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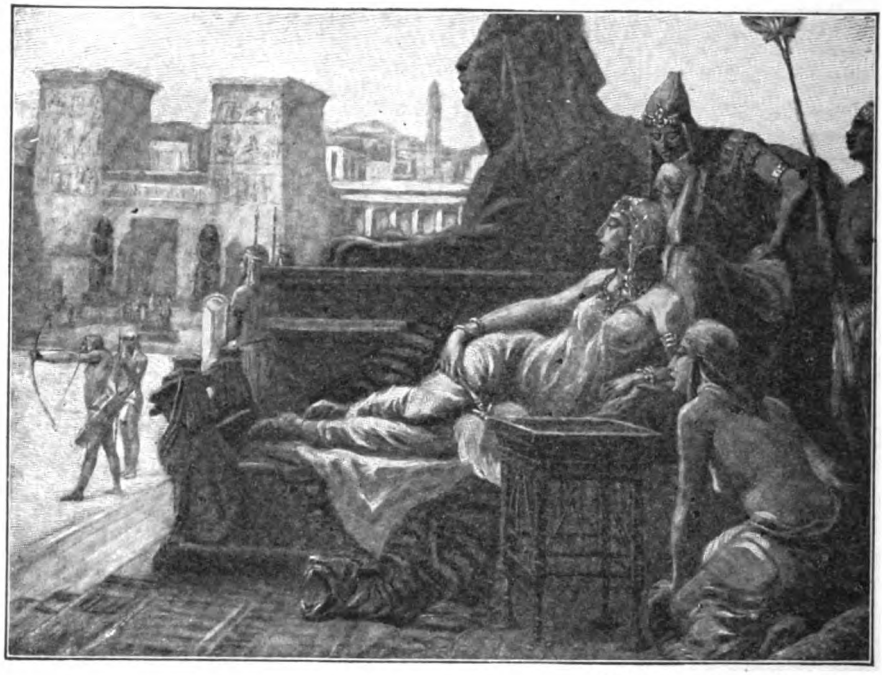

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FIRE-FLY

BY J. H. ROSNY

JEAN SAVIGNY had expected to meet a giant, but he was hardly prepared for this man who seemed built like a lion, with a face like those of the barbarian Eburoni and Franks who, centuries ago, had invaded this country. A furious energy seemed to issue from Vacounine every time he spoke or made a gesture. The young man admired this tremendous specimen of the human race, but his companion looked upon him with the same feeling he would have felt at viewing in Barnum's circus the man with the head of iron or the monster from Borneo.

They had been talking together for some time, and twilight had fallen upon the Lake of Lugano. Vacounine had been diving into his memory, which seemed fathomless as the ocean, and pouring forth anecdotes in an uninterrupted stream.

"Yes," he said suddenly, to Savigny, "I loved your brother. He was one of those men who can see to the bottom of a swamp at one glance. He was not one of those who can be fooled by such bourgeois flatterers as the historian Michelet. Besides, I am intuitive. I have only to look at you. You're an honest man, a lover of the open. This house is yours!"

He turned his enormous eyes upon Jean Savigny's companion, a little man wearing eye-glasses and breathing painfully, and then he roared at him: "You're disgusted, eh? You don't take my side; you snap your fingers at liberty!"

"What liberty?" asked the little man, smiling. "The liberty to live? I am only a very small candle. The liberty to think? When I wish to think I don't have to go out in a public square to do so. The liberty to move around? I never go out when it rains. The liberty to earn my bread? Well, I do earn it."

"That of others!" growled the Russian. "Everyone must have a chance to eat his belly-full and roar as he pleases. But we shall have a chance later on to fight these questions out. You shall dine with me; Lampuniani will be with us."

The voice of Vacounine, which had been resounding like thunder for the past two hours, stopped. Jean had a chance to look out upon the lake. His attention was attracted by little darting lights. Flames seemed to be dancing about the grass. He thought he saw will-o'-the-wisps, and stopped for a moment to examine them. The little flames seemed to come and go, sometimes capriciously, sometimes regularly, pure and cold as a far-off star. Sometimes these gleaming points resembled shooting stars, that one marks in the heaven on summer nights. In the light of the dying day they had a subtle charm which attracted the young man. Soon they became more numerous. All over the lawns and among the thuya trees, the glittering points rose and fell, writhing and twisting; they seemed to imitate, on a smaller scale, the darkened arch of the heavens that was slowly

filling up with innumerable stars. It was the feast of fire-flies, each one a breathing, moving, passionate light.

"The first fire-flies I have ever seen," thought Jean.

This strange land of Ticino filled him with an indescribable pleasure. The moment was but a promise of future happiness. From the plants, from the whispering waters of the lake, from the pink and violet west, there came to him a strange mixture of coolness, warmth and perfume like a caress that is at the same time sensual and reassuring. It was the great breath of Roman power and tenderness that swept over this sacred land from the Lake of Lugano to the Straits of Sicily.

Jean was created to enjoy it in every sense. He was intoxicated by the colors, the sounds, the perfumes, which seemed to unite in forming a fairy scene.

Leaning against a tree, he drew deep breaths of the night air and abandoned himself to a frenzy of hope and desire. His past life, as he looked back upon it, seemed to have been very monotonous, and this night promised wonders in the future.

He silently thanked the artist, a friend of his, who had advised him to visit this country.

His attention was attracted by the bright rays of a lighted lantern which had been placed in front of the house. He turned and saw a man and a young woman coming toward Vacounine; the man was short and broad-shouldered, like a small bull; his face was the color of Turkish tobacco, his cheeks were hollow and above them gleamed two half-closed, crafty eyes. He was draped in a long green cloak, bound about his waist by a red belt, and wore a peaked hat.

Jean scarcely looked at him. He was stupefied by the beauty of the woman, in whom all the beauty of the landscape had been crystallized into human life. As he looked at her the tremendous voice of Vacounine roared out:

"Good evening, rascal! Have you been able to bring through your salt and your tobacco over the frontier? Did you deliver my message?"

"I did, Signor Vacounine," answered the man in a hoarse voice. "I have some apples for you."

"Good. Are you going to pass the night at Lugano?"

"No, I must be at Tavesco."

"But you do not start at once?"

"Not before ten o'clock. If you have something to run across the frontier, I'll take it."

"Just what I want. You shall drink some of my new Chianti and your pretty wife shall have a glass of my foaming Asti, which explodes like a cannon when you open the bottle."

The young woman smiled, and made a gesture that was at once so sweet and so dignified that Vacounine clapped his huge hands.

"Giovanni, she is the queen of the Ticino. Take good care of your property!"

The white, sharp teeth of the smuggler gleamed like those of a wolf, and in his crafty eyes there was a look of jovial ferocity. "The property takes care of itself," he replied. He motioned to his wife to follow him, and disappeared.

"There is a free man!" exclaimed Vacounine. "I always love smugglers. They are men who have a contempt for all laws, who laugh at frontiers and are the only real Nihilists, for the thieves that live in the city are, after all, only property owners. I confess, however, that I do not particularly like Giovanni. His private life is disgusting. He has made a slave of this beautiful woman—he hates her more than he loves her—and he locks her up in a dog-house or else leads her around with a chain. She is certainly unfortunate. If I were young, if I were the Vacounine who formerly galloped across the steppes on a wild kirghis horse, I would be glad to take the risk of this man's knife and gun to deliver the poor little woman. But now I am nothing but an old——"

"You say that he hates her. Is it because of jealousy?" asked Jean in a trembling voice.

Vacounine looked at him affectionately.

"My poor boy!" he exclaimed, "you are already beginning to feel the effects of the air of the lake. No nonsense! That man would put a foot of steel into you with no more hesitation than he would kill a sparrow, and no surgeon knows better than he how to pick out the fatal place. I don't think he is jealous in the sense in which you and I would understand the word. It makes no difference to him whether his wife loves him or detests him, and he wouldn't care a snap of his fingers whether she loved another man or not. In love, he understands only the material side—and ownership. His uncle Armanio and he form a guard about this woman which is more effective than that of a hundred eunuchs."

"I was only thinking about painting her portrait," stammered Savigny.

Vacounine broke into a roar of laughter. "Do you think I am going to undertake the responsibility of bringing up a little Cabanel? The first old cow you meet is more interesting to paint than that woman. But human desires sometimes masquerade under the form of art."

"Beauty is our only teacher. The expression of that woman, even upon a canvas, is better than that of a cow."

"Little one," growled the giant, "you are not frank. You want to see Desolina again—and perhaps make love to her. You can see her again, but as for the rest you will first have to kill two men, and that is not a job that you can carry out. After all, dear boy, I advise you not to see her again, even if your intentions are the very best. Something would happen that would spoil your stay with us, and that would be unfortunate." He turned to the little man with the spectacles and continued: "Have you any influence with your friend?"

"Absolutely none. I haven't any influence upon myself, so how could I possibly have on anyone else?"

"You are ironical."

"There is no doing anything with him. He follows where his eyes, his ears and his nose lead him. Besides, he has not an atom of common sense."

"Ah, what a fortunate man!" cried Vacounine. "If he must die badly, at least he will have lived well. When one's built that way—and I was—even Siberia is a paradise. Well, here comes Lampuniani."

A man with a profile of Julius Caesar, little, restless black eyes, an enormous stomach and a sensual mouth appeared in the rays of the lantern.

"Two Parisians who will be our friends," said the gigantic Russian Nihilist, presenting the two young men to the new comer. "This one is young Savigny, who will probably end on the scaffold, but in the meantime he will paint well and eat well. This is Philippe Cormières, who will die in his bed." Then he introduced the new comer: "This is the illustrious Professor Francesco Lampuniani, the only man in Europe who knows the real history of Pope Innocent X, and why the doctrines of Jansen were put in the 'Index Expurgatorius.'"

"I thought I knew it," said Lampuniani, "but I've just discovered some new documents. You see, there isn't a single historical fact that it wouldn't take a hundred men their whole lifetime to elucidate. History requires at least ten millions of historians and archæologists to explain properly. Even then they would have to begin all over again in the next twenty years."

"All is in all," answered Cormières. "Hence all history is contained in every single historical episode."

Lampuniani laughed with the frankness of a child. "Eh, Vacounine," he exclaimed. "All that there is of Lampuniani at the present moment is his stomach."

"Let us dine then, without a moment's delay."

On the way they picked up the daughters of the host, three enormous young women whose faces were half hidden by masses of blond hair. Their eyes were blue, their skin was pink and

white, their lips were full, red and smiling.

"This is my flock," said Vacounine gaily.

The young women all laughed loudly, but it was the innocent, causeless laugh of children or savages.

"Father didn't notify us," said one of them, slowly. "You'll have a very bad dinner, nothing but what we can get right here."

"With the exception of the caviare," interrupted Lampuniani, looking hungrily at this *hors-d'œuvre*. "And then, what we get in this country isn't so bad after all."

The table was adorned with water-lilies, blue, yellow, and white. There was something joyous and exhilarating about this dining-room, with its wide windows opening out upon the night. Jean almost forgot the wife of the smuggler in the pleasure it gave him to see this splendid table.

"No one must make a god of his stomach," Lampuniani said.

Then he took upon his plate a large tablespoonful of caviare, which looked like black soap, and began to spread it methodically on a slice of bread. Vacounine followed his example, while Cormières, disgusted, tasted a little with the tip of his knife. Two enormous pike followed. Jean, who thought himself a big eater, noted with amazement the rapidity with which these fish disappeared. Vacounine alone ate three or four pounds, the professor nearly as much, and the three laughing, smiling virgins loaded their plates.

"Fish," remarked Lampuniani, "are very light."

"Fish must swim!" exclaimed Vacounine as he swallowed glass after glass of Yvorne wine.

"These Northern people," said Lampuniani, "drink too much at the beginning of a meal. My opinion is that with the fish one should not drink more than one bottle of wine."

He sniffed greedily at the roast, which just then made its appearance, surrounded by sweet-smelling herbs.

"Vacounine," continued the professor, "in other dishes I am very moderate, but when it comes to the roast, I am with you. It is the true food of the worker."

He devoured six or seven huge slices, but Vacounine ate twice as many. Subsequently the Russian ate a chicken and a good half of a leg of goat. In silence, placid and smiling, the young women followed the honorable example of their father as well as they could. They poured down glasses of Chianti and Burgundy, as if they were workers at the wine-press. Jean could not but admire these people, who seemed to belong to a different race, a race that is in its youth and charges itself, before overthrowing civilization, with strength and energy. As for Cormières, he looked at them in absolute terror. He felt himself a poor, weak, almost dying creature in comparison with these bears, but at the same time he had all he could do to keep from laughing.

"I've had enough," finally exclaimed Lampuniani, drawing a deep breath. "Decidedly, you people from the North can beat us. But in this country you will certainly die of indigestion. Dyspepsia is already making fearful ravages in England and the United States. The turn of Germany and Russia will come later. It is by sobriety and temperance that the Latin races conquered the world."

"Sobriety," answered Vacounine, "is a negative virtue. It may prolong one's existence, but only as a weakling."

Then, according to the custom of the country, *la minestra*, which is a thick soup made with rice, was brought in, and the temperate Lampuniani found room for a huge bowlful. Vacounine declared that it facilitated digestion, so he took two.

After this dinner of lions, a pleasant hour was spent over the coffee. It was served out on the terrace, in the light of the stars and the fire-flies. Alternately, the professor and the Nihilist told anecdotes. Both had wonderful memories and splendid powers of description. There was delightful good humor in the tales of the Latin, while the eloquence

of the Slav was rude, brusque and full of invective.

"And what news have we from the Conservative party?" demanded Vacounine.

"They are doing something out there beyond Tesserete," answered the professor. "Gennaro Tagliamente tells me that they are preparing for an uprising."

Vacounine began to sing in a voice that sounded like the low growling of a lion:

"We'll hang all the rich,
We'll send them all to the guillotine,
And the people will dance for joy, I ween."

"Your 'people' is a big ass!" exclaimed Lampuniani.

"Yes, yes, I know," replied Vacounine, winking one eye. "You don't want to lose your lands and vineyards, most illustrious professor; you care more for these than you do for the good of humanity."

"Eh, my good friend, all those who work for the good of humanity should long since have been put in the insane asylum. What are all these people who have the mania for acquiring property compared to the others? They are but blades of grass to bamboos! Cousin of the Tsar, all you sellers of Nihilistic drugs and socialistic elixirs are children playing with matches."

"Illustrious professor, you will die upon the scaffold!"

"Noble cousin of the Tsar, you will die in a madhouse!"

Vacounine looked affectionately at the fat professor. "It will be a pity, a man who knows so well how to cook *minestra.*"

"It would be a pity, a man who can eat it with such magnificent genius."

The tall blond girls served liqueurs, and silence fell upon the group—a silence which seemed filled with happiness, broken only now and then by the plaintive clamor of frogs. Through the trees one could distinguish the lake, which reflected the stars and seemed to be moving almost imperceptibly. Lying back in his chair, gazing dreamily out upon the wonderful Italian night, Jean again thought of the woman. She dominated him. He feared that she would take away all the charm of the hour, that she would spoil his trip. Accustomed to the brusque variations of his artistic temperament, he was not astonished at this. Men of his kind, more than others, know the importance of small events, or rather for them there is no other measure for the occurrences of life excepting what they themselves feel.

The life of Savigny had been filled with important decisions based upon causes which the average man would have looked upon as trivial. Jean never analyzed causes, he yielded to them, and his only reaction against them was a feeling of sorrow that seemed to exalt him. A keen critic of men and things, his mind was a magnifying glass well adapted to study the world without, but not an instrument which he could use to study himself. Hence his sympathies and antipathies were exaggerated, at times hyperbolical, but they were always true. He might make a mistake in quantity but not in quality. He had never been the victim of treachery on the part of women or men; he had always discounted in advance both friendship and love. Strange as it may seem, and notwithstanding those sudden decisions which seemed to have made a chaos of his life, he had himself been faithful to friendship and was capable of being faithful to women, but to women of a different class from those he had heretofore met, sellers of wine and love.

"By the way," exclaimed Vacounine suddenly, turning to Savigny, "if you intend to travel about Valcolla and the neighborhood, Gennaro Tagliamente would be a famous guide for you. He is keen, crafty, brave as a lion, and if he likes a person he is wholly devoted to him. He adores Lampuniani and I believe thinks something of me. To please us, he would devote himself to you. Really, it would be to your advantage to know this part of the country thoroughly, without having to hire an ordi-

nary guide. Gennaro will obey your every wish, will confine himself to telling you what is before you, and will save you many annoyances. Besides, it will not cost you much; a dollar a day will cover all his expenses, including salary."

"That man," Lampuniani interposed dreamily in the conversation, "is the worst kind of a smuggler. I do not believe he would give up the intoxicating delight of climbing over the Baltech, eluding the custom house guards and safely delivering his package of tobacco, salt or powder, for the love of any woman on earth. At bottom, he is an unmitigated scoundrel, and I love him."

"He is the most honest man in the world, you rascally old land owner," growled Vacounine. "His work is holy. He makes war against the governments."

"I should certainly weep if I had to condemn him," answered Lampuniani, "and yet if I were the judge I should send him to the galleys for life."

"Hasn't he smuggled in tobacco for you, you whited sepulchre?"

"Oh, I simply bought some tobacco for a friend of mine, a judge at Torino. Is it my duty to inquire whether the duties were paid on it? Am I a watchdog for the Italian treasury?" He blew a cloud of smoke toward the Russian and then turned to the Parisian. "The Tsar did a mighty good thing when he exiled this Vacounine. To return to our Gennaro, I know you will like him. I will write a few words on my card and give it to you. It will be an open sesame."

The professor drew from his pocket a portfolio so ragged and dirty that it would have disgraced a beggar, drew out a microscopic card and wrote two or three words on it.

"There!" he exclaimed. "Shall I put your name on it, too, Vacounine? It's done. If it doesn't do any good—"

"It will probably do a great deal of harm," interrupted Vacounine. "We are probably digging this young man's grave at the present moment. Do you know, Lampuniani, that he wants to make the portrait of la Desolina?"

"Very pretty portrait," returned the professor quietly. "There isn't a head in the middle ages or in antiquity that I wouldn't trade for hers."

"But look at the young fellow!" continued the Russian.

"Well, if he were not a little agitated I should say he was destitute of all feeling. When I was twenty years of age I would have made the portrait of Desolina, and so would you, you snow giant."

"No!" exclaimed Vacounine harshly. "When I was twenty years of age I would have done one of two things—either I would have admitted that the man was worthy of the woman and I would have gone elsewhere: or I would have admitted that the man is a hog, which he is, and then I would have—" He hesitated a moment and then continued: "I'm nothing but an old ass."

"The word 'old' is an exaggeration," said Lampuniani softly.

Suddenly a soft light appeared among the thuyas, sycamores and black poplars. Jean and Cormières looked at it, much puzzled.

"That's my daughters' cage," said Vacounine, who noticed their look. "Come along, you can get a better view of the lake over there."

All four arose and as they advanced toward it the light became brighter. Then they discovered what it was. In a large cage, constructed of gauze, there were hundreds of fire-flies, and as they flew about they illuminated the foliage, the grass and the flowers with a silver sheen, extending almost as far as the mirror-like lake. Here was a new impression of this magic country and the magic heavens. The lake seemed to sweep away into the shadow; the city of Lugano was crowned with a halo of nacre, amber and amethyst. The tree-bordered banks were a mixture of sepia tints; a light breeze carried with it a hundred commingled odors of flowers: everything appeared extraordinary in this wonderful land.

"Would you think," said Vacounine

pensively, "that this land of Italy has retained something of the ancient soul of the beautiful which no other country possesses?"

"Pliny says: '*Ergo in toto orbe et quacunque coeli convexitas vergit, pulcherrima est Italia!*'" quoted the professor.

The three tall girls continued catching fire-flies, and putting them in the cage. They ran about like young she-bears, at once heavy and agile. They laughed with the rich, full sound of those who have splendid health. Jean wondered that they had inherited only their size from their father, but had nothing of those terrible eyes, that heroic fury, that voice of brass. Again the divine image of la Desolina arose before him. The sound of a bell aroused him from his revery and he saw Giovanni approaching under the trees.

"Ho, there!" cried Vacounine to the servant, who was accompanying the smuggler. "A table, chairs, flasks of Chianti and sparkling Asti."

The Tessinese woman stopped in front of the cage. Even the cold, weak Cormières was dazzled by her beauty. Desolina seemed to arise from the tall grass like some earth-goddess. Her hair was like a blue-black mirror; one could see the reflection of the fire-flies in her dark eyes, in which, when she looked sideways, there was something at once savage and terrible. Her neck was bare, and showed the voluptuous lines of her throat and shoulders.

"Wait a moment," said Vacounine. "You shall drink a glass of wine and then we will go and get the merchandise."

The sinister husband bowed with the treacherous smile that is common to so many of his race. He had not looked straight at Cormières and Savigny, but their images were indelibly impressed upon his memory.

"What news from the Baltech?" asked Vacounine, while the servants were placing the glasses and uncorking the bottles.

"Bad news, Signor Vacounine. Some custom house guards fired on my comrades and one of the uniformed gentry broke his leg and another lost his ear." He laughed a moment, showing his white teeth between red lips, and then his features settled back into their usual repulsive expression. Desolina kept her eyes riveted on the cage of fire-flies. Her expression was austere, almost sombre, and one could see that she must take life very seriously.

"Some Asti?" asked Vacounine.

"Yes, yes, Asti!" she answered, and there passed into her eyes a look of pleasure, almost of enthusiasm.

