had grown suddenly quiet she looked at me with a puzzled frown, as though undecided whether to thank me for saving her a bad fall or to scold me for having frightened her horse.

"'Mademoiselle,' I said in English, taking off my hat as I spoke and bowing respectfully, 'I need not say that I was unaware of your approach when I fired at that rabbit. I tremble to think of the danger I put you in, the fright I have given you.'

"While speaking I gazed with admiration at the lovely being before me. She was now occupied in arranging the folds of a blue veil rolled around her high hat. In this position, with her arms raised, her flexible, elegant figure showed to advantage, as well as her hands, which were unusually beautiful. Her black hair was thick, and the arched brows, Oriental in form, gave her face a peculiar expression, something imperious and hard, for they started at the temples and met, or nearly so, at her nose, which was aquiline and of the European type. Her riding habit, admirably fashioned, must have come from London, like the governess, who was compelled to remain in her saddle for lack of aid to dismount, and who now gazed on the scene with a comical air of anxiety, the cause for which I understood in time.

"Soon, alas! the veil was adjusted, and the proud face of the young girl was hidden behind a thick mass of blue gauze. But the evil was done; I was in love, in love for the first and last time in my life.

"Who could she be, this young lady riding alone with her governess? Doubtless the daughter of some English banker or diplomatist who had brought her up to the freedom of his countrywomen. Ah! how different was her air of audacity and determination from the manners of any of the women I had known—pretty creatures enough, but whose indifference and servility marked them as inferior beings.

"She must have guessed my admiration and embarrassment, and they were better than any excuses.

"'Well then, what are we going to do?' she asked in the purest English, addressing her companion. 'We can't stay here.'

"'I can try,' I suggested, 'to repair the mischief I have caused.'

"A huntsman does not start out without indispensable implements in his pocket. Establishing myself on the moss with the saddle on my knees, I undertook a provisional repairing, which, fortunately, presented no difficulties. During this time the Amazon, seated on the trunk of a tree close by, with the reins of her bridle passed under her arm, watched me, while a stiff, angular figure dominated the group.

"I wished to speak and cast about in my mind for something to say; but I lacked my usual facility.

"'Mademoiselle,' I asked at last, very indiscreetly, I will admit, 'are you in the habit of riding through this forest?'

"'If I were,' she replied, without my being able to see whether she spoke seriously, 'my adventure this morning would scarcely encourage me to continue. It would not be pleasant to risk being shot at any instant!'

"'Ah, mademoiselle,' I cried, 'the shot that killed yonder rabbit is the last I shall ever fire under these trees. All the rabbits on earth may surround, attack, devour me alive, I shall never once fire—no, not to save my life!'

"'You are French, monsieur?' she asked, laughing at my bad English and at my nonsense.

"To be taken for a Frenchman was the highest compliment I could have received. And from such lips! I had not enough courage to remain Armenian.

"'I have arrived here recently,' I answered evasively. 'I came from Egypt.'

"'He comes recently from Egypt; do you hear that, Miss Albert?' and she began to question me about the country and the people I had known. But my self-command had returned, and I remained prudently silent about my life in Cairo. The more she tried to draw me out the more I mystified her and made her lose the clue, taking care to amuse her meanwhile by my observations on people and things so that she ended by laughing heartily.

"I soon perceived that she was a coquette and that she was rather diverted by her adventure. When the girths were repaired I placed her in the saddle, and discovered that her foot was as pretty as her hand.

"'Well, mademoiselle,' I asked, more earnestly than I wished to reveal, 'am I to hang up my gun?'

"'It will not be necessary,' she said, smiling. 'Shoot your hares in some other part of the forest, for this is my favorite path.'

"As my face betrayed my joy at this implied permission to meet her again, she added quickly:

"'Only you must promise two things. The first is not to follow me. The second is not to speak to anyone about our meeting. Will you swear it?'

"'I will swear it.'

"'Your word as a Frenchman?'

"'Ah!' I murmured as I pressed my lips to her glove, 'do I know at this moment whether I am French or Turk?'

"She galloped off, the beauty who had turned the heads of so many men in her life. Her loveliness never accomplished a greater miracle than when she created a romantic young man out of the ambitious greedy-for-gain whose name was Karakashe-Gulbenkjianoglow.

"On the following days I returned to the forest of Alemdagh, as you may guess without my telling you. To avert suspicion I took my gun, but I did not even trouble to carry cartridges. Often after passing hours on that tree trunk where the young girl sat that day I would return to my house without having seen her. When we met it was only for a few moments. Without vanity, I could easily see that she liked me, and for her part she would not have been a woman if she had not known at once that I loved her to distraction. With a thousand precautions, I endeavored to obtain permission to present myself at her home. According to English customs, to act otherwise would be ill-bred. But she received these suggestions without encouragement, and not once since the

first day of our meeting had her blue gauze veil been raised. Faithful to my promise, I had not attempted to pierce her incognita, though I began to regret my vow.

"One day, as we were parting, she said suddenly:

"'By the way, I don't know your name.'

"'What does that matter,' I replied, 'since I have not the right to ask yours?'

"Another time, she asked: 'Well, monsieur, and what do you think of the Bosphorus? Do you amuse yourself? Do the Turkish ladies interest you?'

"'No, certainly not. They are agreeable little animals, pretty enough to look at, but incapable of appealing to heart or intelligence.'

"'Nonsense,' she replied. 'You are repeating what you have heard. Do you know any of them?'

"'I am too happy and too miserable since my arrival here to think of other women,' I sighed.

"'But just suppose some pretty Mussulman woman should take a fancy to you, that might alter your opinion. But then a stranger who does not speak Turkish——'

"'Pardon, mademoiselle,' I interrupted, 'I speak Turkish'; and I recited in the original some very tender verses of a poet then in fashion at Constantinople.

"She colored deeply under her veil, well knowing that I was reciting my own sentiments.

"'Do you know what that signifies?' I asked, rather pleased with myself for my boldness.

"'How should I know anything about it, and why should I care? But it seems to me, monsieur, that you speak Turkish too fluently for a Frenchman!'

"She was evidently suspicious. I was about to throw myself at her feet and admit my deceit, but she galloped away, followed by the inevitable Miss Albert, who might as well have spoken Chinese, for all the use she made of her tongue.

"The week passed, and I saw no more of my beloved. As if fate, after having brought her to me, were determined to make me forget her, I happened upon the beginning of a second romance under the following circumstances:

"I had entered a European shop kept by a Greek widow and situated on the great thoroughfare called Pera, between the Russian ambassador's and the Holland legation. The widow sold a little of everything, but principally the various accessories of feminine dress. That implies that the shop was constantly thronged with Turkish and European ladies and that purchasers of the male sex were not lacking. It was whispered that the Greek widow might as well have been an Armenian; I mean that her shop was well adapted for rendezvous.

"As I entered the shop I noticed at the door a coupé with two fine horses, covered with glittering harness. A coachman in livery was dozing on his seat, and the eunuch, fat and red-eyed, sat perched on his saddle and stared at the passers-by. In the shop I found two ladies who had arrived in the coupé. Their *yashmaks*, thicker than is usual in these days, allowed nothing to be seen but their eyes, but it was easy to guess through their *feridjes* that one was much younger than the other. The young one, after looking at me, whispered to the merchant, who replied in the same way. Then she left the shop and, entering her carriage, was driven away.

"'We see you but seldom, Karakashe Gulbenkjianoglow,' said the Greek widow, 'and that's a mistake on your part, as I shall prove. This time you happen on a piece of good luck. You have made an impression.'

"'An impression! And how do you know that?'

"'That young lady who has just gone asked me your name. I had to repeat it twice, as well as your address. Accept my compliments and hopes that we shall soon have the pleasure of seeing you again.'

"'Do you know who this amiable

lady is, who takes such a kind interest in me?'

"'Dear me, how should I know? We see so many, and my memory is so poor!'

"'Add that you might see fewer people if your memory were better.'

"I knew that by paying her price the widow would probably reveal all she knew. But what did I care? I was thinking too much of my English girl, so charming, witty, captivating, to bother myself about a typical Oriental intriguist. So I made my purchases and went home. By the time I had reached Beïkos I thought no more of the affair. But the very next day the post brought me this note in Turkish:

"Karakashe-Effendi, have you neither heart nor eyes for any but the foreign girl? Must one be on horseback to awaken your interest, and do you never bestow a glance on a woman unless you meet her in the forest of Alemdagh? You may answer these queries if you choose tomorrow at five o'clock, in front of the Mosque of Bayazid.

"This note caused me great agitation, less because of the flattering perspective it opened than the intimate knowledge it revealed concerning my affairs. So my secret was known to others! I had kept it carefully, and no one to my knowledge had witnessed any of my too short interviews with the English girl. Still, for a week past I had seen nothing of her, and that seemed mysterious. I was puzzled, uneasy. I resolved to go to the mosque to try to discover something, and at five minutes before five I was already waiting, mounted on my best horse, before the mosque.

"Perhaps you know that this place is, during the Ramadan, the fashionable promenade at Constantinople. In the middle of the esplanade the mountebanks and street venders attract the populace, while the Turkish ladies, beautifully dressed, ride slowly by, staring, permitting themselves to be admired and all looking pretty under the *yashmak*. Ah! the day when the Oriental women discard the veil—if that day ever comes—their prestige will be lost!

"I scanned the passers, seeking for some sign of recognition in this moving circle of massive vehicles. At last I perceived the coupé which had been stationed on the previous day before the shop of Samatiades. I recognized the two women, more thickly veiled than ever, and I received from the younger a bow and look that spoke volumes. I began already to cast about for a method to pierce the incognita of my second unknown; but I was detained by friends for a few minutes, and when I looked about me the equipage and the ladies had vanished.

"On the morrow, as on the days preceding, there was no one in the forest. But if my English affair was languishing, my Oriental interests were progressing swiftly. As I awoke from my siesta that afternoon another note was handed me by an Armenian Iris. It contained but few words:

"At sunset—shop of the widow Samatiades.

"At the appointed hour I was with my mysterious lady in the room at the rear of the Greek widow's shop. But I took no advantage of the situation. The long days I had passed without seeing my English girl had redoubled my passion for her. I was puzzling over the evident connection between her disappearance and the fact that our secret was known to the woman before me.

"I had found her seated, still thickly veiled, her hands, in fact, her whole person hidden, below her *feridje*. Only her eyes could be seen. In a slightly muffled tone she said in Turkish:

"'And so, Karakashe-Gulbenkjianoglow, you have not disdained the attentions of a poor little Mussulman woman, you who are accustomed to the wit and grace of the foreign ladies?'

"'Mysterious beauty,' I replied, 'you are laughing at your slave. How should any European lady deign to notice a poor Armenian without rank or fortune?'

"'You took a very good method to call attention to yourself! Gunpowder is noisy and cannot be unnoticed.'

"This allusion puzzled me still more. I plied my new conquest with questions which she did not answer, and I ended by admitting, with scanty politeness, that I was desperately in love with a lady whose name I did not know.

"'Of course, you told her yours?' said the Turkish lady, who seemed to accept her part as confidante; in fact, her manner conveyed the impression that it was the role she preferred.

"'I admit that I did conceal my name,' I replied, 'for we Armenians are looked upon with disfavor by foreigners.'

"'Why should you care what they think?' she answered. 'What can they matter to you?'

"I forgot to whom I was speaking and broke out into an ardent panegyric of European women—of the delicacy of their education, the elevation of their ideas.

"'You know my religion,' I said finally, 'since you know me; but if I had been born in your faith, one thing would have made me abjure it: the fate it has decreed to you poor creatures, without liberty, soul or love.'

"'What would you do in our place?' she asked in a tone that betrayed deep bitterness. I knew there must be tears in her eyes.

"This simple question coming from such a source amazed me. To find an Oriental woman comprehending the misery of her condition! I had not believed such a thing possible.

"'What would I do? Ah, pardon me, I would not have spoken as I did if I had known you would understand so well. This place we are in has never beheld such an interview as ours. Again, pardon me. May I not know who you are, after having made you weep?'

"'What is the use,' she said sadly, 'since I must live and die a Mussulman?' and she arose and went away, leaving me astonished.

"The next day I received a letter written in irreproachable English, in an elegant, flowing hand, the envelope bearing the mark of a Piccadilly stationer. A small box accompanied the missive, which read as follows:

"Come no more to meet me at Alemdagh. You have seen me for the last time. I might let you think that I punish you for having deceived me about your birth. But I pardon you because I know that people have to suffer sometimes for being what they are. In a month I shall be married and far from the Bosphorus. This is enough to separate us; but there are other reasons. Perhaps some day you may find out the name of the Alemdagh horsewoman. Even though you may be surprised, be always for me what you have seemed—a devoted and respectful friend. Farewell, and keep for my sake the memento that accompanies this letter.

"I opened the box; it contained this ring that you see on my finger. It will be buried with me when I die.

"As for the letter, I can't show it to you, but I have it at Beïkos. I have received others since in the same handwriting, signed with a name you will hear in a moment; you may already have guessed it if you know Constantinople.

"Compelled to renounce love, I turned more energetically than ever toward politics and ambition. At first, as I told you, I was interested in Mustapha-Fazyl, whose schemes seemed to offer me a brilliant future, especially as he had suddenly begun to treat me more confidentially than he ever had done before. But in my country an obstinate fidelity to one political cause seldom leads to success.

"About that period my former patron, the khedive, undertook a task in which he thought I might prove useful; and I may say, with all due modesty, that after-events confirmed his opinion. Negotiations were to be opened with the sultan concerning the modifications which have to some degree increased Egyptian independence, and also about establishing heredity in the direct line as the rule of succession to the throne in that country.

"Naturally, this compelled me to go directly against the interests of Mustapha-Fazyl. But though I was henceforward obliged to abandon the interests of the khedive's brother, his person always remained sacred to me, and I kept faithfully the secrets he had intrusted to me. However, I was no more seen at the palace of Tchamlidjah. I must tell you that during one

of my last visits there I was much surprised to meet Miss Albert in one of the neighboring halls close by the apartments of Mustapha-Fazyl. What could the English governess be doing there without her bonnet, in the dress and with the manner of a person at home? What had become of her pupil, the lovely horsewoman of Alemdagh? I would have given much to question her; but Oriental customs would not allow it, nor even permit me to recognize her openly. She seemed, for her part, anxious to avoid an interview, and disappeared without appearing to notice me.

"But it is time to come to the end of this mystery. Some little while after I went to pay a visit to the wife of an ambassador and found her laughing over a letter she had received.

"'Read this,' she said; 'read this last line and tell me what you think of the plural.'

"I took the paper she gave me and glanced at it nervously, for I had instantly recognized the handwriting of the unknown beauty. I looked at the phrase indicated and read:

"'My mamas all send their love.'

"The letter was signed '*Mazli*.'

"'Why, certainly,' I stammered, 'the plural is strange. There must be some mystery under it.'

"'A common enough mystery here,' she answered. 'The Princess Mazli can speak of her mamas in the plural, since her father has several wives.'

"'What!' I cried. 'The Princess Mazli! She wrote that letter? The daughter of Mustapha-Fazyl?'

"'Of course. You must have heard her spoken of, as you are her father's confidential adviser. I had forgotten that. Come! Tell us all you know about that odd girl.'

"I had recovered my self-possession and my caution. 'It is true,' I answered, 'that Mustapha-Fazyl has been very kind and friendly, but were I his most intimate companion and his equal, as you know, I should not have the slightest right to make the most simple allusion to any female member of his family. I have heard, however, that one of his daughters has been brought up in the European way.'

"'Then you have never heard all the stories about Princess Mazli?'

"'I have so recently arrived from Egypt,' I said evasively. 'At Cairo, under the eyes of the khedive, his niece could not enjoy the same liberty as at Tchamlidjah.'

"'She profits by her liberty here then, I assure you! It seems that she goes out on horseback alone with her governess, sometimes followed by a groom, but not always. She speaks English perfectly, reads all the new novels as they appear in London, plays the piano, subscribes for *Truth*. If she is eccentric from the Mussulman point of view, she has a keen mind and a good heart. I may add that she is very pretty, for I have been to see her several times, and I am very fond of her. Her notes are always charming. This one announces her approaching marriage.'

"'Yes,' I said in my bewilderment, 'I knew about that.'

"'Ah! then you are not so ignorant as you pretend. I thought I should be the first to announce the news.'

"'My information is incomplete,' I returned, 'since I do not even know the name of her intended.'

"I was informed that the future son-in-law of Mustapha-Fazyl was a personage of high rank at the Egyptian Court, but prematurely old and little worthy of the beautiful, gracious woman given him by fate. My poor princess! I now understood the reasons that parted us, and I also perceived that the English horsewoman of Alemdagh and the Turkish lady of Samatiades's shop were one and the same.

"I went home as soon as possible, for I longed to be alone. So this lovely girl whom I had held in my arms and whose adorable face I had once seen was Mazli-Hanoum! I remembered her blush when I had spoken of love in a language I supposed unknown to her; I recalled her tears when I had inveighed against the narrow life of the Oriental women. And I laughed at my own presumption as I thought over certain dreams. Good-bye to dreams!

"A few months later events had progressed. My instructions were to approach the sultan by all possible methods. Already Ismaïl Pasha, advised by me, had attained imperial favor by sending presents of rare birds, pheasants, unheard of varieties of pigeons and fighting-cocks—birds being, for the moment, the passion of Abdul-Aziz. The moment soon came for the khedive to follow up his pigeons with more substantial gifts. But first it was necessary for me to be able to offer them directly. To let them pass into the hands of a third person would have been disastrous; the metallic pieces would have melted on the road and Abdul-Aziz would not have received his due. Besides, if there was to be any discount, would it not be better to keep it for my own profit? The donor and recipient would lose nothing, and I would make something for myself.

"A *moukassih*, or story-teller to the sultan, about this time began a friendship for me, the cause and price of which I understood perfectly. We consulted together, and finding that I was skilful at playing backgammon he declared that nothing could be more fortunate for my purpose, as his majesty was extremely fond of the game.

"'Inside of a week I can promise that you will be called to the palace to play with his majesty,' said the *moukassih*.

"'All right,' I replied; 'but I suppose I must make a point of losing the game.'

"'Not exactly,' he replied hesitatingly; 'for if we all did that there would be no enjoyment in the contest, and no skill needed in any player. It is easy enough to lose a game. The sultan does not like to be beaten, but he will not allow anyone to give him the game. It is a dangerous dilemma, and I never sit down to the imperial checkers without feeling a cold sweat running down my back. So, as you may fancy, I am extremely well pleased to let you have my place.'

"A few days later I was summoned to the honor, the perilous honor of shaking the dice with Abdul-Aziz. Knowing the great man as I did, my anticipations were not rosy. I pretended, of course, to be overcome by the high favor, but I was really as anxious for my personal safety as though I had been ordered to cross the Bosphorus on a tight-rope.

"I lost the first game without trying, I need scarcely say. I played stupidly, but I fancy the sultan was greatly amused by my tortures, for he was far too sly not to be aware of them. But I succeeded in spending whole afternoons over backgammon, inventing the most unheard of false moves, making bold now and then to win a game, and doing my best to assume a crestfallen air when I lost on purpose.

"Between whiles I did not neglect Ismaïl Pasha's little affairs. One day after a game the sultan permitted me to talk about Egypt. He soon suspected, I think, that I was something more than a backgammon player. He was sure of this when I delivered certain messages—of a financial nature—to which I have before alluded. I had begun by being an agreeable companion; I soon reached the situation of a useful personage. Ismaïl obtained what he wished—but that is ancient history now. And in the end, it was not, after all, any political service that made me a pasha.

"One day, absorbed by the serious questions filling my mind, I absentmindedly won three games in succession. My imperial adversary flew into one of his rages, seized his yatagan and determined to win in a manner that would have put an end to my games forever. I have sometimes wondered since whether Abdul-Aziz was not trying to frighten me just for fun. But at the time I did not stop to argue about it. I threw down the dice and flew across the hall, closely pursued by my adversary, who commanded me to stop with imprecations little calculated to inspire obedience. Fortunately, we were on the ground floor. A window was open. I leaped through it and, running toward the Bosphorus with all the agility God has given me, jumped into my *caïque* at

the risk of overturning it. You may easily believe that my *caïkjis* didn't loiter by the way. Finally, I reached Beïkos and barricaded myself in, giving orders to my attendants to say that I was seriously ill and could receive no visitors, not even if it should be the Prophet Mahomet in person.

"For three days I heard nothing from the outside world, for I did not even venture to walk in my own garden. On the fourth day the sultan sent for me to play backgammon.

"'Let his sublime majesty be informed,' I said, 'that his unworthy slave Karakashe-Gulbenkjianoglow is between life and death, and incapable of leaving his bed even to obey the orders of his gracious master.'

"The next day another message arrived from the palace, and this time it was accompanied by the Order of Osmanié. The situation was growing grave, for according to court etiquette I was bound to present myself to return thanks. But in my country such strange things are constantly happening that all the grand orders on earth would not have given me confidence. I therefore sent word that I was at the point of expiring, and I took the precaution of procuring a medical certificate to that effect. If the sultan had insisted I should have sent word that I was dead.

"Whether he had found no one to replace me at backgammon, whether he believed I was really sick and desired some great inducement to recover, or whether he simply found the circumstances amusing and wished to keep up the fun, I don't know; but once more his messengers appeared at Beïkos, and this time they left a paper sealed with the great seal of the State. It was brought to my bedside, for I acted out the part of a dying man and pretended to be too feeble to rise. Imagine my amazement when I found that I was created *mouchir*, that is, a marshal of the Empire, and, in consequence, a pasha!