The cork popped and Desolina, taking up her glass filled with the foaming wine, drank it slowly, pensively. But she would take only two glasses. Giovanni, on the contrary, swallowed Chianti and Asti with an enjoyment he took no trouble to conceal. As he drank, however, his lips curled more and more into lines of cruelty and savagery; it was evident that his drunkenness was of the quiet, very lucid kind that augmented rather than diminished his cunning and treachery. Jean hated him. It seemed to him that he was able to read the man's character, but he nevertheless exaggerated the cruelty and the perfidy of it. Giovanni was ferocious because he was tyrannical by nature, and he took pleasure in manifesting this trait. The suffering of others left him quite indifferent. He would not have climbed a mountain to see a man tortured or killed whom he did not know. Undoubtedly he would have been pleased to witness an execution, and he belonged to that class of men who formerly took the greatest delight at the spectacle of a heretic or witch being burned to death, but he would not have taken the trouble to leave the wine-room or give up a game of *morra* to see it. On the other hand there was no joy so great to him, not even that of love, as to hear the agonized cries of the man he hated—and he hated very easily. Those whom he hated could never hope to escape his vengeance, however long it might be delayed. He did not care to assassinate,

because the death penalty still exists in Ticino, but he had a marvelous knowledge of human anatomy and knew how to wound in the most atrocious way. He was suspected of having committed several crimes. No evidence—that is, no legal evidence—could be adduced. Those he had wounded, and not one had ever complained, had never been able to recognize the masked assailant; besides, he always managed to prove an alibi.

He had bought his wife for a few dollars. Desolina "belonged" to an uncle, her only surviving relative. The old man had an instinct of ancient Roman traditions. Hard and stern, he nevertheless could do little with this slave. He could beat her and torture her, but all his efforts seemed to have no effect upon her whatever. He began to drink, sold field after field, vineyard after vineyard, almost for nothing, until one day, Giovanni Preda offered him twenty louis for the girl, and he accepted the money. Desolina, although she was now stronger than her uncle and could take the stick away from him when he tried to beat her, was nevertheless glad to get away from him. She was hardly more than a child and she did not think that a woman had any choice in the matter of a husband. Giovanni did not please her, but at the same time he was not repugnant to her. She accepted him as she would have accepted a position to work on a farm.

The awakening was terrible. She found that he was as brutal as her uncle and that his strength was irresistible. If she had submitted quietly, or if her resistance had indicated any timidity, Giovanni would not have hated her; but she had ceased to be a slave from the day when, for the first time, she had wrenched the stick from the hands of her uncle. It is certain that in a way Giovanni feared her; he knew that she would stop at nothing if he went too far. Desolina suffered, but she was equally balanced between fear and anger. She loved life, but felt certain that if she ran away Giovanni would catch her and kill her, and this belief held her in slavery so long as her fear was greater than her repulsion.

She was watched, however, with a vigilance that never slept. Giovanni was not her only guard. He had an uncle, a gray-haired man, who never let her out of his sight when the husband was compelled to go off on one of his smuggling expeditions. This man had for his nephew the love of a bandit, profound, savage, unchangeable. He had little intelligence, but possessed the instinct of an animal; he had the keen scent of a hound, the patience of a cat, an extraordinary power of divination.

Between these two men Desolina passed her dull existence, marked here and there by violent quarrels and revolts. Passionate, tenacious and capable of fidelity, neither very good nor very bad, always reserved, she was in one sense timid and in another courageous: she saved herself from despair by not allowing herself to think of the future.

This evening, the taste of the foaming wine and the sight of the cage of fire-flies had given her a childish pleasure. But when Giovanni gave the signal to start, a shadow seemed to pass over her wonderful eyes. With a deep sigh and a little nervous gesture, she gave a last glance at the lake and rose, and then for about two seconds her eyes caught those of Jean. She smiled slightly and disappeared in the wood, while he stood there, dazed and, as he himself put it, "stunned with admiration."

Two hours later, when he was finishing his cigar at the hotel of Monte-Generoso, Cormières remarked: "You will do me the justice to admit that I am not inclined to give advice. I would much rather stand aside and simply admire human stupidity in general and yours in particular. The illogical incoherence of the acts of some people is the only thing that makes them endurable. Still, I would hold you by the coat-tails before I would allow you to traverse a rotten bridge. My dear fellow, you are going to spoil a trip that should have been delightful. Every-

thing promised your one-hundred-and-forty pounds of humanity exquisite pleasure. This exhilarating atmosphere, the curious habits of the people, would have filled your imagination up for years to come. I could pardon you if you were risking all that at the end of the trip, but at the beginning——!"

Jean was gnawing his mustache. "I don't know what I want," he murmured finally.

"More than likely. No one would ever accuse you of thinking of the future. I know very well what you are after, and I know too that unless I can save you there is going to be a great deal of trouble. I put myself out of the question. Up to a certain point I am bored everywhere. Notwithstanding the fact that I don't like fleas nor the eating, I can adapt myself to both; besides, *au fond*, I am something of a vagabond. But for you it is a very different thing. You never lived in your life among dissolute and crapulous savages."

"But with money—"

"No! Money will do you no good, they will simply rob you, you will eat dirt, and you will make yourself ridiculous—to say nothing of the fact that you may arouse certain passions which in this country are generally settled by means of the knife. You are not afraid; all right. But you are not fond of danger, you are too easy-going for that. While I am not so careless as you are, I would risk my life a good deal quicker than you would, that is, if I dared to allow myself to be involved in a love affair."

"You seem to have the blues, very dark blue, tonight, Cormières."

"Not more than usual—and after all, if there had been any possible issue, I should have kept my mouth shut. But you are not built to fight a scoundrelly smuggler. Not only would you be whipped, but you would be ridiculous. You certainly don't want to try and fool me with the yarn you told that old Nihilist, Vacounine, about making her portrait. Silly as you are, you wouldn't spend two weeks painting a Tessinese in dirty petticoats."

"Cormières!" exclaimed Jean passionately, "her petticoats were not dirty! I have much better eyesight than you have—"

"Oh, yes, I suppose she takes a bath every day. I haven't a doubt of it."

Savigny reddened with anger, but almost immediately he began to laugh.

"To tell you the truth, Cormières, a man like you cannot possibly know what passion is," he murmured.

His friend smiled bitterly but did not answer, and they finished their cigars.

"I've given you my advice," said Philippe unconcernedly. "I knew it would be useless. I suppose we will have to face the inevitable, although understand, I am not in the game. I am going to take a trip to Milano, Florence, even to Naples. You can come with me if you feel like it; you can join me if you feel inclined; and that settles it!"

They shook hands, Philippe Cormières coldly, Jean Savigny excitedly.

"Old friend," exclaimed the latter, "you know, *entre nous*—"

"It's life and death," grunted Philippe. "At the drop of the hat you would take the oath of Grütli. *Entre nous* simply means until one gets sick and tired of the other. Still, as we rather like each other we might be able to get along for a time."

"You don't know me," protested Savigny with a childishness that rather pleased Cormières.

Savigny remained for a long time leaning upon the window sill and looking out into the night. The air seemed to him to be filled with a strange throbbing; he felt that something new had come to him; he was exalted, yet he felt a certain sorrow, a fear, almost an anguish—that peculiar sentiment of approaching death which accompanies an awakened passion.

II

It is customary for the men of the Tavesco to meet Saturday evenings to

gossip and gamble and drink in the two inns of the village. They drink but one thing, a thick, heavy wine, strong but tasteless. No stranger who has ever partaken of it desires to do so again. The people of Ticino are not particularly addicted to alcoholic drinks, but on the other hand they are not temperate. On feast days they became as enthusiastic as beer drinkers. The men of Tavesco have large stomachs and hot heads, and they talk at haphazard.

That night, at the inn of Luciano, some twenty were braying like a hundred asses. Among the more distinguished were Gennaro Tagliamente and Giovanni Preda, the smugglers; the master-mason, Salvator, the sign-painter, Panscri, and Jean Savigny. During the first hour the men were at liberty to drink as they pleased, but then their wives came in and, to prevent their husbands from getting too drunk, helped them to empty the glasses.

Jean had now been a month at Tavesco, and up to the present time he had not been very unhappy. His curious artistic temperament had enabled him to find an extraordinary interest in this ragged crowd, and these keenly sensitive Latin people, feeling that he cared for them, returned his friendship with compound interest. He was attracted by everything about him—their mode of thought, their hyperboles, their carelessness of the morrow, their mobility, their voices, their passion for music and dance and brilliant colors. There was something in them of the negro; it was an ancient race always dying out and always being born again. These people made him feverish. He studied their methods of thought and adapted himself to them without difficulty; they amused him, they were an interesting comedy of human beings passing over the stage: buffoon, ardent, highly colored, always doing unexpected things, and when he was alone, the thought of them made him laugh. They reminded him of Harlequin and Polichinelle, of Dante, Michel Angelo, Leonardo, Machiavelli, Juliet and—Desolina. Sometimes he could hardly refrain from joining in their mad dances, and at other times he found himself floating off into those golden Italian dreams which are a mixture of pleasure and tragedy.

Twice a day he met Desolina. Early in the morning she went to the fountain and again about sunset. With her black hair and her red robe she crystallized the life of a race. When you looked at her you saw the long and splendid legend of ancient Rome and of the Renaissance—a universe of splendor, an eternity of poetry. When Jean saw her he felt himself capable of the greatest acts of heroism and of the greatest crimes. He fervently desired the death of Giovanni Preda.

She passed him with a slight smile; she well knew that he remained in Tavesco only on her account, and she was proud of it; but the blond stranger astonished her without arousing any sentiment, and she did not see how he could possibly have any effect upon her future. She no more thought her deliverance would come through him than from the waters of the brook that flowed beside her. He was only the ship that passed in the night, the cloud that floated across the sun by day; the wind would carry it away, far away. Desolina was not capricious, and she could not conceive of any woman desiring that which comes and passes quickly away. She went by him, indifferent, though in a way flattered, and returned to her hut to take up again the golden dream of a slave.

Giovanni also knew perfectly well that the young man remained in Tavesco on account of his wife. This knowledge did not worry him, but aroused a certain amount of hatred toward the young man. He smiled at Jean whenever he met him in a way that gave Cormières a cold chill. As a matter of fact, the smuggler felt quite certain that the foreign artist was not strong enough to carry off his wife, especially as he was not a man who would ever resort to extreme measures, and these measures were the only ones that ever amounted to anything. Nevertheless, he redoubled his watchfulness.

The question of the portrait had not been raised. Jean was preparing for it by painting the young girls and the women of the village. In the meantime, he had engaged the services as guide of Gennaro Tagliamente. The social ideas of this man were extremely rudimentary. He had not the slightest respect for the life of any man who did not happen to be a friend of his. Still, he would not have killed a man simply for amusement, and in a way he respected the law. Passionately attached to a few people, he would nevertheless not have hesitated to cut the thread of anyone else's existence to secure a bottle of Chianti or a pipeful of tobacco. He was quite indifferent to Cormières, but Savigny pleased him from the day of their very first meeting. At the end of a month he was as fond of him as he was of Lampuniani, and he expressed it in this way:

"You know, Signor Savigny, if anybody ever bothers you around here, all you have to do is to whisper his name to me very softly."

This statement annoyed the young man, but Gennaro smiled pityingly at him and the next time he got drunk repeated it again and again. Finally Jean began to feel as if he were an accomplice in some crime that the old scoundrel was meditating.

Salvator, having howled an obscene song against the "Long Ears," as he designated the conservative party, bet that he could lift the sign-painter with one hand and hold him up in the air. Jean took the bet, which was five bottles of common wine of the country. The master-mason put one knee upon the ground, with his right hand seized Panscri about the waist and then rose. Ten seconds later Panscri was eight feet above the floor, held in the powerful grip of Salvator.

"Salvator is the giant of Valcolla," cried Gennaro enthusiastically.

"That is, after the great Romagnoli," replied Giovanni, with an ugly smile on his face.

"Romagnoli? I can break him over my knee," howled the Hercules. "And anyone else who wishes to try his strength against mine."

Giovanni looked at him quietly. "It isn't worth while to challenge any of us, you colossus," he answered. "We know your strength. It would be as easy to fell an oak with a switch, and not one of us is going to risk himself in your gigantic hands. With you there are only two ways, a bullet or a knife. Against these you're no better than the rest of us."

"That's true," answered Salvator, who became quarrelsome only after he had had at least ten glasses. "But there is only Gennaro who shoots better than I do and there is only you who can match me at knife play."

"Gennaro can shoot no better than I can at any *living* thing," sneered Giovanni. "And as for the knife, it is true that your arm is longer than mine, but I know the right places better than you do."

The giant shrugged his shoulders and Gennaro laughed. "We will find that out on the day we both shoot at something living."

"We will," said Giovanni very softly.

Thus they had threatened eath other for years, each one imposing certain limitations upon his words. Their hatred for each other was terrible, and their patience admirable. Neither would fight without having received a direct insult, and each had a second who would avenge his death. Behind Giovanni there was his uncle, Armanio, whose cunning was boundless; behind Gennaro there was Salvator, whose tremendous strength, skill and undoubted courage were to be feared. When Salvator had not been drinking he was as harmless as a lamb; he would stand any kind of raillery, something very few Italians will do. Drunk, he was irritable, but only in the first stage of intoxication. The only thing to do then was to let him alone; besides, jokers could easily escape their punishment by speaking in a low tone, for he himself talked so much that he could hear nothing about him. He began to talk about

humanitarian doctrines, to proclaim the delivery of mankind from servitude, and especially he never forgot to curse the priest. His harangue generally concluded with a demonstration in front of the house of the priest.

Salvator ordered the five bottles he had just won and treated all those who were present. According to custom, everyone took a glass, and Salvator finished what remained. He had now reached the talkative stage.

"Signor Savigny," he cried, "your presence does honor to this country—you honor us in coming among us—for we are nothing but peasants!"

"I am an artist," yelled Panscri, the sign-painter.

"I am the equal to any man who ever drew the breath of life," said Giovanni.

"Isn't this newcomer a heretic?" squealed a lady who showed signs of having been almost devoured by fleas.

"He honors us!" repeated Salvator. "We are his equals, because all men are equal, but he honors us, I tell you."

A game of *morra* had been started in one corner of the room. Voices, pitched in a high key, and at times menacing, could be heard calling out: "One—two—five!" Their agile fingers struck the table, and the passion of this primitive game lit the light of murder in their eyes.

Salvator drank more and more; he talked incessantly, he shouted, he roared. His voice as compared to others was like the report of a cannon to the roll of musketry. Suddenly he remembered the priest, and a tremendous rage arose within him.

"Friends and fellow citizens," he roared, "is it not time to finish once for all with this damnable Simoniacal priest?"

All looked up, very much interested, and hastened to empty their glasses. Then the face of Salvator became very solemn. He lifted up his arms in silence, opened the door of the wine-house and marched toward the residence of priest.

It was still twilight; amethyst, amber and copper light flowed down upon the village. The house was surrounded by huge trees, enclosed within a stone wall. When Salvator reached this wall, he drew himself up to his full height and shouted:

"Signor priest!"

The echo gave back his cry; old women and children ran forward; the men gathered about him in a circle, then the tremendous voice of the master-mason repeated the call:

"Signor priest!"

In this marvelous sunset the trees, colored by purple and hyacinthe, looked like colossal flowers; exquisite odors seemed to flow down the mountains in waves. Salvator, inspired, passed his huge hand through his long hair and began:

"Priest! I am as drunk as a hog, and that is the reason I am going to tell you a few patent truths. Wine gives us the power to tell the truth, it gives us courage. Were it not for wine we would permit ourselves to be whipped like slaves or fooled by those honeyed words of yours. Signor priest, you have taught us that the poor would receive their due, and the poor continue in the same condition. You said there would be justice in the world, and there is the same injustice as of old. You lied, you hog, but I will forgive your lying. What I do not forgive is the evil life you live, your immoral habits, the example you set to others. You have made a god of your belly. You have traveled about the mountains here, and I will not tell certain abominable acts you have been guilty of. Priest, would you dare face your bishop?"

Attracted by the noise, the priest showed his round, fat face and malicious black eyes for a moment at the window.

"It is time to end this scandal!" roared the master-mason. "It is time you should be punished, it is time you should stop laughing at the poor. Today, slave to my vices, I am incapable of cutting you open, but tomorrow, when I am sober, I will take my knife and slice you into small pieces."

His terrible voice filled the whole

valley and rolled up to the hills. The priest listened to him very calmly.

"Yes," continued the giant, "I will give you this night to repent, to ask pardon of your creator; but tomorrow, by the Holy Virgin, my knife will disembowel you——"

He did not conclude. A small, withered hand grasped him by the coat and he saw before him the only human being on earth he was afraid of, la Nona, his legitimate wife.

"Come home," she squeaked in a voice like that of a magpie.

Salvator tried to resist. "Woman," he exclaimed, "it is my duty to talk to this man."

"Come home," she repeated.

Salvator felt the impossibility of resisting. He turned to the crowd and said: "Is this just?" Then he obediently followed his wife, murmuring humbly: "The wife must obey the husband, Nona. You know it, poor creature that you are; you know I could take you between my thumb and forefinger and break you like a nut. But I must consider, Nona, that you keep the house in order, that you can gather chestnuts better than any of the girls in Tavesco, and especially that you love me; there's not another woman who loves her husband as much as you do me."

All the inhabitants of the village, including Giovanni, followed Salvator. Jean had slipped quietly away and gone to the fountain, in the hope of meeting Desolina alone. He had not spoken to her yet and now suddenly, while the master-mason was making his crusade, he had felt an irresistible desire to talk with her. He knew well that either Giovanni or old Armanio was watching her, but this did not cause him any uneasiness. The smuggler did not care anything about the yearnings of the soul, and Jean had hitherto been prevented from speaking to Desolina only by the fact that there was always a third person present.

Accident favored him. He had hardly arrived at the fountain when Desolina appeared. She hesitated a moment, perceiving that there was no one there but the stranger. Then she smiled gravely, a little defiantly, and advanced to the well. In the flame of the setting sun the basin of the fountain seemed to contain molten gold. Desolina was attired in a red skirt and a white waist, the sleeves of which came down to her elbows. Her feet were clad in narrow sandals, with little wooden heels. Her dark hair was bound by a sulphur colored ribbon that looked like a flame, and all the colors that were coming from the setting sun seemed to surround the Tessinese women with an imperial halo. For a moment Jean was speechless, and then he spoke a few words, though he hardly knew what he was saying.

"Only to look at you, signora, is a supreme happiness."

She smiled; she belonged to a race that likes exaggeration and revels in rhetoric, even when the full sense of the words are not understood. There is an atavism of eloquence lying dormant in the souls of these people. Desolina did not answer. She carelessly held one of her jars under the stream which issued from the fountain, and the movement revealed new lines and curves of her beautiful body under her white waist.

"Do you know," continued the young man vehemently, "that I stay here only on your account?"

She shrugged her shoulders indifferently. "It is not right to trifle with me."

"You know very well that I am not trifling with you. Who would dare do that?"

She looked at him with a glance of suspicion. "You had better mock me than talk to me the way you do." Her eyes, which were violet in the deepening twilight, filled him with a strange fear.

"I had no intention of offending you," he said supplicatingly.

"Then you should not have said anything at all. I am an honest woman."

She threw back her shoulders and looked at him. Whatever plans she may have made in her dreams, she did not lie when she said that she was honest, and besides, she was proud. As her humiliating slavery continued, she be-

came more unbending, harder. Those who have known Italian people are familiar with this mixture of suppleness and firmness. These souls can develop within a very small shell, and issue from it fully armed for the highest flights. Desolina, if she were to escape from her prison, desired to do so in triumph, with dignity. Perhaps she was ready to risk everything, even death, but only for a liberty that should be spotless. The idea that the stranger should desire her as other rich men desired poor girls aroused her indignation.

"I am sure that you are honest," answered the artist in a trembling voice.

"Well, then what do you want with me?"

"Nothing, signora, only to see you, only to tell you sometimes how beautiful you are."

"What is the use of telling me that?"

"Don't we enjoy saying that of things we admire?"

She did not understand, although she was not a fool. She could not understand the comparison between a beautiful woman and a beautiful object.

"I don't want you to talk to me any more about it; I can't trust a stranger."

"I don't ask you to trust me—and if it offends you, I will never speak of your beauty again. I will be satisfied to see you, to look at you."

The woman was asking herself whether the young stranger were laying a trap for her, if he were crafty, or whether in fact she had misunderstood what he had been saying. She finally answered him, perhaps not so angrily as before, but on the other hand more suspiciously.

"There is no one here who would understand what you mean."

"You mean to say that there is no one here," he replied quickly, "who could love, knowing that he would never be loved in return?"

She could not help smiling; she understood now.

"Then that is what you wanted to say?"

"Yes, only that."

"Well, a woman cannot prevent a man from loving her, but she can wish that he wouldn't tell her so; that is what I want, Signor Painter. No one must talk to me of love."

She looked toward her home on the hillside, and on her lips there was an expression of melancholy, mingled with hatred.

"We have already talked too much together—and alone! It may cause a great deal of trouble to both of us." She gracefully lifted her two jars filled with water, and as she turned away she said to the painter: "Besides, I am not entirely a fool. I know what it means when rich men from the city come here and tell poor women that they love them. I would put a knife in my own heart before I would listen to those men."

She was gone. He saw the red skirt and the white waist disappear among the trees. The place where she had stood and the fountain itself seemed to him something legendary, fantastic, infinitely beautiful. He was almost happy. He forgot the sense of her words, the prohibition to speak to her, in the intoxication of having been able to speak to her at all and of having been answered. The scene he had just witnessed was something of which no one could deprive him. He thought of nothing else; any plans he may have had for the present or the future were all confusedly intermingled. A man twenty years of age, of artistic temperament, does not know what he wants; he can be blown hither and thither by every wind of passion. He only knew that he loved her, loved her madly. But he made no definite plans for the future; accident, fate, circumstances which could not be foreseen, would decide.

"I wonder if she has an individuality," he asked himself as he walked homeward. He answered the question in the affirmative, and felt an exquisite pleasure in being able to do so.

He arrived at the village at the precise moment when Salvator's wife was leading her husband home. The eyes of Jean and those of Giovanni met. The

latter smiled maliciously and murmured:

"You like fountains, do you not, Signor Painter?"

There was irony and deadly menace in his tone. Even though he had confidence in his own vigilance and that of his uncle, he would not neglect the opportunity to inspire fear as an additional safeguard. The smuggler did not pursue the conversation, but turned on his heel and walked away.

Jean returned to the room which he rented from the sign-painter, Panscri, because it was much cleaner and more agreeable than any room he could have had at the inn. The six daughters of the host worked laboriously to keep out the vermin with which all these houses swarmed. Philippe Cormières, who was more afraid of a mosquito or a flea than he was of a lion, had established a system of prizes which excited the ardor of these young women. His walls, his bedding, his clothing were so clean that it began to excite the apprehensions of Panscri himself: "for," he said, "when there are not too many, fleas are good for the health."

Savigny found Philippe smoking his pipe. The room, with its solid stone walls, looked like a cavern, in spite of an oak table, three stools and two very primitive beds. The floor was of beaten earth, half covered by a linen cloth. Cormières, who did not like the people of Tavesco, passed his time reading or sketching in the neighboring fields. He rarely spoke to anyone with the exception of Panscri, his six daughters and Salvator; but Salvator was never visible except Saturday night, and then he was always drunk.

"You reek of the wine-shop," said Philippe when Jean entered, "and to me that smell is several degrees viler than the odor of the worst tobacco on earth."

"But the life here is so human, so rich, so naturally artistic, and at bottom the people here are good-natured—a little excitable if you like, but social."

"They remind me of those animals that you see squirming about when you lift up a stone," answered Cormières. "These people you admire would murder their fathers and mothers without the slightest provocation."

"You don't understand them!"

"Yes, just as I don't understand you."

"No. You don't grasp them," continued Jean excitedly. "You haven't the sense of their vibrations, of their rhythm. You don't note all that is violent, voluptuous, gay and buffoon in their faces. You are like a wolf nosing an orange."

Jean arose and walked rapidly about the room.

"Well," said Philippe ironically, "you are tormented by the desire to confide in someone. What do you want to pour out tonight?"

"I spoke to her," exclaimed Savigny.

"And you want me to know it? What do I care whether you did or not, and what do you care whether I know it?"

"Don't be a cynic. You know you and I are friends, after all."

"I don't contest that fact, but it is the very reason why I should not sympathize with your tendencies toward females. The spectacle of a friend in love with a woman is a very annoying one. Friendship consists in being able to smoke our pipes together, and chat and laugh. As soon as a man loses interest in his pipe, there is no more fun for the other fellow. We can overlook a passing flirtation, but your adventure is going to get you into serious trouble; you think of that woman every moment. Mark my words, the whole thing will end in blackmail and some disagreeable events, and you will be lucky if you get out of it at the cost of a few thousand. Between Giovanni and Armanio on one hand and that damned scoundrel, Gennaro, on the other, I should not be astonished if we had a crop of crimes."

But Jean was not listening to a word he said. "I saw her by the fountain," he went on. "She was alone, my friend, and we had a few minutes alone, together. It may be that it is the beginning——"

"Yes," said Philippe pensively, "she is very brilliant, this little fire-fly; if she

could only sparkle for a moment, and then disappear, it would be better, much better."

III

For fifteen days Jean had been sketching an open-air picture. Il Castello, where he worked, dominated the valley. There he was painting a half-dozen barefooted mowers. The work did not advance very rapidly, as Jean was laziness itself. He was dreaming about that evening at the fountain, and sometimes he thought of the Baltech, where he got the idea of his picture. Baltech is a village which is simply glued to the side of a gigantic mountain, and from afar you would mistake it for a dirty poster pasted on the slope. Here and there are projections, small ravines like cracks, and here the young girls go to cut the grass, which is free to all. A goat could hardly climb here; but the girls, utterly careless of danger, creeping and clinging, armed with scythes and carrying wicker baskets on their shoulders, crawl on the mountain side like flies upon a wall.

One morning, invited by these mowers, Savigny had followed them. The women took off their shoes and leaving behind them their provisions, which they had brought for their lunch, began to climb the almost perpendicular side of the mountain. In order to accompany them, Jean was compelled to take off his boots and leave his painting apparatus behind him. The Tessinese crawled up in single file, their backs to the abyss, flat upon their stomachs. Seizing a bunch of grass with one hand they would cut it with the other, putting the grass in their aprons. When they had more than they could carry they rolled and tied the grass into balls and threw it down the mountain side, without turning their heads and looking down, for fear of the vertigo. When they returned in the evening, all the grass was found at the bottom of the precipice. Once one has started to climb upward, he must never think of returning. Once in a while, simply from trying to follow with her eyes the rolling ball of hay, some girl is dashed to pieces on the rocks below. When one starts, one must go steadily to the top. Once arrived there, one of the girls goes down by a pathway which is comparatively easy and fetches up the provisions, and the others, grouped together on the top of the cliff, their bare legs hanging over the gulf, begin a song.

Savigny had been profoundly moved by this song. When he heard these female voices, so instinctively harmonious, he felt that he could no longer live without that love for which his heart yearned. The music evoked within him the image of Desolina. As in ancient tragedies, the chorus narrated and explained; all these mowers seemed to be but a single woman; while listening to them he could scarcely restrain his tears. Their songs were always of love, and when they stopped another song came like an echo from another group of mowers hidden somewhere behind the rocks in another part of the mountain; a song of mysterious purity, silvery, soft and tender, that passed over the mountain like a reflection of the face of a beautiful woman passing across a crystal surface.

Since the first day he had gone with the mowers their songs haunted him; he could not watch their return without feeling his heart beat violently. In order to keep the souvenir of his impression, he had got together six models whom he was painting, or rather pretending to paint, on the top of Il Castello. The majority of them were attractive—two were indeed very pretty—and Jean talked more with them than he painted them. The emotional character of women attracted him always, and the chatter of these girls did not bore him. Their bare legs, their long, coarse hair, their clothing of doubtful cleanliness, their graceful, impish gestures, pleased him. Their faces, necks and legs would have been improved now and then by soap and water, but he overlooked this for the sake of their curved, red lips, their pearly teeth and pure eyes, which seemed now and then to catch a reflection of the sky. They

had a sub-epidermic cleanliness, if one may use that word, and one did not think of the superficial spots of dust and the stains of newly cut grass.

"It is your turn now, Pepa," he said, motioning to Stella that she could give up her posing and rest for a while.

Pepa advanced with a sombre air. She was a little Proserpine, even when she laughed, and she laughed as much as any of them. She had a terrible mane of black serpents which broke away from all hairpins. In this blackness she thrust everything red that she could find: red stones, red flowers, red ribbons. Her face was, perhaps, a little too broad, yet it was attractive and was made more so by the wonderful eyes. They were not the eyes of an animal, but of the very finest quality; large, with reflections of gold, amber and emerald, exquisite in form, and her eyelids were like fine seashells, overarched by heavy eyebrows. In her walk and movements there was just a touch of vulgarity, but a splendid, attractive, voluptuous vulgarity. She was naïve, but not vicious. She was an orphan, compelled to shift for herself, and since Signor Savigny had commenced to paint her upon Il Castello, her innocent heart ached to tell him its whole history.

She took the pose he indicated, and began her chatter:

"Signor Savigny, have you any parents?"

"No, Pepa, and I have not had for a long time."

She sighed deeply. "It is just like me," she said. "I do not remember my mother at all, and very little of my father."

She remained silent for a few moments, while Jean was putting a few daubs upon the canvas, and then she continued with the air of one who has made a tremendous discovery: "Then we are both of us orphans!"

"That is the holy truth," replied Jean. He mixed red and black without succeeding in getting the tint of her hair. Pepa returned to her idea, or rather to her instinct, by another route.

"Signor Savigny, can you see that big bunch of chestnut trees over there in the valley?"

Jean nodded affirmatively.

"Well," she continued, "there are eight of them; they are the finest in the country; everyone will tell you that they are the finest." She smiled and tossed her head proudly; these eight chestnut trees made her an heiress. All the ambitious young men from Tavesco to Baltech wanted them. "Each one of those chestnut trees brings an income of forty-five lire a year. And then I have a stone house."

She blushed, but her eyes remained fixed on those of Jean. Now he understood; she was offering him her fortune. He was deeply moved by the girl's words, and then he too sighed. Who knows? If this young girl had been Desolina, he would have accepted the eight chestnut trees, and he might have been able to live with her a life close to nature, in the stone house. This moment, then, was to decide his whole life. He felt a great tenderness for the pretty animal. He did not know what to say, balancing between the instinct of the male which would prey upon all women who offer themselves, and the honest desire not to do anything which would render Pepa unhappy.

But a new personage arrived upon the scene to put an end to his indecision. It was Bellinda who called out: "Signor Preda is coming."

Jean trembled. The approach of Giovanni always awoke within him a multitude of contradictory feelings, such as are excited by an enemy, by a rival, by the husband of the woman one loves. It was a mixture of jealousy, repulsion, hatred, fear and at the same time a sort of bizarre pleasure; after all, he brought with him something of the atmosphere of Desolina. He was returning from the Baltech, with his sack upon his back, and looked just what he was: a knave and a thief, cunning and cruel.

Giovanni stopped for a moment to look at the picture. He could make out nothing but spots of paint, and felt an infinite contempt for the artist. He

considered himself called upon, however, to smile approvingly.

"You are getting along, Signor Painter."

"I wonder what the rascal is after," thought Jean.

The models had the same thought, for Giovanni never took any interest in his neighbors, except to swindle them. He looked at the group of young girls and felt envious. This feeling of envy had been tormenting him ever since he learned that the painter was paying his models; then, every time he looked at Desolina he was filled with greedy, rapacious anger. He could not feel jealousy of anything excepting the sole object of love as he understood it. The idea that girls much less handsome than his wife were earning as much as five lire, was insupportable to him. From the very beginning he would have offered Desolina as a model, but he thought if he did so it would lower the price, and he had awaited a proposition from the painter. In his ignorance of human nature he did not understand that this was the very thing that Jean could not do, had not dared to think of even since their meeting at the fountain.

"No," the painter answered, "the work is not getting along."

"Those little girls are pretty, though," said Giovanni with a crafty smile.

"It's not the fault of the girls, it's my own."

The smuggler did not understand; at Tavesco and in all the Valcolla, the idea of a man depreciating his own work is as inconceivable as it would be among the negroes of the Soudan.

"But, Cristo!" he exclaimed with a hoarse laugh, "pretty girls must be easier to paint than ugly ones."

He was embarrassed because he did not know just what to say to get the painter to make a proposition for his wife, nor did Jean understand what the man was driving at. The artist glanced up at his models and noted on their faces a swift smile which is peculiar to Italian women. Then the homeliest of them came over to him and whispered in his ear: "Don't you understand, he wants to offer you a model."

Jean became very pale. "Certainly," he stammered, "if I could find a pretty woman—"

But in this Preda had found his cue and interrupted. "Often painters have wanted to paint my wife—but we were traveling—I had my goods to get over the frontier—we did not have the time—"

"And if you had the time would you have allowed one to paint the portrait of la Signora?"

"I don't care much about it," said Giovanni, feeling that the fish was nibbling at the hook. "Desolina is very useful at home, and she helps me to fix up my pack. And as she is much prettier than any of the others it would be only right to pay her a good deal more."

Jean had recovered his coolness; he knew that he ought to appear to hesitate, and trying to look indifferent, he replied: "Oh, of course, one would have to pay her a little more."

"What do you mean by a little more, Signor Artist?"

"Oh, I don't know, perhaps five lire for an afternoon."

At Tavesco, a first-class blacksmith or carpenter can earn only two lire a day, and Giovanni thought that this was a good deal more than the whole six models together were worth.

"And what do you pay these girls?" he asked disdainfully.

"Three lire each."

"For an afternoon?"

"Yes."

Astounded, Giovanni did not know whether to consider the painter the fool who soon parts with his money or simply a born imbecile. To pay a girl like that three lire! Indignation and delight at the prospect of being able to do a good stroke of business almost suffocated him. He shrugged his shoulders.

"Five lire! That would not be enough for such a model as Desolina!"

"That is your opinion," replied Jean, though he felt as if he were strangling. "I have given you mine."

"Signor Artist," cried Giovanni, "I

believe that Desolina could earn as much as ten lire a day in Milano or Florence."

The enormous sum he had mentioned actually paralyzed the man himself. The girls all lifted up their hands in amazement, and Bellinda could not help saying: "Colombo! Signor Preda is going to emigrate."

Jean, feeling that the success of the affair now depended entirely upon himself, replied very quietly: "In Milano or Florence, I do not think she could. In Paris, perhaps. But here, in Tavesco, five lire would be very high pay."

Preda was about to yield, but the inborn greed and craftiness of the Italian peasant withheld him.

"Five lire, when you pay each of these girls three! You are joking, Signor Artist. These girls are not homely, and Pepa is a girl who is an honor to Tavesco, but I have traveled and I am not deaf. I know what men say about Desolina; I know what your friends, Signor Vacounine, and Signor Lampuniani think about her. She never goes anywhere but what people open their eyes wide and stare, but, *porca!* at Paris we would make a fortune. I would have my hat full of gold. Do I look like a fool? If she ever comes here, it will be for eight lire, not a cent less."

Jean thought that he had played enough at bargaining. He shrugged his shoulders as if wearied and answered: "That is high, very high—but still I could do it."

The cunning eyes of the smuggler turned from right to left as if he were disquieted. Fearing that the stranger was mocking him, he asked with evident distrust:

"You could do it? Does that mean that you will do it?"

"Yes," replied Jean firmly, as the image of Desolina rose before him.

"And for not less than fifteen days?"

"For not less than fifteen days."

"And twenty lire cash down in advance?"

"Yes."

"Then it's a bargain!"

He extended his hand smilingly, but did not feel completely certain until he saw the gold piece in the palm of his hand. Then he thought to himself: "The man is simply insane." Then, trying to get some small additional profit, if possible, the smuggler added: "She will come this afternoon, if you wish; but you must count it as a whole afternoon."

"I will do so."

The smuggler walked quickly away, and the six girls, very much displeased, watched him stride down the mountainside.

"You're not very smart, Signor Savigny," cried Bellinda mockingly.

"But what a thief that man is!" said Pepa.

Jean did not hear them. He could not seem to realize that it was all true; it seemed to him unheard of, inconceivable, impossible. This act of the greedy and cunning Tessinese was to him something of a miracle, for what miracle would not have been petty in comparison with what he was expecting! Had half the world been destroyed in his presence it would not have aroused within him such a chaos of emotion as the thought of seeing Desolina. He could not believe that the man would keep his word, and looked anxiously in the direction of Tavesco.

He saw the form of the young woman sharply outlined against the shaded hill. Her features could not be clearly discerned, but the grace of her movements prefigured her exquisite beauty.

When she came near the painter she cast upon him a look of displeasure, almost of contempt. Ten paces behind her, Armanio Palmieri, a blue clay pipe in his mouth, showed a greenish yellow face that looked like badly roasted veal. His eyes were small, and were celebrated in Valcolla as being the most piercing of those of any man. He bowed abruptly to the artist and then sat down some distance away, where he could see but not hear.

Desolina turned to the painter. "So I am at your service now, am I, Signor Artist?" she demanded in an angry, bitter tone.

Jean stood before her like a lamb in

the presence of a she-wolf: his knees shook, and under the disdainful glance of these wonderful eyes he felt himself ugly, ridiculous and vile. He did not answer; he could think of no reply that would not have been stupid. After a pause, the woman went on:

"What do you want me to do?"

"Anything you like," he answered in a quavering voice.

She laughed sardonically. "I don't suppose you are paying my owner merely for the pleasure of my company?"

"Yes," he repeated humbly, "anything you desire."

She looked at him in surprise, but suspiciously. Then the indolent look returned to her eyes; she seemed to forget the anger that had been aroused within her by what she thought was the cunning and the presumption of the stranger; she accepted the situation, knowing that she was well protected against everything and everybody excepting always her husband and Armanio.

"You really do not wish to give me any orders?" she asked.

"No," he answered, pleased at the change in her voice. "I don't yet know myself just how I wish to paint you. Your movements will give me an idea."

Up to that time she had scarcely cast a glance at the girls or the sketch. Now she examined them; she smiled very sweetly at the little Tessinese and then examined the canvas. She was astonished by these vague figures, these splotches of green and red and blue. She knew, however, that paintings were always begun that way, and she did not absolutely despise the artist.

"Are you going to put me in that?" she asked.

"No, I am first going to make a study of you by yourself."

She did not understand what he meant, but did not care to pursue her investigation.

"I will pick some flowers," she said suddenly. She began to pluck them here and there, and in a few minutes seemed to have forgotten everybody. Standing out against the green slope, with her scarlet skirt, her white waist, and the yellow ribbon in her hair, she looked like a poppy. Jean contemplated her with a sort of melancholy pleasure mingled with a sentiment of fear that was like the fear of death. He felt that before long he would have to give her up, to leave her.

"A savage!" he thought to himself, ironically, but his irony was false. She might be a savage, but for a man like him that was of no importance; no psychical refinements were taken into consideration by him when physical beauty was in question. Desolina appealed to him with incomparable eloquence, in a language he could understand—perhaps the only one he could understand. Had she been stupid and vulgar, he would still have loved her; but he already knew that she was not a mere brute, and that she had character.

She returned, carrying an armful of flowers. Sitting down in front of the artist, she proved to him that she knew another language, that of color and form. She gathered her buds into a bouquet of harmony that would have done credit to a daughter of Nippon. It is true, she cared less for the subtle blending of tints than for violent contrasts, but the contrasts were according to the secret rules of art. He himself did not dislike sharp color contrasts.

He took up a brush and made a few rapid strokes upon the new canvas. She watched him, interested in what he might make of her. At this moment they were alone. The girls had climbed to the top of Il Castello, and even Pepa, understanding how useless it was to attempt to push her plan any further, had gone away. Suddenly he felt an intoxication like that which he had experienced at the fountain. To see her close to him was already a sort of possession. His eye became clearer, his hand steadier, and the sketch he was making of her had real merit. A half hour passed, during which neither spoke. She remained immovable, with an ever-growing curiosity to see the

picture that she knew was developing under his touch.

"You are not tired?" he asked.

"No."

Leaning against a slight eminence, she had allowed her bouquet to fall to the ground while she seemed to dream of the future. She was as far from him as he was close to her; not that he displeased her, but she was certain that the stranger must be a liar, a fugitive from his own country, and a coward. She never imagined for a moment that a man like this could be her savior, could deliver her from the iron grip of Giovanni, either by force, by shrewdness or by patience. The painter, with his blond hair and beard, his blue eyes and northern complexion, seemed to her a weak and unreliable being. She wanted one of those strong men she knew so well, short, heavily built, powerful of limb and square of chin, knowing how to use the knife and gun.

"We will do nothing more today," he said softly.

She despised him for this tender intonation; she wanted, or thought she wanted, a master—for nothing is more uncertain than our ideal; fate frequently plays tricks upon us to prove that we do not really know our own inclinations.

"You are tired?" she asked, adding: "I am not."

"It is not fatigue," he said smiling, "but sometimes the brush is very capricious."

She approached the canvas and saw a tinted shadow, without noticeable outlines, and a face that was smoke colored and without eyes.

"It looks like a dead woman," she said mockingly.

"The most beautiful ones begin this way," he answered.

In a way she understood him, and for a few moments they stood side by side, he so pale with love of her that she felt a little compassion for him, but a compassion just the opposite of the kind that could conquer her. Free, she would have been more responsive to his affection; slave that she was, it was he who should have pitied her. She looked at him and said very softly:

"Poor man!"

Suddenly something happened that caused her to change her mind. Thereafter she felt no more contempt for this man. It came just as she was turning away to rejoin Armanio. She had stooped down to brush the pollen of the flowers from her skirt. Suddenly her eyes became fixed in terror and from her deathly pale lips a single word issued:

"Scorpione!"

Like many people who live in this country, she had an exaggerated horror of this creature; she believed it could kill a man by a single touch of its claws.

"What is the matter?" exclaimed Jean, who at first did not understand. Then, following the direction of Desolina's look, he saw the scorpion. "Is that what you are afraid of?" he inquired calmly, and knowing that in Ticino this animal is not very venomous, he took it up between his thumb and finger and deposited it in the hollow of his hand. She watched him, fairly hypnotized, while three of the girls who had returned to see if it were their turn to pose, mingled cries of admiration and fear:

"It's a scorpion, signor. It will kill you!"

He laughed, saying: "It is a superb one, and would delight an entomologist."

He threw it away in a hollow of the rock. When he turned Desolina was still looking at him, as surprised as if she had seen him stand in front of a loaded cannon which was sure to go off.

IV

GENNARO TAGLIAMENTE rose at six o'clock, according to his habit. He began the day with a huge bowl of *minestron*, allowing no one else to prepare it, for he took great delight in making this dish. He watched the small pot boil, sniffing from time to time with an expression of extreme pleasure, and when

it was finished he ate it slowly, enjoying every mouthful.

He had finished his breakfast and was enveloped in a cloud of smoke from his pipe when he saw Jean coming toward him. The smuggler emerged from the mist and advanced joyfully toward the painter, for whom his affection had been growing day by day.

"What good saint sends you here, Signor Artist? Eh! By the Holy Madonna, you have a sorrowful face!" He squeezed the painter's hand and then whispered: "Is there some hog about here who is bothering you? Shall I disembowel him for you? Come, there is a cup of *minestron* left. Let us have that and a pipe, and then we'll take a turn on the lake or in the mountains."

"I will not take any *minestron*, Gennaro," said Jean. "I have already breakfasted, but as I am free today, I thought I would take that trip on the lake that we have been talking about for the last month."

Gennaro directed a barometrical glance at the sky.

"It will be a fine day. If we can only find the Shepherd of the Bees, one can do everything in his boat—cook and paint."

The house-boat of the Shepherd was wide and shallow—a keelless craft, slow moving but comfortable. It could not possibly upset in any storm that might descend upon the lake. There were two large hives, one on the right and one on the left, which took up a good part of the deck room. When sailing or when the boat was at anchor, there was a movable deck that covered it entirely over; then it resembled a Dutch canal boat. When at anchor, well protected in some creek, everything was arranged so that the bees could come and go at their will. In the cabin were cooking utensils, a mattress and even a sort of library composed of old almanacs, some ancient works on farming and novels long since forgotten.

The owner was a huge, bow-legged Tessinese, with a complexion the color of Etruscan pottery; he had no neck, and his eyes seemed to be made of polished horn. Had fortune dealt otherwise with him, he would have been a scholar; as it was, he was more interesting than learned. He had read haphazard and had profound faith in the printed page; his mind was a chaotic world of jumbled ideas, and this, added to his taste for solitude and his love of nature, rendered his companionship very agreeable.

Gennaro found the boat in a forest of reeds that were nearly as tall as bamboos.

"Signor Lorenzo!" called the smuggler.