"Observe that it was not one of those honorary titles, accorded so easily, even to foreigners. I was a pasha, a veritable pasha, as much so as a man can be, and besides I had the distinction of being almost the only Armenian ever so honored.

"I reflected, however, that the life of a pasha is as easily taken as that of another man, and the unusual circumstances of my elevation inspired me with suspicion. What ought I to do? To declare myself cured and rush to the palace might oblige me to bid a long farewell to the shady bowers of Beïkos. To refuse the unhoped-for favor Fortune sent me would be to renounce forever all future advancement. After considerable hesitation, which would seem natural to you if you knew the Orient, ambition carried the day, and I decided to risk my person.

"I lost no time in prostrating myself before the sultan with many expressions of gratitude, and the *menchour* of my nomination was read with the customary solemnity. Nevertheless, the best moment of that day was when I found myself once more beneath my own roof. You will understand, when I tell you that before leaving it I had made my will.

"From that time I never lost favor with Abdul-Aziz. He gave me a proof of it during the last war, when he intrusted me with enormous amounts of bullion, which I had to convert into currency to defray the expenses of the campaign. This was the most important and interesting of my operations, for my public life closed soon after with the death of my imperial master.

"Now, retired in my residence of Beïkos, which, according to foreigners, is not the least agreeable on the borders of the Bosphorus, I am passing quietly my remaining years. Occasionally, when summer has restored to the oaks of Alemdagh their leafy adornment, I go to the forest to hunt rabbits as of old. Now and then I meet some dashing horsewoman, and then for an instant I grow young and think of the only woman for whom my heart has ever stirred, my dear, dear Princess Mazli."

THE SILVER CRUCIFIX

BY ANTONIO FOGAZZARO

"COUNTESS, the coffee," said the maid.

The countess did not answer. The curtains were drawn, but one could distinguish on the dim whiteness of the pillow the pretty, sleeping face of a young woman.

The maid, standing beside the bed with the coffee tray, repeated more loudly:

"The coffee, countess."

The countess stretched herself, sighed and yawned with her eyes still closed.

"Draw back the curtains a little."

The maid went to the window without setting down the tray, and in turning the handle of the blinds overturned the empty cup on its saucer.

"Softly!" said the countess in an undertone, but sharply. "What are you doing this morning? Where is your head? Now you have waked the child."

In fact, the little one had wakened and was crying in his bed.

The countess raised her head from the pillow and called out imperiously in the direction of the little bed: "Hush!"

The baby was silent at once, save for a few brief whimpers.

"The coffee now!" said the countess. "Have you been to the count's room? Stand still! What is the matter with you?"

What indeed was the matter with the woman? The cup and saucer, the sugar-bowl, pitcher and coffee-pot trembled suspiciously on the tray. The countess raised her eyes.

"What is it?" she said, setting down the cup.

If the maid's face was convulsed, that of the countess was no less so, from fright and uncertainty.

"Nothing," replied the woman, trembling.

The countess seized her by the arm with the strength of a wild animal.

"Speak!" said she.

Meanwhile the pretty face of a child of four years appeared, intent and silent, over the edge of the bed.

"A case, countess," replied the maid, almost in tears, "a case of cholera."

The countess, livid, turned almost instinctively, and seeing her son listening, jumped out of bed, quickly silenced the maid with a look, motioned her to go into the next room, and ran to the little bed.

The child began crying again, but she kissed him, joked and laughed with him until she had conquered his tears. Then, hastily donning her wrapper, she joined the maid, closing the door behind her.

"O God, O God!" she gasped, while the other began to sob.

"Hush, for the love of heaven! Woe to you if the child becomes frightened! Where is the case?"

"Here, with us, countess. The steward's Rosa," replied the woman. "She was taken ill at midnight."

"Oh, heaven! And now?"

"Dead half an hour ago."

The child called its mother.

"Go," said the countess. "Play with him, amuse him, do everything he wishes. Be quiet, dear," she called out, "I am coming directly."

She rushed into her husband's room.

The countess had a blind, mad terror of cholera. The one feeling that was blinder and more unreasoning was her love for her child. At the first rumors of the epidemic she had fled with her husband from the city to her

villa, to the splendid estate which had been her dowry, confident that cholera would not penetrate there since it had never penetrated there before, not even in the great cholera year of 1836. And now here it was in the house, in the farmyard of the villa.

Disheveled and untidy, she entered the count's room, and before speaking gave two furious tugs at the bell rope.

"Do you know about it?" she cried, with wild eyes.

The count, who was calmly shaving, turned with soapy brush in hand and replied stupidly:

"What?"

"Do you not know about Rosa?"

"Yes, I know," the count replied tranquilly.

If he had at first unreasonably hoped that his wife might still be ignorant of Rosa's fate, he now thought that he might reassure her by assuming an indifferent manner. But the lady's beautiful eyes flashed fire, and her face wore a look of savage hardness.

"You know," she cried, "and think of shaving? What are you? Oh, what a father! What a husband!"

"Oh, heavens!" cried the count, throwing up his hands.

Before the poor man, soaped to his eyes, could find words to express himself, his valet knocked at the door.

The countess ordered that no peasant from the farmyard should be admitted to the house and that no one from the house should go to the farmyard. Then she sent word to the coachman to have the landau, with whatever horses the count wished, to be ready in an hour.

"What are you going to do?" asked the count, who had by this time recovered his breath. "I do not like these heroics."

"Heroics! And you have the courage to say that! I will be your slave in everything except in a matter of life and death. When it is a question of my son, then I will listen to no one, you understand! I wish to leave at once. Order the horses."

The count was annoyed. How could she go to such extremes? And how inconvenient it was to run away—how about his affairs? In two days, in one day, perhaps in twelve hours he might be able to go, but not before. The countess hardly let him say four words without contradicting him in the most excited manner. What did inconvenience or affairs matter? Shame on him!

"And your things?" said he. "We must take something with us. That requires time."

She could have her trunks ready in an hour, his wife explained scornfully.

"But where are you going?" asked her husband.

"To the railway station, and then wherever you wish. Order the horses."

"I give it up!" cried the count. "Order what you like. Let everything go! What do I care!" said he furiously to the man who stood waiting impassively.

The man left the room.

The countess hurriedly dressed herself and arranged her hair, often clasping her hands in the process in spasms of silent prayer, giving orders with every breath, setting the servants running all over the house in answer to frantic ringings of bells. There was hurrying up and down stairs, banging of doors, calling and cryings out, laughter and suppressed cursings. The windows looking out into the farmyard were closed at once, because aside from dread of infection the dead woman's children could be heard crying; then a depressing odor of chlorine filled the house, overpowering even her favorite perfume in the countess's room.

"Good heavens!" she cried, shuddering as if it were the odor of death, "this will spoil everything. Hurry up with the trunks, hurry! And close them at once! I shall die if I carry this odor away with me. Do they not know that chlorine is useless? That everything must be burnt? The master will send the steward away if he fails to burn everything."

"They have already burned everything, countess," said a maid. "The doctor made them burn sheets, coverings and the mattress."

"There are other things," said the countess.

At that moment the count, shaved and dressed, entered the room and drew his wife aside.

"What are we to do with all these servants?" he said. "We cannot possibly take them all with us."

"Do what you like," replied the countess. "Send them away. Certainly no one is to stay in this house. I do not wish them to get cholera and then spoil my rooms with the odor of chlorine, and burn goodness knows what things because they belong to the mistress."

The count was now furious with himself for having given in to her.

"A fine figure we cut!" he said. "It is cowardly and disgraceful to run away like this!"

"That is just like you men," said the countess. "To appear strong and courageous is of more importance to you than the life and safety of your family. You are afraid of losing your popularity. You do not wish to do so? Then send for the mayor and give him a hundred *lire* for the cholera victims."

He proposed to remain behind alone while she went away with the child; but he lacked the determination to persist in his intention.

Meanwhile the trunks were filled. The child's playthings, his most elegant clothes, laudanum, prayer-books, bathing costumes, jewels, notepaper with their crest, furs, underwear, very few necessary and many superfluous things, all were heaped up in confusion. Then with great exertion the trunks were closed, and the countess, followed by the count, who displayed great anxiety to do something but accomplished nothing, went all over the house, opening drawers and cupboards, looking in them for the last time, and then locking everything up. The count declared they ought to take some refreshment before leaving.

"Yes, yes!" said she ironically. "Take some refreshment! I will tell you now what you are to take." And summoning her husband and all the servants into one room, even those servants who were to be sent home, because she wished well to all, she compelled every one of them to take ten drops of laudanum; to the child she gave chocolate.

Finally the carriage came from the direction of the garden at a trot and stopped before the villa. Before descending the steps the countess, who was very pious, retired to her room for a last prayer. She knelt beside a chair, her slender form clad in white flannel, and clasped her black-gloved hands, with their bracelets of gold and silver, her eyes fervidly raised to heaven beneath her black-plumed hat and her lips moving rapidly. She uttered no word of prayer for the miserable children who had lost their mother, nor that the cholera might spare the humble lives chained by necessity to the land that had given her her villa, her jewels, her gowns and perfume, her refinement and pride, her husband and child. Nor did she pray for herself. She already saw herself and her family stricken down with cholera on the journey. She had no wish to pray for herself, and she forgot to pray for her husband. She prayed for her child, offered up vows for him. To be sure her lips only murmured Paters, Aves and Glorias, but her whole soul was with her child, filled with horror lest he might be stricken, and with the intense desire that he might not suffer even from this hasty departure, this journey whose destination was still unknown, that he might lose neither appetite nor sleep nor happiness nor the color from his cheeks, that she might succeed in concealing from him any sadness of countenance and the terror of others.

Hurriedly she made the sign of the cross, threw a long gray cloak around her, and went to close the only open window. The morning wind blew the grass before the villa, driving great masses of clouds across the sky and bending the poplars of the entrance avenue. The countess had no eyes for the peaceful scene familiar to her from childhood; it seemed full of

treachery to her now. She closed the window and went downstairs.

Near the carriage door the mayor was talking to the count.

"Have you come from there?" she asked, starting back.

Learning that he came from his own house, she inveighed against him for not having been able to keep the disease out of the village. He smiled and excused himself; but the countess hurried into the carriage with the child.

"Have you given it to him?" she asked in an undertone of her husband, when he had taken his place. The latter nodded.

"I must thank the countess, too, for her generosity," began the humble mayor.

"Poor creatures!" exclaimed the count, hardly knowing what he said.

Now that all were in the carriage, the countess made a rapid inspection of the bags, valises, umbrellas and wraps, Meanwhile, the count put his head out to see if the trunks were in their place behind the carriage.

"Are you ready?" asked the count. "And what is the matter with that child?"

"Who is crying?" exclaimed the countess in turn, almost throwing herself out of the carriage.

"All is ready, sir," replied a peasant who had been called to help the servants.

A ragged boy stood at his heels, sobbing.

"Go away! Be quiet!" said the boy's father roughly, and turning to the gentry said again: "All is ready!"

The count put his hand in his pocket, looking at the boy.

"Don't cry," said he; "I will give you a penny, too."

"Mama is sick," sobbed the boy desperately. "Mama has the cholera."

The countess jumped up, and with a face mad with terror, struck the coachman over the shoulders with her umbrella.

"Drive on!" she cried. "Drive on at once!"

The man whipped up the horses, starting off almost at a gallop. The mayor saved himself by jumping back, and the count had barely time to throw the man some money, which was scattered on the ground. The boy stopped crying, the man did not move, but looking after the rolling wheels and the gray umbrellas rapidly disappearing in the dust, muttered between his teeth:

"Accursed pigs of gentry!"

The mayor went away quietly, feigning not to have heard.

The man was of medium height, thin and livid, with the sinister expression of a criminal. His clothes, like those of his son, were in rags. He made the child pick up the money, and then both set out for home.

They lived in the courtyard of a farm belonging to the countess, between a dunghill and a pigsty. Below a plank which served as a bridge a black ditch, filled with unnamable filth, yawned before the door.

The door opened into a black, lurid cavern, without flooring, with a mutilated brick fireplace and its hearth hollowed out in the middle by the rough knees of those who had cooked polenta over the fire. A wooden stairway, with three steps missing, led to the bedroom, fetid with decay and debris, where father, mother and son slept in one bed. Near the bed was a hole in the floor through which one could look down into the kitchen. The bed itself had been dragged into the only part of the room where, when it rained, the water did not enter through the roof.

Couched on the floor, her head resting on the edge of the bed, was the peasant woman stricken with cholera; a poor face, old at thirty, which had been pretty and blooming at twenty, and still possessing the beauty of a mild saint. Her husband at first sight of her understood what had happened and uttered an oath. The boy, too, who followed him, was frightened at sight of the purple face of his mother and paused at the entrance.

"Lord Jesus, send him away!" murmured the woman in a weak voice. "Send him away, for I have

the cholera. Go to your aunt, dear. Take him there, and bring the priest."

"I will go," said her husband.

He went down the stairs, pushed the boy toward the door, and repeated:

"Go! Go to your aunt!"

Then he went to the farmyard gate, returning with an armful of straw which he carried into the kitchen, and went up to his wife, who meanwhile, with great effort, had thrown herself on the bed.

"Listen," he said with unusual gentleness, "I am sorry, but if you die here they will burn the bed, you understand. I have carried some straw into the kitchen for you. A good pile of it."

She was rapidly losing her voice and could no longer make herself understood. She nodded her head in assent and made a futile effort to rise from the bed. Then the man took her in his arms.

"Let us go!" said he. "If I am to die too we must lose no time."

The sick woman begged him with a gesture to give her the little silver crucifix that hung on the wall. When he had done so she pressed it ardently to her lips, her husband carried her down in his arms as if she were already a dead woman, and, laying her down on the straw, went in search of the priest.

Then the wretched woman alone like a beast on the already infected straw, before departing for the unknown world, prayed. She prayed in humble contrition for her own soul, convinced that she had sinned greatly, though she was unable to recall how and was tortured by her inability. The doctor came, sent by the mayor, looked at her in terror and said: "Rum, or marsala. You have none?" Then he ordered hot bricks to be placed on her stomach, put up the sign of sequestration and departed. The priest, a chaplain who was not afraid, came and said roughly, with the tranquillity of custom, what are called "the usual things," obscuring with his words the Divine ones. Ruined as she was by ignorance and misery, the words yet filled the dying woman's mind with serenity and light.

His task fulfilled, the priest too departed. Meanwhile the husband, after propping up her shoulders with more straw, lit the fire to heat the bricks. The woman continued to pray for her family, not so much for the boy as for the man whom she had forgiven so much and who was on the road to eternal damnation. Finally, kissing the crucifix, she recalled the individual who had given it to her.

It had been given to her sixteen years ago, at her confirmation, by the countess, the owner of the splendid villa where it was a joy to live and of the wretched, dirty hut where it was a joy to die. The countess had been a child at the time and had given the crucifix to the laborer's daughter at the suggestion of her mother, the countess of that time, a gentle lady dead for some years and unforgotten by the poor.

The dying woman admitted to herself that she had thought ill of the master and mistress, and even had sometimes complained of them and caused her husband to curse them, because in spite of petition after petition, they would never have the roof repaired, nor the floor, nor the stairway, and never would have papers put in the window-frames. She repented now; she remembered the good old lady, and asked pardon in her heart of the count and countess, and prayed to God and the Madonna for them.

The moment the man placed on her stomach the bricks, which burned her, her body writhed for an instant till a final quiver ran through it, and she died.

He covered her discolored face with straw, with difficulty unclasped her fingers from the crucifix, which he put in his pocket, and grumbled like the wretch he was: "For what you have done, O Christ!" He gave no utterance to the rest of his thoughts.

That same evening the servants who were to go home on a vacation during the absence of the count and countess became drunk on rum and marsala in the drawing-room of the villa.

THE MAYOR'S WINTER OVERCOAT

BY PETER NANSEN

AMONG the papers of Mayor Holst, found after his death, was a sealed envelope on which was written:

"I ask that after my death the inclosed shall be published in the *Berlingske Tidende*, or in whatever paper is at that time the official organ of Denmark."

So far as is known the manuscript has not hitherto been made public. Its contents are as follows:

I desire—for the enlightenment of our judges, legislators and moralists generally—to make confession herewith of a theft committed by me at the age of forty, a year after His Majesty had appointed me mayor of the town of Jutland that has recently celebrated with many ovations my twenty-fifth year of service.

It was on the occasion of a stag dinner party at the home of our district judge, Chamberlain Lilje, long since deceased. After dinner the chamberlain, Baron Ornhjelm, Dr. Colbein and myself settled down to a game of whist. We were all feeling pleasantly animated, for the wines at dinner had been of excellent quality, and the drinking did not stop with the conclusion of the meal. During our game we did not let the fine old Charente brandy lie idle in its bottle.

Baron Ornhjelm particularly had had somewhat more than was good for him. In a manner that was anything but aristocratic, he sat and twaddled about his shining qualities as a horse-dealer. He told us that that very day he had sold a pair of old nags to a stupid country priest for at least a hundred dollars more than the animals were worth. He took out his well-filled wallet and showed us triumphantly the roll of bills out of which he had swindled the poor priest. And then he sat there, chewing at the end of a fat Havana cigar and playing cards with about as much sense as a donkey.

I was comparatively sober. I had imbibed steadily, and enjoyed it, but my brain was quite clear. I knew perfectly well what I was saying and doing.

For a few minutes I found myself idle, as my partner was playing alone. To make myself more comfortable I pushed my chair back from the table. As I did so I glanced under the table and saw a fifty-dollar note lying on the floor. I had no doubt that it had dropped out of Baron Ornhjelm's wallet when he took it out to show us the money.

I was on the point of picking up the note and returning it to its owner, when I was suddenly seized by an irresistible temptation to keep it for myself. I was entirely dependent upon what I earned. My salary was large enough to allow me to live a care-free bachelor life, but it was not any too ample, and my position brought many social duties that taxed my income severely. Besides I had some few debts still remaining from my student days. In short, fifty dollars meant something to me. The thought flashed through my brain that it was just what I needed to buy a very necessary new winter overcoat.

But it was not this alone that moved me. I felt at the same moment a decided thrill of pleasure at the thought of becoming a thief.

Swiftly I thought out a plan, which I executed with a cold-blooded craftiness that awoke my most lively interest and filled me with secret pride in my ingenuity. While pretending to be absorbed in watching the game, I took out a fresh cigar, cut off the tip, and then dropped my knife, as if in awkwardness. It fell most happily right beside the bank-note. The other men were too much occupied with their cards and their drinking to think of offering to pick it up for me.

With an oath, as if in anger at my clumsiness, I bent down, felt about as if having trouble in recovering my lost property, and quietly slipped the note into the top of my boot. I took care to push it well down and to see that my trousers were put in order again after the operation.

Then—all this had taken several seconds—I rose with a groan, leaned back in my chair as if fatigued, lit my cigar and puffed contentedly. I began to criticize the playing, choosing for the already intoxicated baron some well-turned, malicious compliments.

The exciting moment came when the game closed. The baron, who had lost ten or twelve dollars, took out his wallet to pay his debt. He turned out the roll of bills on the table and fingered it over.

"Look at the millions," I laughed. "We should have plucked him a good deal more."

I took up my glass for a quiet drink with the doctor, begging him to give my regards to his wife. The glass was still at my mouth when I heard the baron say:

"The devil! I've lost fifty dollars!"

I emptied my glass quietly. Then I said: "Perhaps you made yourself out too bad, baron. You may have swindled the old priest out of only fifty dollars. Or perhaps the brandy has a different effect on you than on the rest of us. We're beginning to see double; for instance, you look to me to be twice as drunk as you probably are."

They all laughed at my joke, even the baron. But after he had gone through his roll of bills again, he insisted: "I'll sell my soul if there's not fifty dollars less here than there should be. Here, chamberlain, will you please count it? When I left the hotel I had eight fifty-dollar notes, and one hundred and fifty dollars in fives. I can't make it more than seven fifties now."

Amid general merriment the judge took the roll and counted the notes carefully. My friend Dr. Colbein, if he survives me, can bear witness to the unpleasant sensation that possessed us as the judge gave his decision.

"There are but seven notes here," he declared. "Are you sure there should be more?"

"I know I'm pretty full," the baron replied, "but I know that I had eight of the larger notes when I left the hotel. I counted them carefully just before leaving."

There was a painful silence. Then the judge said: "I am very sorry for this, baron, but if the money was there, it certainly will not be difficult to find it."

I remember that for the moment a feeling of sympathy overcame me—not for the baron, but for the gentle, amiable judge, who evidently was most disturbed at the affair. I had it on my lips to explain that it was a joke on my part and return the money. But I did not do it, partly because I needed the money and partly because I enjoyed the sensation of committing a crime. This sensation was doubly exciting, because I sat there, at once the thief and the representative of authority.

Then began a feverish hunt for the lost note, to the accompaniment of a running fire of questions and conjectures.

"Are you sure, baron, that the note isn't in some other pocket?"

"Didn't you drop in anywhere on your way here?"

"Could it be possible that you didn't count right at the hotel?"

"Or perhaps the money is in the coat you wore this afternoon."

But the baron, who had become quite sober, replied in no very friendly

tone that there was no mistake possible.

Then I spoke with a touch of offended irony in my voice, though I was otherwise quite cool and business-like: "If the baron is so certain of himself, all we can do is to offer ourselves for a personal search. As the official head of the City Government, I put myself quite at the baron's disposal."

My words had the intended effect. The baron understood that he could not push the matter further in such a place. With the manner of a grand seigneur he declared the whole thing to be a mere bagatelle that would probably be easily explained by to-morrow morning. The money would turn up somewhere, either here or at the hotel. And in any case, he was pleased enough with his fifty-dollar profit.