The Shepherd of the Bees raised his jolly, good-natured face above the side of the boat. "Is it you, you rascal? Do you want some honey?"

"No, I come with this gentleman, who wants to paint the lake and your bees."

Lorenzo looked affectionately at Savigny. "My house is never closed, the boat is always friendly." He managed to arrange a long board by means of which the two could reach the boat without wetting their feet.

"Please be very quiet," said the Shepherd of the Bees to Savigny. "Remain for a half hour without making any quick movement. The bees like to make the acquaintance of men who are quiet and calm. They detest those who are violent and capricious and who cannot take a step without upsetting a piece of furniture. Bees, Signor Artist, belong to the nobility of God's creation."

He pointed to a bench, from which they had a view of the lake and its divinely beautiful shores. The bees swarmed and undulated in graceful curves; they seemed to be weaving the weft of the air into the warp of the sunlight. The life of community and co-operation, which they began long before man did, governed all their acts.

"Yes," continued Lorenzo, "they belong to the nobility, and besides, they are innocent and pure. I believe that a very good God created them. Through them God tried to teach us that one can gain a livelihood without killing any-

thing. What do they do, Sir Stranger? They help the flowers, those poor flowers that are tied up to their stems and must depend upon others to propagate their species. The wind helps them, the water helps them, the birds help them, and also many insects; but they pay heavily for it! The wind, the water, are usurers. The wind breaks their wings, the water drowns them or causes them to rot, the birds rob them, the insects gnaw them. *Cristo! Santissima Madonna!* How dear everything is in this world, how hard is the struggle for existence! What a pleasure it would be if the whole world were filled with bees! They, taking from the flower only what it does not need, carry the fecundating pollen from one blossom to another, and each greets them with hymns of love."

"*Vacca!*" exclaimed Gennaro with a roaring laugh. "Did you ever hear such a fool? That is the way he runs on forever if you don't stop him."

"You," responded the Shepherd calmly, "belong to the family of the pike. Whenever I see you crossing a mountain you always remind me of those fish, with their ugly jaws and pointed teeth. But I am happy to live almost as the bees live. I am not their equal, of course—nothing is their equal in this world. I know that I am only a heavy, stupid lout. I try to follow their example, however, with humility. It is true I make my living by selling the honey which they take from the flowers, but the bees do not suffer by this. Sometimes I rub my hands and say to myself: 'Surely, Lorenzo, you are almost an enormous bee yourself.'"

"You are a good deal more like a tun filled with spoiled wine," exclaimed Gennaro.

"Thank you, Signor Pike," replied the stout man. "We must always love the friend who points out our defects. And now, Signor Stranger, you would doubtless like to sail, so we will weigh anchor and go out upon the deep. Lend a hand with the sail, Gennaro."

Free from its moorings, the leg-of-mutton sail bellying out, the boat began to move slowly through the water. Every moment they had new views of the shore, and the water looked now like molten metal, now like some delicately woven fabric; the reeds were like little, yellow forests or fields of corn; the Alps cut off the horizon in irregular forms of dark blue; green fields, towns and clustered villages moved by as in a panorama; all in the light of the Italian sky, so clear, so mysteriously beautiful, an ocean of light, a universe of vibration. A mystic cloud of perfumes, violent, voluptuous, acrid, intoxicating, seemed to sweep over the surface of the waters, arousing every passion, every desire. Jean thought to himself: "I have spoiled all this, all these sensations which I might have experienced in all their purity." His love for this woman gnawed him like a cancer. He was maddened because he could not enjoy with perfect equanimity the beauties of the landscape. Why could he not get some drug which, for a few hours at least, would banish the thought of Desolina?

"Philippe is always right," he thought to himself. "He knows me better than I know myself. Every time I refuse to follow his advice, I pay heavily for it."

Notwithstanding his preoccupation, he had arranged his easel and prepared to make a sketch. This work, hard as it was in the beginning, ended by absorbing all of his faculties. It required an effort on his part to take up the colors with his brush, for they seemed so crude and harsh at first, but afterwards they seemed to blend harmoniously.

And so some hours passed. The gentle swing of the boat, the sensation of the light breeze upon his face, seemed to deprive Savigny of the power of motion; he was benumbed by all the sensations of beauty which he felt so keenly. Now and then Gennaro and the Shepherd of the Bees exchanged a few words, but they too soon fell back into the stupor engendered by the smoking of a pipe and those infernal black cigars which would kill any honest man.

"Scoundrel!" cried Gennaro, when the sun had planted its shield of light

directly overhead, "are you going to allow us to die of hunger?"

"I have some fresh *polenta,* macaroni, tomatoes, olive oil and pepper," replied Lorenzo. "With all that we can live."

"Without counting the provisions you have in the cellar," said Gennaro, pointing to the lake.

"You can take from that anything you choose," replied the Shepherd of the Bees. "I never take out of it anything but people like you: voracious pikes, who, were they allowed to do as they pleased, would devour everything else."

"Let it be a pike then! Besides, it's a fish I know how to cook. Stop this old machine of yours a moment."

"She's not moving, the wind has gone down. I'll furl the sail; this is a good place for fish."

The boat was quite still now upon the surface of the lake. The Shepherd of the Bees took a long harpoon, to one end of which a cord was tied, and stepped silently to the bow of the boat.

"Look at that wine-pot," whispered Gennaro to Savigny. "Would you believe that he is the best harpooner in the whole country?"

The surface of the water was covered with the broad leaves of water-lilies. The skilful fisherman would know when a pike was hiding himself beneath these aquatic parasols. The pike, like the ostrich, thinks that he cannot be seen when he hides his head. The Shepherd laughed silently as the movement of a tail betrayed the position of the animal. Calculating his distance, he slowly lifted the harpoon, and then aiming a few inches beyond where he thought was the head of the fish, he threw the lance with a rapidity and precision that were like pulling the trigger of a gun. The pike spitted himself on the sharp point, and Lorenzo, pulling the cord in slowly, for the fish dashed furiously from side to side, said:

"This fellow weighs at least fifteen pounds—we shall not die of hunger."

He brought the boat to anchor again, and it amused Jean to see them cook the dinner in primitive fashion. This sort of Robinson Crusoe episode delighted him. Notwithstanding the thought of Desolina, which would not down, he took pleasure in eating this simple meal, washed down by a flask of Chianti; after which they smoked the atrocious Italian cigars.

"This is what I call living!" exclaimed Gennaro. "The Shepherd of the Bees is a lucky man."

Jean thought so too. Could he have had the love of Desolina, he would not have wished for any other life. To float, to balance upon the waves, to love, careless of the morrow—then from some invisible source high up in the heavens would fall, drop by drop, the elixir of eternal youth. But Desolina weighed down upon the earth and upon the heavens, and her beauty was so great that it struck a keynote of pain in all the beauties that lay about him.

The day died away and the long shadows crept up as the yellow sun sank behind the rugged Alps; melancholy seemed to sink upon the earth. They were off Lugano. All the bees had returned, laden with honey and pollen. Now in the coolness of the evening they had come out on the shelves of the hives and in clinging bunches they seemed to be resting; perhaps they were dreaming. People from the city, in row boats, were going to the grottoes of Caprino, to get their wine. The voluptuousness, the sensuous beauty of the moment were overwhelming.

Then the moon rose and night lit its little lanterns all over the dark blue heavens. Here and there a boat cut the surface of the lake with a line of reflected fire, and Jean could hear the voices of men and women, sometimes conversing, sometimes singing in harmony a low, sweet Sicilian song. The sound seemed to strike upon the rocks, to turn and ascend heavenward in ardent supplication or in murmurs of ecstasy; sometimes the stronger voice of the male dominated and again the languorous voices of the women floated over the waters in minor thirds.

On the broad, sloping lawns, in the

gardens of Lugano, silvered by the moonlight, men and women were moving; an exhalation of love seemed to arise from earth and water and every living thing.

"It is too beautiful, too beautiful," whispered Jean, and the tears came to his eyes and rolled slowly down his cheeks.

Gennaro saw this. This man, ferocious as a wild beast and emotional as a woman, excited as he was by the Chianti, was deeply moved. He leapt toward the painter and seizing him by the arm, exclaimed:

"My own little one! My poor little boy! I know who is standing in your way. I hate him for you and for myself, *Carissimo.*"

He seized Jean's hands and crushed them in the grip of his powerful fingers, while his own eyes filled with tears.

That night, when they had left the stage coach which had brought them to Tavesco they walked side by side along the dark road, deep-shadowed by tall trees and slender rushes. From afar came the roar of the waterfall. As the road turned to the right or the left, the sound dwindled into a murmur or swelled into the voices of a thousand naiads. It seemed to be a living voice; it seemed to make the tall trees and the moonlight vibrate in unison, to put to flight the evil spirits of the night, to shake the foundations of the huge rocks.

Gennaro had passed his hand under the arm of his companion.

"She will love you, dear friend," he murmured. "Why should she not love you? And when she does love you, you see, your old uncle, Gennaro, will take a hand in the game. And you know when your uncle begins to think out a plan, it is not generally for the purpose of amusing a lot of old women. There are a good many precipices in the mountains. What can anyone say when he finds a man lying dead at the bottom of one of them? Don't worry, more difficult things than this have been fixed up."

But Jean felt uneasy while he listened to this voice, at once menacing and kindly; he felt that he was surrounded by an atmosphere of crime.

"Gennaro!" he exclaimed. "If you touch a hair of his head I will never look at you again, and I, myself, will denounce you to the court."

Tagliamente laughed softly. "Ah! you are nothing but an innocent pigeon. But I, I tell you that you would not denounce your friend, and that you would not refuse to see him, if he had made your happiness. Besides," he continued more seriously, "you are a mascot, you are bound to win. Mark my words, this man will surely be killed by the custom house guards."

V

For two weeks Jean had been attempting to paint the portrait of Desolina. Too emotionalized by his model, he had given up all idea of making a *chef-d'œuvre*. He felt that he was too young and inexperienced to accomplish any great work; but he did want to paint something that would resemble her, not only because he wanted the canvas that would recall her to him in the future, but also because he wanted to please her and hear her say: "That looks like me." This idea inspired him with energy. Day by day the woman's face grew under the brush. At the end of the second week he would not allow her to see his work; he felt that if she made the slightest criticism, it would spoil everything.

She was becoming more and more impatient to see herself in pigment upon canvas, yet she obeyed the orders of the artist. Their relations had not become any closer. She did not despise this blond-haired man any more, but she was very suspicious of him. While she spoke to him quietly, there was a note of constraint in her voice and her eyes did not see him.

On the afternoon of the fifteenth dav she took up her position as usual, while Pepa, Bellinda and the other girls were running about the mountain. As usual, Armanio was seated some fifty yards away, silent, motionless as an alli-

gator. Jean was finishing his work, although neither Desolina nor any of the other models knew it. He was nervous, thoroughly discontented with what he had done; his work lacked life and he felt that both strength and patience were coming to an end. He gave a few more touches here and there, laid down his palette and crossed his arms.

"You don't care to work any more?" she asked curiously.

He answered in a discouraged voice: "I have finished."

She bounded up, and for the first time showed some interest, her eyes sparkling. "Does it look like me?" she inquired breathlessly.

"No, I do not think it does."

An expression of disappointment passed over her face, and then she came slowly forward and looked at the canvas. Suddenly her expression changed.

"Oh, Signor Artist, you have made me far more beautiful than I am."

"You think it resembles you?" he asked disdainfully.

"Yes, yes! If *she* were not so handsome, *she* would look like me."

There was a melancholy look in his eyes as he lifted them to the Tessinese woman. "That picture looks as much like you as a wooden image looks like the mother of God!"

The delight of Desolina grew as she took in the details of the portrait. Not only did she recognize the perfection of the "rendition," but she felt the harmony of color and line. To her uncultivated understanding nothing could be more perfect. After looking at it a long time in a sort of ecstasy, she turned to the painter.

"What are you going to do with it now, Signor Artist?" she said. "Are you going to sell it?"

"No!" he answered excitedly. "No money on earth could buy this picture."

"Because it is so beautiful?"

"No, because it is your portrait."

"Then you will keep it?"

"Unless you want it; in that case I shall have to make another."

"Do you mean to say that you would really give it to me?" she cried, clapping her hands.

He looked her straight in the eyes and replied very quietly: "I would give you my life!"

Astonished at his tone, she became very serious. Something within her seemed to be breaking to pieces. Since the episode of the scorpion, she believed in his courage; now she admired him as an artist, and finally she was beginning to believe that he was capable of telling the truth.

"Do you really love me?" she said to him with a very slight trace of emotion in her voice.

"I love you."

"But not like some stranger who happens to be staying here for a few days? If I were free would you marry me?"

"Yes."

"You are not lying?"

"I am telling the simple truth."

She looked down, seemingly trying to think it all out. Her eyebrows contracted; she had the strong and sombre beauty of those great Roman heroines and great Roman criminals. Her voice was hoarse when she asked:

"Would you carry me away? Would you carry me so far that nobody could ever find me again?"

"I would take you wherever you wished."

She bowed her head and thought for a moment; then she laughed. "Giovanni and Armanio would find me if I were at the other end of the world. You are foolish, Signor Artist." She looked at the canvas again and sighed.

"Do you want it?" asked Jean.

"No, it would never belong to me. *He* would take it and sell it."

"But you will come back to Il Castello?" asked Jean.

"Signor Painter, I will come back as long as Giovanni will let me, and he will let me come back as long as you pay him."

"And if you were free?"

"I do not know. I've never been free in my life."

"But do you dislike to pose for me?"

"Why should I dislike it? Am I not

as well off here as I would be at the house?" Then pointing to the painting with a graceful, childish gesture, she added: "Besides, I like to be painted."

Il Castello was throwing its long, pointed shadows over the valley. Armanio Palmieri took out his watch, glanced at it and walked slowly toward them to take possession of his prisoner. He stopped about ten paces away, as was his habit, but Desolina could not help saying to him:

"The portrait is finished. You can look at it."

The old man came up and scrutinized the canvas. "It's your twin sister," he said finally. "They say that those whose picture is too well made do not live five times ten years." Then he spat upon the ground and smiled like a demon. Desolina became very thoughtful.

After this she was more amiable. When they were alone—that is, when Armanio was not near enough to overhear their conversation—she would sometimes talk. He learned something of her life, of her suffering, especially of her hatred. She did not attempt to conceal the execration she had for Giovanni and Armanio; on the other hand she never spoke of her dream of deliverance; she pretended to be reconciled to her fate. Yet one day she could not help saying:

"It will be a long, long time. Giovanni and Armanio will live as long as the crows live."

Sometimes she permitted him to tell her of his love for her; but he did not abuse this privilege, for he felt that she was a woman who did not like too many words, in spite of the race to which she belonged.

She always returned home somewhat excited, and could not help thinking of the painter. What else had she to think of, in the deadly monotony of her life, between these two sinister guards? She began to like the tenderness of this man, and as he was not afraid of scorpions, perhaps he might not be afraid of the knife. And now, since her suspicions of him had died away, he represented to her the Beyond, a possible ideal of which she had scarcely dared even to dream. She did not believe, however, that one could love her as this man said he did. She revolted at the idea of his coming to her and taking her in his arms; then her eyes sparkled with defiance, with a touch of hatred. But of late this feeling occurred to her more rarely, because she had become convinced that he would not dare. Her life at home was a little less hard. Each week when the smuggler counted the silver pieces which old Armanio brought to him, he laughed greedily.

"That fellow is a good ass," he said. "It is as easy to get money out of him as it is to steal pennies from a child!"

But he was one of those men who can never let well enough alone. Before the end of the month he began to think how he could make the artist put up more money. One evening when he was seated in his garden, an idea came to him that made him smile. He remembered something of real models that posed for painters and sculptors, and the Frenchman might like to make a more complete portrait. This was quite possible. Desolina could pose for the upper part of the body as well as the face. In his garden, which was well screened by underbrush, they could not be seen by passers-by.

"He will certainly never refuse that offer," he thought to himself, and he wished that the painter were even fonder of the young woman than he was. Armanio, whom he consulted, thoroughly approved of the idea; the old man was as avaricious as his nephew. Besides, he began to be bored by having to go every afternoon to Il Castello; he preferred to smoke his pipe on the door-step or under the shade of the trees.

"My opinion," he said, placing his withered hand on the shoulder of Giovanni, "is that you can easily get a bill of one hundred lire out of this fellow for that job, and besides he will pay the agreed amount every day."

"You are joking, Armanio."

"No! If you like I will fix everything. I can do it better than you can."

When he spoke of money there was a gleam of intelligence in the bestial face of Armanio. Nevertheless, Giovanni hesitated. Finally he said: "All right, go ahead. If you fail I'll try it myself."

The old man frowned. "I will not fail. You see, Giovanni, this man is crazy."

They exchanged cunning and ironical looks.

"All the same," said the smuggler, "try not to get sick, or else I shall have to watch her myself."

The uncle shrugged his shoulders. "Neither you nor I, Giovanni, will ever die in our bed——" He saw Desolina coming in, and put his finger up to his lips.

The next day, Armanio sauntered up to the painter while he was at his work and looked at the canvas with an exclamation of astonishment. "Signor Artist," he said, "you are making the same picture over again."

"Certainly," said Jean, surprised to hear this mute speak. The old man puffed away at his pipe in silence for five minutes, before continuing: "Desolina is much handsomer when you can see her shoulders. Do they never make portraits with bare shoulders?"

"Yes," replied Jean, somewhat surprised, at the same time beginning to scent a trap.

"Well, then, would you not like better to make a portrait like that?"

"If I could, and if the signora would consent——"

"It can be done," the old man hastily interrupted, "but not on Il Castello."

"Where, then?"

"At the house."

Jean did not answer. He was greatly embarrassed, but principally on account of the young woman; at the same time his desire to see her in her own house, to know her environment, was intense. Armanio, who never wasted words and felt that the painter was giving way, said abruptly:

"How much would you pay to see her at the house?"

"Is this a proposition?" asked Jean, with a mingled feeling of disgust and delight.

"Perhaps! I must know first. Would you pay one hundred lire down?"

Jean did not have the courage to bargain. He remained silent for a moment, and then looked at Desolina. She seemed to be quite indifferent, gazing at the mountains. What did she think? What did she want? He didn't dare ask her, knowing perfectly well that if she refused Giovanni would find some way of making her suffer. Jean suddenly turned to the old scoundrel.

"I will pay one hundred lire for the right to go to the house," he exclaimed loudly. "You understand me? I buy the right. I may never take advantage of it."

The old man thought that the painter was even more of an imbecile than he had formerly believed him to be; he answered with a contempt that he took no pains to disguise:

"Well, I'll sell you the right."

He extended his hand and turned pale when the painter tossed him a hundred-lire bill.

"What must I do?" asked Jean humbly when Armanio had gone back to his post of observation.

She seemed to awaken suddenly and looked pityingly at Jean. "They will steal your skin if you don't protect yourself," she said.

"How could they ask less than a hundred lire?" asked Jean.

"A hundred lire to come to the house?"

"A hundred lire for the privilege of being nearer to you. It is worth a fortune."

He saw that she was surprised, as she had been on the day when he picked up the scorpion. To her this was an enormous, a fantastic sum which her mind could not grasp, and the way it had been handed over was simply miraculous. But what was still more fantastic, still more incredible, was his statement that these brutes could not have demanded

less for the privilege of being a little nearer to her. She said, merely to test him:

"I will not uncover my shoulders."

"Did you suppose that I would ask you to?"

"And suppose I refuse to let you come to the house?"

"I will do exactly as you wish."

"And you would have no regret?"

"Yes, the regret of not having seen the place where you live."

"But the hundred lire!" she exclaimed.

Jean smiled sadly. "I would gladly pay a thousand lire, only for the hope of obtaining what has just been offered me."

"Can a man really love a woman as much as that?" she murmured softly, as if to herself. Then she added: "You must come; they would blame me if you did not. But for the love you bear me, do not let these men rob you any more."

The garden of Giovanni was large and very beautiful. Armanio had mingled wheat, oats, vegetables and flowers. The chestnut trees were over a hundred years old. In the corner where Jean worked there were immense climbing roses, and he was compelled to look up to see above them the square tower of the church. From outside, no one could see Desolina, but Armanio and Giovanni could watch her from the house. However, they were more alone here than upon the summit of Il Castello. The Tessinese woman seemed to have a friendship now for the artist; she was pleased when the hour came to pose. No less shrewd than those who guarded her, she knew whether or not either one of them could overhear their conversation, and notified Jean by a sign.

Now and then she hinted at her dream of freedom, without acknowledging that it was a question of vengeance as well as of love. One afternoon, Jean said to her:

"If you wish to escape, I will help you; as a friend, as a brother—"

"A brother?" she asked, looking at him with a strange smile. "Yes, I wish you were my brother."

These words wounded Jean deeply, but he did not let her perceive it.

"I would not suffer if I were your brother, yet the idea of being your brother is horrible to me. But I can help you as I would help my sister."

"You would fight against Giovanni *only* for the purpose of setting me free?"

He answered yes, and really believed for the moment that he was not lying.

She remained pensive for a long time. She had a good opinion of the courage and talent of Savigny, but no great faith in his skill and physical strength; she felt certain that the smuggler would conquer him. After a while she asked:

"Well, what would you do?"

"Anything you wanted me to do."

Then, lowering her voice, she whispered: "Would you be willing to kill him?"

Jean perceived suddenly, in all its depth, the gulf of racial instincts which separated them. The impression was painful, almost agonizing. He become very pale and said hoarsely:

"What do you mean? If he attacked me or you, why, a person has a right to defend himself."

She looked at him contemptuously. "When he attacks us, it will be too late."

Jean felt an irresistible desire to know exactly what Desolina thought. "What would you say to the man you loved? Would you want him to kill him?"

For a moment the eyes of the Tessinese woman sparkled like diamonds in the sun; then she said carelessly: "*Chi lo sa?* I hate him, and besides he deserves to die. No one knows better than I what he has done; there is no man about here so depraved as he is. Should he fall into a precipice and be killed I would dance. Still, I must say this: if I could escape and be sure he could not catch me, I would not wish his death. But how escape him? I don't know that he has actually killed people, but I think so. What I do know is that

those who yet live and against whom he swore vengeance are terribly scarred or else have lost the use of one of their limbs. No one has ever been able to escape him. He followed one man as far as Gaete. What can we do against such a man, when he has Armanio to help him?"