We all went out rather depressed. At the door the judge whispered that he wished to speak to me to-morrow.

I walked home with the doctor. We united in disapproval of the baron's behavior. Had he not been so intoxicated, had he been capable of realizing what he was doing and saying, he should have been sharply called to account. Here he had practically accused the judge's guests of theft!

I talked myself into a passion, while my friend endeavored to turn it all off as a joke.

"Really, now," he said, "supposing you or I had actually taken the fifty dollars? Wouldn't it be rather a good deed than otherwise to deprive the baron of a little of his ill-gotten gains? Would we not be merely the instruments of a just fate? And certainly the robbed priest would be the first to give us absolution."

"Don't let us drag religion into this matter," I answered. "For my part I think a theft is the ugliest and meanest of all crimes. I can understand murder, but not theft. I could perhaps understand a theft committed in direst poverty or hunger, but such a crime for the mere lust of gain is repulsive in the extreme."

As I rattled off these words I was proud of the true ring of my indignation. At the same time I found myself hoping the bank-note would not work itself out of my boot as I walked.

The doctor and I parted in the market-place. As soon as I found myself alone, I bent down to see if the money was there, and then put it into a safer hiding-place.

I walked home whistling merrily, planning not to spend the money until the first of the month, when I received my salary. On paydays I was accustomed to change several large bank-notes in the local bank. After entering the house, I lit all the lights in my sitting-room, opened a small bottle of extra fine madeira, and smoked an imported cigar. "Now the baron is just lighting one of the cigars he slipped into his pocket at the judge's house," I thought. Was he really any better than I?

I have seldom felt so well and happy as I did at that moment. Before me on the table, beside my wineglass, lay the stolen bank-note. I had a feeling of riches, of riches that seemed doubled because they were won so suddenly and without any labor—like a sudden legacy or a prize in the lottery.

Before going to bed I put the note in among a package of letters lying in an open pigeonhole of my desk. They would never be looked for there, being, as it were, right out in the open. I put it in the only yellow envelope in the package, that I might be able to find it again myself.

My first business next morning was to go to my tailor's and order a winter overcoat. I ordered a handsome one with silk lining. It was like a present anyway, so why should it not be as handsome as possible?

From the tailor's I went on to the judge's office. He came to meet me, with an expression of care on his face.

"What an unpleasant affair this is," he began. "What do you advise me

to do? I can find no other explanation for it than that one of the servants, either my own old Lars or the man who came in to help, must have taken the money. I can't understand it, for I know them both to be absolutely honest. But how else could it have happened? And now it's this way: I will not have either of the men arrested or involved at any price. They are both married men, fathers of families, and they have been devoted to me for years. I wish the matter to be settled without any noise or scandal. I thought I might write the baron and tell him the money had been found in the room, and then send him the amount. Wouldn't you do it in my place? Isn't it all there is to do? Would there be anything wrong in settling it this way? That is what I want you to tell me."

I must explain here that Chamberlain Lilje was by no means a rich man. He had no private fortune, and it was as much as he could do to live up to his position and make his house, as his professional status demanded, one of the best and most honored in the town. I could not bear to think of his paying the rich baron, to whom fifty dollars meant so little, a sum which to him would be a serious loss.

So I answered: "My dear chamberlain, you take this matter much too seriously. For my part, I cannot believe that the baron lost the money in your house. You must acknowledge that he was not quite clear-headed during most of the evening. Who knows whether he had not been that way most of the day? Anyway, I advise you to wait a day or so."

When I had succeeded in calming the judge somewhat, I called on the baron at his hotel. As I expected, he was still there; in fact, he was still in bed.

"Between you and me, baron—we are both bachelors and can talk freely," I began—"are you so certain that, in case it came to a legal investigation, you could swear that, between the time of your dealings with the priest and your dinner at the judge's, you were not at any place where you have reason to think you might have lost the bank-note? Besides being still a bachelor, I am the mayor of this town. In this capacity I am also well acquainted with what goes on in the little house in Gravens Alley."

The baron and I soon came to an understanding. He maintained that he did not think the money could have been taken in Gravens Alley; but he did not want to make so much trouble about a small matter, nor did he want to worry the kind old judge. So the baron wrote a letter to the chamberlain to say that he had found the missing bank-note in his hotel room, and that he deeply regretted the happening of the night before.

And it all ended happily, after all.

The new winter overcoat that I bought with the baron's fifty dollars was a very good one and served me well for many years. When it was no longer good enough to wear for state occasions, I used it on cold days in the court-room. And it brought a milder judgment down on the head of many a poor fellow accused of petty thieving.

In its best days it helped, even if only indirectly, to win for me a young and charming wife, with whom I lived happily for more than twenty years, until death took her from me. My wife brought me a fortune large enough to prevent any wish to renew the exciting sensations of my first and —on my honor—my only theft.

I have no doubt that after my death all will agree that I have been an irreproachable and incorruptible public official.

And, indeed, I have been, with the one exception here narrated. But this one exception—does it not deserve a place in my obituary? Is it not, perhaps, more interesting, more instructive, than much of the praise that may be said of me? For if a fortunate Fate had not sent me a rich wife—who knows——?

I leave the conclusion to my thoughtful readers.

THE TALISMAN

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

I HAD gone to his house at midday in accordance with his request. Throughout the luncheon, which was served in a dining-hall as long as the nave of a church, where he had assembled a rare collection of antique jewelry, I found him not sad but thoughtful. His lively wit showed only occasionally in the conversation. Sometimes a word revealed his rare artistic taste or his ardor as a sportsman, which had not been assuaged even by a terrible fall only a short time before, when his horse's neck had been broken. But his ideas were halting. One after another they seemed to come up against a dead wall.

Of the conversation, which was rather tiresome to follow, I remember only that he had just sent a pair of white peacocks to his chateau at Raray, and that, without any sufficient motive, he had neglected his acquaintances for three weeks past, not even calling on his most intimate friends, M. and Mme. Nevers. Evidently he had not invited me just to listen to confidences of this sort. As we were sipping our coffee, I asked what he had to say to me.

"Had I something to say to you?" he asked, with a slightly surprised air.

"Why, certainly, you wrote me: 'Come and lunch with me tomorrow. I want to talk to you.'"

As he still said nothing I took the letter from my pocket and showed it to him. The address was written in his fine, clear hand, and on the envelope there was a seal of violet wax.

He passed his hand over his forehead.

"I remember now. Will you be good enough to come with me to Feral's? I want to show you a Romney sketch of a young woman—the reflection of her golden hair gilds her forehead and cheeks; the deep blue of her iris gives its color to the entire eye; and the warm freshness of the skin is delicious. I want you to look at it and see if you can find out whether—" He broke off abruptly, and then, with his hand on the door-knob, he added: "Wait for me. I'll slip on a coat and we'll go together."

Left alone in the dining-room, I went over to a window and examined the wax seal more attentively than I had before. It was the impression of an antique intaglio representing a satyr lifting the veil of a nymph asleep at the foot of a column under a laurel tree, a subject very popular with the painters and engravers on stone of the best Roman period. It seemed to be an admirable replica. The purity of the style, the incomparable feeling of the form, the harmony of the composition made this scene, which was no bigger than a finger-nail, a powerful picture.

I was still under the influence of its charm when my friend appeared at the half-opened door.

"Come, come, let us go," he said. He had his hat on, and seemed to be in a hurry.

I complimented him on the seal. "I did not know you had this beautiful stone."

He replied that he had had it but a short time, about six weeks. It was a great find. He drew it from his finger, on which he wore it mounted on a ring, and handed it to me. The engraved gems of this classic style are almost invariably carnelians, and I

was a little surprised to see that this was a dull stone of a deep violet color.

"Well, well," I cried, "it is an amethyst!"

"Yes, it is the stone of sorrow and brings bad luck. Do you think it is antique?"

He handed me a reading-glass, in order that I might examine the gem with it and the better appreciate the cutting. There could be no doubt that it was a chef-d'œuvre of the Greek lapidaries, dating from the early days of the Empire. I had never seen anything finer in the museum at Naples, which contains a superb collection of gems. With the help of the magnifying-glass the emblem that figures so often on the monuments sacred to subjects of the Bacchus cycle could easily be distinguished on the column, and I remarked as much.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. The stone was mounted on a swivel, and when I turned it over to examine the reverse I was very much surprised to find certain marks carved there with brutal crudeness, evidently of a very much later period than that of the cutting. They looked somewhat like the cabalistic formulas that are so well known to antiquaries, and in spite of my inexperience I thought I recognized certain magical symbols. My friend shared this belief.

"They tell me," he said, "that it is a charm, an incantation from some Greek poet."

"From which one?"

"I do not remember them very well."

"Theocritus?"

"Theocritus, perhaps."

With the aid of the glass I could distinctly make out four letters: "KHPH."

"That doesn't make a name," said my friend.

I remarked that in Greek it made "Kere," and I returned the gem to him. He looked at it in a sort of stupor for some moments before he put it on his finger again.

"Let us start," he said suddenly. "Which way are you going?"

"Toward the Madeleine. And you?" I inquired.

"I? Where am I going? Why, I am going to Goulot's to see a horse that he doesn't want to buy until I look it over. You know I am a horse-dealer and even a bit of a veterinary. I am also a second-hand dealer, house decorator, architect, landscape gardener, and at a pinch a stockbroker. Why, my dear boy, I would do up all the Jews on the Bourse if it weren't so much bother."

We strolled down the faubourg and my friend began to walk at a gait that contrasted strongly with his usual indolence. His pace soon became so rapid that I could scarcely keep up with him. A woman, well enough dressed, was ahead of us, and he drew my attention to her.

"Her shoulders are round and her waist a little large," he said, "but look at her ankle. You see, horses, women, all fine animals are built the same. Their limbs, heavy and rounded in the fleshy parts, become slender at the joints where the bones are finer. Look at that woman—there is nothing to admire in her figure above the waist, but below it how free and graceful she is!" And with the wisdom that he had so thoroughly acquired and which he dispensed freely, he added, "One shouldn't expect everything of a woman, and one should take the beautiful where one finds it. The beautiful is extremely rare."

Almost immediately, by a mysterious association of ideas, he raised his left hand to look at his intaglio.

"You are using that marvelous bacchanal instead of your coat-of-arms, the little tree, are you not?"

"Ah, yes," replied Du Fau, "our family emblem, the beech—you know my name, Fau, is the Old French word for beech. My great-grandfather was what was called a gentleman in Poitou under Louis XVI., that is to say, a notable commoner. In the course of time he became a member of the Revolutionary Club in Poitiers and acquired a good deal of Government

land, which assures me today the friendship of princes, and aristocratic rank in our society of Israelites and Americans. Why have I given up the beech of the Du Faus? It was almost as famous as the oak (*chêne*) of the Duchêsnes de la Sicotière, and I have changed it for the bacchanal, the sterile laurel and the emblematic column."

As he said this with a mocking emphasis we reached the house of his friend Goulot, but Du Fau did not stop before the heavy bronze knockers, in the form of Neptunes, that shone on the door like faucets on a bathtub.

"Were you in a hurry to see Goulot?"

He did not seem to hear me, but increased his pace and raced on, almost out of breath, to the rue Matignon, into which he turned. Then, suddenly, he stopped in front of a big, somber, five-story house. He said not a word, but looked up anxiously at the plaster façade, which was pierced by many windows.

"Are you going to stay here long?" I asked him. "Do you know that it is in this house that Mme. Cère lives?"

I felt sure I would irritate him by this mention of the woman whose artificial beauty, notorious venality and astonishing folly he had always detested, and who had been suspected, watched and caught stealing lace in one of the big shops.

"Do you think so?" was all the reply he gave me, in a feeble and almost plaintive voice.

"I am sure of it. Why, you see those horrible curtains with the red leopards on them in the windows of the second floor?"

He nodded his head.

"I really think Mme. Cère lives there. I think she is behind one of those red leopards this very moment."

He seemed to wish to pay her a visit, and I expressed my surprise.

"You used to dislike her very much in the old days, when everybody else found her handsome and attractive, when she inspired fatal passions. You used to say: 'If only for the texture of her skin, that woman would inspire me with an insurmountable disgust, but in addition she has a square waist and thick wrists.' Now that she is a physical wreck, have you discovered one of those hidden charms with which you were saying just now a man ought to be satisfied? What do you think of the slenderness of her ankles and the nobility of her soul?—a big hackney, with neither chest nor haunches, who, when she entered a drawing-room, used to sweep the room with a movement of her entire head, and by that simple means attracted to herself the crowd of fools and coxcombs who ruin themselves for women who could never stand being undraped."

I stopped, a little ashamed of having spoken so of the woman. But she had shown such abundant proof of her horrible spitefulness that I had given way to the very strong distaste with which she inspired me. To tell the truth, I would never have expressed myself so freely if I were not quite sure of her evil heart and her perfidy. Besides, I had the satisfaction of noticing that Du Fau had not heard a single word of what I had been saying.

"Whether I go to her house or not," he said, speaking as if to himself, "makes no difference. For the past six weeks I have not been able to enter a drawing-room without finding her there, in houses that I haven't entered for years, and to which I go now without knowing why. They are funny places."

I left him standing before the open door, unable to understand the attraction that held him. That Du Fau, who had had a horror of Mme. Cère when she was handsome and had repulsed the woman's advances in her brilliant years, should seek her out now, when she was old and a slave to morphine, was a depravity that surprised me in my friend. I would have sworn that such an error of taste was impossible unless there was some reason for it in the obscure domain of pathology of the passions.

A month later I left Paris without having seen Paul Du Fau again. After

passing a few days in Brittany, I went to Trouville to visit my cousin, who was installed there with her children. The first week of my sojourn at Halcyon Villa was spent giving water-color lessons to my nieces, making kites for my nephews and hearing my cousin play Wagner.

Sunday morning I accompanied the family to church, and during mass I took a stroll about the village. As I was walking along the street, lined with toy shops and bric-à-brac stores, that leads down to the beach, I saw Mme. Cère in front of me. She was going to the bathhouse alone, sluggish and abandoned. She dragged her feet after her as if she were wearing sabots. Her soiled and rumpled gown looked as if it were falling off her. Once she turned around. Her hollow, unseeing eyes and loosely hanging lips shocked me. Women looked askance at her as she went on her way, dejected and indifferent. Evidently the poor woman was saturated with morphine. At the end of the street she stopped before Mme. Guillot's display, and with her long, thin hand began to feel of the laces. Her hungry look at the moment recalled to my mind the evil tales that were told of her in the big stores. Stout Mme. Guillot, who was showing some of her clients out, appeared at the door. Dropping the laces, Mme. Cère resumed her desolate walk to the beach.

"You never buy anything now. What a bad client you are!" cried Mme. Guillot when she saw me. "Come and look at the brooches and fans your nieces thought were so pretty. They are growing up to be fine young ladies."

Then she looked at Mme. Cère, who was going down the street, and shook her head as if to say: "Well, well, isn't it dreadful!"

I had to select some trifles for my nieces, and while the shopkeeper was doing them up I glanced through the window and saw Du Fau going down to the beach. He walked quickly, with an anxious air. As he was biting his nails, as many uneasy persons do, I saw that he had the amethyst on his hand.

This meeting was the more surprising to me because Du Fau had announced that he was going to Dinard, where he had a shooting-box. I went back to the church to pick up my cousin, and asked her if she knew that Du Fau was at Trouville.

"Yes," she said, and then she added, with a slight trace of embarrassment: "Our poor friend is making himself ridiculous. He never leaves that woman, and really—" She stopped, and then went on: "He is actually pursuing her. It is absolutely inexplicable."

So it was he who was pursuing her!

I had abundant proof of it in the next few days. I saw him incessantly trotting about after Mme. Cère and M. Cère—no one knows even yet whether he is a complacent husband or merely stupid. His imbecility is his salvation. Doubtless he lives by his shame. In days gone by the woman had been positively insane in her efforts to attract Du Fau, who was well known to be a very useful friend to households that are in financial straits and want to make a showing. But Du Fau had not concealed his antipathy from her. "An artificially pretty woman," he used to say in her presence, "is more tiresome than an ugly woman. With the latter one might hope for an agreeable surprise; the former is Dead Sea fruit."

Now Mme. Cère paid no attention to him. Utterly indifferent to men, she never gave a thought to anything but her hypodermic syringe and her inseparable friend, the Countess Vaux. Du Fau accompanied them on various excursions. I saw him one day loaded down with their wraps and wearing M. Cère's enormous marine-glasses slung across his shoulder. He was going out for a boat ride with Mme. Cère, and the entire beach watched them with malicious joy.

It was natural that I had little desire to be seen with him, and as he always seemed to be in a constant state

of somnambulism I left Trouville without having exchanged a dozen words with my unhappy friend, whom I left a slave to the Cères and Countess Vaux.

I met him again one evening in Paris at the home of his friends and neighbors, the Neverses. In the arrangement of their pretty home in the Avenue Kléber I recognized the delicate taste of Mme. Nevers and of Du Fau, which agreed very well together. It was rather an intimate reception, and Paul Du Fau exhibited, as he had in the past, the brilliant wit which is so characteristic of him and the refined delicacy which, nevertheless, has in it in some strange way the most picturesque brutality. Mme. Nevers is a witty woman, and the conversation at her house is always very amusing. However, the first words I heard there were tiresomely commonplace. A magistrate, Councillor Nicolas, was telling at great length the hackneyed story of the watch tower in which all sentinels committed suicide one after the other, and which had to be torn down to put an end to the strange epidemic. After this Mme. Nevers asked me if I believed in talismans. Councillor Nicolas saved me the trouble of answering by declaring that I must be superstitious because I was so skeptical.

"You are not far wrong there," exclaimed Mme. Nevers; "he believes in neither God nor the devil, and he loves stories of the other world."

I watched the charming woman while she was speaking, and admired the discreet beauty of her cheeks, her neck and shoulders. Her entire person suggested the idea of some rare and precious thing. I don't know what Du Fau thinks of Mme. Nevers's foot, but I think it is exquisite.

Paul Du Fau came up and shook hands with me. I noticed that he had no ring on his finger.

"What has become of your amethyst?" I asked.

"I lost it."

"An engraved gem more beautiful than any Rome or Naples can boast, and you lost it?"

Without giving him time to reply, Nevers, who never left him, exclaimed: "Yes, it's a strange story. He has lost his amethyst."

Nevers is an excellent man, very confident and talkative, and so simple that he is often ridiculous.

"Martha, my dear," he called to his wife, "here is a man who hasn't heard yet that Du Fau has lost his amethyst." And then turning toward me, he went on: "It is quite a story. Fancy, our friend had absolutely abandoned us! 'What have you done to Du Fau?' I asked my wife, and she replied, 'I? Nothing, my dear.' We couldn't understand it, and our surprise was increased when we heard that he never left that poor Mme. Cère."

"What is the good of repeating all that rigmarole?" interrupted Mme. Nevers.

"Permit me, my dear," M. Nevers insisted. "I am explaining the story of the amethyst. So this summer our friend Du Fau refused to come to see us in the country, as he usually does. We invited him, my wife and I, very cordially, but he stayed at Trouville, with his cousin, in the worst of company. Yes," Nevers insisted, at a protest from Mme. Nevers, "in the worst of company. He spent all his days boating with Mme. Cère."

Du Fau observed calmly that there wasn't a word of truth in what Nevers was saying.

"Do you dare to give me the lie?" laughed Nevers, throwing his arm over his best friend's shoulder. And then he went on with the story: "Du Fau wandered about day and night with Mme. Cère, or with her shadow, for they say that Mme. Cère is nothing more than a shadow of her former self now. Cère stayed on the beach with his marine-glasses. During one of these excursions Du Fau lost his amethyst. After this misfortune he would not stay a day longer at Trouville. He left the place without saying good-bye to anyone, boarded the train and came to us at Eyzies, where nobody expected him. It was two

o'clock in the morning. 'Here I am!' he said to me coolly. Isn't he extraordinary?"

"But what about the amethyst?" I asked.

"It is true," replied Du Fau, "that it fell into the sea. It is resting now at the bottom of the ocean—if some fisherman is not bringing it back to me in the belly of a fish, according to the prescribed usage."

Three days after that I went into Hendel's, in the rue de Châteaudun, and asked him if he hadn't some knick-knacks that I might care to see. He knows that I am looking for bronzes and antique marbles. He silently opened a certain case that is known only to favorite customers, and took out of it a little Egyptian scarab in hard stone, in the primitive manner. It was a gem. But when I learned the price of it I myself put it back in its place, though not without a regretful glance. Then I saw in the case a wax impression of the intaglio I had so much admired when Du Fau had it. I recognized the nymph, the column and the laurel tree—there was no possible doubt.

"Have you this gem?" I asked Hendel.

"No, I sold it last year."

"It's a pretty bit. Where did you get it?"

"I got it from Marc Delion, the banker, who killed himself five years ago for a society woman — Mme. — perhaps you know her — Mme. Cère."

NOT A PIRATE

CRITIC (*to wife of orchestra conductor*)—How is it that your husband does not compose any music?

CONDUCTOR'S WIFE—Oh, he is far too honest!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

A TIP

THE NEPHEW—Now, don't try any of your guying on Aunt Mehitabel.

THE GUEST—Why, can't she understand a joke?

"No; she's deaf as a post."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

MERELY A REPORT

MOTHER (*severely*)—Fannie, you kissed Mr. Flirter just now out in the hall. Don't deny it! I heard you.

FANNIE (*languidly*)—Mama dear, don't you know you can't believe all you hear?—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

UNDER THE RUINS

BY ISABELLE KAISER

"ARE you going out this evening, Daniel?"

Du Breuille raised his eyes from the newspaper and threw away his cigarette. "Of course. Why do you ask, Elie?".