"The world is large. Gaete is a town only a few miles from here. One can go to the other end of the earth—to Brazil, to Australia, to South Africa."

"The other end of the earth?" she asked dreamily. "Is that much further than Gaete?"

"The nearest of the countries I have mentioned is a hundred times further than Gaete. There are immense oceans to traverse."

"Those people are all savages?"

"The people are much more civilized than they are in Tavesco."

"*Santissima!* But does it not take a fortune to get there?"

"Two or three thousand lire."

"I cannot believe," she cried impetuously, "that you would spend so much money—for nothing."

"It is because you have no idea of your own power that you think that."

The Italian woman shrugged her shoulders. "And you would do that for a sister?"

"Yes, but because I love."

She nervously tore to pieces the rose which she held in her hand. "Are there other men like you in your country?"

"Some."

"There is surely not one in Ticino."

He began to paint again, but she, puzzled by this great love she could not understand, asked: "Are you sure that you love me?"

"To be your husband, for a single hour, if you loved me," he said hoarsely, "I would consent to be poor all the rest of my life."

She dropped her eyes. For the first time in her life she felt a strange sensation she could not understand. Then she turned to him with a curious smile and said:

"Will you go tomorrow to the church of Our Lady of San Bernardino? I am going there."

The heart of the young man bounded with delight. It was the first time she had ever seemed to care whether she saw him again. He nodded affirmatively, and they were silent; for the steps of Armanio could be heard on the graveled path.

VI

Our Lady of San Bernardino was a little church perched upon the side of the mountain and smothered by huge oaks and chestnut trees. To reach it one must climb goat-paths and push through underbrush. Mounting toward it, the sky, through the branches of the trees, looks like a divine lake, turned upside down. On certain days the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, headed by the priest and carrying banners, make pilgrimages to this shrine.

When Jean arrived there, early in the morning, he found a number of peasants thronging about the place. There were faces, the owners of which should have been handed over to the hangman without further consideration, and others which might have been mistaken for those of Roman consuls in need of a bath; heads of Umbrians and Ligurians, covered with hair like the wool of a black sheep; skin that was the color of the dust of the highway and eyes like black flames which, at the least emotion of joy or anger, dilated and became phosphorescent.

These men, shouting and clamoring, were dressed in shirts red and green, in felt trousers, in peaked hats; they smelled of perspiration, sausage, sour milk and mould. Their wives and daughters swarmed about them, in the clearing before the church, full of life, ready to break into song and dance, with long black hair that was splendid and unclean; there were old Gypsies with hooked noses, there were splendid madonnas, there were female brigands with hard cheeks and pointed chins.

They mingled strange perfumes with the other rustic odors; their voices, hoarse or silvery, extending from the contralto to the note of a reed-flute, dominated the voices of their masters. On the grass a crowd of children tumbled about like so many fleas.

The people of Tavesco came late, and their clamor could be heard from afar. They were blowing trumpets and made a frightful noise with a huge drum that was built at the time of the Cis-Alpine republic. High above the others rang the stentorian voice of Salvator; Gennaro was swinging a huge stick; a member of the religious brotherhood, clad in an indigo-blue robe, carried a flag; two others carried an image of Christ made of plaster with a face like a sheep, the hands and feet nailed to a rustic cross and daubed with red paint. The two inn-keepers of Tavesco, like two Tessinese Davids, danced before it, and there followed the members of the brotherhood, some in strange blouses and some in rags, yelling, shouting, mingling oaths with pious supplication.

Jean shuddered when he recognized Desolina among them. She was walking with some women and girls, just behind Giovanni, Armanio, Panscri, the sign-painter, and a gigantic cowherd.

Before the Mass began they arranged their provisions. The people of Tavesco had brought with them some barrels of water, one of wine, some ham, smoked herrings, chestnuts and bread which still smelled of the oven.

When the bell rang for Mass silence fell upon all. The little church was so crowded that the voice of the priest could scarcely be heard amid the deep breathing and shuffling of feet. Immediately afterward the feast began. Jean could not help thinking that these people had changed but little since the days of Consular Rome. He had taken the precaution to order a good dinner to be served by the Hotel Ticinese, and besides the ordinary dishes there were upon his table roast chickens, sweetmeats, an enormous tart, bottles of *Lachrimae-Christi* and foaming Asti. When the eyes of the priest fell upon this, he exclaimed:

"Ah, Signor Artist, you have brought the feast of Gamache up into the mountains."

"You will sanctify it by taking part in it, father."

"And I hope to sanctify it worthily," replied the fat priest, whose eyes *à la Rossini* sparkled with greediness. He sat down between Gennaro and Salvator, saying to the latter: "Is it today that you are going to cut me open, you schismatic?"

"After dinner," replied the giant gravely.

Jean had also invited Pepa, Bellinda and three other girls. Timid at first, the noise of the crowd gave him some courage. When he saw Giovanni seating himself with his wife and uncle at another table, he cried out:

"You see I have all my models here at this table! There is only one missing. Will you not bring her over here and join us?"

Giovanni, who had been watching the wine bottles, accepted the invitation with a nod. His sombre face seemed to grow human at the sight of wine, which he loved religiously, although he never got drunk excepting on Saturdays. Jean placed Desolina opposite him, and in looking at her he forgot that there would ever be a tomorrow.

For the first time since he had known her, she wore a costume of a different color—a gray bolero jacket from which her white shirtwaist emerged here and there like foam, and an orange-colored skirt. In her hair she had some coral combs; and all these colors suited her, blended with her. Good humor and gaiety seemed to emanate from her; she laughed at the remarks of the priest, which were sometimes almost witty, and drank several glasses of foaming Asti.

"Signor Artist," said the priest when they came to the desert, "may I ask you a question, a very delicate question?"

"Do not listen to this Simoniacal devil," yelled Salvator.

"Something in regard to your religion," continued the priest quietly. "Are you one of these heretics?"

"What do you mean by a heretic?" asked Savigny, smiling.

"Well, a heretic is a heretic—a disciple of Luther or Calvin, what the devil!"

"Father," replied the young man, "I have no use on earth for either Calvin or Luther."

"Well said, my son. Have you ever been baptized?"

"Yes, at the Church of St. James, near the Luxembourg in Paris."

"Then, my son," sighed the stout priest, "why do you pain me by never coming to church? Have I ever done you any harm or displeased you in any manner? Truly, Signor Artist, you should pay me a visit on Sunday if only for courtesy's sake."

He spoke in the tone, at once jovial and serious, which only Italians can assume, and which has given them their great reputation in the diplomacy of the world.

"If you care to have me—" answered Jean.

"As much as I care for a hundred bottles of this delicious *Lachrimae Christi.* Come, generous host, take care of the digestion of your guests. Mine will be perfect if I may hope to see you in the house of God."

Jean nodded and the priest continued:

"Do you know what would be a wonderful example to these people? I hardly dare speak of it, but by Our Lady, it would be a wonderful example!"

"A wonderful example," exclaimed Salvator, "will be when I cut you open with a good knife, you scoundrel priest."

"I know that I will get it some day, you schismatic mason!" replied the priest calmly, "but I was not speaking of that kind of an example. I was only thinking how glorious it would be if Signor Savigny would help us, or even pretend to help us, to carry our Christ back to Tavesco. Would you do it, my dear host?"

"How could I possibly refuse?" said Jean, smiling.

"Oh, the good little heart," yelled Gennaro, "he's made of honey. Father, Salvator and I will carry the Savior, for any others might give him part of the weight."

In the accent of Gennaro there was that indulgent pity which a savage has for a man whom he knows has been brought up in the city. Jean thought he saw something of this pity reflected on the face of Desolina. He felt a certain pride in his physical strength, such as every man feels in the presence of the woman he loves, and without reflecting, he exclaimed: "Father, I will carry the Christ alone, myself; this will be a much better example for the people."

All looked at him, smiling.

"It will be too heavy for you," said Giovanni, in a honeyed voice. "Only a strong man from our mountains can do that."

"The figure of Christ weighs sixty pounds, *poverino,*" exclaimed Gennaro tenderly. "And you know how steep the path is. If you should fall, we would be responsible for your death."

Desolina was silent, but her great eyes were fixed upon Jean and small flames seemed to be playing about in their orbits. She was too much akin to this race of smugglers, too fond of physical endurance and daring, to be indifferent when she heard the proposition. It seemed to Savigny that if he backed out now, she would despise him forever.

He spoke up defiantly: "If it weighed eighty pounds, I bet that I will carry it to the bottom of the mountains. Father, your proposition has given me the right, and I demand it. I will carry the crucifix alone!"

"By Bacchus! You get excited very easily, Signor Artist. How could I settle with my conscience if any accident were to happen to you?"

"You are working for religion—

come, father, pray for me. The crucifix will be replaced in the church."

"Ah, dear, dear little fool!" sighed Gennaro.

But Jean was obstinate, and all had to give in. A look from Desolina, which seemed to indicate that she was worried, lifted him up to the seventh heaven.

On every side the people had finished their repast. At the sound of trombones, flutes and violins the passionate multitude arose, their eyes gleaming. Their rapid movements were like those of joyous wild beasts, well fed. Jean felt the infection. He had a moment of delirium and forgetfulness. He looked at Desolina with a fearlessness that surprised her. Nevertheless, he did not dare ask her for the first dance. He turned to Pepa, and although the young girl had given up all hope of winning him, she was always pleased to be near him, and accepted with a thrill of pleasure.

He whirled her away in the dance. Like all men of his class, Jean danced very well, and these rustics, who had a fine sense of rhythmic motion, gathered about in a ring, admiringly. Salvator and Gennaro applauded loudly.

"With legs like that," growled the giant, "I bet he will carry the crucifix successfully!"

Profiting by a moment when Preda and Armanio were at a distance, Gennaro slipped up to the side of Desolina and whispered:

"If I were a woman, I would love that man to the very damnation of my soul."

She reddened slightly, and then looked at the smuggler contemptuously. But he laughed cynically and answered:

"Come, come, *carissima,* acknowledge that several stones have fallen from the wall that separated you two."

Jean then danced with Bellinda and two of the daughters of Panscri. Then only he had the courage to approach Desolina. She stood a little to one side, alone, and he said to her: "Desolina, give me the next dance; mark this day so that I will never forget it."

"I cannot refuse one who has just been my host."

He felt stunned, like a man who has asked for a kingdom and unexpectedly obtained it. Then, putting his arm about her waist, he felt her body against his, and the feeling of intoxication was greater than he could ever have imagined. He murmured so that she could hear: "This compensates for every suffering."

He danced badly at first, but after a few moments lost himself in the ecstasy of the rhythmic motion; his arm tightened about her more and more. She did not seem to wish to escape, but on the other hand gave no response. She felt that she could not have escaped had she tried, and the physical strength of the man who loved her pleased her. When he stopped and led her to a seat she felt that he was not physically inferior to these thick-set, powerful mountaineers who stood about.

Giovanni had come to watch his wife dance with the stranger; he seemed plunged in pleasing meditation. Seeing how closely the artist pressed her to him it occurred to the smuggler that there might be more money to be had in some way. Then suddenly there came to him a thought which troubled him: Savigny's strength displeased him and awoke his suspicions. He would have sold almost everything about his wife at a price that suited him, even to her kisses, but as he speculated more and more, he felt that she might ultimately leave him altogether and go with this painter, and rather than that he would have suffered a thousand deaths.

"Armanio," he whispered to his uncle, "This fool is more dangerous than we thought."

Palmieri spat on the ground contemptuously. "Bah! Because he has strong legs and perhaps strong arms, but he always has a side for a knife or a bullet, and let him try to make a move without my knowing it!"

Giovanni, thinking of his knife and gun, was reassured.

Notwithstanding the fact that these

people are generally very temperate, the feast was turning into an orgy. Indescribable things happened, and had it not been for the presence of the priests, there would have been a gleam of knives. Salvator was howling against the Conservatives as usual, and the brother-in-law of Panscri, the gigantic cowherd, was threatening to murder the man who had married his sister and ended by embracing him. Then he turned his attention to the stranger. Seizing a hatchet and brandishing it about his head he yelled:

"This painter must die, yes, he must die."

The six daughters of Panscri clung to him and then he sat down on a bench and began to cry. "I wouldn't hurt a hair of his head," sobbed the gigantic cowherd, "not a hair of his head."

Jean was thoroughly enjoying the passionate, childish words and acts of these primitive people, when an old man, thin and clad in a costume the color of old tobacco, exuding a fearful smell of native wine, came up to him.

"Eh! eh! it's the Golden Pebble!" cried Gennaro gaily. "Have you at last found ore?"

The Golden Pebble looked at him with infinite contempt. "I don't talk to common people like you—I wish to speak to this foreign lord who can understand what I have to say." The old man seized the lapel of Jean's coat and went on earnestly: "Come with me, Sir Stranger, I can make a fortune for you! I am David Spera, the blacksmith of Stagno, and I am well known in every civilized country, for I served as guide to Desor and Agassiz, and you know they said there was gold in the mountains of Ticino." He drew Jean aside and whispered: "I have found the mine—it's in the Baltech—I know it—I've seen it. Will you become my partner?" Then he added tragically: "With two hundred lire we can be rich. Perhaps you don't believe me?" There was a look of insanity in his eyes, a poignant anxiety. "You don't believe me? Well then, look at this." He took from his pocket a piece of yellow stone and held it before Savigny's eyes. "Look at this! If this is not gold, I am a hog. Do I look like a fool? *Madonna,* is this gold or is it not?"

"It's gold, of course," suddenly interrupted Gennaro, who wished to deliver the young man. "But, *Christo,* you must not show it in this crowd—they would steal it from you. Come back and see Signor Savigny some day at Tavesco."

A voice like thunder now drowned every other sound, and turning they saw Salvator, who had mounted the stump of a tree and was haranguing the crowd: "I want to tell you, Signor Priest, who these long-eared Conservatives are, the kind of men you like. People of Valcolla, listen to this story and tell it in the mountains. There was a time when the Long Ears dared to lift their heads. They fortified themselves at Tesserete and we marched on them in three different bands. All night we marched. One division marched through the valley, another went up the side of the mountain, and another over the plain. When the sun rose we were in sight of Tesserete. The cannon had not yet arrived; besides it would have been no good anyway, for we didn't have any powder. Well, we were sure of victory; yes, we were sure of capturing Tesserete; we knew that the church must be filled with Long Ears, but nothing moved; the houses were closed and the fields were empty. We thought they had played us a trick, and by the *Madonna,* they did. When we reached the church, there was no one there, but oh, the smell was horrible! I tell you one thing, you priests, they had left that church in a fine condition; the noses of the strongest of us could not stand it, and we fled precipitately. We were beaten that day not by the Conservative party, but by what it left behind it."

Roars of laughter drowned the sound of the musical instruments. Besides, the feast had come to an end; there was no more wine nor even any water. The priests began to gather together their respective congregations. He of Ta-

vesco said to Jean: "Are you still of the same mind, Signor Artist?"

The people standing about looked ironically at the young man; no one believed he could do it. He shrugged his shoulders and answered:

"I am ready."

They clad him in the blue robe and then hoisted the plaster crucifix on his shoulder; Salvator and Gennaro helping him because they loved him, and Giovanni because he sincerely hoped that the artist would fall by the way. Desolina hoped with her whole soul that he would succeed, but more on account of the hatred she bore her husband than for any love she had for the other man. Panscri and the priest completed the escort. The trombones groaned, the bass-drum roared, and this barbarous music encouraged the man who carried the image.

"Courage, Signor Artist," said the priest from time to time. "All the people have their eyes upon you."

For the first quarter of an hour it was not so bad. Then the cross began to cut into the artist's shoulders; great drops of sweat ran down his forehead. Pepa and Bellinda wiped them off with their handkerchiefs, while Gennaro kept on protesting: "Dear heart, you are a fool! Let me help you!"

But he would not give up; this seemed to him the supreme task of his life; to reach the foot of the mountain without a slip was of more importance to him than the victory of Marengo was to Bonaparte. However, at the expiration of a half hour, he could do no more; his shoulder was covered with blood, the muscles of his hips were breaking down under the pain, and he began to stagger like a drunken man.

"Halt!" suddenly cried Salvator. "Here's where we empty the last bottle!"

Giovanni gave him an ugly look but the giant deliberately lifted the crucifix and leaned it against a tree. Then he took two bottles of country wine which he had hidden in his pocket, uncorked them and passed them around. This rest saved Jean. When he had hoisted the crucifix on the other shoulder, he felt an invincible courage.

"He'll get there," roared the giant. "His legs are all right."

"If he doesn't stumble," muttered Giovanni.

Minute by minute, Jean felt himself giving way. Now his left shoulder was bleeding, and there was a strange numbness in his legs that augured ill for future progress. Fortunately the path became smoother. The trombones played a joyful march and Salvator roared out a song at the top of his lungs.

"Another quarter of an hour?" said the priest. "I must rest a moment, my children. I am not so strong as I was when I was twenty years of age."

With all his heart the old man wished the stranger to succeed in his task, for the edification of the faithful. Jean felt now that he must rest, and he brought the figure of Christ down upon the ground so heavily that he broke off four fingers, which the priest hastily picked up and put in his pocket. The artist felt that he could do no more, and doubted if he could even arise to his feet.

"Don't remain seated!" Gennaro whispered to him. "If you do you will never be able to get on your feet again."

He arose, staggering, but the mocking smile on the face of Giovanni, and the anxious look on that of Desolina, galvanized him into new life.

"Forward!" cried the priest, who well understood that rest would only make things worse for the artist.

Again they lifted the crucifix to his shoulder, Jean feeling as if a block of granite weighing tons had suddenly fallen upon him. He seemed to lose all sense of motion; only one maddening idea sustained him; his ears rang and the blood rushed dangerously to his head. "I am lost," he thought to himself.

He made a few more steps; everything seemed to be breaking; a mist rose before his eyes; his legs were weakening, and the crucifix swayed dangerously from side to side.

Suddenly the weight disappeared; he could hear the clamor of hundreds of voices; Gennaro grabbed a girl and began to dance, the priest began to talk Latin, and Salvator, seizing the crucifix and holding it high in the air, roared in a voice that would shame a lion: "He has won! He has won!"

And almost fainting, Jean perceived among the girls who were bending over him and offering him water and wine the divine face of Desolina, which bore an expression of almost superhuman joy.

VII

Old Armanio, his face covered by a wire mask and his hands protected by leather gloves, was calmly smoking the bees out of his hives, when he heard a voice calling him:

"Barbarous villain! Even in the days of Virgil they knew more than to smoke out bees. In this damnable valley you have preserved the worst traditions of savages."

Armanio turned and recognized Lorenzo, the Shepherd of the Bees.

"And what would you do?" sneered the old man.

"Let me come in and you'll see; and it will be as much to your profit as to the advantage of these innocent creatures."

Armanio hesitated, but he had heard something of the powers of the Shepherd and was curious to know more, so he opened the gate hidden in the trees. Lorenzo entered very slowly.

"You will see how easy it is."

He slowly turned over one of the hives and then, with his knife, cut away the comb. The half-numbed bees lit upon his hands and face but did not sting him.

"You've got a secret!" exclaimed Armanio.

"Yes, I have a secret. I am their friend and they know it. If you cared for them as I do they would respect you. Don't you know that they kill themselves when they sting you? And do you suppose that creatures as intelligent as these are going to commit suicide without having some motive for it? To do as I do you must be very quiet and very careful; then they will recognize you and know you."

He cut the honey out of the second hive and then out of a third. "That's what it is to be ignorant! You could get double the amount of honey. If you want my advice you will put one hive on the top of another, and next season you will have double the amount of honey. What the bees need is plenty of room."

This statement so much interested the greedy old man that he forgot for a moment to watch Desolina and the painter. She was leaning against the trunk of a chestnut tree, her long hair falling about her bare shoulders, and he was bending over his canvas. Armanio could see them through the climbing roses and the sun-flowers. Desolina was looking upward; it seemed as if she was seeing something in the interlaced leaves and bits of blue sky. Of late, something had awakened within her; she wanted to live and sometimes she looked at Jean in a strange way. Now that he had carried the crucifix down the mountain she believed in his physical strength. It was not the same strength exactly that the men of her race had, and it was not put in motion by the same instinct; still she had confidence in it. She believed that there might be some other ways of saving a person besides those which would be employed by a Tessinese or a Lombard. Of what they were she had only the vaguest idea, and because it was vague, it was fantastic, and because it was fantastic it was attractive. Still, she did not love him. When Jean came her heart beat a little faster; when he went away she regretted his absence. She thought that it would be very sweet to be his wife, and that if she were free she would want no one else. But the thought did not agitate her; she did not feel inclined to risk her life to elope with Jean.

The voice of the Shepherd of the Bees awoke her from her revery. She turned around to watch him handle the hives,

and Savigny looked in the same direction.

"I spent some agreeable hours on his boat," he remarked.

"Isn't he crazy?"

"I don't think so. He lives alone, that is all, with his books and his bees and the broad lake. I think he is happier than we are."

"It is not very difficult to be happier than I am," she said bitterly.

This was the moment when Lorenzo was turning over the first hive and Armanio was attentively watching the operation. Jean seized Desolina's hand and pressing it, whispered: "I am no happier than you are! But even if I were happy I would give all my happiness to make yours."

For the first time she was moved, and her hand returned the pressure. He became so pale that she was alarmed.

"What is the mattter?" she asked.

"It is only happiness," he replied.

Lorenzo had finished his work and as he was leaving perceived Jean and Desolina, who had left the shade of the great chestnut tree and were watching him.

"Eh!" exclaimed the Shepherd of the Bees, "there is the handsome stranger. My bees and I remember you. Are you not coming back to the most beautiful lake in the world?"

"Yes, Signor Lorenzo, I will be very glad to go back upon the lake again with your boat and your bees. How have you the courage to leave them to themselves?"

"Oh they are well taken care of by a friend of mine who knows as well as I do how to find pasture for them. Twice a year I must go to Lugano and to Valcolla. In the city I sell my honey, in the valley I inspect my houses, for these little girls of mine have made some money for me which I've invested in land. When I become too old and feeble to live on the lake, I must have some shelter for myself and for them."