The young wife shivered nervously. "Yes, of course, you do go out every evening; but—there is something threatening in the air, the weather feels tragic, somehow."

He followed her to the veranda, where she stood leaning her elbows on the balustrade.

"You are too susceptible, Elisabeth."

But he said no more, for he was struck by the unusual aspect of the landscape before them. A hot breath came up from the bay, where the waters splashed musically beneath the oars. The Mediterranean, impenetrably blue, lay as if congealed before some formidable onset: the sun was sinking toward the horizon in lurid fire; not a cloud flecked the sky; the sea breezes were asleep; all the flowers in the garden, the lemons, eucalyptus, oleanders, roses, exhaled their souls in passionate sweetness on the glowing air.

"It is terrible in its beauty," she said with labored breath. "One feels as though treachery were lying in wait."

Her husband stole a glance at her unperceived. Against the golden background her profile stood forth imperiously distinct. Within its frame of hair was the face of a saint, with lofty brow and eyes disconcerting in their impenetrable depth. The mystical nature of her beauty had always baffled the understanding of this man of the world and exercised upon him a secret fascination, mingled with an unreasonable jealousy of the unknown God, or whatever Power it was that disputed with him the homage of his wife's soul. Like all profound natures, she was the shrine of a mystery which he had never been able to penetrate.

He put his arm about her waist, but she turned pale and drew back, as if swayed by some feeling that overpowered her.

"One cannot breathe tonight," she murmured.

She left his side, gathered some yellow roses that were climbing over the balcony, and arranged them in a Vallauris vase. Then she said suddenly:

"If you are going out, Daniel, you had better go soon—before the storm breaks."

He frowned. She seemed anxious to get rid of him.

"Why don't you come with me, Elie?" he asked.

She looked surprised. "Surely, dear, you have forgotten? A nursing mother—what about little Gabriel?"

"Oh, of course. I beg your pardon."

In the sudden gust of passion fanned by the latent voluptuousness of the evening's quivering tension he had in truth forgotten. A feeling of tenderness took possession of him.

"I had promised to meet Jean Rodier at the Café Anglais; but if you would rather—" He hesitated.

"No, dear. Besides, I could not give you my whole evening; I have things to attend to."

"What are you going to do?"

"Oh, don't trouble about me, Daniel. I shall be—with the baby, as usual these last few evenings."

"Don't sit up till my return, dearest," he begged. "I told the Devrainnes I

would look in at the ball at the Casino to pay my respects to Prince Carnival. You won't be afraid of the storm?"

"Afraid? I?" she said disdainfully.

Afraid, indeed! She loved the sublime fury of the sea, the masterful wind that swept the frivolity out of the pleasure-loving town. But he did not understand these things. Why? She placed her hands on her husband's shoulders and scrutinized the handsome, bored face, the metallic eyes whose supercilious glance never penetrated beneath the surface of things. Would he never grasp the meaning of life? Would no revelation of greater truths ever smooth away the skeptical lines of his mouth, break down the barrier that rendered impossible the complete fusion of their two souls?

Perhaps some great sorrow——!

She said nothing, but, feeling the unspoken monition of her eyes, the eyes of one who sees, he turned away.

When he reappeared to bid her good night before he went he saw that she was weeping, silently, as she stood.

"I do not know what is the matter with me tonight," she said, with a smile. Touching with her finger-tip the tears that hung on her eyelashes she traced with it lightly on the man's forehead, half petulantly, half in earnest, the sign of the cross.

He shrugged his shoulders. "One would suppose I was going away on a sea voyage!"

"Does one ever know? Daniel, after all, the sun itself might not rise some morning."

She watched him as he passed, with the *blasé* conqueror's gait usual to him, beneath the pointed arches; she saw the hand that knew not work put aside the branches of the tamarind trees veiling the portico, with the gesture of one who would pick up a lady's veil or throw gold upon a gaming-table. A shudder passed through her heart.

As soon as he disappeared, without having once turned to send her a glance of farewell, her expression changed swiftly. An almost childlike eagerness dispelled the harmonious gravity of her former attitude.

"You run to your pleasure, and I go to my joy," she said to herself.

She raised a questioning glance to the sky. A few stars twinkled in the blue. A barque with unfurled sail was hastening toward some hospitable creek.

Darkness enwrapped the earth like a thief planning a crime. In the nearer streets tinkled the little bells of human folly: the carnival of the South with its loud laughter, its unrestrained impertinences.

"I will go, all the same," she decided.

She went into the villa and rang the bell.

"I am not at home to anyone," she said to the manservant.

In her own room she hastily attired herself in sombre garb, wrapped herself in a large cloak with a hood, put on her gray veil. Then she passed into the nursery.

II

When Daniel du Breuille left the club with his friend Rodier a few hours later a flash of flame struck him in the face. Heavy black clouds walled in the firmament. A shudder ran through palpitating nature.

He tried to speak—"My wife was right—weather for the end of the world"—but a formidable blast of wind cut from him his powers of speech. A breath sulphurous as from the jaws of hell swept by at lightning speed; the waves of the troubled sea dashed against each other; the bowels of the earth, tortured by an army of Titans, writhed, rolling their thunder that burst with a roar.

Daniel du Breuille felt the ground beneath him heave like a sinking ship. He staggered, clinging to his friend's arm. The thought of God, Elisabeth's God, and His punishments furrowed his soul in an instant of supreme light: then, as if mown down by a mysterious, shadowy hand, the two men were flung headlong to the earth.

When he recovered his senses and

tried to rise he saw the innocent stars smiling down upon him through the transparent air. He had no consciousness of what had happened. His limbs were sound; he seemed to himself to be waking from a nightmare. But his friend, standing over him, was exclaiming in terrified accents:

"Du Breuille, get up! It's an earthquake! There may be other shocks coming. Let's take refuge somewhere!"

Du Breuille was up with a bound. The words struck like a bullet to his heart. An earthquake! Falling houses, devastated homes, women buried beneath the ruins! Take refuge? Yes, indeed, there was for him but one place of refuge: the villa yonder, nestled among the tamarinds—there—by his wife and the child's cradle.

Fool that he was to be running after pleasure! Hell itself had cried to him, Halt! The thought of the ball to which he had been going appeared monstrous; the frenzied masks thronging the shadowy streets were figures in the dance of death. He looked toward the town; it was standing, but the growing clamor that arose from the mass of stones, the screams, as of butchered sheep, that re-echoed through the squares, proclaimed the triumph of the catastrophe and the ravage it had wrought.

Nothing occurred to stay Du Breuille in his headlong flight homeward. Fantasies of his brain maddened him—the dear home in ruins, shrieks for help from shattered throats. A rain of tears streamed down his face. He was no longer the same man who had stepped out delicately in self-conscious elegance a few hours before, the dilettante of life whose very existence was naught but vanity and a feeding upon wind. Danger had rushed upon him like a torrent and swept away his futilities. In this hour, when faith was inspiring others to heroism, his soul lay bare and bleeding, bereft of all support.

He reached the gate and clung to it, for his strength was failing him. The house was there, wrapped in slumber, not a stone out of its place. One solitary light gleamed in the front. A breath of honey floated through the garden—the roses knew nothing of the disaster.

He entered the villa. The servants were there in disorder; they were terrified when they saw him alone. Already he was far up the staircase. In the nursery, where the night light was burning, the baby wailed, forsaken by his nurse.

Elisabeth was not by the cradle. He bounded to her bed; it was untouched. He called her, searched the empty rooms where misfortune seemed to brood; there was no answer.

"Where is your mistress?" he demanded of the maids.

They hesitated.

He repeated the question imperiously.

The hour of peril swept away their scruples.

"Madame went out, as she does every evening, after monsieur," the chambermaid admitted.

"She—went—out?"

Such stupefied amazement was depicted on the face of their master that the household was struck dumb. He recovered himself hastily to anticipate any inference that the hirelings might draw for themselves.

"Ah, yes, quite so. I knew—and madame did not say when she would return?"

"No, sir."

"Ah—what time did she return last night?"

"Madame always returns after ten o'clock."

"But it is past midnight!"

"Madame must have been delayed by the earthquake."

"Very good, you may go. But sit up for madame's return; she may need you. Jenny, did madame return last night alone?"

"No, sir, there was someone with her."

"Who?"

"A man—I do not know who he is—he has never been inside the house."

Daniel du Breuille went out again

into the night—to go and meet her. Unquestionably he would meet her, but he felt the terrors of doubt pass through him. It was as though the earthquake had turned his soul upside down in the rebound. The horizon of his life had been altered: something within him had fallen in ruins.

His wife! She whom he had regarded as the very incarnation of truth, *she* to conceal from him a part of her life! With an inward vigor, astonishing in the man, he stifled in this hour of confusion the flame of suspicion that leaped up in his breast. He tried to find plausible reasons for his wife's nocturnal expeditions.

Did she go to call on friends? No, she had no friends in this summer resort; she knew no one. And besides, what reason could she have for concealing such a matter from him?

So, while he had supposed her to be at home at her piano, bending over a page of poetry or watching beside her child in the pose of a nursing Madonna, she was running about at night—! To the churches? Of course! But why secretly, and in the evening? True, he scarcely ever left her to herself save in the evenings—and true also that, skeptic and worldling as he was, he entertained an instinctive contempt alike for divine service and for human misery; for the heights to which he could not attain and the depths which he shrank from approaching.

This theory of her having gone to church calmed him. He went on into the town, wide-awake that night, and made inquiries. No church had fallen, but in the old town several buildings had collapsed, burying their inhabitants beneath them.

For hours he wandered at random, returning to the villa as weary as though he had been marching through a desert.

Elisabeth had not returned. He passed the remainder of the night in agonized expectancy.

In the depths of the man a rift, at first imperceptible, widened with the passing hours, working in him invisible ravages. In vain he tried to shield himself from it; there was a breach in his thought through which writhed the viper of doubt. He was too steeped in the prejudices and notions that were current coin in the world to which he belonged; his own mind had long since been stripped by daily contact with vulgarity, the stories told at the club, the tinsel of his boon companions—stripped too bare of any natural purity to have the moral strength to resist suspicion in face of so patent a fact—a wife clandestinely leaving her husband's roof, at night, and in his absence.

A wife? Perhaps. But his wife? Never!

But then—? In the presence of this enigma the debasing torture began afresh, the pure image of his absent wife grew tarnished.

At daybreak he questioned the chambermaid again. Had she noticed nothing? Had no one called the previous day?

Yes, the maid said, a child had brought a note for madame—one of those little Italian vagabonds.

Was there nothing she could tell him to guide him in the search?

Yes, madame went in the direction of the mountain, toward the old town. Indeed, the first evening, a week ago, she herself had had to accompany her mistress as far as the door of a house.

"Come with me!"

They went out. The young woman led the way in full confidence, being familiar with the neigborhood. But as they entered one of the streets of the old town a sergeant stopped them. For greater safety a cordon of soldiers had been drawn around the place.

Du Breuille gave his name and made a declaration that his wife was lost and that he had reason to believe she had come here the previous evening. He was allowed to pass.

The maid turned pale as she stopped before a house of which a piece of the outer wall alone remained standing; three windows opened into empty space.

"It was here, sir."

He fell back as if a paving-stone had

struck him in the forehead. There—there—in that heaped-up tomb? No, no! the girl must be mistaken!

He turned to the bystanders. Who lived there? Poor people, doubtless?

No, that was the studio of Giuliano Marini, the well-known artist. Not a day passed without strangers coming to see him. It was feared that he was buried beneath the rubbish, he and all his pictures.

Du Breuille went white, as though he had heard his dishonor proclaimed aloud, there in the open street. He turned away.

The officer in charge of the soldiers stopped him as he was going, to say that the work of searching the ruins was proceeding and that if they came upon any trace of Mme. du Breuille, who was well known in the quarter, he should at once be informed.

Mechanically Du Breuille raised his hat in acknowledgment; mechanically he took the road to the villa, hoping against hope.

Elisabeth had not returned.

A cyclone of fury burst suddenly in his heart. The beautiful palace of trust built up during long years of friendship before marriage and in thirty months of close union crumbled to earth. The torrent of doubt raged on, devastating the spotless past. The image of the beloved wife was rent like the veil of the temple.

Everything now became ground for suspicion. Her faith was hypocrisy, her charity a means of cloaking her sin, her face—that face of a saint whose prayers are heard—a mere mask of deceit, her recent motherhood itself an outrage. Suspicion entered his heart as a conqueror enters a city prepared to receive him.

He lay prostrate beneath the weight of his thoughts, shivering at the idea of a message from outside, tossed between instinctive desire to find her again, living or dead, and the hideous apprehension of certainty and the public display of her shame.

His wife! his pure Elisabeth!

For, at the very moment when in his thought he was covering her with something worse than contempt, the voice of his subconscious being murmured: "Oh, man of little faith!" As he clenched his fist in vengeful madness a ghostly hand slackened the rigidity of his muscles, forced him to raise his eyes to the spotless stars whose brightness we behold without the power of understanding it; which vanish, and we know not why.

In the course of the day a child, the barefoot little Italian of the day before, rang the bell of the villa.

"Why did not Madonna come last night? Poor mother is still so bad!"

The servants fetched M. du Breuille, who heard the boy's words without comprehending them. The child said that "the Madonna" had promised to come back. Du Breuille was about to follow him, hoping thereby to discover some trace of the fugitive, when a policeman met them.

"Monsieur du Breuille—be prepared—they have found madame. Come quick; orders have been given to leave everything untouched till you come."

He longed to cry out: "No! bury your dead as I have buried mine." But the eyes of the Italian child fixed upon him made him ashamed of his cowardice.

"Let's go, signore, and find Madonna."

They went.

In front of Marini's studio Du Breuille stopped, his feet riveted to the earth. The policeman looked back.

"It is further on, sir. There are no victims here. The studio was empty at the moment of the disaster."

They crossed an alley. It ended in a damp court, in which had stood a hovel. The earthquake had engulfed it, leaving the roof alone nearly level with the ground. With infinite precautions the workmen, as they cleared a way through the debris with their pickaxes, had removed the roof, laying bare the wretched interior. A group of human beings within had been struck by the falling beams and killed instantly. Their last living attitudes spoke for themselves.

"Will you lean over here, sir? Is not that Mme. du Breuille?"

He obeyed, clinging to the stones, and looked down. He thought he was dying.

Death was the revealer of Life. It was his wife's resurrection.

On a wretched bed was stretched a pale, haggard woman, just through the pains of childbirth. Four children were on the ground; the head of one was shattered, the white teeth of another were yet fixed in a piece of bread; they lay across the feet of another woman, whose body was crushed.

But her face, the face of a saint whose prayers are heard, was unharmed. Radiant with divine compassion it drooped above the new-born babe which she held to her own bared breast.

THE ONLY WAY

STATION AGENT (*to couple embracing on the platform*)—Hurry up there! The train is starting!

MR. HAYSEED (*leisurely giving the young woman another smack*)—That's all right, captain; we don't want the train. We came here because it's the only place in this pesky town where a fellow can kiss his girl without being guyed.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Journal."*

HIS UNSELFISHNESS

FOND MAMA—I hope you behaved well and were not greedy at the party, Willie.

WILLIE—Of course, mama. Why, there was a plate with six little apples and one big one right in the middle, and I didn't take the big one at all—I just took the six little ones.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

SHE WAS QUALIFIED

MISTRESS—Above all, I want a servant who has some refinement.

APPLICANT—Well, madame, I've been operated on for appendicitis and had ptomaine poisoning twice.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

A CAPRICE

BY K. S. BARANTSEVICH

"MADAME——!"

Silence. The bronze clock on the marble mantelpiece ticked relentlessly. In the gathering twilight the face of the young woman who sat upon the sofa in the luxuriously furnished boudoir appeared like a misty silhouette.

"I am speaking to you. Reply!"

"What more do you want of me?" The voice was a deep contralto, and the ringing notes of anger were easily discernible in it.

"You want to be free? I understand! But I will not let you off so easily! I want you to confess everything to me, openly and honestly! Nothing else!"

The old voice broke in the low notes like a cracked clarinet. The bluish lips of the old man twitched, and his grizzled red "mutton-chop" whiskers trembled under the stress of his indignation. He sat at the window with his back to the young woman, but in spite of himself he turned his head from time to time in her direction. In profile the old, worn face with its large, aquiline nose and eyeglasses was like the head of an owl.

"I do not understand, Paul, what you want," said the young woman, in a voice that trembled slightly. "What confession? What shall I confess?"

"No need, Sophia Sergeievna, no need of your confessing!" he shouted angrily, shaking his head. "At last I know everything! Pipkin has been here. I recognized his hat. Was he here? You dare not deny it!"

"If you will have it so, Pavel Petrovich—then he was," she replied.

"And he always comes here when I am away! Do you see, I know everything, everything!"

Sophia Sergeievna moved as if about to rise.

"How cynical you are!" exclaimed Pavel Petrovich, dramatically clasping his hands. "You confess openly that you have favored another man, and who?—a Pipkin, a nonentity, a wretch whom I lifted from the mire, a poor, despicable plebeian!"

"Listen to me!" began Sophia Sergeievna, rising from the sofa. "For a whole hour you have been tormenting me! It is time to put an end to this scene! I can no longer bear it, and I intended long since to tell you that I have not the strength——"

She sank back again upon the sofa, and the handkerchief that she raised to her face glimmered white in the gathering dusk.

"I cannot live any longer as I have lived. I love Gregory Nikolaievich, and I will go to him!"

A long silence followed this declaration. Pavel Petrovich rose and looked out of the window into the growing night and began to drum nervously upon the window-sill with his fingers.

"Is that your final decision?" he asked.

Sophia Sergeievna sobbed quietly.

"Well, then—" Pavel Petrovich spoke with irritation, pacing up and down the room—"I shall not attempt to keep you! If you are so blind and foolish that you can't see what this gentleman has in mind—if you, like many another of your sort, are attracted by his good looks—go to whomsoever you please!" His voice rose to a shout as he stopped before Sophia Sergeievna. "But remember—please bear this in mind—there is no return—it is not to be thought of!"

Pavel Petrovich made an energetic gesture, and sank into a chair breathless with excitement.

"It would be interesting to watch this touching union!" he continued venomously, but in a slightly calmer tone. "The union of two loving hearts! Even a mean little hut becomes a paradise when shared with the beloved! What an idyl! Of course I will no longer countenance such a man as this Pipkin in my employ, and we will see if he fancies flirting on an empty stomach! Ha-ha! and then you will have to change your mode of living when you suddenly find yourself in some dirty basement—especially with such a treasure as this Pipkin, who is not even fit to be a decent street-cleaner! A fine outlook, I must say! All these idiotic ideas come from idleness, from sheer idleness, my dear Sophia Sergeievna! All the evil in modern family life comes from it! Well, what do you say, eh? You are silent?"

There was no answer.

He rose, and after walking through the room once, stopped before the young woman.

"Consider, consider well, before you decide. I am telling you this as your best friend and a man of experience, who knows the world. Consider!"

"I have nothing to consider. I have thought everything over," she replied. "After what you have told me—what else is there for me to do?"

"What have I told you?"

"What, haven't you told me enough? Haven't you jeered and mocked us enough? Haven't you abused and degraded him? And why? Because I have dared to love him and not you! Blame yourself—no one else is at fault. You have thought of me always as a toy, a plaything; you have amused youself with me as with a doll. You have surrounded me with luxury, dressed me richly, given me jewels, and you thought this enough—that I would want nothing more! Well, you were mistaken. Take these trinkets; I don't need them! Give them to the one who will take my place!"

She quickly unclasped two costly bracelets from her arms, pulled her rings from her fingers and threw them all on the sofa, and then covered her face with her hands, trembling with suppressed weeping.

Much disconcerted, Pavel Petrovich looked at her for a moment. Finally he sat down by her side and tried to draw her hand away from her face.

"Sophia — Sonia! Don't, please! Now, never mind, it was all nonsense!" he murmured.

"Let me alone!" Sophia Sergeievna fairly screamed. "You disgust me. I don't want to see anyone! Leave me alone!"

She rose and turned to the door, but Pavel Petrovich caught her by the hand and pulled her back.

"I will not let you go, Sonia Sophia, my angel, we must have an explanation!"

"Let me go!" she cried violently.

"Sonia, dearest!"

"Let go of me or I shall call for help!"

"Oh, great God! Sophia, what are you doing with me?"

The old man was almost in tears. It occurred to him that he might break something in order to avert Sophia Sergeievna's mind from leaving, even for a moment. He seized a costly vase and was about to drop it on the floor when he suddenly recollected himself. Going quickly to the door he turned the key and put it in his pocket.

"Why are you locking the door?" screamed Sophia Sergeievna.

"Now let us have a talk, let us understand each other, for God's sake!" urged the old man. "These things cannot be done in a hurry—it is impossible, Sophia!"

"Please leave off all this bickering!"

"I will, I will, of course, but you understand yourself that you simply cannot act in this way. You understand? I have become used to you, attached—" Pavel Petrovich's voice was pleading, as he forced Sophia Sergeievna back to her former seat on the divan. "There, now sit still

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—no, please don't interrupt me; just be quiet a moment, and I will explain everything and clear it all up."

"You are crazy, you are!" Sophia Sergeievna half smiled through her frown.

"Yes, crazy, you are perfectly right!" exclaimed Pavel Petrovich, with a forced laugh. He caught her hand in his and put it to his lips. "And what can I do? I get angry and make scenes because I love you—dear God, if you only knew how I love you! And now you are angry with me again. But, my angel, why should you be?"

"You disgust me—especially when you talk of love to me! Please leave that subject alone!"

"But, Sonia, it is impossible! When you feel as I do, you can't help speaking, my love."

"Let go of my hand!"