He cast upon Desolina a look of admiration and exclaimed: "By the Holy Cross, she becomes more beautiful every day! I don't believe, my sweet one, that from the lake of Geneva to that of Como, one could find two to add to you and make a trinity. But this Giovanni!" He laughed, and profiting by a moment when Armanio was occupied in gathering together the combs, he murmured with a sigh that contradicted the maliciousness of his Italian smile; "Poor girlie, it would have been better if it had been the young painter—he would have been happier—but the most beautiful flowers are ravaged by the wasp as well as by the bee. Oh, great Saint Francesco!"

Desolina seemed to listen to his words with an extraordinary interest.

They were becoming more confidential. Every day she told him a little more of herself, and finally she hid nothing from him. Up to the present, while she had not concealed from him her hatred for Giovanni nor his cruelty, she had given no details. To no one else on earth had she ever spoken of her suffering; she was too strong a woman for that. She began to feel that her submission up to the present time had been criminal.

Jean loved her, not with more violence but with more tenderness. He felt that she was a woman who could be faithful to death to the man she loved. He asked her the question one day, and she answered: "If Giovanni had been good, or even not bad, I would have been burned at the stake before I would have been unfaithful to him."

He believed her, and he was not wrong. She was one of those natures which are very slow in attaching themselves to any other human being, but there was an obstinacy in her that would have led her, either for love or for hatred, to death without flinching.

Would she love him? Sometimes he hoped, sometimes he was discouraged. There is nothing more uncertain than the love of a woman, and perhaps it would have no value were it not for this very uncertainty. In the beginning, every normal woman is as uncertain of herself as she is of the man. She shields herself against him, she is unde-

cided, capricious. She vacillates until the final moment. Desolina herself was absolutely ignorant of the fact that she loved Jean Savigny.

One Saturday when they were seated among the flowers, he said to her after a long silence: "How beautiful the world would be to me if you only loved me."

And she answered, "I have often wished that I did love you, and then—" She stopped, not knowing how to express her thought.

"And then?" said the artist.

"And then," she continued slowly, "I am afraid for you."

"For me?" he asked in surprise.

It was the first time that Desolina had ever expressed fear for anyone but herself.

"Yes, I would not want to have you hurt on my account, for if I loved you I feel that I could not live with this man any more. Have you ever thought of how it would be possible for me to escape from Armanio and Giovanni?"

"Yes, I have thought about it."

"Well, how?" she asked with a melancholy smile.

He told her his plans and she listened to him gravely. Then she shook her head.

"With not one of your plans would we get so much as a half hour start." Then she put her finger to her mouth, for Armanio, who had been smoking his pipe upon the door-step, was coming toward them. "There is only one way," she whispered quickly.

VIII

In the tower of the church of Tavesco there were four bells. On Sunday they rang together, and their voices filled the valley with joy. The worst skeptics answered to the call. One could see the huge Salvator led by his wife, and Panscri, the sign-painter, pushed by his six daughters. Even the owner of the inn, a radical and a revolutionist, went to Mass, just as the stupid Long Ears did. The women entered the church at once, but the men stood outside, gossiping. Whenever the bell tinkled, Salvator would genuflex; he thus pretended to make a distinction between God Almighty and his representative.

That Sunday Jean had gone to church to set the good example that the priest had asked him to do. In the light of the candles, mingled with that which came through the gothic windows, he saw the face of Desolina. He reflected that this little peasant, who after all belonged to the same race with those peasants who were kneeling before the altar, was all that there was in life to him. Strange, fantastic—but true!

"What an illusion," he thought, "the dream of a dream, the shadow of a shadow, and yet it is the only reality."

Instead of quieting him, this thought excited him. At the elevation of the Host, when a divine silence seems to fall upon a congregation, his heart beat so loudly that he was astonished that those beside him did not hear it. The Mass came to an end and Jean went quickly to the font of holy water, for this would give him a chance to touch the fingers of Desolina. Thanks to the crowd that was pushing out, he found himself alone with her behind the pillar for a single instant. He whispered to her:

"I cannot stand it, Desolina, not to see you this afternoon."

"We are going to Stagno," she replied quickly. "There may be a dance there to-night."

She darted away and Jean remained by the pillar, thinking what pretext he could invent to go to Stagno. Outside he found Gennaro, Salvator and the old man he had met at the feast of Our Lady of San Bernardino.

"Here," exclaimed Gennaro, laughing, "here is our friend the blacksmith, who is looking for you. He insists on making your fortune."

"I don't insist upon anything," said the old man quietly, "but I know where the gold is. Do I look like a fool? As surely as there is a snake with a crown of fire which lives in the spring from which the river takes its source,

so certain is my knowledge of where to find the rock of gold."

"What kind of an animal is that?" asked Salvator. "Did you find it in the Apocalypse, blacksmith?"

The old man looked the giant over from head to foot. "You are large in stature, mason, but not in intelligence. If you have not heard of the snake with the crown of fire, it is simply because you have never associated with anything but bricks and stone. I saw this serpent once and it looked at me—I hope it will never look at you, although you deserve it for your stupidity. The look paralyzes you, you cannot move, and I do not know how I ever found the strength to run away. Giant without brains, your huge body would not protect you."

"You still have a tongue," answered Salvator gaily. "What do you say to a goblet of wine? I will pay for it."

"I don't say no," replied the old man. "But first of all I came here to speak to the illustrious stranger. Did he not promise me to come up to my forge?"

Jean trembled; here was the very opportunity he was looking for.

"Oh, did I promise?" he replied. "Well, if you wish it, I will go there this afternoon."

"And if I can prove to you that the rock contains gold," asked the old man, "will you become my partner?"

"What do you want of a partner?" asked Gennaro. "All you have to do is to pick up the gold yourself."

"You know nothing," answered the old man angrily. "I tell you that I need two hundred lire—one hundred now and one hundred later."

"Well, I will see about it," said Savigny. "If it is really gold, of course I would be only too glad——"

"Let's go to the inn," interrupted Salvator, and Gennaro whispered to the artist: "You surely don't intend to throw two hundred lire into the river, do you?"

The village of Stagno is situated about fifteen hundred feet higher than that of Tavesco, and this difference of altitude causes a considerable change in the *flora*. At Stagno the chestnut trees are very small, and they are overshadowed by the beeches and pines. The grass is shorter and the flowers do not come out so quickly. There are no fire-flies there. The houses, which cling to the slope, are very old. The inhabitants are not so joyous as those of Tavesco; the men are sombre and the women melancholy.

When Jean, Philippe Cormières, Salvator and Gennaro arrived at Stagno, the feast had already commenced. The orchestra, perched upon a rock, consisted of a very weak flute and a complaining violin. About a hundred people of both sexes were there. At first the scene was very sad. The men had the dark faces of the Middle Ages, the women were flat-chested, with high cheek-bones and expressionless eyes. The crowd did not interest Jean; he had perceived Desolina dancing with a tall mountaineer. It was a strange thing that up to the present time he had never been jealous. But now this sentiment awoke suddenly and he felt a sharp pain.

"Don't weaken, old man," murmured Cormières, "people are looking at you."

Jean started. He saw the ironical eyes of Giovanni fixed upon him.

"Wait, scoundrel!" muttered Gennaro, "your day will come." Then he added aloud: "The blacksmith invited Signor Savigny to come up here; it seems that this time he has really found the gold mine."

The furtive eyes of Giovanni sparkled with greed. "I would like to see those pebbles that the blacksmith has found."

"Well, come on then."

The blacksmith was awaiting them at the door of his den. The fire of his forge was out and one could perceive vaguely by the light that filtered through the smoky windows the anvil and a mass of hammers, pincers and the plow that was being repaired. When the owner perceived these five men, he made a gesture of displeasure. His yellow eyes glared at the two smugglers, for he had confidence in Salvator. As

for Philippe, David did not bother about him. He had a blind faith in the loyalty of French, English or German travelers.

"You don't look pleased, old man," said Gennaro mockingly.

"I was not expecting you nor that one," he said, designating Giovanni.

"He is insulting us," cried Gennaro gaily. "Old Golden Pebble, you deserve a knife in your breast rather than gold in your coffer."

"You cannot frighten the man who lives among these precipices," answered the old man proudly. "The one who can make the blacksmith of Stagno retreat has not yet been born."

The old man invited them to come in and opening a box took out a few pieces of rock, three of which he handed to Jean. The pieces were blue and gray, and one could perceive little sparkling dots in them. The painter knew absolutely nothing about mineralogy. He looked at the stones, which did not seem to him to be very metallic, and he was especially surprised at their lightness. He hesitated a minute, wondering if, after all, it would not be better to undeceive the old man, but when he saw the gleaming, almost ferocious eyes of the blacksmith, he replied:

"I am not an expert, Signor Spera, but I would not be surprised it it were gold."

"Ah, you see," roared the blacksmith. "May my soul be forever damned if this is not gold. Let your friend see the stone."

Cormières resignedly took up the piece of rock and guessing the desire of Savigny, said: "Why shouldn't it be gold?"

Almost maddened with joy, the old man turned to the Tessinese and cried frantically: "Eh, you ignorant lot of poor devils, fleas of the wine-room! You have been making fun of me for a long time. There are more brains in my head than the whole population of Valcolla have. I will have a palace in Milano, and you shall come and black my boots." Then an idea seemed to strike him and he turned hesitatingly to Jean: "Would you be willing to go into partnership with me?"

"Yes," replied Jean, "for the amount you spoke of, that is, a hundred lire now and a hundred in a month."

"But," interrupted Cormières, turning to the old man, "what can you do with a hundred lire?"

"Buy the objects I need."

"What are they!" demanded Giovanni, whose cupidity was aroused.

"An ass would not answer your question," replied the old man.

When they were outside, Cormières said to his friend in French: "Before, that man was only half crazy. You will have the credit of sending him to the asylum."

"Oh, no," replied Jean, "he was as crazy before as it was possible to be. I simply gave him a little hope."

Giovanni walked by them, thinking deeply. After they had taken a few steps he could not help asking the painter:

"Then you think it is really gold that this old fool has found?"

"It is possible," replied Savigny guardedly.

When they returned the dancing was about to begin. The flutist and the violinist were each emptying their last glass of country wine. Jean saw Desolina standing among a group of women, but the tall mountaineer seemed to be staying as close as possible to her. And the jealousy of the painter was again aroused. When he approached, the Tessinese woman said to him, smiling a welcome out of her great eyes:

"It was good of you to come."

He could not conceal his displeasure, and it was the first time since she knew him that she had ever noted any annoyance on his face.

"What is the matter?" she asked in surprise.

"It hurts me to see you dance with others."

She looked at him in astonishment: it had never occurred to her that he could be jealous.

"Then you are just like all the others!" she exclaimed.

"I am like every man who loves."

"But how foolish! All the women here dance with several men. I cannot refuse. What would people say?"

It was true, and Jean could answer nothing. After a moment's silence he asked her: "Will you dance with me?"

"When you have taken a turn with one or two of the girls," she answered with a mischievous laugh. "See, there are two of your models who have just come up from Tavesco." She pointed out Pepa and Bellinda, who were walking hand in hand up the pathway. "Pepa would ask nothing better than to dance with you. Why did you not fall in love with her instead of me?"

"Your laugh hurts me," he said. In truth, there was about her manner something feverish. She seemed to be under a strain. He thought of the mountaineer.

"Go!" she said. "You can come back later."

He obeyed and danced with Pepa, who looked at him languorously and seemed still to have a vague hope that he would consent to accept her stone house and her eight chestnut trees.

Gennaro, from afar, was watching the young man. When he saw him return to Desolina he said carelessly to Giovanni: "What would you say to a game of *morra?*"

Excepting money, there was nothing in the world that Giovanni loved so much as this game. He and Gennaro seldom played together, because *morra* is liable to end in fierce quarrels and knife thrusts. Perhaps he might have refused, but it was some time since he had played a game, so he accepted. Besides, what risk did he run? That Jean should press Desolina a little more closely in the dance? Giovanni cared nothing for that.

Gennaro had a table set out upon the lawn and invited Salvator and a mountaineer of Stagno to join in the game. It began as usual, gaily at first, then serious, then sombre, then malignant. While he was playing, Savigny and Desolina were dancing to the squeaking music of the flute and the violin. She seemed to avoid him, and every time he attempted to press her more closely to him she shrank away. This resistance filled him with a strange fear. When the dance was over, they walked along together in silence for a few moments. Then he murmured, in a tone that showed how deeply he was hurt:

"Why do you wish to make me suffer? I thought we were friends."

"We are friends," she replied coldly. "I'm sure I don't know what I have done to you."

"You know very well what I refer to," he answered angrily. "You began by mocking me and then you have danced as certainly no other woman here would do: as if you were trying to escape from me every moment."

She elevated her eyebrows, as if to indicate that she did not understand him. Then she gave a rapid glance at the table where Giovanni and his companions were engaged in playing *morra.* The game was becoming stormy. The voice of her husband rose, harsh and menacing: "Five! *Morra!*"

Besides the fact that the crowd was pressing about the table and watching the players, the smuggler had his back turned to them. Desolina looked at Jean with a strange smile. "The game blinds him, he does not see us."

She sighed as does a prisoner who feels for a moment that no guard is watching him in his cell. They walked along until they came to a place where they were concealed from all eyes. She stopped here, and looking up at him with the same strange smile, laid her hand upon his arm.

"For five years," she said, "I have never been out of his sight or that of Armanio. Five whole years! Did I really make you suffer?"

"Yes," he answered resignedly, "you did."

She looked at him with a great pity in her eyes and then she trembled. A strange and indefinable sentiment had arisen in her that morning. It was now fear, now joy, then revolt and even anger. Here, under this deep blue

heaven, wherein the rounded clouds were wandering about like so many gigantic pearls, she seemed undecided. She murmured very sweetly: "Forgive me. It was not my fault. What can I do to make you forget it?"

"Speak to me as you are speaking now."

He took her hand and suddenly a strange change took place within her. It seemed to her that all her dreams and memory had crystallized into one overpowering thought. She began to tremble, and then, very simply but without hesitation, she placed her hands on the shoulders of the artist and drawing him toward her, kissed him on the lips.

"You have wanted this poor love of mine," she murmured softly. "Well, it is yours, now and forever. God help us!"

VIII

THEY could scarcely believe in their own happiness; for both the ecstasy of the moment of that kiss seemed to last day after day. It was their life, that for which they had been born. Whether he were alone or with her, he still felt the touch of the lips of Desolina. Both were becoming impatient; both were suffering because they were so near each other and yet separated by an impassable barrier. He suffered when there came to him the perfume of her hair mingled with that of the flowers; sometimes when he looked at her, trembling with passion, he felt a murderous jealousy against Giovanni Preda. She suffered as much as he did, but being a woman, had more patience. Now that she loved the painter the very presence of the smuggler was repulsive to her.

One afternoon she was seated on the bench beneath the great chestnut tree. Autumn had come and the light of the sun was less ardent; she seemed to move more slowly, more languorously, as she walked across the paling lawns, over the flowers that were slowly dying. A great silence seemed to press upon Tavesco; the chestnut and the linden trees were strangely motionless; the heavens seemed to sleep and the mountains upon the horizon looked harder and heavier.

For a half hour neither of them spoke. Jean, wearied, dropped his brush.

"Must this last much longer?" he asked.

"How can I know?" she said.

"It is true—how could you know? I am the one who should take action. I am ready. But you must be ready too, and as yet you have not given me a definite answer."

She looked around to make certain that Armanio could not overhear.

"I don't know what to answer—I am afraid——"

"It is right," he said wearily, "and I am an egotist. I should never have forgotten this very legitimate fear of yours."

"Oh, no, you forget my fear, because you love me. All men are like that, and I fear not only for myself but——"

He started and looked at her keenly. "You are afraid for me?" he asked.

"For both of us," she answered hesitatingly.

"I must know it, Desolina. Is it principally for yourself that you are afraid?"

She felt herself incapable of any further dissimulation. The truth leapt from her as the spark from the flint and steel.

"No," she murmured, "I am lying. I do not fear for myself at all. I would die rather than continue this life. I could stand anything before that moment at Stagno, but now I can endure it no longer. My hatred is so strong that every day I feel that I must kill him, and how shall I resist the temptation to do so much longer?"

"And I too," he answered in a dull voice, "I would rather die than know you to be living with this man."

"Is it true?" she demanded eagerly. "Are you speaking from the very bottom of your heart?"

"It is as true as the fact that you are living, Desolina."

She murmured dreamily: "I believe you, love, I feel it too much myself not

to believe it. This life is becoming worse than death. It must end—we must go away, and the day when you are ready, then will I be."

She had kept her eyes fixed upon the form of Armanio, half hidden by the bushes.

"Listen!" she whispered. "You do not want him to die and I also do not wish his death, although he has deserved a thousand deaths. We must manage it so that when he is on the Baltech, Armanio cannot move for some hours——"

"He will be seized and bound!" said Savigny excitedly.

She shrugged her shoulders. "Who would do it? Gennaro? But then that would mean certain death for either him or Giovanni. No, we must try something else first. I can drug Armanio, I have something that will serve that purpose. Let me only know the hour and the day when you will be ready and we can reach Lugano and catch the train. That is all I need."

"And if you fail?"

"That is true—I might fail—he might not wish to drink at the hour you would have fixed upon. If it were in the morning, or at night about eight o'clock, it would be easy. The morning is better, for then he drinks tea, the taste of which is very bitter."

"Then let it be in the morning! There are trains leaving then from the station at Lugano."

"That is not all!" she continued quickly. "I have thought it all over. We would perhaps not risk our lives if there were a woman with us. Gennaro is shrewd and he loves you as he does his own son. I am sure that he could find some woman."

"How would that diminish the danger?" asked Jean naïvely.

She looked at him mischievously. "Gennaro will guess it. You are not a Tessinese—I will tell you, but not at present—Armanio is moving—have you understood?"

"Yes."

The spy was walking slowly towards them.

Jean began to mix some vermilion and ochre. She smiled happily, although she was a little pale. Armanio had a spade and began to dig close by them. They did not talk any more that afternoon, but when the artist left, he gave Desolina a look which she understood.

Jean went straight to the house of Gennaro and found the smuggler seated in his yard.

"A half hour later and you would have found me in bed!" he exclaimed when he saw the painter. "We made a famous expedition across the frontier last night. What good wind blows you hither, dear friend? Shall we have another excursion in the mountains tomorrow?"

"No," said Savigny gravely, "I want to ask a favor of you."

"I have always told you that it was only necessary to whisper a word in my ear. These two hands and this head are at the disposition of those I love. Tell me what you wish."

This moment was a serious one for Jean. Up to the present, his life had been pure and well defined; it would continue to be that, probably, afterwards. Nevertheless he hesitated to confide his secret to this man, who was after all something of a criminal. The cunning Tessinese understood his thoughts and shrugged his shoulders.

"Poor heart, you hesitate? That is because you don't know Gennaro. Speak, dear boy, as if you were talking to yourself."

Jean burned his bridges.

"Gennaro," he said, "I rely upon you. Can you help me to free the wife of Giovanni?"

"I was only waiting for you to ask me. I've been thinking of it for a long time. If it pleases the Virgin, we will carry off Desolina, if it were only out of hatred for that hog of a husband of hers. But you know, little one, we risk his life, your life and perhaps mine. However, so far as I am concerned, I hate him so much that I've only been awaiting a favorable opportunity to——"

He took Jean's hand in both of his own and looked at him tenderly.

"I suppose you have thought it all over," he said. "Don't let us talk about it again; simply tell me what you want me to do, unless you wish me to take charge of the whole matter."

"I would only ask you to be ready on the morning of the day we may decide upon. Giovanni will be absent and Armanio will sleep for a few hours. She must reach Lugano quickly and catch the first train for Berne or the South—I don't know just which would be the better."

"*Santissima Madonna!* Is that all you want me to do? Nothing but to have the horse and carriage ready?"

"No, that is not all. Desolina wishes to be accompanied by a woman, at least as far as Lugano."

"She is cunning, that beautiful one!" laughed the smuggler. "You understand it is more difficult to find the woman than it is to find the horse. But don't worry, I will find the woman—and one who knows how to keep her mouth shut."

"Do you understand," asked Jean innocently, "why she wants this woman?"

"Yes. If her husband should catch her before she reaches the train, and she were not accompanied by any woman, he would knife her instantly."

"How well these people know each other," thought the artist, and then to Gennaro: "If you do this for me, you know, I will never forget it."

"I don't care whether you do or not," answered the smuggler quietly. "I am doing it for my own pleasure, for the friendship I have for you and for the hatred I have for him. If you knew how many times I have sighted him in the mountains, and yet my fingers did not pull the trigger. And now, while I have been talking to you, I have thought of the woman. I carried her son down from the Baltech on my back, and she has not forgotten it; she can be trusted. Dear boy, if we can get Desolina away from that man I will not stop laughing for five whole years."

When Jean returned to the house of Panscri, he was very much worried. Cormières was awaiting him, seated in front of a wood fire, for the afternoons and evening were cool at this season.

"Comrade," said Philippe, when Jean entered the room, "I am bored to death. I have stayed in this hole as long as human patience can stand it, always hoping that something would happen. Nothing does seem to happen, and I regret to have to tell you that tomorrow I am going away."

"Philippe," said the artist quietly, "I will never forget that you have been a true friend, much better in every way than I deserved. In the meantime, let me inform you that I shall leave here very shortly after you do."

Philippe looked at him anxiously. "You don't mean it."

"I do."

"That means that you are going to commit the most astounding piece of folly that any man was ever guilty of."

"My friend," murmured Jean softly, "I know well that you cannot and will not understand me; I would rather sleep at the bottom of Lake Lugano than continue to live as I have been doing."

"Yes," sighed Philippe, "and I wouldn't be very much surprised if you were soon to start in on that last sleep. So you are going to carry her off?"

"I am," answered Savigny.

Both were silent for a long time. Finally Philippe said: "Have you thought it all over? Up to the present you have taken very little part in the real lives of these brutes. Very few men of our class would have consented to become so familiar with them as you have. However, it may be one way of amusing oneself, and it wasn't probable that such adventures as you would meet with in an obscure hole in the Ticino would have had any great effect upon your future life. Only this time, it is not merely a question of their wine and their dances; you are going too deeply. Tomorrow you will be a savage. You will not only be a friend of Gennaro, you will be his accomplice. You can't straighten out this affair with Giovanni with a few gold pieces. It

will be settled with a knife, if he can find you anywhere on God's earth."