"Very well, I will. Only let me tell you what is in my heart. Here, I'm at your feet"—Pavel Petrovich pulled a footstool over to the sofa and sat down—"I know very well that you can't love me—I would be a fool, an imbecile, if I didn't. I understand all that very well; but you must not deprive me of the only joy that is left to me. Don't leave me, don't desert me, dear!"

"This is too much!" Sophia Sergeievna wailed. "I cannot bear it any longer. I have decided, and everything is ended between us. Let me go or leave the house yourself. Open the door, please!"

"Sophia, *mon ange*——"

"Oh, leave me in peace! I have a headache."

"Sonia!" The old man spoke beseechingly. "Only one more word: Can't we talk this matter over later?"

"Useless, entirely useless!"

"Then you must allow me to say a few words to you now!"

"I beg you to leave me!"

Pavel Petrovich approached the door, took the key out of his pocket and unlocked it. Then he returned to Sophia Sergeievna, and taking her hand he put it to his lips.

"Sophia," he murmured passionately, "do what you please, but I beg one thing only of you—do not desert me!"

He went out into the drawing-room and stopped musingly, as if intending to return; but on hearing the door of the boudoir shut with a bang, he quickly turned and walked out into the hall.

As he took up his hat from a little table, he lifted his eyes to the large mirror, and saw reflected in it his faded, worn old face with its whiskers thickly streaked with gray, its pale, bluish, nervously twitching lips, and such a pitifully wretched expression in the tearful eyes that Pavel Petrovich was smitten with self-pity. He quickly donned his hat and coat and sadly left the house, walking on tiptoe, with bent back and lowered head.

II

For several minutes Sophia Sergeievna remained sitting in the same position in which Pavel Petrovich had left her. It was already entirely dark in the boudoir, and only the feeble light of a street-lamp shone into the room through one of the windows.

The chambermaid tiptoed through the boudoir into the bedroom, where she lit the pink Chinese lantern, and through the open door a long streak of pink light fell across the rich velvet carpet of the boudoir. As quietly as she had entered the chambermaid again crossed the room, closing the door softly.

Once more everything became still. Sophia Sergeievna started as if from a dream. She drew her hand over her face several times and looked around confusedly. What was it she had intended to do? Oh, yes; to pack up and—go away! She rose and slowly entered the bedroom. There, under a canopy of some costly stuff, stood a black, richly carved and mirrored bed. Opening the curtains she threw herself upon the bed just as she was, dressed for the evening, and buried her face in the pillow. There was a

bitter feeling of oppression at her heart, which rose higher and higher until it reached her throat and suddenly suffocated her.

Sophia Sergeievna broke into hysterical weeping. Her shoulders heaved spasmodically while she tossed and turned on the soft bed, crumpling the blue silk coverlet. She kicked first one and then the other gold embroidered sandal from her silk-stockinged feet. She rolled and twisted her lace handkerchief into a ball and then she began to tear at it with her teeth till the whole pillow was strewn with shreds of lace and wet with her tears.

Suddenly she turned so that she could see her tear-stained face and disheveled hair in the mirror. A paroxysm of destruction seized her—a longing to tear and break everything on which she could lay her hands. She clenched her teeth tightly and struck the mirror, but the strong glass withstood the blow and she only hurt her hand. In impotent fury, biting her lips until they bled, she clutched the pillow with her hands and lay motionless. The ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece was the only sound in the rooms.

Gradually she became calmer.

"Well, I will leave," she thought. "This is all nonsense. After all, I don't care so much for luxury as he tries to make me believe. I'm disgusted with it all. I love Gregory, and no matter what happens—but do I love him? Of course I do! I feel lonesome if he is not here. I must end this at once."

She rose from her bed, and without putting on her sandals, sat down at her writing-desk. When she had written a short note she put it in an envelope and rang for her maid.

"Grusha, take the carriage and go to Gregory Nikolaievich—I believe you called at his house once before—and give him this note immediately," she ordered.

The maid left, and Sophia Sergeievna, still very much excited, sat down at her toilet-table and began to arrange her hair. She changed the style several times in the endeavor to dress it in the way Gregory liked best. This kept her occupied for some time, but as soon as she was ready with her toilet she once more became very much excited, and sitting on the divan in her boudoir she impatiently awaited the ring of the bell. It seemed to her that a terribly long time had elapsed already. Why did he not come? What was detaining him?

Little by little her anxiety grew. Her thoughts were wholly occupied with Gregory; all kinds of impossible suppositions crowded into her brain; perhaps "the other one" had gone to ask him for an explanation, or he was ill, or had left the city.

She rose, and began to pace the floor impatiently. Of a sudden the sound of steps came from the drawing-room. She ran to the door and met Gregory on the threshold. His face wore a strange, questioning expression, though he endeavored to seem calm and unconcerned.

"Gregory darling!" exclaimed Sophia Sergeievna, stretching out her arms toward him.

He took off his hat, ran his hand through his curling hair and took the young woman in his arms.

"Sit down—here, close to me," she murmured, making him comfortable on the divan. "Let me look at you. Are you well? Really? Oh, and I must speak of so many things to you! How did you get in? I didn't hear the bell at all."

Pipkin made a mysterious face and twirled his little mustache. "I came through the rear entrance," he explained, drawing off his gloves. "What has happened? Is he here?"

"Ah, Gregory darling! If you only knew—I cried as if my heart would break just now. I think my eyes are still red. And it seems to me that if I had not thought of sending for you, God only knows what I might have done."

"But what has happened?" again asked Gregory, with growing anxiety in his voice.

"My life is so unhappy, Gregory!"

Sophia Sergeievna said, raising her handkerchief to her face. "I am like a bird in a gilded cage—" she smiled through her tears—"I live only when you are here."

"But what has happened? Is he here?"

"Oh, don't speak of him at all. You ask what has happened? Well, probably nothing important—only one of our usual, innumerable scenes of jealousy. They can be jealous, it is their right! But today I felt unhappy, very unhappy, my dear." She leaned upon his shoulder and put her arms about his neck, looking lovingly into his eyes.

"Well, so everything is at an end between you two?" he asked.

"It had to be ended some time, Gregory, and, do you know, I am very glad that it came about so. I really feel as if a mountain had rolled off my back. Gregory, you are the first man I have ever loved. I really don't know what made me come to him. I was such a fool! I was tempted by all these playthings—here they are lying around," and she pointed to her discarded jewels. "I gave them back to him. It is true that he did everything he could to give me pleasure. Sometimes I even feel conscience-smitten when I see how much care he has lavished on me. But can I go on living so, can I force myself to love such an old, repulsive creature as he is? Until I met you—you remember how it happened—my life passed somehow or other, and I tried my best not to think of anything, to forget myself as they say drunkards forget themselves in wine. But I can do it no longer. You are my only sweetheart!" She drew his head toward her and kissed him passionately on the lips.

"Come, Sonia," he murmured, "tell me everything in detail; how did it all happen? You are too easily excited."

"Why, how do you suppose it happened? He made a scene, began to reproach and threaten——"

"Wait! Does that mean that he suspects?"

"He doesn't suspect, he knows definitely——"

"About me?"

"Well, yes! He saw your hat the last time you were here, when I excused myself by saying I felt unwell and refused to see him."

Pipkin sprang up from the divan and began to pace the room excitedly.

"So that is it?" he whispered. "And so you had a stormy scene?"

"Yes."

"And you have confessed all to him?"

"Yes."

"Ah!" Pipkin sighed. He made a few turns of the room, and then sat down on the other end of the divan. "And what did he say?"

"Oh, he said that he doesn't want to hold me by force, that I am free and so on. But this is the main thing—and it's very dear to me—it means, Gregory, that I have fought for my freedom and have come out victorious. But why do you sit down so far from me?" She came closer to him and embraced him.

"Well, and was that all he said?" asked Pipkin, imperceptibly disengaging himself from her encircling arms.

"Great God! What didn't he say! He even warned me that if I should go to live with you I would suffer want, as he would discharge you from your position in the bank."

"Ah!" Pipkin jumped up as if stung and once more began to pace the room with knitted brows.

"It is a very serious matter," he muttered. "It is no joking matter."

"Don't be frightened, Gregory, don't be frightened," began Sophia Sergeievna, looking lovingly at Pipkin. "I can see that you are worried on account of me. You think it will go hard with me, a woman used to luxury, to renounce it all? No, Gregory, you must not fear for me at all. Sit here and let us talk it over."

Pipkin sat down reluctantly; his face wore the same dissatisfied and anxious look as before.

"See, my dear! I have already thought it all over, and have decided

how we can best start life together," Sophia Sergeievna began enthusiastically. "Of course, you will have to look for another position, but that is not a great misfortune. I also will try to help along—of course, I wouldn't dream of living at your expense. You ask what I can do? I can give music lessons, or embroider—I tell you, we will establish ourselves in the loveliest way possible. We will take little rooms in a quiet neighborhood where the rent is not high, and furnish them tastefully, but very modestly, and keep only one servant. We will live a quiet and retired life and will receive no one—what do we need of acquaintances? Am I not right, Gregory? Oh, how nice it will be! I enjoy it all beforehand. Just imagine, when you return from work and I meet you——"

"One moment, just a moment," Pipkin suddenly interrupted her. "First of all I must find this position that you speak of with so much confidence, and then——"

She looked at him with wide-open, uncomprehending eyes, feeling as if suddenly all her enthusiasm was extinguished.

"What is the matter?" he challenged her look. "Were you going to say something?"

"Nothing, nothing! Go on, I'm listening!" she replied dully.

"As you can see for yourself, it is not such an easy matter," continued Pipkin, walking up and down the boudoir, and twirling his little waxed mustaches. "It is easy enough to say, find a place; but when it comes to getting one, then it is a different affair. As to your plans for finding music pupils, and so on, they are sheer nonsense! And so the plain truth is that you have acted very foolishly and thoughtlessly."

"How?" questioned Sophia Sergeievna, growing very pale.

Pipkin turned his face to the window and continued: "Certainly you acted rashly and foolishly! Such things ought not to be done in a hurry; you should have considered everything before you decided to act like this! You are not sweet sixteen any longer, and an intelligent woman ought to know life."

"Gregory, Gregory, what are you saying!" She clasped her hands and then, letting them drop listlessly on her lap, became very thoughtful.

Pipkin turned from the window sharply. "What am I saying? I am saying that you have acted rashly. If you were determined to break off your relations with him, you should have done so in a different manner! Where was the necessity of making confessions? I really cannot comprehend it."

"Very well, let us suppose that I have made a mistake and have acted rashly," began Sophia Sergeievna, in a dull but firm voice. "It can't be helped now, and there is no good in speaking of it. I only want to know what you intend to do?"

"What I intend to do?" he muttered. "I really don't know what to do! For us to live together is an entire impossibility. You don't know my mother; she has such views and ideas, she would never agree to it. To break with her—I can't do that, because I am to a certain extent dependent on her because of her acquaintances and influential connections. And besides, I don't believe that living together would add much to our mutual happiness. It was a terrible mistake to act like this, without considering, without first providing for yourself——"

"Providing!" Sophia Sergeievna rose, and coming up closely to Pipkin, looked intently into his face. Then with an almost imperceptible gesture, as if she would push him away from her, she returned to her place.

"But anyhow, I can't comprehend why you had to hurry about it in this way," Pipkin suddenly recollected himself. "In such matters it is all wrong to hurry—it is suicidal. You were in too much of a hurry, don't you think so now? Come, am I not right?"

Sophia Sergeievna did not reply.

Pipkin resumed his seat on the divan close to the young woman, and without

noticing that she turned away from him slightly, he continued:

"Upon my honor, you have placed both of us in a very difficult position. I really don't know how to act! And my affairs are—as if on purpose—in very bad shape, and—and—you know, of course, that I have—you know what I mean—debts."

"I did not know, and it does not interest me in the least."

"You are angry? But really, I can't help it. It's enough to knock anyone off his feet. Such an occurrence! Of course you can't remain here now. And do you know, I'm beginning to think your idea is not altogether so bad as it seemed at first. My mother will have to understand—we will win her over——"

"It is not necessary!" said Sophia Sergeievna quietly.

"What do you mean?" Pipkin became excited. "I thought we had decided to install ourselves in apartments, to live together."

"I have changed my mind."

"Sonia, what foolishness is this? Well, it's my fault, of course; but judge for yourself—it came so unexpectedly—I hadn't time to consider the matter properly! But tell me if you have reconsidered. What is it you intend to do?"

"That is not your affair! And as for you, Mr. Pipkin, I will request you——"

Sophia Sergeievna rose impetuously from the divan, and walking to the corner of the room pulled at the bell-rope. Her face, notwithstanding the red reflection of the Chinese lantern which fell upon it, was almost livid, and she was breathing hard.

"Sophia, what are you doing?" Pipkin inquired in great alarm. "What is wrong?"

Sophia Sergeievna did not reply. Grusha entered with the sly expression of a lady's maid who is intimately acquainted with the private affairs of her mistress.

"Grusha, show this gentleman out."

Pipkin remained stunned for a moment; then he opened his mouth to say something, but Sophia Sergeievna had already vanished from the room.

"Ha, ha!" He forced a laugh, but it rang false even to his own ears.

In the hall the mirror reflected his young face with the little, waxed mustache. But the usual insipid expression on his face was gone; in its place was a suggestion of wretched shame and dejection like that of a cur that has been severely beaten.

"My Lord, how foolish," he thought, as he took his way home. "And why did I tell her all those lies about mama, who has been dead for years? I thought she wanted to hang herself about my neck like a millstone, and was frightened out of my wits; and she—she drove me out!"

For a long time after Pipkin had left the house Sophia Sergeievna remained sunk in bitter thought. Did she love Pipkin? she asked herself for the hundredth time, and always the answer was "No!" True love reconciles itself to everything—allows and forgives everything—but this was not love, it was simply a delusion of the senses, a kind of intoxication. Her heart needed someone to whom it could cling, in whom it could confide, and had attached itself to the first comer.

Her thoughts strayed to that "other one," who had for years surrounded her with every comfort and care, and she began to compare the two. "Well, so be it," she thought, with a sigh, and her face once more took on its usual expression of cold indifference.

And while Pipkin was upbraiding himself on his way home for his weakness, Sophia Sergeievna sat at her little writing-desk, and wrote with the same expression of cold indifference the following note on perfumed and monogrammed paper:

Paul, if you are not very busy, come to tea. I shall expect you. I hope you are not sulking. It was only a foolish caprice—nothing more.

THE WAY OF A MAN

BY GEORGES DE PEYREBRUNE

"DID you send for me, father?" asked Jacques as he entered M. Bertaud's room.

His father was seated at his desk with his back toward the newcomer. "Yes, sit down, sir," he said, without turning around.

"Sir!" murmured Jacques, and an expression of uneasy surprise flashed over his bright, handsome face.

He leaned his elbow on the chimney in a graceful pose, twirled his blond mustache, and waited.

Turning suddenly about, M. Bertaud let his calm, cold glance rest on his son's fine blue eyes.

"You have seduced Mlle. Lydie Mercier—" He paused.

"But—" stammered Jacques, with a slight smile.

"Have you nothing to say?" asked M. Bertaud roughly.

"Well—er—I do not quite see what I can say to you on such a subject, and, indeed, I do not see how it can interest you," replied the young man, with a slight show of pride.

"Ah, you cannot see? Well, I shall show you. Sit down, Jacques."

Jacques flung himself impatiently into a chair, crossed his legs, and, with his head thrown back, stared at the ceiling.

"Three years ago Lydie Mercier was your sister's governess, here, in my house, under my protection. You seduced and abandoned her: you owe her reparation."

"But allow me," exclaimed Jacques, who had suddenly become interested. "Lydie was twenty-five years old at the time. She was not a child; she knew what she was doing. I did not promise her anything—we loved each other, that is all. In this romance in which you are good enough to interest yourself there was neither abduction, violence nor seduction. I owe her nothing, and under the circumstances I think——"

Jacques had risen to leave the room, but M. Bertaud stopped him with a gesture.

"I see you know your rights—in the eyes of the law," said the old man, a little ironically. "Your morals are not very exalted; they are confined to the strict obligation of the code. In the eyes of the law of your country you are, in fact, innocent."

"Well, then?"

"Well, then, I've always thought that the code is not the highest expression of human justice. It is subject to revision; therefore it is not perfect. For some time past attack has been made upon our laws in so far as they are unjust and inadequate as regards women; their rights are being heralded; protection is claimed for them, and there is much discussion of the matter. Soon a new law will be framed that will be a notable advance toward ideal justice. However, it has not yet been inscribed upon our statute-books; and so you come to me with your worn-out code in your hand and say, 'You see, I owe nothing.' My son, I thought I had given you a higher conception of duty, of strict duty—in fact, of what is called honor."

"Honor!" repeated Jacques violently. "Who dares impeach my honor?"

"I, perhaps. And while I can understand that you would allow no one to instruct you on that subject, I cannot understand your indignation when it is I who would advise you. Do not forget, sir, that for us bourgeois, who

have grown rich but yesterday, but have been upright for centuries, honor is a heritage as the crown and the sword are the heritage of those of noble birth. And I have the right to see to it that this heritage, which I have transmitted to you intact, shall be passed on in the same state to your sons."

"You are the most honorable man I know, father," murmured Jacques, somewhat moved by his father's words; "and for that very reason I beg of you not to allow yourself to be led away by sentimentality in the case of a—a fact that is so commonplace that it has never been considered as staining a man's honor. It happens every day——"

"It happens every day," interrupted M. Bertaud, "that a merchant, otherwise a perfectly honorable man, is declared a bankrupt. The Bertauds, merchants from father to son, have never 'failed.' It happens every day that a merchant like us retires from business after years of work with a scandalous fortune, acquired in the full light of day, but by questionable transactions, commercial trickery, brutal exploitation of his fellow-men, and other means to fortune that are absolutely legal and generally permitted. The Bertauds will never be multi-millionaires, or if they should become so it will be so slowly that the value of their millions will barely be worth the eight hundred thousand francs of our capital today. It happens every day that a young man seduces a young girl and abandons her. The Bertauds will never abandon the woman whom they have compromised or lured on to the loss of her honor.

"The world goes on as it pleases, my son," the old man continued, "and it goes badly. Honest people deplore it, but that is not enough. People vaunt their high-sounding theories, but the simple and natural practice of virtue is far better. You pretend to be an honest man; prove it."

"That is easily done," replied Jacques. "Since you wish to know about my conduct toward Lydie Mercier, here it is: When she came to us to finish my sister's education, four years ago, she was pretty, simple and virtuous, as I saw. I loved her. I contrived to make her share my feelings; and after a whole year of refusal, or rather of defense on her part, she gave way. She had then left your house. We were very happy. I have never compromised her. I have acted toward her like a gentleman. What always happens in such a case happened to us: her passion for me increased in proportion as mine evaporated. What was to be done? I took infinite pains in bringing about a break between us. Finally, one day, I ceased going to see her, after having tried in vain to get her to accept some provision that would put her beyond the need of want. She refused. I have not heard of her since. What have I to reproach myself with?"

"So there is in the world a woman whom you have dishonored and abandoned, and your conscience reproaches you with nothing?"

"Nothing. Each of us is responsible for his own act. Lydie had her share of happiness, as I had. She loved and she knew the social conditions that await a fallen woman; now she is suffering the consequences of her misstep, like all girls who have put themselves in the same position. I did not deceive her."

"I understand—you seduced her."

"I loved her, that is all."

"And you do not love her now?"

"No."

"However, if you had not employed all the resources of your power to charm in order to lure her on, if you had not pursued her when she tried to defend herself, if you had not for a long time tormented and enveloped her weakness and simplicity with the violence of your desire, with the obsession of your prayers, of your tears, too, doubtless, such a girl as she would not have thrown herself into your arms. She would have smothered the love she might have felt for you, she would have remained honest and pure, she would have been able to marry; in fact, to live her life like any other woman.

And now she is disgraced, lost, for her everything is ended, and through your act. Have you not, then, robbed Lydie Mercier of her share of happiness in this world?"

"It was without premeditation," replied Jacques, with a smile. "A man does not stop to reason when he is in love, and I was in love."

"The thief, too, 'loves' the gold that he steals from our cash-boxes. Would you excuse him?"

"Oh, father, you are making a paradox there."

"You think so? Possibly. Has not someone said that the paradox of today is the truth of tomorrow? You must at least acknowledge that the honorable man should have some scruples when he takes from a girl this treasure of virtue which is her most precious possession."

"Willingly; I will even add that it is a pity that passion does not reason, that love drives one mad, that desire, with its unconscious brutality, crushes out all sense of duty. But what can we do, we who submit like slaves to the implacable laws of instinct?"

"We can make reparation, when we have recovered our calm judgment, for the damage we have caused in our blindness. That is called justice."

"Make reparation!" repeated Jacques. "What reparation and how? Lydie has refused all my offers. What does she demand?"

"Mlle. Mercier does not demand anything from you."

"Ah, that's fortunate," said Jacques, with a sigh of relief.

"Perhaps not so much so as you suppose," M. Bertaud replied gravely. "If she had 'demanded' something, perhaps I would have been prejudiced against her. As it is, her attitude having inspired me with esteem for her, I felt myself compelled to ascertain if you were culpable and responsible toward her. Since that fear entered my head, I have been dissatisfied with you, Jacques, my paternal pride is wounded. I fear I have found a spot on your honor, and I wish that spot to be wiped out. If it is of such a nature that it can be effaced by a sacrifice of money, I will ruin you if necessary; but if it is necessary to give your name in order that it may remain untarnished, you shall give it."

"Never!" cried Jacques.

"Because——?"

"Because I no longer love her."

"So much the worse," coldly replied M. Bertaud. "However, I have given my word that it shall be so."

"Your word! You! To whom?"

"To Mlle. Mercier's guardian."

"Oh, here's an intrigue! They refuse the son's offers and threaten the father. Very neatly done! And to think that I almost believed in Mlle. Mercier's disinterestedness! Well, she's like all the rest!"

"Silence!" cried M. Bertaud. "You are insulting a woman who is dying without a murmur and who does not yet know that her guardian has broken the promise of silence that she exacted from him."

"She is dying!" stammered Jacques.

"Shame, sorrow, misery, perhaps, have brought upon her an illness of which she will soon die if she is not succored. A few days ago, feeling that she had grown very weak, she broke the silence that she has preserved for four years to her guardian, the one person who has interested himself in the poor orphan. He went to her at once and found the unhappy girl in the squalid bedroom of a farmhouse, sick, almost unrecognizable from suffering. To him she confessed her fall. Her guardian wished to speak to her about you. It was then she made him swear that neither you nor I should ever know what had become of her. He had to promise everything to calm the excitement into which she was thrown by the mere thought that her name might one day be pronounced before you—whom, doubtless, she despises."

Jacques drew himself up.

"Would you be surprised if she did?" M. Bertaud asked coldly.

"But," said Jacques, now visibly embarrassed, "why should her guardian come to you rather than to me?"

"Jacques, there you touch upon a wound that her avowal has given me. I blushed for you, and I replied proudly, 'Address yourself to my son.' But I had to bow my head and acknowledge that, if it was old Bertaud they approached, it was because there was no doubt of his uprightness and honor—while they were, unhappily, fully informed as to the perfidy of the son. Yes, they said that this upright old man would not know how to give the lie to a past of spotless honor, and they said to him, 'Be judge in your own case.' And I accepted."

M. Bertaud raised his grizzled front with an instinctive movement of dignity and pride. His face, serene, proud and gentle, with its common features and its deep lines, had for a moment the majestic immobility of marble.

"So be it, you shall judge," murmured Jacques, who was visibly impressed. "It shall be you, rather than I, father. But will you allow me to ask what you purpose to do in order to enlighten your judgment?"

M. Bertaud turned and took from the table a packet of yellowed letters tied together in a piece of faded silk.

"Lydie's guardian left these letters with me," he said, "your letters and hers, which you returned to her, and also the Testament the poor girl gave him, thinking she was about to die. She wishes them to be buried with her, these sad pages that hold the sad story of her life. But she also wishes that her guardian shall read them all in order that she may be justified in his eyes for her unhappiness and her unmerited shame, and in order that he may know that if she surrendered, it was under the stress of a moral violence that no woman could have resisted. I am repeating to you Lydie's words," M. Bertaud added, at a movement his son had made.

"I shall read these letters," he continued.

"You!" cried Jacques, his face turning crimson.

"With your permission," replied the old man, offering him the packet. "Since your conscience reproaches you with nothing, I think that you will permit me to find here the proofs of that fact."

Jacques had held out his hand to receive the letters, but his arms fell to his side and he bowed his head. M. Bertaud dismissed him with a gesture. Then, as Jacques hesitated to go, he said to him with much feeling:

"Leave me alone for a few moments, please. Time presses. I am expecting Mlle. Mercier's guardian, who returned to her this morning with a physician I recommended. I shall send for you presently, when I have finished reading."

Left alone, M. Bertaud opened the sad little packet, which was spotted here and there on the faded yellow silk with the white marks of tears, and he found in it all of the letters that had passed between Jacques and Lydie during four years, classified day by day, from the very first note, which contained a withered spray of forget-me-not.

MONDAY EVENING.

MADEMOISELLE, when I took from my sister's corsage this evening the branch of myosotis that you had yourself attached there, after having picked it in the grass at your feet, I have been very much depressed over the vexed attitude you assumed, and I have discovered too late that my thoughtless, involuntary action displeased you. I beg your pardon. Here it is, the little flower that your angry looks forbid me to keep; I return it to you—but not complete, however. I adore certain flowers—that is my best excuse—and some petals have been brushed from it by my kisses.

Your respectful and devoted
JACQUES.

WEDNESDAY MORNING.

You are very prudish, Mademoiselle Lydie. In the six months that you have been with my sister and we have lived together in family intimacy I do not remember that I ever

have been lacking in the respect I owe you.

The innocent familiarity that I allowed myself to take the other day, and for which, moreover, I have apologized to you, does not warrant, it seems to me, the coldness with which you have treated me since then. On that occasion I acted toward you as I would have acted toward my sister; for in spite of myself I have fallen into the way of confounding you with her in the same affectionate and brotherly tenderness. Yes, Mademoiselle Lydie, I love you like a brother. If this avowal offends you, tell me so; I shall have the courage to obey you.

Your

JACQUES.

SUNDAY.

For pity's sake, mademoiselle, answer me. I prefer your reproaches, your anger even, to the cruel, scornful silence that wounds my heart. What have I done to you? You refuse to take my hand now in the evening when I am leaving you as you had been doing for the past six months. This happiness, which I awaited impatiently every evening, and which filled me with joy for twenty-four hours, this contact, brief though it was, of your little hand with mine, you have deprived me of for the past week, and I feel that I am going crazy over it. Lydie, Lydie, take pity on me—I am very unhappy.

JACQUES.

SUNDAY EVENING.

MONSIEUR JACQUES, I had hoped that my silence would make you understand the impropriety of your conduct and would spare me the necessity for a more direct reproach. You allow yourself to send me letters which I find here and there, in my work, in my books or in my flowers, which is an absolute failure of respect, as much toward me as toward your sister, whose education I am directing, and your family, which has received me under its roof. I must warn you that if this clandestine correspondence does not cease at once I shall ask your father to find a substitute for me immediately and I shall go away.

Your servant,

LYDIE.

APRIL 12.

MADEMOISELLE, I send you this letter by post in order that you may no longer reproach me for my "clandestine" correspondence. I hope that you will concede me the right, without offending you, of writing to you as a very respectful and devoted old friend may do. Since you threatened to leave the house I am in constant fear lest you put that cruel decision into effect. It would make me very unhappy, and I am forcing myself to reassure you by my absolutely correct attitude; I hope you will do me the justice to recognize that. What cause have you to reproach me now? Have I not compelled my looks to belie me? Are not my voice and my attitudes sufficiently indifferent and cold for your austerity? Then why are you no longer the same toward me? It is to ask this that I am writing to you now. Formerly, Lydie, you were kind and gracious toward poor Jacques. You admitted him as a third party to your interesting conversations with Louise. Your beautiful eyes, which are so tender and simple, frankly met mine, and when I joked with you you laughed like a happy child.

Now you never allow your saddened eyes to meet my imploring glance; you no longer laugh, Lydie. Your chats with Louise are infrequent and sad, and you even are silent whenever I am present. Have I wounded you so cruelly, my dearest sister, that you cannot forgive me? And must I always be wretched because I have dared to tell you, or rather have let you understand, that I love you as passionately, as respectfully, and for all time?

Believe me, Lydie, a devoted friend is not to be scorned. Are you not alone in the world, deprived of those family affections that lighten the heavy

burden of a life of toil? And is your heart of bronze, that it does not feel the sweet and tender need of a shared affection, of a consoling friendship? No, I do not think it can be so. But you are timid and distrustful, a little proud, perhaps, and you say to yourself that this humble fellow who aspires to make you accept his love is very daring. I know I am very inferior to you in point of wit, of artistic cultivation, of all the delicate things of imagination that make you a little marvel of learning, sentiment and poetry, but I am proud to believe that my heart is as high as yours, and that though in your life you may meet a man better gifted to please you, to interest you, to attract your attention and sympathy, you will not find one who admires you more or knows better how to love you. Ah, if you were willing, Lydie, what promises of good, solid, frank friendship we would exchange with a cordial hand-clasp. I would be so happy over it, and it seems to me that you might be happy, too.

Your
JACQUES.

APRIL 13.

MONSIEUR JACQUES: I believe your sentiments toward me are honorable and generous, and I am angry at myself that I cannot receive them as I should—that is to say, with gratitude. But the good friendship you offer me has no need of the mystery of this correspondence, which between a young man and a young girl always appears suspicious and reprehensible. This is the last time that I shall reply to your letters, and I beg of you not to write to me again. It is a pleasure to think that the brother of my dear Louise feels almost as great an affection for me as for his sister. As you say, it is a consolation in life to feel that one is surrounded by a sincere affection, and it is a real happiness for me, in spite of the hardships of my fate, to have met so perfect a pupil in a family every member of which showers on me the most touching marks of sympathy and friendship. Let this be our understanding, Monsieur Jacques: we shall be good friends frankly and without any mystery.

Your devoted
LYDIE.

MAY 30.

Surely you will allow me now to write to you, my dear Lydie, now that you are all established at Fontainebleau while I am left alone in Paris to take my father's place at the head of the business, which I do not understand very well yet and which is a burden and a torture to me. Never did I feel the aversion to it that it inspires in me now; I feel that I am chained down by the necessity of this incessant supervision in this grimy old office. The empty house fills me with horror, and sometimes I forget myself, leaning on my desk with my head in my hand and ready to cry over my solitude, or rather over your absence. Ah, dear Lydie, do not you, too, feel a little of the bitterness of this separation?

Of course, I am to pass Sunday with you every fortnight, but what does that amount to? An hour in which to look at you from a distance, in the midst of all the family, without a single whispered word to soothe my heart, when I would spend my entire life, even though it should last as long as the world, kneeling at your feet. When I think that you have gone away for six months it seems to me that I shall go crazy. Well, a week more and I shall see you again. Write to me, Lydie, my dear, adored sister, send me a word, just a single word, but a kindly word to console your poor and unhappy friend.

JACQUES.

JUNE.

MONSIEUR AND FRIEND JACQUES: Your father is working in the garden, your sister is studying the flowers, no one has time for correspondence, and everybody charges me to write you the news of the household and ask various commissions of you. M. Bertaud wants you to send him

some pruning shears and some plants or seeds of variegated carnations. Louise wants a riding-whip and a hunting horn. You are to bring all these, please, next Sunday.

You are so bored in your office that I scarcely dare tell you what a delightful life we are leading here, riding in the forest almost every day, seeking new views of the country and wondering, poor Parisians that we are, at the immense spaces of verdure that we suddenly see from a high rock and that seem to us like bits of virgin forest. These grand trees, these great masses of rock, these overgrown paths, these flowery heaths and meadows, all these things seem to us new and unexplored. It is as if we had discovered a new world, for we do not take a guide for our forest rides; we wander about haphazard, and when we find a view that is more beautiful than the others we make as much of it as if we had really discovered it and talk about it all the evening. We all regret then that you are not with us to share our pleasure.

But you should not regret the monotony of your situation, for it is thanks to your intelligence and devotion that your dear father, who has worked so many years for you, is able to find rest and recreation for a few days. This thought should make your task less heavy, for nothing so lightens the heart and rejoices the spirit as the sense of duty accomplished.

Until Sunday, Monsieur Jacques, and do not forget the commissions.

Your devoted

LYDIE.

JUNE 6.

No, Lydie, I shall forget nothing, not even your sermons and particularly your indifference. You are very fortunate, mademoiselle, to have a heart that nothing touches. I write you that I am unhappy, that I am suffering from your absence; I ask you for a word of tenderness, or at least of pity, to console me for everything. Poor fool that I am! To whom have I addressed my love and my prayers? To a statue, to some charming and wonderfully made automaton which lacks absolutely nothing except the insignificant thing that is called a heart. Do you not know that it is through the heart alone that certain things in this world derive all their value, my proud and cold little lecturer? I swear to you on my honor that I have a hundred times higher opinion of a lost girl who gives and abandons herself through the generous pity of her tender heart than I have of the hard, cold maiden, without sin and without pity, who refuses even the alms of a smile to one who is dying for her.

Come, come, I am weeping like a child as I write these lines. It seems to me that I am alone in the world; that my life is broken; that there is no longer either sun or love or happiness in the world, since I have read the cruel letter in which you said not a word to me.

JACQUES.

MONDAY.

Yesterday was one of the most unhappy days I ever lived. Lydie, you have made a terrible torture for me of the Sunday that I waited for and longed for so much. When I came out of the depot and saw you sitting very straight on the seat of the cart, with your gray veil fluttering, holding the reins over your two ponies like a veritable sportswoman, while Louise and my father held out their arms for me, I had such an overwhelming sensation of joy that I almost fainted. But you made an imperceptible gesture and the cart started, and it was you who carried me away before I had been able to press your hand. And during the entire day, in the house and in the forest, you remained impassive, sticking closely to my sister's side and never giving me a glance. Very well, mademoiselle, I understood, and I understood the better the aversion with which I inspire you because of certain matters that my father put me on the track of. It seems that a young man of the neighborhood of Fontainebleau, doubtless some grand seigneur who is

not condemned to the drudgery of business and daily work, is endeavoring to make you receive his attentions, and that you find him in your path wherever you go. If you had received him as you did me, it is clear that he would have ceased to follow you: therefore you must be encouraging him. I confess that in accusing you of a lack of heart I was mistaken. It is only for me that you lack one. Well, so be it. You will have had in your life a romance of a desperate wretch whom your disdain has reduced to the last state of misery.

You may rest easy, mademoiselle. I wish to be in nobody's way, and I shall not set foot in Fontainebleau again. I reached this resolution yesterday evening when I left you, and you might have dispensed with the pretext you were evidently seeking in order not to be present at my departure. I would not even have offered you my hand. I bid an eternal adieu to my beautiful dream of tenderness, to my pure and chaste love, to you, Lydie, who are henceforth for me only the memory of a lost happiness, for which my soul will always mourn.

JACQUES.

JUNE 20.

MONSIEUR: Your last letters, which are so strange, have given me much food for reflection. I have been trying to learn what it was my duty to do in these painful circumstances—which have just been added to the many sorrows of my life—when I saw that you yourself dictate my conduct to me when you say you will not return to Fontainebleau—doubtless so long as I am there myself—and add to these words an eternal farewell.

It is my place, monsieur, to leave this house to which you will otherwise never return, since you will not allow me to maintain in peace the attitude that you oblige me to take toward you, from which, nevertheless, I cannot depart without failing in my duty.

I have just informed M. Bertaud of my intentions, giving as a pretext my desire to go to Russia. By this means you will not be disturbed.

For the rest, I hope that my departure will not be to the prejudice of your sister's education, which is almost finished now. And, Louise having been asked in marriage by the young man to whom you allude—he has been almost her shadow since our arrival here—I hope she will be consoled for a separation which will for that reason be painful only to me.

In memory of the happy days I have passed here, where I've almost forgotten that I was alone in the world, I freely forgive you the great sorrow you have caused me. You may come back Sunday, Monsieur Jacques; I shall have left then.

Your devoted

LYDIE.

JUNE 21, EVENING.

Lydie, dearly beloved Lydie, I throw myself at your feet. Forgive me, forgive me. Have pity on me. Be merciful to an unhappy fool who will never forgive himself for the torment he has caused you. Lydie, I repent; Lydie, I accuse myself. What I have done is horrible. Poor, dear, unhappy and resigned child, I have almost driven you from the only roof where you might live happily, esteemed, protected and adored. Oh, forgive me as the Christ to whom you pray forgave His executioners. Do not go, Lydie. Promise me that you will recall what you said to my father. Write me by return mail that it is finished, forgotten—everything, yes, everything—that you have forgiven me, that you will stay with us, that you will stay there always. My sister is to be married—so much the better; children will come, you will bring them up, you will fill the noble mission of devotion. My God, what can I say more to touch you, to soften your heart? Oh, if I were with you now I would throw myself at your feet; in spite of you and before everybody, I would implore your forgiveness and pity. Yes, pity, for if you go, Lydie, if I do not find you there next Sunday, I give you my

word of honor, the word of the Bertauds, which is never taken back, that I too will leave home, that I will enlist, that I will go to Algeria, where there are rumors of war now, and that I will be killed there, as truly as I love you madly, respectfully, eternally.

Your
JACQUES.

JUNE 22.

Alas, Monsieur Jacques, you would have done better to let me go. But I am not willing that your father should be deprived of your presence on my account, and that perhaps some day he may have to mourn for you. I know you would do the foolish things you said because you have said them. Nothing less than that could have kept me here. I shall stay, then; but I impose one absolute condition on your honor: that you shall leave me in peace. There shall be no more letters, by turns too affectionate and too cruel; in a word, you must never again permit yourself to speak to me of love. There can be no love between us, Monsieur Jacques; there can be and there should be only loyal friendship. Do not forget that.

LYDIE.

JULY 10.

Monsieur Jacques, I had to burn your last letter because Louise asked to read it. As I could not give it to her, I threw it in the fire and said that it was destroyed, which was true. I beg you to be sensible and never again write me anything that I cannot allow people to see. You yourself must see the embarrassment in which it places me.

Louise wanted to write to you today; but she is out of spirits and nervous. However, she wishes you to know that her marriage is broken off, and for what reason.

M. Bertaud broke it off abruptly on the receipt of certain information, which, it seems, accused Louise's suitor of some dishonorable conduct, not concerning money, but—I do not know, we did not understand it very well. It concerns a young girl whom he abandoned, I believe. In a word, M. Bertaud was immovable and all Louise's tears could not soften him. She flew into a passion and said that she loved him and that love came before everything else; to which M. Bertaud replied that the only thing that came before everything else was honor. He added that an honest woman could never be happy with a husband who was not in her eyes the model of perfect loyalty, of absolute rectitude, at the same time an example and a judge. My heart is heavy at sight of Louise's suffering, but I cannot blame M. Bertaud. He is right, absolutely right, and I admire him for it. If one possessed no sense of justice and truth, one would acquire it by living near him. It seems to me that such virtue must be contagious. That is what I am trying to make your sister understand, and she will certainly understand it when the violence of her disappointment has passed.

I think that she should have some distraction, and I count on you, Monsieur Jacques. You will bring much gaiety to us next Sunday, for we all need it very much.

Your devoted
LYDIE.

JULY 15.

MY DEAR LOUISE: It appears that your pretty eyes have been shedding tears and that I must console you. Mlle. Lydie has written to me on your behalf. I shall not reply to Mlle. Lydie, but you will give her this letter, which is none the less for you. If I were to write her what I wish to tell you, she would be capable of preventing my consolation from reaching you, perhaps finding it utterly lacking in soberness, reason, resignation and virtuous enthusiasm, and absolutely improper for the consolation of a young girl who has been disappointed in love.

So, my dear Louisette, you gave your heart to a fine gentleman, and

now you must take it back because papa has certain—fastidious ideas, let us call them, on delicacy in human affairs. I confess that it is hard. If I have rightly taken Mlle. Lydie's vague explanation, it is a matter of a young girl whom your ex-fiancé has perhaps deserted on account of your pretty eyes. If anyone should complain, it seems to me, it should not be the author of those pretty eyes. What the deuce? Here is a father has a charming little girl whose mischievous beauty leads an unhappy man, who for the rest may be a very good sort of fellow, to break away from everything in order to give himself body and soul to the new love that has overwhelmed him, and the father gets angry at it. Ah, that's the sort they are, these upright men! They are all cold-blooded. You see, little sister, I am almost angry. So do not torment yourself too much. I shall come, and you will see how I get around papa—with all due respect to him, of course. I shall teach him what love is, and I shall demonstrate to him, I hope, that all the virtuous theories, all the sermons, all the fine phrases and all the underbrush that austere people delight in accumulating along the road where at twenty years Love rides triumphant, only serve to make him leap higher and farther, like a proud courser that bounds over all obstacles.

You know what love is, my dear little sister. Oh, how fine it will be for us two to chatter under papa's nose and under Miss Lydie's downcast eyes. Shall we drive them fairly crazy to avenge ourselves for their sermons? Come, come, laugh a little and sharpen your arrows for tomorrow afternoon's battle. Do not be angry with me for being gay when you are crying—I am so happy at the bare idea of seeing you all again soon.

Very respectfully, young ladies, your Jacques, who kisses your hands.

JULY 18.

We are very uneasy, Monsieur Jacques; your father talks of going to Paris. Why do you not write? Never have you spent a week away without sending news of yourself, without giving M. Bertaud an account of the firm's affairs. Since your last visit, since that quarrel with your father, apropos of Louise, since your painful departure on Sunday evening when everybody was angry, when you hurried away almost in tears, an anxiety has reigned here which a kind letter from you would have quickly dissipated. I have an idea, which I have not told to anyone, that perhaps you are sick. If it is so, you should let us know of it. In any event I beg of you to write immediately—immediately, do you understand, Monsieur Jacques? It is wicked to cause your family and your friends so much anxiety. You know the affection they feel toward you here. As to myself, I must confess that my friendship is very much alarmed at your silence. This morning M. Bertaud expressed a vague fear that you might have been led away by some of your friends to those—festivities in which young people forget, so they say, a little of their duty and much of their affection. We would all of us be very sorry if that was so. I beg of you, send a word quickly, and believe me always

Your devoted friend,

LYDIE.

EVENING, 19th.

My good Lydie, take the cart tomorrow morning with Louise under some sort of pretext, and meet me at the ten o'clock train. Get my father out of the house. When I am well installed there you can gently tell him of the accident that has happened to me. I have severely wrenched my left arm and the shoulder is badly sprained. A fever ensued, and I have suffered like the damned for four or five days. Now, it seems, I am in a condition to be transported, and I wish to be near you. The doctor will accompany me. Do not torment yourself, and calm Louise; it will be only a little longer, and I am delighted, for I shall not have to leave you for days. Ouch! I can't

write any more. But I am very happy just the same, for I am in need of care, and as I have promised myself that I shall have all the whims of a sick man, it will be you who must take care of me.