"Have I not told you that I like it better that way," cried Jean vehemently.

"O, tragic infant! Yet if you're only willing to take a six months' trip with me you would be cured of this malady."

"You are judging me by yourself."

"No, I am thinking only of you. If I were to get caught in the meshes of a great passion, it would be less easy to kill me. I have not the youth that you have, and less power of recuperation."

"Yes, but you would not have the passion."

"That is true," answered Cormières bitterly, "but you should not have mentioned it. Well, although my words fall upon the empty air, I shall still try. You say you are willing to risk your own life; so be it. But if they kill her it is you who will have committed the murder. If Gennaro or Giovanni die, you will be guilty. You know as well as I that these people have very little respect for human life."

"If Desolina were to die," said Jean, "I would know how to judge myself, and carry the judgment into effect."

"I am not so sure of that; it would depend upon circumstances."

"It would depend only upon myself."

Philippe smiled sadly and shrugged his shoulders.

"You are making me suffer uselessly," cried Savigny. "I have made up my mind."

"I know it only too well. You should have been born among these people; you come pretty near being made of the same kind of flesh. If I had only not been foolish enough to accompany you here, I could wash my hands of the whole business."

"You certainly have had nothing to do with it."

There was another silence. The branches crackled violently in the flame and the sparks flew up like a swarm of red insects, the gleaming light dancing upon the white walls. Cormières, shaking his shoulders like a man who has just thrown off a heavy burden, finally said:

"Well, I have spoken, and now tell me exactly what you intend to do."

"The thing is simple enough. I am going to take her away some morning when Giovanni will be absent on one of his smuggling expeditions and Armanio will be asleep."

"Armanio asleep? Ha, ha! Well, then, suppose you have given him a 'twelve-hour soup.' Then there is the train to Paris!"

"No, I am not going to stop at Paris. For her sake I am going much further."

Philippe poked the fire with a piece of wood. "If I only dared to be your real friend, you know what I would do?"

"No."

"I would go and notify Giovanni and put him on his guard."

"Philippe!" cried Jean, springing to his feet and trembling with fury.

"Yes, that is just exactly what I ought to do, but I lack the energy. I shall confine myself to giving you good advice, and for that purpose I shall put off my departure for some days. I shall take care, however, to get out at the right moment, for I don't care to be mixed up in any way with these villains —I'm not strong enough."

Jean took his hand and held it for a moment in silence.

"Believe me, Philippe," he finally said, "there are many other men who would do the same thing in my place."

"If she had been your equal, perhaps. But there is a profound racial difference, my poor boy, between you and a woman of Tavesco."

"That is where you don't understand!" sighed Savigny.

Cormières gazed dreamily at the fire. "Poor little fire-fly, why could you not let her alone to gleam, if only for a few moments, in her own country?"

"Because she would have died, Philippe! She was suffering, and her unhappiness, as well as her beauty, appealed to me."

IX

It was early in the morning. Old Armanio lit the fire—for, to please Gio-

vanni, he did everything about the house that might have soiled the hands of Desolina. The young woman placed the cups, the teapot and the *polenta* on the table. These two people scarcely ever spoke; their hatred for each other was terrible. Desolina execrated this cold, hard face, the machine-like movements of the old man, and especially the sound of his voice. She wished his death as much as she did that of Giovanni; she had the contempt for him that most people have for those who guard them as captives and spy upon their every action.

This morning she watched him closely. She awaited with feverish anxiety the moment when, the fire lighted and the water boiling, he would go out and smoke, while waiting for the tea.

The old man took out his black pipe, filled it methodically, and then went out and sat upon the doorstep. The water for the tea was boiling in the pot and in her hand she held a little piece of paper, containing a white powder.

Giovanni could not be back to Tavesco before eleven o'clock, and consequently it would be impossible for him to reach Lugano before two in the afternoon. Besides, they had advised him to pay a visit to the Golden Pebble, and Desolina believed that he would not fail to do so. To pass through Stagno would delay him. Everything then depended upon the sleep of Armanio; should he drink his tea before eight o'clock Desolina would be on her way to Lugano, in a carriage which had been procured by Gennaro and in company with another woman. By refinement of precaution, the Tessinese woman had invented a pretext for her departure; were she caught she would say that she was going for a doctor for old Armanio.

The tea was ready. Desolina put some sugar, a little more than usual, in Armanio's cup, dropped the powder in and then poured in the boiling tea. Her hand did not tremble, but the pupils of her eyes were somewhat dilated. She was afraid, but her fear did not affect her intention. She put some tea in her own cup, and then, after drawing a deep breath, called out:

"Armanio!"

The old man put his pipe aside and sat down at the table. After taking some *polenta* he drank a little of the tea. The pallor of Desolina might have rendered him suspicious, but as he was always watching her when there was someone there he paid but little attention to her when they were alone. He emptied his cup and Desolina said to herself: "Holy Madonna, I will burn a candle for you every Sunday for five years. Save me from the hands of these men. You know how they make me suffer; Holy Virgin, have pity on me."

The old man ate his *polenta* slowly, and asked for another cup of tea. Having finished his breakfast, he went out into the garden to smoke another pipe. As he was not suspicious, he yielded without resistance to the torpor that was creeping upon him. Once or twice, when his eyes closed, there was an instinctive reaction against the effects of the drug; he half rose, but fell back in his chair and dropped his pipe.

The young woman watched him for over a quarter of an hour, fearing that he might awaken. Then she went to him and touched his shoulder, then his arm, and finally shook him; but he did not move. She called him several times and receiving no answer ran to the hut of la Lucia, a woman who lived near Giovanni's garden. When she saw Desolina, she rose and looked at her silently.

"Lucia," said the young woman, "Armanio seems to have been taken ill. He went to sleep while smoking his pipe and does not answer when I call him."

"He is old," answered Lucia, "who knows but what this may be his last day on earth."

"Can you not watch him while I go for a doctor?"

"Why should I not care for him?" answered Lucia calmly. "I have cared for hundreds, some of whom are living while some are dead."

"Then, come!" said Desolina, almost joyfully.

The two women crossed the road without being seen by anyone, and were soon beside the old man. He had not moved; his breathing was imperceptible. Lucia shook him and said: "He is certainly sleeping very sound. We must get him to bed."

"I will help you," said Desolina.

To her it was a repulsive task, but finally Armanio was laid in his bed, his head upon the pillow.

"Now, I will leave you," said Desolina.

"Oh, you need not fear to leave me alone with him. There is no one in the village who can take care of sick people as well as I can."

The young woman cast one last look upon the man and then put on her best dress and her jewels. This took but a few minutes. She found the carriage awaiting her on the highway and in it there was a gray-haired woman; it was she who was not only to accompany Desolina but to drive the horse. When she perceived the young woman, she said simply:

"Everything has gone right?"

"Yes," replied the young woman.

"Get in then and let us be off!"

She bounded into the carriage and the little gray horse started off at a gallop. An infinite gladness filled the heart of the young Tessinese woman. She was saved! She saw with exaltation the tower of the church of Tavesco disappear behind the rocks. No pleasant memory held her back. Childhood, youth—all her past life seemed to her as odious as in reality it had been. She drew deep breaths of "free" air, and for the first time in her life she felt that she really lived. The sentiment of freedom was almost as delicious as that of love.

Since the day before, Jean had been at Lugano, and had dined with Vacounine. The Russian was very much excited, for the police had just arrested a number of Nihilists. The big man hammered the table with his huge fist and announced that the Empire would soon be drowned in its own sewer.

"We are on the eve of the greatest event of this century!" he shouted. "The French revolution was nothing compared to this fearful battle which will shake the universe to its foundation. Your *Girondins* and your *Montagnards* still believed in conventional lies. The Russian Revolution will be an explosion of individualism."

When he had calmed down a little he noted that Jean seemed to be very much preoccupied. The painter knew that he could trust Vacounine, and finally told him all. The giant Russian listened to him, looking very fierce, and then broke out into a roar of laughter.

"It was written," he said, "yes, I could read it on your face the first night you saw her, and I should have known that this was sure to happen." Then, becoming very serious, he added: "You must succeed, boy, for if you do not your chances for a sudden death are very good. Fortunately, you have Italian *finesse* on your side; neither the most beautiful woman nor Gennaro are likely to take a false step."

"I cannot make any blunders," said Jean, smiling. "Everything has been arranged without my intervention—which would have been dangerous. There is nothing for me to do but take the train."

"And not miss your connections. Where are you going? Paris?"

"No. We are going straight ahead, without stopping, very far."

"Yes, that is the best way. Ah, little friend, how I envy you!"

They passed the greater part of the evening on the border of the lake, the same place where the painter had first met Desolina. Notwithstanding the Autumn, the night was warm and there was scarcely any wind. Some boats were passing slowly over the darkening surface of the water, and now and then a distant song could be heard. Jean remembered the first moment when the Latin enchantment had enthralled him, and his past life seemed to him now to have been very plain and monotonous. One night more, but a few hours, and he would have conquered Fate and won happiness.

When he took leave of the giant, the latter said to him:

"I would advise you to take a little chloral tonight. You are going to pass anxious hours of waiting which, even if they are to be followed by happiness, are tragic."

He followed the advice of the Russian and was able to sleep until sunrise. A few moments after he awoke Gennaro arrived. The smuggler had left Tavesco very early in the morning.

"Nothing," he said, in answer to the artist's mute question.

It had been agreed that, if some obstacle should arise, Desolina would raise the curtains of her window.

"Then you think we will succeed?" asked Jean nervously.

"We are bound to succeed," answered Gennaro. "Only some unexpected fatality can prevent the carrying out of our plans."

"You have confidence in the old woman?"

"As much as I have in myself. She has driven horses since she was a child, and besides she is not stupid. I tell you nothing but some strange trick of fate can stop us, and against fate I do not believe all the saints of heaven can fight."

He drew from his pocket an enormous watch which he had inherited from his father, and remarked: "We have two hours to wait. Let me have something to eat. And you, eat if you can; I have observed in these mountains that those who eat are generally more successful in getting themselves out of difficulties."

Jean ordered coffee, bread and eggs, which the smuggler devoured with delight. While he watched this hard, tanned face, the gleaming and crafty eyes, and the hooked nose, Jean thought of what Cormières had told him. Was not he, Jean, becoming something of a savage? After all, does not savagery sometimes dominate in the present century? Actors or victims—what is the drama of Carnot and of the Empress Elizabeth felled by the stroke of the dagger? Of McKinley and Humbert, shot down in the midst of a crowd as if they were wild beasts in a wood, of Princess Louise clinging to Lieutenant Keglewich, or the Princess of Bourbon eloping with a painter? And what of all these trite occurrences where the lover kills his mistress or the mistress kills her lover, or the husband kills his wife? Why was the carrying away of Desolina any more barbarous or primitive than any of these acts? It was not, he said to himself.

"You look tired, my poor, dear boy," remarked the smuggler. "But fear nothing. Now that you have started the game, even if you lost today, you are bound to win tomorrow. All I can say is, God help Giovanni Preda, if he stands in our way." And the smuggler caressed the handle of the long knife in his belt.

"Gennaro!" exclaimed the young man. "I have told you a hundred times——"

"What do I care what you have told me?" interrupted the smuggler gaily. "Acts eat up words. And besides, it won't be you who will do anything for this man. It will only be a little affair between him and myself."

"I would never forgive you—no, never!"

"You would probably denounce me, eh?" laughed the other. "And I tell you that you would forgive me, and that you could not denounce me."

He finished his last cup of coffee, lit a cigar and continued: "It is about time now. Give orders to have your baggage carried to the railroad station. I will go out and watch for Desolina and the old woman."

"I will go with you."

"No, until the last moment you must keep out of sight. I myself will not accompany them, but will go ahead. One can easily see that you have never smuggled merchandise across the frontier."

Jean watched him go out with a feeling of mingled hope and regret. Whatever might happen now, he would always be under obligations to this man, but when the beautiful face of Deso-

lina rose before him, everything else appeared to him ephemeral, petty, unworthy of notice.

He arrived at the station three-quarters of an hour before it was time for the train to leave. There were an English family, some natives and two German tourists walking about. The artist felt certain that she would come, but when the hands of the clock pointed to a quarter to eleven, and he had purchased his tickets and checked his baggage for Berne, he became uneasy. He went out on the platform and walked nervously up and down. Suddenly he perceived Gennaro coming out of a side street and rushed toward him, crying joyously: "She is there?"

The smuggler looked at him sadly and said in a low tone: "Fate has been against us."

Jean staggered and would have fallen had not the smuggler grasped him by the arm. He pushed the artist into a carriage and took him back to the hotel. Only when they reached his room did Gennaro speak.

"Yes, as I told you, fate was against us. Fate is a hog. Listen! The company of smugglers, of which Giovanni was one, were notified not to attempt to cross the frontier, as the police were on the alert. Then Giovanni came back. What he thought I don't know; but he got a horse from the inn and caught up with the carriage a half hour before it reached Lugano. He took Desolina back and the old woman came on to notify me and get a doctor. That's all. There's nothing to do but try again; only next time it will be hotter. *Santissima Madonna,* the little one has fainted!"

It was true, the artist had fallen back and his eyes had closed. He came to in a few minutes and the reaction set in. "He shall not have her, or I will die!" he shouted.

"*Cristo!*" exclaimed the smuggler. "You may be sure he will not keep her." And he put his arms about Jean, lifting him as if he had been a child.

"Oh, my beloved little one, you think that Gennaro is going to let him alone? I've hated him for ten years—no, since we were born. I never look at his vile face without getting mad. He must die, only I was waiting for some good reason, and when could I ever have a better one? Come, dear heart, give your friend a chance—he takes the whole thing on himself—no one will ever guess it. Do you take me for a fool? The mountains do not talk."

His words and face expressed a ferocious devotion. This savage could be a terrible enemy and a true friend. In the past he had served his friends well, but for some strange reason he had never felt the friendship, the love for any human being that he did for Jean Savigny.

Stunned by his disappointment, the young man listened to him without protest. Finally, however, he said:

"If it is for the love of me that you speak this way, Gennaro, never forget that nothing in the world will make me forgive a crime."

"A crime?" sneered Gennaro. "I would regret more killing Salvator's dog than I would Giovanni!" And he began to whistle the march of Garibaldi. A moment later he growled: "But you are not going to drop this poor woman now, are you? If you do, you condemn her to death."

"I told you I would give my life to free her!" cried Jean angrily.

"Your life! Bosh," answered Gennaro, shrugging his shoulders disdainfully. "If that is all you have to give she is surely lost. Give what you have in your head and in your pocket." He looked at Jean cunningly. "You say you wish to act without hurting him. Poor child! Very well, I will act without hurting him."

X

DESOLINA had shown herself to be as resolute as fate had been hard for her. As soon as she perceived her husband, who was following her—and thanks to the fact that she had the eyes of a mountaineer, she saw him long before he reached her—she took counsel of her

companion. The old woman, cunning and experienced, understood at once the role she was to play. She did not drive the horse any faster, and when the smuggler came up she stopped at once. Giovanni had the look of an assassin; he held his whip high. But the attitude of the old woman, as well as that of his wife, impressed him. Carlotta looked at him with an air of astonishment and Desolina was perfectly calm.

"You didn't expect me," he howled mockingly.

"No," answered the young woman. "If I expected you I should not have left Tavesco. You could have gone yourself to get the doctor."

"Get a doctor!" he sneered. "Couldn't anybody go and get a doctor, and was it necessary to go as far as Lugano?"

"I don't know. I wanted to be sure to get one. Besides, I didn't want to be near Armanio. You know your house is always disgusting to me, but with somebody in it who might die, I'd go crazy. All women in Tavesco go out alone."

"You wanted to elope with the stranger!" he said, darting at her a glance of intense hatred.

"I do not like strangers," she said disdainfully. "You might have known that—but you know more about merchandise than you do about women."

"She lies!" the smuggler thought to himself. Still, he had never known her to lie before and he was in some doubt.

"The stranger is at Lugano!" he said brusquely. He was merely guessing, trying to confuse her.

"How should I know?" she said indifferently. "All that I learned was that his friend went away yesterday and I supposed you knew that as well as I did."

Still, there was something in Desolina's voice that aroused his suspicion again; he wished to make a last test.

"Let us go together to Lugano."

"I cannot oppose your will."

"You would have liked better to go alone."

"I should always rather be alone than with you!"

The man hesitated. He might learn something of importance in the city, but on the other hand he desired to return as quickly as possible to Armanio. The old man was the only being in the world he loved, and besides he thought he could learn the truth better at the house than elsewhere. He took a sudden decision.

"Carlotta," he said, "will you promise me to send a physician?"

"I will send you as many as you want," answered the old woman. "As I am not going to remain long at Lugano, I will bring one back with me in the carriage, if you pay me two lire."

Giovanni did not try to bargain, as he would have done in any other circumstances.

"Good! You know Doctor Rossi?"

"Better than any of the others."

"Then try to find him and bring him back."

He lifted Desolina into the saddle behind him and took the road to Tavesco. As he jogged along, his suspicions became sharper and he began to think that he had been very stupid. Still it was useless to turn back now, as the old woman would doubtless have notified those who were in waiting. Besides, his experience as a smuggler had taught him to understand a situation and decide quickly.

"How did it happen?" he asked as they were nearing Tavesco.

"I don't know. I found Armanio asleep and I couldn't awaken him."

"Where did you find him? Had he fallen to the ground?"

"No, he was seated on the bench. He had fallen asleep while smoking his pipe."

"I must investigate his tobacco," thought the smuggler.

"And before that was he as well as usual?"

"I never look at him."

"Did he drink his tea?"

She shuddered. "If he didn't I suppose it was because he was sick," she answered dryly.

"Well, the fact remains that you ran away," he said insidiously.

She was not more moved by this assertion than she had been when she first met him. "I told you that I was going to bring back a doctor, and also that I wanted to go out alone. I would have you understand, Giovanni, that I will go out alone when I please, and if you continue to make a prisoner of me, I will end by rebelling!"

"You know what you risk," he said quietly.

"I will risk everything!"

"Well, we'll see about that, my pretty one. In the meantime don't flatter yourself for a moment that I won't ascertain the truth. If you intend to elope with the stranger I will see that each one receives his deserts: you, the stranger, Gennaro."

At the fear this statement aroused within her, she felt how great was her love for Jean Savigny. Her voice, however, did not betray her emotion.

"Be careful about your threats, Giovanni. I've never had a single happy day with you in my life. If I killed you I would be rendering a service, even to those you call your friends. I am disgusted with life and when I die I will not die alone. After all I am no stupider than you are, and when a woman is afraid of nothing she's the equal of anyone."

Notwithstanding this frankness, perhaps because of it, the smuggler began to believe in the innocence of Desolina.

"In the fog," he answered, "it is not easy to distinguish a custom-house officer from a tree. I first wanted to catch you. I will examine into your conduct later. Your threats make me laugh. If you are guilty, I will skin you alive with my rawhide whip."

"If I am guilty," she said slowly. "But you have struck me a thousand times when I was not guilty, and I swear by the Madonna that you will never do it again!"

"We will see about that," he growled.

When Giovanni and Desolina returned to the house, Armanio had awakened. He was still somewhat dazed, but the presence of Giovanni assisted in bringing him completely to himself. The smuggler told la Lucia that she could go, and remained alone with his uncle. He contemplated the old man a moment in silence, and then with real tenderness in his voice, asked:

"Do you remember how it happened?"

"It seemed to me I went to sleep," answered Armanio.

"But I want to know what happened before that."

"Nothing at all. It seems to me it was only a moment ago. I was smoking my pipe—"

"You didn't feel anything?"

"I don't remember—perhaps I felt a little headache. I have a headache now."

"Before you smoked your pipe, how did you feel?"

"As usual, I think."

"Do you think they could have done anything to you?"

The old man, his suspicions aroused, began to consider. But, no more than Giovanni, did he think of the tea.

"No. What could they have done to me?"

"Have you got your tobacco?"

Palmieri put his hand in his pocket and withdrew his pouch, half filled.

"That is what there is left," he said.

"I will have it examined," said the smuggler, for he knew that one could mix opium with tobacco. Then he added suddenly: "Do you think Desolina could have put up this job?"

The old man knew Desolina better than Giovanni did. He hated her, and he well knew that nothing would have pleased her better than to see them both killed, but on the other hand he did not think she was treacherous. The fact is, she was not; but when pushed to the last limit, and her mind made up, she would stop at no duplicity, at no falsehood. This metamorphosis deceived the most certain instincts as well as the most subtle intelligence.

"I doubt it," answered Armanio, shaking his head.

"The fact is," said Giovanni excited-

ly, "I found her running to Lugano under pretext of getting a physician, and the artist is there."

The old man remained thoughtful for a moment. He had no suspicion of Jean; he thought him something of a fool, and in any event, maladroit.

"All Tavesco knew that he was going to see his friend off," he said finally. "What did Desolina tell you?"

"That she wanted to fetch a doctor, and that she was glad to get away alone. She theatened that she would run away every time she got a chance; besides, she told me she couldn't endure your presence."

"You knew that before," said the old man with a curious smile.

"The stranger would give his fortune for her," said Giovanni.

"Yes," answered Armanio disdainfully, "but he wouldn't risk the thrust of your knife."

Giovanni smiled. He had the peculiar contempt of the savage for the civilized man; of the peasant for one who lives in the city; of the adventurer for the bourgeois. He could not judge the feelings of Savigny as he could those of Gennaro; he mistook them, both in quality and quantity.

"You don't think he would try to carry her off?" he asked.

"Not before having offered to buy her," answered Armanio.

This argument was conclusive. Giovanni replied: "Let us wait for the doctor."

The physician arrived late in the afternoon. He was an old brute, more capable of taking care of cattle than of men. He had once cared for Giovanni when he had been wounded, and since then the smuggler believed him the grand lama of the medical world. Rossi examined the old man's tongue and pulse without listening to a word of what the two men were trying to tell him.

"Your tongue is bad," he said severely. "You should take care of your stomach."

"What has happened to him?" cried Giovanni.

"You have been eating filth," replied the doctor. "People in this part of the country don't eat anything else."