I love you, Lydie, with all my heart and always.

JACQUES.

OCTOBER 1.

You refuse to listen to me. When I want to speak to you, you rest your eyes on me with an imploring or a scornful look that takes away all my courage. Well, then, you must read me, Lydie. There must be an end to this existence, which is demoralizing and killing me. For two months now we have not been separated; I have lived your life; sometimes pretending an illness that I no longer had, I have obliged you to remain near me for hours in order that I might study your heart. I have made you talk, I have learned your inmost soul. Without knowing it, without wishing it, perhaps, you have given yourself to me mentally, bit by bit, minute by minute. Your immaterial being belongs to me now as your thoughts belong to you. I have experienced the ideal pleasure of sensing your soul under the apparent hardness of your words, your tender heart under the mask of your frigid reserve. Do not try to hide from me; it is useless now, I know you thoroughly. Do you want proof of it? You love me, Lydie.

That is why I say that there must be an end to this hypocritical and deceitful existence, which is unworthy of us. We love one another. The trembling of your hands, of your lips, tells me what is passing in your mind—why have you not the frankness to confess it to me yourself? Since you love me, since I have at last achieved the supreme happiness of touching your heart, of attracting it, of winning it, why dispute that conquest with me? What do you expect from this resistance? That I shall give up loving you, give up telling you so? Not for an instant, and you know it well. Why then? To live thus forever without an avowal that relieves the heart, without a more tender, more confiding intimacy, without the inexpressible happiness of living some hours alone at your feet, we two alone, your hands in mine, whispering to each other all our divine love? Oh, Lydie, I love you, I love you! Have you no wish to hear me tell you this save in those dreams that dim your eyes with tears and draw you near to me? Are you not afraid that your cruel resistance will drive me to some terrible folly? Sometimes I think I will clasp you suddenly in my arms and shower kisses on those mute lips, those eyes that turn away from mine. What would you do if I dared? Would you run away? I would follow you. You hinted yesterday that you had some idea of entering a convent. Very well then, try to shut yourself up in one if you want me to go and beat my head against the walls of your prison. You belong to me because I love you and you love me. I shall not give you up to anyone. Love is your master, as you shall see. And yet you can make it your obedient and humble slave. Do not avoid me any more. Take pity on me, be kind, be indulgent. Let yourself love, let yourself confess it.

And, indeed, what do I ask that you cannot grant me? Are you afraid of me? Are you not brave enough for two? What danger do you fancy there would be in going alone into the forest with me one day, one of those beautiful days of autumn when the forest is so beautiful? We could wander there side by side, your arm in mine, slowly, dreamily, our souls lost in the profound ecstasy that the eternal beauty of the world gives to the eternal beauty of love. Oh, Lydie, Lydie, let yourself live, since living is loving and you love! Do not keep your poor little hands folded over your heart, which is frightened but ardent, and flutters to escape you. Let it come to mine for all time.

OCTOBER 2.

Lydie, you must forgive me; I was mad. I have already told you that

your cruelty would drive me to some extremity. Besides, I must explain to you. I swear it was not my fault as much as you think. I had just received my mail and read a letter from my father, which recalled us all to Paris. We were being driven from our Paradise. I was urged to resume my business life, which had been interrupted for some two months.

This news irritated me and filled me with a despair that I could not master. I started toward the garden, where I had seen you go, repeating to myself that I should never see you again in this way, at every hour of the day, in this intimacy of country-house life, that perhaps I should never again find an opportunity to talk with you alone for a single minute, or even to let my eyes speak to you. When I reached the garden I saw you perched on the top of the ladder, gathering flowers. You did not hear me come, and I looked at you with growing love and anger, as you stood there so gracefully, your slender body leaning against the ladder, your arms raised, your head thrown back and your blond hair mingling with the leaves and flowers. When you saw me so close to you, you wanted to jump down to the ground; your foot turned and you fell with a cry, your hands outstretched and dropping your flowers, and you wounded yourself with the shears; your finger was bleeding. Is it my fault if, seeing you fall, hearing your cry, and ready to die for the rosy drop that pearled on your finger, I lost my head completely and, catching you in my arms, carried you across the garden as if I had wings, straining you to my breast as if to wrap you in my heart? Is it my fault if that contact with you intoxicated and maddened me; if, feeling you struggling to escape me, I almost smothered you in my arms? You must forgive me, Lydie. The kisses I gave you in spite of yourself I was not able to restrain. It is not I; it is the being within me who escapes my moral control; it is the undisciplined brute that pressed your bleeding finger to its lips. Forgive me as you would a madman, an animal that had wounded you. I swear to you that I am as remorseful now as I then was full of violent passion.

Write me a word, Lydie, I beg you on my knees. Give me back my peace by telling me that you forgive me. If you do not I shall never have the courage to return to Paris and take up my work again. My head is on fire; I am crying and singing at the same time. Have pity on a happy wretch who is dying of love for you.

JACQUES.

OCTOBER 2.

You have offended me greatly, Jacques. You have destroyed forever the confidence I had in you. You have treated me like a girl whom one despises, and I am dying of shame. I know that I am very culpable, too, for I should have left your house at your very first words. But I believed in your repentance, in your promises to respect me; in your friendship; and that family life and the affection that surrounded me were so sweet to me that I had not the courage to go away and seek peace in some place far from here. How many times while you were ill I wanted to flee!

Yes, I cried through long, terrible nights, and you, who must have known it, had no pity on me. You say that I am weak and affectionate, and yet you, who have strength and courage, are not afraid to hurt me, to bruise me, to lead me on in spite of myself to forget all my duties. For it was my duty to make complaint to your father, but to spare you trouble I did not do so. My duty was to go away, and I have meekly remained here, crying my eyes out, without the strength to listen to my conscience when it told me that I should go away. I have felt all the humiliation of your pursuit, for I have had no illusion as to the character of your affection for me, and I have not had the dignity to escape from it. An invincible force, far stronger than my courage, has wrapped itself more and more closely about me each day, and new and unknown

emotions have drowned the voices, so clear in other days, that dictated my conduct and duty. That is why I am so unhappy, for it seems as if I were deserted, deprived of all moral support, blinded by the strange brilliance that emanates from my heart. Ill with I know not what languor, which is killing me, in vain do I reach forth my arms to hold myself back, to save myself; an abyss is there under my feet, and I am dizzy with the fear that I shall fall into it. And it is while I am struggling against this fate, putting forth all my strength against this terrible destiny and striving my utmost to reconquer my will, the "me" that used to be so strong but today has disappeared; it is at this moment, when our return to Paris brings me the hope of help, of greater security near your father and far from you, that you insult me by writing letters in which you address me as familiarly as if I were a woman of the street, and profit by my fall in daring to kiss me.

Now I know how wrong I was to believe you, to hope for a respectable affection, and to let you take in my heart the place that you have taken there, for now I must drive you from it. For I would rather die than submit again to such outrage, and henceforth, whatever promises you make to me, I can no longer believe you. That folly is ended.

Oh, I shall have courage this time, the courage of despair. Do not try to restrain me again by threats and pleadings; I shall not listen to you; it is ended. I believe that I shall never be cured of the hurt that I bear now. So much the better. As for you, Monsieur Jacques, forget me and never allow yourself to put another poor girl to such a terrible trial. It is a crime, I tell you, to awaken a heart only to crush it. Respect the weak and deserted creatures who have such a hard time struggling against themselves that it is an absolute cruelty to oblige them to struggle against you too.

When you read these pages you cannot reply to them—I shall be far away, and no one will know where I have gone. For that reason I can say to you in conclusion, Jacques, I am carrying away in my heart a sorrow that I shall never forget.

LYDIE.

LA CHENAYE, DECEMBER 25.

You took your precautions badly, Lydie, or your memory failed you. When my father engaged you for my sister, you came to him from your guardian, Maître Tarvin, his notary. Ah, you were very careful to tell a story to him as well as to us when you wrote him that you were going to Russia; but, taking my own time, I have made him talk about you. I have learned that you were brought up in La Chenaye, twenty leagues from Paris, a mere stroll. I reasoned it out that no one would set out like that, between one day and the next, for distant lands, without having made arrangements beforehand, especially when the person was, like you, a refined and prudent young girl and afraid of everything, even your own shadow. This reasoning led me straight to La Chenaye, where I learned that a handsome young woman, recently arrived from Paris, had opened a school for little boys and girls in an obscure corner of this community of scarcely a half-dozen scattered farms. I was told that the new teacher lived with some farmers who had taken care of her when she was a little girl, and that these farmers were attached to the castle of La Chenaye, which was uninhabitated at the moment, though it is, since yesterday, by a so-called hunter, who has paid his rent in advance for a year.

Can you imagine who this hunter is, Lydie? He is a certain Jacques Bertaud, a poor fellow who almost went crazy when you deserted him, and who could find no other way to avoid suicide than to swear that he would find you again. He has procured a six months' leave of absence and left for England to negotiate an important commercial affair. However, that very evening he slept at La Chenaye. That was yesterday. Tomorrow morning when

you open the copy-book in which little Jacquot, the gardener's son, makes strange pothooks and hangers, you will find this letter in it, and in spite of yourself, Lydie, your heart will leap with joy, for your heart is human, it is alive, it is palpitating, while your reason is cold and old and wrinkled, like a last winter's apple. I can fancy your reason nodding its head and mumbling something that is rather impertinent toward your friend Jacques. But I salute it, I kiss its hand, I make an irreverent reverence to it, I am even making a little fun of it now. There will be two of us against it; I first, and then your heart.

I wager that you do not know why I am so gay after the terrible punishment of the past two months. Yes, gay, confident, almost happy. It is because I saw you yesterday, Lydie. I spent an hour near you, and you did not recognize me. To be sure, you did not look at me. It was at the midnight mass, for today is Christmas, merry, merry Christmas. When you read this, Lydie, I shall be quite near you, for I'm going to wander about the little school as soon as you have shut yourself up in it among the youngsters whose racket will fairly make you giddy. I have seen from a distance the low windows that open on the deserted road, and I shall be near them. Do not be afraid, Lydie; it is I, it is your

JACQUES.

TUESDAY EVENING.

Oh, that is wrong, Lydie, it is cruel, it is odious, what you have done!—dismissing the school suddenly, retiring to your own room and saying you were sick so that no one might intrude on you. It was not wise, and you have nothing to be proud of. It is another evidence of that thoughtless and insulting fear, which irritates me more than it touches me. Am I a dishonorable man merely because I have the misfortune to love you? Yes, misfortune, for this hopeless love worries and upsets my life, makes me indifferent to all the pleasures of youth, and is eating me up, heart and soul.

Do you think that, if I had been able to forget you, I would not have done so? I swear it is true, for I am too unhappy, but it was in vain that I tried to do so. Your image, your memory pursues me everywhere. At last I have had to give up and throw myself at your feet, to find you again and see you again, or die. And then when I do find you again, Lydie, it is only to lose you once more. Cruel girl, when will you put an end to this wicked struggle? Did you hope to escape the great divine law to which all creatures in this immense universe must bow? What is the good of struggling, Lydie, when I hold out my arms to you? Do you not know that you must fall into them or I shall die?

I could very well have understood your scruples in my father's house. Here I do not understand them. Here we are free, with only ourselves to answer to. You are without family, duties or ties. The bird that flits from branch to branch or flies across the sky to seek the nest that suits it is not more free than you. You can be what you like, do what you please; no one has the right to look into your life. An immense, glowing horizon of happiness, limitless and without a cloud, is spread out before you, and you close your eyes to it. Why? If you did not love me, all would have been said; but you do love me.

You have let me take your soul, you know very well that you will not take it back from me.

Then why? Do you not desire our eternal unhappiness? Will you be any happier when I have put a bullet in my brain under the pretext of a hunting accident? Oh, Lydie, be merciful to yourself and to me, submit to the implacable destiny which has caused us to meet and please each other. Be too proud to bargain for your heart; give it to me frankly, bravely and confidently; for I love you.

If you would only hear me, if you would only once, for one single time, let me speak to you!—you would tell

me your reasons, and I would listen to them and try to combat them. But at least we would have exchanged our ideas face to face; we would both of us have bravely discussed this burning question of our love. You would understand me better, or—who knows? —you would have converted me to your views. But at least I should no longer have to suffer the bitter despair of never having told you, with my eyes on your eyes and my lips on your hands, "I love you, I love you!" Answer me, Lydie; I must see you, I am capable of doing anything to compel you to grant me this interview.

JACQUES.

MIDNIGHT, TUESDAY.

Why see each other, why this useless interview? It is you who are cruel—yes, cruel and pitiless. But really, what do you want of me? I cannot be your wife—if you had proposed it to me I would have refused. You are rich, I am poor; I have been paid for services in your house. Besides, you have not even thought of it. Am I, then, so contemptible in your eyes that, though you cannot give me your name, you dare say to me, "Let us love each other"? Happily that insult wounds my pride sufficiently to give me the strength to defend myself against you. Ah, if you had not pursued me, if you had left me in the obscure peace where I have sought to hide my eternal weariness, I would have been able to preserve deep in my heart your too dear memory, without bitterness and without shame.

But you have robbed me of that last consolation; you have torn loose and thrown to the winds the tatters of my last dream. By pursuing me like a prey you have become an enemy to be feared and avoided. That is why I do not wish to see you. Go, Jacques, if you still have a shred of honor, a little pity. Leave my path, which we cannot travel together hand in hand. Leave me unhappy but with nothing to reproach myself for. Imagine that I am dead; mourn for me, but do not seek to see me again. And if you love me as you say, as I believe, Jacques, be brave for me and for you —go!

LYDIE.

WEDNESDAY.

The farmer's girl who brings me your letter, Lydie, tells me that "the young lady" will not hold her classes for some time, as she is ill, and at the same time she declares that you are so pale and changed that everyone who sees you is filled with pity. She tells me, too, that that is not surprising because, for the two months that you have been here, "you have never stopped crying." I do not want you to cry, Lydie, but what am I to do? Tell me, and I swear I will obey you. As you have not stopped crying for the two months I have been far from you, it surely is not my presence now that disturbs you so. Whether I go or stay, you will suffer.

However, I will do what you tell me—but what you tell me face to face. Oh, do not be afraid, I am calm now. I no longer think of myself and my own unhappiness; I wish to think only of you. Come, let us talk seriously. You say I have not even thought of marrying you. Yes, I have thought of it, Lydie; but as one thinks of a serious matter that requires long waiting and great diplomacy. It is not my father's wish that I should marry young, not before thirty, and I am only twenty-five. It would be useless bothering him with it now; but I have thought this: when the time comes, when my father will give me the business and say: "Now get married," I will reply to him: "Very good, here is my wife." I've never spoken to you of this, Lydie, because it was a distant hope and also because I have surrounded our love with such a glory of poetry, such a halo of radiant youth, of ideal love that it would have seemed to me—yes, insulting to you, if while I begged you to give me your love, I offered you at the same time this—this compensation, this marriage bargain. I did not wish to buy you with an act signed and sealed as if

you were a piece of property; I wished to receive you from yourself as a heavenly gift, as the exquisite and disinterested gift of pure love.

What would you have, my dear Lydie? The son of a merchant and a child of the century, I have the fault of lacking practical common sense. It is repugnant to me to regard the divine union of two souls and two lives as a contract. Whatever you may think of me, I do not think I could have given you a more sincere proof of respect and love than in having "dared," as you reproach me, to say to you, "Let us love each other," without adding, "legitimately."

I confess that your reflections on this point have a little cooled the wings of my loving fancy. I love you as much as ever; but I pity you sincerely for not experiencing the delightful fevers, the intoxicating flights of the soul in love that make one forget the conventions of the world in the ecstatic contemplation of heavenly joys.

Forgive me and let us talk about yourself. You wish me to go away—so be it! I wish to say farewell to you. Let us grant so much to each other. I will go to see you wherever you wish. You need weep no more, Lydie.

Your

JACQUES.

WEDNESDAY.

Since you consent to go, Jacques, I will consent to see you again. Besides, I, too, wish to talk with you now—letters express so little, and I see that you have misinterpreted my reproaches. I feel that I must assure you that I have never thought or hoped to become your wife. That is why, in fact, I spoke to you of it. I simply told you that, our respective situations separating us in this matter, it would have seemed more worthy in you to break the bonds of an affection that might become a source of sorrow and perhaps a shame to me. You make it out a crime to be "practical"; alas, my friend, society makes it a law unto us to be practical. A young girl who would think and act like you in the poetic folly of her heart, forgetting everything to follow her burning and divine dream, would quickly find herself ruined in reputation, stained in honor, despised and driven from every honest roof. Do you think our dreams must be less great, less tormenting than yours?—we who live so largely in the ideal and do not know how to love save passionately? But between us and our happiness society has erected a barrier. If we pass over it, we are lost. We must remain on this side, suffering and weeping, as I am now.

Do not be angry with me, Jacques. Yes, I wish to press your hand for the first and last time, and then we will separate without a backward glance, each going to his duty with a tranquil conscience, even though our hearts are broken. Tomorrow at two o'clock I shall wait for you in the chapel on the hillside where you heard mass near me on Christmas Eve. It seems to me that I shall have more courage in God's house. Until tomorrow, Jacques, and always, your friend,

LYDIE.

FRIDAY.

It is necessary to make sacrifices, Lydie. You saw me yesterday so respectful and submissive to your least orders that you cannot refuse me this great boon of writing to you, and of writing that to you which you forbade me to say. It is the only concession that I ask, and I will be the more calm and reserved when I am near you, because I shall have told you by letter a little of what is in my heart.

When I saw you at the entrance to the chapel yesterday, lighted by the windows which crowned you with a halo like the little saint you are, so pale that you really looked like a marble statue in your long black veil, did you suspect, when you saw me stop and uncover at a little distance from you, that I was trembling with a mad desire to throw myself at your feet, to clasp you in my arms? Did I even touch your hand, save when we

separated, and because you yourself offered it to me? And did you feel that I was dying with a mad wish to kiss the tips of your fingers? For there is no use in deceiving you, Lydie; all my submission to your wishes has taken nothing from the violence of my passion. I have promised and sworn to treat you as a sister, but I have not promised that my thoughts and desires would submit to your orders. To obtain your permission to remain a week longer at La Chenaye and see you sometimes, not alone, but surrounded with your little ones in school, I have promised all that you exacted of me, and I shall keep my promise. But when I stand silent and motionless beside you, know, Lydie, that my heart is bounding and writhing in ineffable torture. For I love you madly, oh, cruel beloved, and I fear that, when the day comes for me to leave you, I will not be able to endure it, and will make an end of my evils and my life.

But we have not reached that point yet. A week! It is an eternity of happiness for me, who feared never to see you again. A week! All my life is to be comprised within those seven days. I await this evening with mad impatience. At the hour of prayers I shall come; I shall see you seated at the end of the little hall behind the bare, whitewood table that your white arms do not disdain to rest upon, and in the scratching of pens and the scuffling of your little pupils' sabots under the desks I will speak to you, seated a few feet away, about the weather and the fine appearance of your school and the progress your pupils are making. However, I shall look at you; I shall count religiously the golden ringlets that veil your forehead. I shall follow the movements of your fingers in the knitting you are doing for your little girls; I shall try to surprise your glance raised to dazzle me with the divine clearness of your eyes, and if you smile, I shall almost want to cry, I shall be so happy. Until this evening, Lydie; I love you.

JACQUES.

JANUARY 8.

Oh, Jacques, Jacques, the entire village has been upset by your munificence, and I, who want to scold you, am obliged by the mayor's order to send you a letter of thanks in the name of the municipal council, of the curé, of the factory, and, indeed, of the entire village. Your generosity has excited indescribable enthusiasm. This poor free school that I have started here is now, thanks to you, furnished with a sumptuousness that throws my poor children into almost comical bewilderment. They scarcely dare sit on their shining walnut benches; they keep their noses constantly in the air, looking at the beautiful pictures that hang on the wall; finally, oh, miracle! they speak in low voices, so thrilled are they with admiration and respect.

I would not have minded all that; but I must reproach you for this armchair of carved oak upholstered in red velvet and this beautiful desk that are destined for me, for they are much too fine for a schoolmistress in a little village like this. I know that your offering was made to the commune, which accepts it with joy and pride—but it is for me that you have done all these things, and they make me vaguely uneasy.

Then see how that upsets our plans! You ought to go away tomorrow, but the commune is to give you a banquet, the date of which has not been set, and they tell me—what bitter irony!—that I must persuade you to put off your departure.

Ah, you guessed how it would be, Jacques—do not deny it!—and you knew well that you would not go on the date set. However, my friend, since it must end so, what is the good of prolonging a situation which is so painful to me that I could not bear it if it were not for the mercy of God? Your letters are terrible, Jacques; they hurt me. It seems that each time they come they take away a little of my strength. It is my heart that is going out in shreds when you touch it with your burning phrases. Have

pity, spare me, Jacques, and be good and generous; go, do not wait for anything! I shall have no peace in my sorrow until you have gone.

Your

LYDIE.

JANUARY 9.

What you ask of me is absolutely impossible. I have promised to inaugurate this school, I have promised to be present at the banquet and I am preparing my speech now. Excuse me for the present, and until this evening.

JACQUES.

JANUARY 15.

At last, Lydie, here is my first day of happiness—and what happiness! You must confess that your poor Jacques is not very exacting, but I have been waiting so long for this blessed hour when I could sit at your knee like a submissive child and hold your hands in mine! It took all the excitement of yesterday's festivity in your school to give me an opportunity to find you alone or rather to surprise you after the departure of all your children.

Well, what harm was it, what crime? Has your scrupulous conscience anything to reproach itself for? Could not all your celestial angels have been present at our interview without having to hide their faces with their wings? Why did you always refuse me so pure and sweet a happiness, and why should you refuse it to me hereafter? Were we not happy? Is there anything in the world comparable to the ecstasy of two beings whose hearts are united, and whose hands, united too, seem to bind them together with a bond of eternal happiness? You refused to let me kiss your hair—I kissed the hem of your gown, Lydie, my dear madonna, with the respect of a devotee. Were not you too happy when you had wept gently, softly, without knowing why, as if your overflowing heart were at last pouring out its sorrow in a dream of peace? That is happiness, Lydie. Does it still frighten you, my beloved? Will you have the courage now to refuse the pure chalice in which the soul is so chastely watered with infinite delights? Is it not true? The evil days of cruel struggle are over, they are ended, and we shall always love each other every day so long as we live and through all eternity. I love you.

JACQUES.

THURSDAY.

No, it is not finished, and once again I beg of you to go. Yesterday, when you left me, I stood like one dead, in annihilation of all my being, in absolute confusion of thought, powerless against the weakness of my heart. And I endured indescribable suffering, made up of joy, remorse and shame. I was wrong, Jacques, I was wrong to let you come near me, intoxicating me with your words and the gentle pressures with which your hands burned mine. I am not a child, I have dreamed too much, and I feel and guess the danger toward which you are drawing me. I am afraid. That pure cup which you offer me with reassuring words—only to come near it has filled me with an intoxication that I feel is deadly. Have pity on me, Jacques! I do not, do not want to give myself up to this terrible power of love, with which I feel myself surrounded and against which I struggle, already vainly but in terror.

What is this terrible evil which hangs over us, in spite of ourselves and in spite of our struggles, and which crushes us and destroys all our physical and moral strength? How can God have been cruel enough to give us this terrible burden and yet order us not to succumb to it? Oh, this obsession by day and by night that leaves us but one thought, one vision, one feeling, and always the same! Perhaps this terrible thing is exquisite in happy love, in love that is free and permitted; but it is the most terrible of tortures when it is inflicted upon a being condemned by her social station to repel it, to fight against it. I can do no more. If I knew where I might flee

for shelter, if I could find some unknown road and travel along it forever, always farther from you, I would do it. But I am a poor girl, obliged to earn my bread where I can do so at the only trade I know, teaching, and I must remain in one place or another, within reach of your pursuit, since I have not the material resources to go farther away. Will you not have pity? Will you not be merciful to me as you were the other day, at my request, to a little bird that had been wounded by your gun and could no longer fly?

You see, too, that my pride is dead; I tell you humbly all my heartrending misery; I supplicate you, I implore your pity; I put myself under the protection of your honor. Leave me, go away; you, who can do so, spare a poor girl who will love you a hundred times more when you have delivered her from the mortal terror in which your presence puts her. Believe me, Jacques, this good action will be set down to your account, and my thoughts will follow you like a benediction all your life. Do not look for me this evening. I have taken refuge in the parsonage, and I shall not leave it until you have gone.

LYDIE.

SATURDAY, MIDNIGHT.

MY DEAR LYDIE: After receiving your letter I remained in the castle for two days, trying to obey you. I shall not tell you what I suffered during those forty-eight hours of agony—it would make little difference to you. You should know only that I have reflected deeply, that I have questioned myself sincerely, that I have made a test of the separation you demand in order to see if I can bear it—a matter which you have not taken the trouble to look into, as if my sufferings did not count. But I forgive you that: women, with their claim to being devoted, are the worst egotists in the world. They are sensitive only to the evils that they endure, and to spare themselves the possible evil that might come to them through a too deep charity toward the unhappy beings who love them, they condemn them to the most infernal punishment and would even see them die without a qualm. However, I have made up my mind about your lack of heroism and I have decided that, since, after all, I have not been able to make you love me strongly enough to obtain the brave and loving abandonment of yourself, of your life, whatever it might cost you and in a sublime flight of heroic love, there is nothing left for me to do but to disappear.

That is what I shall do. You do not know, my dear child, man's nature and the implacable violence of his desires. Otherwise you would have saved yourself the trouble of writing me the pitiful letter that has drawn tears of rage from me, but not of pity, our ferocity in love making us incapable of pity.

Yes, my dear Lydie, I shall leave you; you will be relieved forever of the torment of your chaste life. But I love you too much to go away from you as you command me and tranquilly take up again the course of my usual occupations as a man returning from a little pleasure trip enters his house again, shaking the dust from his feet. I have not that resignation. My first love has been unhappy—I shall not try the experience again. I can live only for you and through you. You drive me away—very well. All is finished.

Oh, I do not even ask you the favor of a last farewell. In the first place, you would refuse it—wisely; and then, if you did grant it to me and if you did let me coldly go away, I think, God forgive me, that I would kill you. You see, I am very calm. I have even become religious, as you shall see. I wish to hear this evening, when they sound the Angelus, the bells of the holy place in which you have taken refuge and from which you defy my pursuit. To hear them the better, I shall even walk along the edge of the moat, some fifty yards from the church. There, with my eyes turned toward you, I shall listen. When the

last vibration of the last stroke of the bell has died away, from the chapel where you will be kneeling, Lydie, at the feet of the guardian angels that protect your cruel virtue, you may hear a pistol-shot in the borders of the wood. At that moment, dearly beloved, pray to God for the soul that is passing near you into eternity.

Always,

JACQUES.

SATURDAY, 4 O'CLOCK.

Jacques, do not kill yourself! Jacques, I do not wish you to die! My God, I cannot see to write!—tears blind me and my hand shakes. I cannot—Jacques, listen to me; come—no, I do not know what I am saying. But I do not want you to die! It is horrible! You are right—what is my life, after all? Nothing, nothing. Take it—I give it to you. All my life is yours, yours; but do not die—Jacques—God forgive me!

LYDIE.

There were still a few letters unread, but M. Bertaud, whose eyes were moist, did not even open them. He put them away from him with a gesture of disgust; almost all had been written by his son and bore a much more recent date. He guessed what their contents might be. These doubtless were the "infinite pains," of which Jacques had spoken, to induce Lydie to break with him. He glanced through one of the letters, however, in which he recognized Lydie's writing, though it was scarcely decipherable, so stained was it with pitiful tear-marks. How her hand had shaken was plainly visible; it was fairly instinct with her great sorrow.

There were phrases in which she recalled Jacques's eternal vows, his love so soon forgotten, the engagement he had made toward her as an honorable man when she gave her life to him to save him from suicide.

And then the letter flowed timidly along in faintly traced words, which could still be read: "Now that I love you with all the passion that your soul has raised in mine, it is I who will die if you repulse me. Save me as I saved you. I love you, Jacques, I love you, and I am going mad with waiting for you, calling for you."

M. Bertaud rested his head on his hands, and his tears fell on Lydie's sorrowful complaint.

Suddenly he straightened up at the sound of a knock at the door. He thought it was Jacques, and without turning around he cried out in a voice hoarse with emotion and anger, "Come in!"

Maître Tarvin had stopped at the threshold on perceiving his emotion. His uneasy glance fell upon the letters scattered over the desk before the old man, who still sat there with bent back.

"Well?" stammered Maître Tarvin, after a pause.

"Oh, it is you, is it?" cried M. Bertaud, rising quickly. "You come opportunely. Come in—how is she?"

"She is very low, sir. The doctor stayed at La Chenaye and tried to make her speak of her troubles. She would not say a word, however. I have come here because the first thing is to find out if——"

"You are right, Maître Tarvin, we must act quickly. You will excuse me if I cut short the usual formalities in the demand I have to make of you."

"The—the demand?" stammered Maître Tarvin, in a choking voice, while he turned pale with the too sudden joy.

"Maître Tarvin, you are Mlle. Lydie Mercier's guardian. I have the honor to ask her hand of you on behalf of my son, Jacques Bertaud."

"Oh, that is admirable, Monsieur Bertaud, it is worthy of you! It is—why, you are saving the life of a poor girl who richly deserves it. Thank you, thank you!" and the two men shook hands fervently, while the tears came into their eyes.

"I am doing only my duty," said M. Bertaud at last. "My son seduced Mlle. Mercier; he pursued her when she fled from him; he employed moral violence to which the poor child had

to succumb as inevitably as if it had been physical violence. The code absolves my son in the name of the law, but I condemn him in the name of honor. The Bertauds have never had any other judges than themselves. I have judged and I have given sentence: Jacques shall marry Mlle. Mercier. Come, sir, let us go to Lydie."

"But," murmured Maître Tarvin timidly, "will M. Jacques consent?"

"My son!" cried M. Bertaud proudly. "Such a doubt is almost insulting, Maître Tarvin. When I command him——"

The door opened, and Jacques entered the room. Without raising his eyes to his father, he went straight to Mlle. Mercier's guardian.

"How is Lydie?" he asked in a shaken voice.

Maître Tarvin hesitated.

"My God, what would you have me understand?" cried Jacques.

"Be assured," replied the guardian at last, "she can be saved."

"Then she shall be saved, sir, and I beg of you never to reveal to her what has passed here. Lydie would never forgive me for having married her only at my father's order."

"But I have given you no order," cried M. Bertaud triumphantly. "You see, Maître Tarvin, my son has recognized his duty——"

"Pardon me," interrupted Jacques, with a gesture in which pride and humility were strangely blended. "I refuse to act in this matter on the ground of duty. A better motive has been granted me at this late hour. The same conclusion which you have reached by reasoning that is abstract and perhaps a little vague on matters of honor and duty, I have reached through other channels. For me it is enough to know that Lydie is suffering, that she is dying as a result of my neglect. Pity is more nearly akin to love than is duty, and my great pity for that dear, unhappy girl has awakened once more all my former love. Permit me, Maître Tarvin, in all respect and humility, to second my father's petition for the hand of your ward, Mlle. Lydie Mercier."

UNREASONABLE REQUIREMENTS

MISTRESS (*to new servant*)—Now you've broken that platter that we have had only two days!

NORA—And yesterday you scolded me for breaking a vase because it was so old. I'd like to know what I *can* break.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

HER REASON

HUSBAND—Why do you insist on quarreling with me whenever you have such an attack of nerves? Why don't you take it out on the maid or the cook?

WIFE—Because they might leave me.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

INNOCENCE

BY W. FRED

AT the conclusion of a stupid evening we landed in the Café Cyrano in the Place Blanche. The company was composed of men between whom there was no great degree of intimacy, but who had simply been thrown together by chance. It was very late, and we had grown hungry. While shelling our hard-boiled eggs and glancing about at the women in the room of the sort that frequent the Montmartre cafés at three in the morning, we discussed stupid adventures, and erotic episodes flavored with a dash of sociology. As a matter of fact, we were all bored, but none of us wanted to turn homeward. So in desperation we exchanged anecdotes.

"Let me tell you a story that has no ending," volunteered the painter.

"Is it a true one?" I queried.

"Entirely, as you will find. True stories are the only ones that have any meaning."

"Then let us hear it," we all urged.

"About two years ago," the painter began, "I was in the habit of frequenting a small café on the Boulevard St. Michel, up in the quarter. I lived near the Madeleine, but each evening I would cross the wonderful Place de la Concorde and stroll along the river banks through the still, sunken gardens of the Tuileries on the way to the little café, where I would sit until the close of the evening. There were never many guests there, nor was there any especial attraction about the place; I simply happened to discover it one Thursday while returning from the Bal Bullier. Besides it was a cheap café, and at that time my purse was very meagre.

"One evening I noticed a couple sitting at a table not far from me. They must have been regular frequenters of the place, for I noticed that the waiter served the man with a glass of beer and the woman with a mazagran without waiting for an order. Her face was familiar to me—I must have seen the couple many times before; but never until this evening had I noticed what a lovely face the youth had. He was obviously a German, a pretty boy, and exceptionally innocent. His manner toward the girl was extremely deferential, and it was easy to see that he was head over heels in love with her.

"The girl was talking with a good deal of animation, and he listened in evident astonishment. That evening I was sitting too far from them to hear what they were saying, but I looked over at them very frequently and saw that the boy's face bore signs of great depression. At ten o'clock they got up. He helped her on with her jacket, and they left the café.

"On the next evening I selected a table nearer to them, for they interested me very much. I wondered why the lad had been so depressed. Was she unfaithful to him? Or was he trying to save her and lift her out of the mire? I held the *Times* in front of my face, and, listening, soon heard enough to clear up the affair for me. He was a good, innocent lad, fresh from school, who had come to Paris by chance—possibly on a holiday trip. He was German in every detail—clothes, manners, and even in the French that he spoke. And he loved the girl deeply and innocently. Yes, you may well laugh. It took several evenings to convince me that the affair was platonic. However, it was true, though it was not her fault.

But when I discovered this detail I understood the youth's mood. Bits of conversation that floated over to me convinced me that the girl made no effort to deceive him. She was quite frank about her mode of life, and made no secret of the fact that what she desired most of all was to have him provide for her, relieving her of the uncertainty of her present existence. The lad seemed not to understand in the least. At times he appeared puzzled; then he remained silent, not comprehending worldly things at all, and was perfectly wretched.

"Then one afternoon I met her accidentally on the quay. She passed me smiling in a miserably stereotyped manner. Time was hanging on my hands that day, so I spoke to her, and soon we were sitting together over an absinthe.

"Before she left me that evening at seven o'clock—she had an appointment to eat dinner with the lad in one of the Cafés Duval—she told me about her 'friend.' It was exactly as I had imagined it to be. He had met her one Sunday afternoon, and had believed her to be a little dressmaker. They had gone together to St. Cloud for the afternoon. On the return trip they were huddled together in the cabin of the little steamer, and she was much surprised that he did not grow demonstrative. Upon their arrival in Paris he put her into a fiacre and sent her home. But she thought that he was probably some strange 'type,' of which there are so many in a big city; so she kept her rendezvous with him in the Louvre on the day following. For three consecutive days they met in the Louvre and the Parc Monceau. Then they selected the café for a meeting-place. It was a case of love and nothing else. He was almost painfully considerate, never asking a single question as to how she made her living.

"To me she complained bitterly of her lot. 'I cannot deliberately tell him that—that, for instance, I have talked with you. But what in the world does he think, anyway?'

"Naturally enough, I asked if he placed his purse at her disposal. And then she told me of such touching, sentimental actions that they sounded like a Marlitt novel or a Tauchnitz romance: Behind her back he paid her landlady, secretly he slipped two louis into her purse, and so on. At heart she was a good little thing, and it grieved her to have the lad torture himself so much on her account. She realized the catastrophe that in all probability would come sooner or later and open his eyes.

"The catastrophe came, and I was the cause of it. For several evenings after the day on which I had met her on the quay I avoided their café—honestly, I was a bit ashamed of myself. But finally the remarkable features of the case worked on my curiosity, and one evening I sat again as usual at my table in the café. She had not yet come, but he was waiting for her, his head in his hands, staring eagerly at the entrance whenever the door opened. She was late. When she came in we must in some way have betrayed our acquaintance—possibly she smiled at me, and he caught her glance; or I may have begun to flirt with her before his very eyes. In short, he was very much wrought up that evening. He glared over at me again and again, and persuaded her to leave the café very early.

"On the following evening I made a special effort to be there, and waited until ten o'clock; but neither of them came. When I left the café the lad was standing on the sidewalk not three paces from the door. When he saw me he turned pale and began to quiver with excitement. At first he was unable to utter a word. I knew not what to say, and remained standing. Then in a voice that shook he hissed: 'You scoundrel!'

"All of you here are sufficiently acquainted with me to know that I am usually very quick with my fists, and that I do not allow myself to be insulted without cause. But on this occasion I did not stir. I felt like a father who was realizing the nonsensical purity of his child. I understood the intensity of the lad's emotion, and

was tempted to take him by the hand and lead him to some quiet café corner, and there tell him a lot of things that I thought he ought to know. But our social conventions are too strict to permit of such kindliness; and besides, he had called me a scoundrel. Therefore, without replying by word or sign, I slowly walked away from him down the street. He stood still, and sent another challenge after me. I believe he called me 'Coward!' "

"Did you ever meet the girl again?" I asked after a pause.

"No, and of course I never heard what passed between them. Possibly I did him a very great service, possibly he took the girl as she wanted to be taken. And then possibly after a fortnight he revenged himself on her brutally because she had killed his illusions—which is a sin that men never forgive."

"You are a cynic."

"Possibly—but let us go."

And we took our way down the empty streets toward the boulevards.

THE BEST REFERENCE

MRS. BROWN—So you engaged that French maid, after all? I thought you didn't like her references.

MRS. SMITH—No, I didn't, but I found out that she subscribes for the loveliest Paris fashion journal!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

THE SAME THING

DOCTOR—My dear woman, I told you that you must walk for three hours every day, and here I find you lying down and reading.

PATIENT—Yes, doctor, but I'm reading a book of travels.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

HEARTLESS

MOTHER—I don't know what is the matter with baby. I've been singing to him for an hour, and yet he doesn't stop crying.

FATHER—Then why don't you stop singing?—*Translated for* TALES *from "Familie-Journal."*

TALES AND THEIR TELLERS

KARL MARIA FEDOR VON ZOBELTITZ, author of "Out of the Past," which appears in this issue of TALES, is a German novelist who enjoys both popularity and high literary rank. He was born October 5, 1867, at Schloss Spiegelberg, in Neumark, and received his education in the military schools of Plön and Berlin. At an early age he obtained a commission in a cavalry regiment, but soon resigned from the service in order to devote himself to further study, especially along historical lines. His talent for journalism and literature soon evinced itself, and he became the editor of various military jounals and of the *Deutsche Familienblatt*. From this he graduated naturally into the responsible position of editor of the *Deutsches Tageblatt*, one of the most influential papers in Berlin. Since 1893 he has spent his summers in the ancestral home at Spiegelberg, returning in the winter to Berlin or making trips to Southern Europe. The exigencies of journalism have not interfered with a literary production that began in 1881 with a volume of verse and includes now a dozen or more novels and several plays that have been produced with success. Zobeltitz's latest novel, "Out of the Past," has been appearing serially in a leading German magazine, *Velhagen & Klasing's Monatshefte*, of which his brother Hanns, also widely known as a novelist, is one of the editors.

W. FRED is one of the clever young writers of Germany, a Viennese by birth, who divides his time between Berlin and Paris and already, at the age of twenty-six, has a considerable reputation as a novelist and critic.

To the foreigner in Copenhagen, and perhaps also to the native, the most interesting personality in that city's literary colony is Peter Nansen. For several years Nansen, although still a young man—he was born in 1861—has been a recognized leader of the clever group of ultra-modern authors in the Danish capital. Part of Nansen's prestige is undoubtedly due to his social position, his influence as the manager and part owner of the Gyldendalske Boghandels Forlag, the largest publishing concern in Denmark, and, not least, to the popularity of his wife, Betty Nansen, one of the most charming actresses in Copenhagen. But his literary reputation is based on genuinely admirable work. He is the recognized interpreter of the most fascinating side of the higher social circles—that on which it touches the literary and artistic world, and his "Julia's Diary" and "Marie" are masterpieces of analysis of the ideas and motives that sway the people of this class.

ALTHOUGH the Swiss have no language of their own, they have a vigorous and growing literature, whose pronounced national characteristics are apparent whether the language used be French, German or Italian. Many of the Swiss writers, indeed, have an equal command of two or more languages, and this is true of Mme. Isabelle Kaiser, one of the most interesting Swiss novelists. The list of Mme. Kaiser's works, comprising three volumes of poetry as well as a number of novels, proves that she prefers French to German for literary purposes, and it is from the French language that her story in this issue of TALES is translated.

In Sweden the name of Charlotte Edgren-Leffler is popularly associated with a number of charming novels, short stories and plays. Outside of her own country, however, the literary reputation of this Swedish author rests chiefly on her biography of Sonia Kovalevska, the mathematician and one of the most remarkable women of the nineteenth century. This interesting and authoritative work has been translated into many languages and was highly praised on its appearance in English a few years ago.

Arthur Stringer, the author of "The Hydrophobiac," was born in Canada, and educated at the University of Toronto and the University of Oxford. Although he has already published two novels and two volumes of verse, and has been a frequent contributor to the magazines, the greater part of Mr. Stringer's time and attention is given to his Canadian fruit farm. He has also made two trips into the remoter portions of the Canadian Northwest, roughing it in the midst of trappers and Indians. The outcome of these journeyings was a series of short stories of outdoor life, of which "The Hydrophobiac" is a representative example. Indeed, Mr. Stringer embarks on one of these expeditions once every year. Last year it was to Sicily and Morocco; the year before it was an extended canoe trip through the Lake Temagami district—for, although addicted to the writing of verse, Mr. Stringer still lays claim to being an athlete, and a few years ago was one of the best known football players in Canada.

Kazimir Stanislavovich Barantsevich is the son of a Polish father and French mother, and was born in St. Petersburg in 1851. He first appeared in the field of literature in 1873, with the stage adaptation of a novel by Count A. K. Tolstoy. The drama, dealing with the life of Ivan the Terrible, was produced the same year in one of the St. Petersburg theatres. He began to publish novelettes and stories as early as 1878, and has contributed to some of the best Russian magazines. His stories have been largely translated into Polish, German and Bohemian.

THE CRUCIAL MOMENT

Tom—Weren't you horribly nervous when you told Miss Smith that you loved her?

Dick—Not half so nervous as last night when I told her I didn't.—*Translated for* Tales *from "Familie-Journal."*

PURE MATHEMATICS

Clerk (*to wine merchant*)—How shall I label that cask in which you mixed five-year-old and ten-year-old Moselle?

Merchant—Mark it "Extra fine fifteen-year-old Moselle."—*Translated for* Tales *from "Familie-Journal."*