"But what happened to him?" howled the smuggler.

"What happened to him? What happened to him?" said the doctor, shrugging his shoulders. "You know what very well. *Christo!* He had a sort of lethargy—"

"But why?"

"He's used up, it's old age."

"I'm only sixty years old," exclaimed Armanio indignantly.

"Well? And you think you are a young man? One finds every day men sixty years of age, dead in their beds, like birds in the snow. Why shouldn't it happen to you as well as anyone else?"

"Then you don't think he was drugged?" insisted the smuggler.

"Who's the doctor here?" yelled Rossi. "If you know more than I do, why did you send for me? Do you think it was any fun for me to be bounced around in that filthy old carriage that isn't fit to carry an ass in? The drug the old man took will last him for the balance of his natural life. Let him keep his feet warm, purge himself every two weeks and put on a flannel shirt in winter. He's green. Green is a good color for a leaf, but a bad one for a man."

The old brute pocketed his fee and retired, followed by the admiring looks of Giovanni and Armanio. The result of the visit, however, was decisive. Giovanni felt no more suspicions. He did not punish his wife, nor did he think any more of putting a few inches of steel into the stranger, but he nevertheless took more rigorous measures to watch her, fearing that his uncle might have a recurrence of this "lethargy." Like Salvator, Gennaro and others, he had his allies in the village; he opened several bottles of wine for them and it was agreed that they should all watch Desolina. Hence she was more closely guarded than before.

XI

JEAN, informed by Gennaro of what had happened, returned the next day to Tavesco. Those who could have given any ground for suspicion, Panscri and his six daughters, and the old Carlotta, kept silence; so that the painter was enabled to return to the house of Giovanni as if nothing out of the ordinary had occurred. Giovanni contented himself with an ironical smile, saying to him:

"We admit your innocence, Signor Artist. Sometimes the best hunter is thrown off the track by the clumsiest animal. I am satisfied not to waste my powder."

"I don't know what you mean," answered Savigny.

"Perhaps you are telling the truth. But, by the way, Signor Stranger, it is getting cold. Wouldn't you prefer to paint Desolina in the house?"

Life became unendurable, especially for Desolina. For a moment, on the road to Lugano, she had hoped and had dreamed of the possibilities of a new life and in the wretchedness of her present existence she strove to forget that glorious dream.

Jean suffered bitterly. He saw no possible issue. He could not even speak to Desolina again. In the large, white-washed room, Armanio was always present, and could have overheard even a whisper. Once in a while the old man left them alone for a moment and they had the chance to exchange a few words. The hatred between Desolina and Armanio had grown to an almost inconceivable degree. Had Jean been a man of her own race, Desolina would have thoroughly approved of his killing both of her guardians, but for him she was afraid. Sometimes, he too "saw red." When he read in the newspaper of some crime committed for the love of a woman he felt a profound sympathy with the assassin.

Autumn had torn the leaves from the trees and the petals from the flowers. Although it was warm on the borders of the lake, there was sharpness in the air of Tavesco on the heights. The migratory birds had long since left and gray clouds swept across the deep blue sky. Monte Generosa grew whiter, powdered by snow that looked like salt and sometimes like silver.

Jean wandered for hours around the village; she was there, and without her he would not leave this savage country. How could he get possession of her? By what craft, by what violence could he carry her away from that hut hidden behind the chestnut trees, where she was better guarded than a prisoner in a dungeon. She was better guarded than ever now, for on account of the bad weather Giovanni rarely risked a trip across the Baltech.

One morning, Jean mounted to Stagno. He found the blacksmith at work at his forge. When he saw Savigny, the Golden Pebble was embarrassed; several weeks before he had received the second hundred lire which had been agreed upon, but as yet he had discovered nothing.

"May the saints protect you, Signor Stranger," he cried very loudly, to cover his confusion. "It requires courage to climb up this far, although it is nothing as compared to the Baltech." Then fixing his hollow and burning eyes upon the painter: "You have come for news? Well, I have none as yet."

"The world was created in six days," remarked the painter, "but God did it."

These words encouraged the old man. "It is wisdom that comes out of your mouth. I see you are not one of those presumptuous people who judge of the winds and the clouds. It is slowly and with patience that the chestnut tree brings forth chestnuts. I have almost discovered the mine; I feel it, I believe it is right there under my pick. I shall die in a palace and you will marry the daughter of a prince. Do I look like a fool?"

Jean looked at him thoughtfully for a moment and then said: "Would you not like to have someone accompany

you? It is dangerous in this weather to wander about the mountain alone."

"A secret is like an old bear," answered the Golden Pebble, "it must live alone."

"But you are not obliged to give away your secret. Understand me, I simply do not wish you to risk your life; we would lose too much if anything were to happen to you. Suppose Giovanni, who has not very much to do at present, should accompany you two or three times a week? You can make him believe anything you please."

"Giovanni has a quick eye and I wouldn't like to work before him."

"So be it. He could wait for you at a distance, and would simply assist you to carry the tools to some place you might designate."

"He would always be near enough to know where I was working."

"Everybody can know that. It would be easy for him or anyone else to follow you."

The old man became thoughtful. It was difficult for him to carry his pick and shovel through the mountain passes.

"Besides," continued Jean, "I have promised him an interest in our gold mine, and it would be difficult for him to betray us. Believe me, you would do better work, and I will pay you another two hundred lire."

This last argument weighed ten times more with the old man than any of the others. For some time he had been concocting a new plan of operation which required more money.

"May great Saint Mark aid me!" he exclaimed. "Let the smuggler come. I can watch him. These eyes are not blind, Signor Painter, and these ears can hear."

Jean walked slowly back to Tavesco and arrived at the house of Giovanni at the usual hour. He found the smuggler lying on the floor on an old cowskin, contentedly smoking his pipe. Armanio was busy sewing together some pieces of woolen cloth to make himself a shirt; Desolina was arranging the dishes. When his eyes fell upon her, Jean felt that this miserable shack was changed into an enchanted palace. She might have been a queen of the ancient days, working as worked the daughter of Alcinous; old Armanio might have been an Aechean chief, and Giovanni somewhat resembled a degenerate Ulysses.

"You are late, Signor Savigny," said the smuggler with his crafty smile.

"I have been up on the mountain," the painter hastened to answer. "I have just seen the Golden Pebble."

"Oh," said Giovanni carelessly. "I'll bet a box of good tobacco against a cigarette that he is still playing hide-and-seek with his gold mine."

"Who knows," murmured Savigny. "I wouldn't be surprised if he were getting rather warm."

"Why do you think that?"

"Why? Well, for no particular reason, perhaps. I merely feel that way. And by the way, the old blacksmith, although he is still strong and agile, exposes himself to a good deal of danger, going alone into these dangerous places. I wish I could find someone to accompany him; I'd be willing to pay something."

"Someone might be found," replied Giovanni, pretending entire indifference.

"The old man is very strange in his ways. His companion might have to wait for him an hour or two."

After a few moments of silence Giovanni spoke up brusquely: "I might accompany the Golden Pebble."

"If you like. I will pay three lire for a half day."

Why Giovanni did not feel any suspicion, he himself would have been embarrassed to say. Hypnotized by the idea of the treasure, he was only too willing to be a dupe. A Napoleon, a Tallyrand, a Bismarck, all have their weak points, and the savage and cunning Giovanni had dreamed a great deal about gold mines; besides, the three lire had weight with him.

"It is understood then," he said. "I'll accompany the old fool."

Several times a week he went up to

the blacksmith's, but his absences had little effect. Desolina and the painter had a chance to talk to each other, but their plans were as vague and uncertain as ever. In this mountain village, where there was not a soul of his own kind, Jean lost every day something of his personality. It seemed to him he was cowardly. Were not his scruples vain, foolish, ridiculous? On one side there was the woman he loved, being slowly tortured to death; and on the other, the executioner. What harm would there be in killing this executioner? When he first asked himself this question, impregnated as he yet was with the atmosphere of cities, the thought appeared to him abominable. However, he gradually became accustomed to it. Besides, the sufferings of Desolina did not leave him an instant in peace. He awoke at night with a start, covered with a cold perspiration, trembling with anger and pity; he understood the disgust, the horror, the frightful submission of this woman. He was ashamed of himself for not having delivered her, or at least not having died with her. He often thought of a battle in which he might stake his own life against that of the smuggler; but there was always the thought that if he were beaten, she would continue in her slavery. He did not fear—or he thought he did not fear—death. But he did not wish to leave Desolina chained to this demon. Sometimes he thought they could commit suicide together, and once or twice he came near proposing it to the woman.

She would have acceded to this request at once. She feared death a great deal less than he did. Had she been happy, she would have clung madly to life. She herself had thought of suicide, but never without its being preceded by a supreme effort toward liberation or vengeance. The day when the last attempt might fail she would poison Armanio and Giovanni. Like a wild beast in a cage, she was continually thinking of new plans for escape. One only seemed to her to be possible, and that was the one they had attempted before, when they had failed by accident. She had had no trouble in putting Armanio to sleep the first time, and he suspected nothing. He ate and drank everything that Desolina gave him, and as usual went out to smoke his pipe in the garden while she was preparing the tea.

One day when Armanio had gone upstairs for a moment, she said to the artist:

"Listen! This must end. Before a month I will be dead or I will be free."

He looked at her lovingly. "*We* will be dead or free."

She hesitated. However passionate she may have been, the idea of dying together did not appeal to her. She could admit that he might continue to live, and even be happy.

"If you wish, my darling," she continued rapidly, for she heard the step of old Armanio on the stairway. "I can ride horseback; we can go faster that way than in a carriage. Get a horse for me some morning. I will start from behind the village and Giovanni's people cannot catch a galloping horse."

"We will go together, this time," he said. "I will have two horses at the place."

They stopped talking, for Armanio was entering the room.

After the return from Lugano, Jean felt uneasy in the presence of Gennaro. He remembered the words of the smuggler. Gennaro seemed to feel this and showed himself more discreet and reserved than was his habit. He was absent from Tavesco nearly all the week and saw Savigny only on Saturdays and Sundays. But Jean knew the tyrannical affection which this man had for him, and felt a certain sympathy for him in turn. This man was the only friend he had, and at hours when he could not see Desolina he often walked with him in the mountains.

When the smuggler learned that Desolina was preparing another flight, he did not seem to be greatly interested. When Jean spoke to him about it they were going down the steep slope that

leads to San Bernardino. The two men sat down on the trunk of a fallen oak, their eyes fixed on the village below them.

Gennaro listened attentively and thoughtfully to all that the artist had to say.

"It is possible," said the smuggler thoughtfully, "on condition that she manages to stay in the saddle. She can ride, yes, but very badly. If she fell, dear heart, and if the friends of Giovanni should arrive, all would be over in a few minutes."

Jean listened to him with surprise. He had not expected to hear these pessimistic words from Gennaro.

"One would think you wanted to discourage me!" he said irritably.

"You are mistaken; I approve. Only let me ask you what will you do if she falls or the horse stumbles?" He winked and began to laugh in a disagreeable way. "Would you shoot?"

"If they interfered, yes."

"Good!" answered the other, who at this recovered all his good humor. "We will empty our revolvers. Only remember that if we escape them we will fall into the hands of the judges. I only wanted to show you the difficulties of the game you are playing."

"Aren't you exaggerating?" exclaimed the artist. "How many men would risk their lives to try to stop us?"

"At least three. I can see their houses from here. I don't say that they will do it, understand me; I only say they might. You see, little one, how much killing you might have to do."

"Why should they stand in my way?"

"Our enemies are always in our way, dear heart. But don't worry, there won't be anyone in your way. We can't have such bad luck twice. Besides, since you have the courage to take the bull by the horns in this way, remember that you and I will both be with Desolina to guard against possible accidents. You understand, however, that after that, if I live, I must leave the country. Would you have any use for me in the far-off country where you will go?"

Jean nodded affirmatively, and Gennaro's face fairly shone with happiness.

"Well, you have only to tell me the day and I will be there with three horses."

A feverish week passed. Desolina wished to foresee everything and take every precaution. On account of the season, Giovanni made few long trips. He accepted one proposition, however, attracted by the prospect of a large profit, and Desolina gave the signal.

That morning she began to make the tea and when everything was ready she carefully took out the dose of narcotic powder which she had kept; there was, approximately, just about enough to put the old man asleep. She went to the table and was extending her hand to put the powder into the cup when she suddenly heard the footsteps of Armanio at the door. She jumped back, struck against the chair, and two-thirds of the powder fell upon the floor.

It was a moment of atrocious suffering. There was a humming noise in the ears of the young woman and it seemed that her heart would stop beating. She waited at least half a minute, and then, as the old man did not come in, she emptied what remained of the powder into his cup.

"Oh, God," she asked herself, "will there be enough? Will he sleep?"

In her ignorance she attributed to the powder an almost magic power and did not despair.

"Armanio," she called out finally.

The old man, as usual, finished his pipe and then entered the room. He was as far from suspecting anything as he had been the first time. He drank his first cup of tea and asked for a second. Then, the weather being favorable, he went out to work in the garden. She watched him through the window with frantic impatience. The old man worked slowly and heavily. "I feel sleepy," he murmured to himself, "it is strange." He sat down on a bench and half closed his eyes. For a moment he seemed to doze; his head fell over on one shoulder and he snored two or

three times. Desolina was praying. The last time she had called upon the Madonna and she had failed to help her, so now she called upon Christ: "O, Lord, I have suffered more than any human creature ought to suffer. Have pity upon me, Savior. Help me to escape from these men." She repeated it over and over: "Have pity upon me! Have pity upon me!"

Then she repeated the *Pater Noster.* The head bent over more and more. But then, suddenly, Armanio started up and opened his eyes; he made a great effort and rose in his chair.

"I am sleepy," he grumbled, and remembering his last attack, he grew frightened. For ten minutes he battled against the drowsiness that was overcoming him and then it became evident that he would not sleep again.

Desolina took refuge in her room. She was crushed by an indescribable despair. For a moment she thought of stabbing the old man and then herself. Then she made up her mind that she would go anyway. She would profit by a moment when his back might be turned and then run. Perhaps he might not be able to catch her before she reached the place where Jean and Gennaro were awaiting her. She went down stairs. An hour passed and then another and Palmieri never seemed to take his eyes from her. Once she thought of making a dash anyway, but she remembered the surprising agility of the old man and thought at the same time that all was not yet lost; she could get another dose of the powder. Another hour passed and she saw that it was too late to do anything that day. Then she became discouraged and believed she could never escape; there was nothing left for her to do but die, and taking refuge in the darkest corner of the house she cried for hours, believing herself to be a captive of destiny as well as of men.

XIII

One Monday, in the month of December, Jean was returning from Lugano. The twilight was just beginning. The sun had sunk behind the great mountain peaks and the flood of wonderful colors was spreading over the snow, the forests and the rocks. In spite of himself, Jean stopped to admire the spectacle. In this wondrous hour, it seemed to him that heaven and earth had grown larger. Supernatural lights marked out new defiles, rendered the valleys deeper, multiplied the crags on the mountains. Soon the brilliant colors faded into melancholy mauve, into light green, and then into a dull red. A feeling of youth, of strength awoke within the artist; all scruples, memories, regrets of his past life had disappeared; he knew nothing, felt nothing but his love for this woman. It did not occur to him that he had become half savage himself; he felt only shame and sorrow that he had not been able to deliver Desolina.

As usual, his head was filled with new plans for her deliverance, yet he recognized the fact that they were all chimerical. The most certain, which Desolina herself had chosen, had now become impracticable; Giovanni had given up his smuggling expeditions in the mountains. He was never away for more than a few hours three or four times a week, during which he accompanied the Golden Pebble. Jean saw only one way, and that was full of danger and uncertainty: it was for him and Gennaro to throw themselves upon old Armanio, tie him hand and foot and carry off Desolina before the eyes of the whole village. Giovanni's friends would try to intervene, but if they chose a day when the master-mason was at home, Salvator might, with his partisans, hold the others in check.

"There is nothing else to do," said the artist to himself.

He could now see the lights of Tavesco. A fine mist hovered over the village which made it appear as something frail, delicate, dreamlike. As he approached he heard the sound of voices. This astonished him, for at this season the inhabitants of Tavesco never went out during the evening except on Saturdays and Sundays; on other days,

when the shadows had fallen, a silence, almost disquieting, reigned in the village.

As Jean approached the noise grew louder; it was the tumult of a Tessinese crowd, loquacious and piercing.

"Something remarkable has certainly happened," said the artist to himself. Accustomed of late to sorrow and disappointment, he was filled with a sinister presentiment. He saw a crowd holding lamps and torches gathered about the house of Giovanni.

He staggered, his legs seemed to give way beneath him and his throat and lips were parched; he remembered how often Desolina had spoken of death. He was compelled to stop for a moment and lean against the wall. Yes, he could see her in imagination, very pale and her eyes closed in eternal sleep; then the very excess of his terror caused him to bound toward the house.

Suddenly he saw her. She was standing in front of the hut, her face looking like gold in the flames of the torches. He could distinguish her very well for she stood on an eminence by herself and dominated the crowd.

"What is it?" he cried breathlessly.

An old woman turned toward him: "Giovanni Preda is dead!"

He gave a cry of astonishment and then the joy that filled him was so violent that he stumbled and fell on one knee. He quickly arose, for he was filled with an extraordinary curiosity, an irrespressible desire to make certain. He pushed through the crowd of women and children and in the light of the torches saw Giovanni stretched out upon the ground. The face of the smuggler was covered with blood, his eyes were half-closed, his mouth wide open. The people having satisfied their curiosity, drew back a little when Jean arrived, and allowed him to approach the corpse.

He contemplated it, almost with ferocity, but without hatred. The strength, the cunning, the powerful will which had had such profound influence on his destiny, were naught now but shadows. He could see the priest, the syndic, the Golden Pebble, Panscri, the sign-painter, and his six daughters standing near him. On the other side were Gennaro Tagliamente and the huge Salvator waving a torch.

"How did it happen?" finally asked the artist.

Panscri started to answer, but the Golden Pebble closed the sign-painter's mouth with his hand.

"I only know it!" answered the blacksmith. "It was an accident. A stone rolled down the mountainside when we stood upon the very edge of the precipice. I am not a fool. I saw the stone fall, and Giovanni——"

"Are you sure it was an accident?" sobbed Armanio.

"Will you ever stop asking me that question?" cried the blacksmith indignantly. "Am I not an old mountaineer? Am I not a famous guide? I think I know a rolling stone when I see it. I say that it was a stone, and were it not for your grief, Signor Armanio, I should resent your question."

"Don't get angry, everyone knows that you are an honest man," said the priest softly. "And you, Armanio, know it too."

Armanio nodded affirmatively and then, taking the hand of the corpse, murmured: "Why did God let him die?"

Some women began to cry; but Giovanni's enemies, and he had many of them, looked at him indifferently and with an expression of satisfaction.

"The dead man must be carried into the house," said the syndic, finally, "and if Signor Armanio and the signora desire it, a doctor will be sent for."

Four men, the same who had brought the corpse back from the mountains, picked it up and carried it into the house. Armanio followed, muttering a prayer. When the cortege had disappeared, Jean turned to Desolina. She stood motionless and very pale, but when her eyes met those of Jean they sparkled with invincible joy. For both of them something had happened which changed the face of heaven and of earth.

When Desolina went back into the house Jean joined the group formed by the priest, Panscri, Salvator and Gennaro. Some of the crowd still lingered about the house. They were gay; in the vacillating light of the torches, in the pale reflection of the lamps, these violent beings, having seen a dead man, felt glad that they were living.

"When did this happen?" asked Jean.

"At three o'clock, on the Path of the Goats. He had gone there to examine the traces of a recent landslide. The rock rolled down almost noiselessly, so quickly that a chamois could not have avoided it. He fell down the precipice, on the side towards Stagno. God alone did it!"

"May His holy name be forever blessed," murmured the priest.

"Not by you, Simoniacal priest," growled Salvator.

The crowd broke up. Panscri and the others, together with Jean, walked toward the inn. When they were about half way, Gennaro drew the young man aside into the shadow.

"Oh my heart, my little one!" he said in a hollow but vehement voice. "Now you are free. Nothing more stands between you and her. This made your happiness when he fell from the path." He pressed Jean's hand convulsively, and kissed it. "You are going to live now! Tell me that you are happy, dear one, tell me that you are glad to have seen him lying there motionless."

A man passed, carrying a flaming torch which threw a coppery light upon Gennaro. There was a terrible look upon his face, the cheeks were sunken, and the lips were drawn in against the teeth in a strange way, the eyes were round, phosphorescent, and had the expression of a madman. Savigny was touched as well as frightened by this emotion.

"He deserved his fate!" continued the smuggler. "There is no vile beast in the mountains that is not good, compared with him. And you know it. I hope that God will never pardon him. I hope he is burning in hell now." Then he added in a quavering voice: "You see, if it had not been for the others, I would have killed him like a wasp, but after that you would not have slept in peace." He laughed, a savage, joyous, menacing laugh. "It is better that the mountain should have done the work."

That night Jean wandered around Giovanni's house, but did not wish to enter it before the following day. Then he found Desolina alone in the living room. She was grave and pale, looking very strange in her black robe. Their first impulse was to throw themselves into each other's arms, but they stopped, seeming to remember. After a few moments of silence he took her in his arms and she did not refuse his kiss. Desolina spoke first.

"I did not sleep all night," she said. "All night long I feared that he might come to life. I wish I could leave this house."

"Why should you not leave it?"

She looked at him in astonishment.

"I cannot. What would people say if I left the dead alone?"

"Why do you bother about these people whom you will never see again?"

"Why should I never see them again? Besides, it wouldn't be right."

"Why would it not be right? Do you think you owe anything to this man who made you suffer so?"

"One always owes something to the dead," she answered gravely.

He could not help smiling. "But not to assassins, not to enemies."

"The dead are not assassins any more."

He understood that he should not contradict her; in fact, these scruples rather pleased him.

"Then you will not leave the house until he has gone?"

"No," she replied pensively. "Then I will sell my half interest in the house; perhaps Armanio will buy it. He has inherited the other half; and then I will go and live wherever you like."

"Darling," he said, trembling, "are you sure? Wherever I would like? Would you not regret Tavesco?"

She cast a long look at the garden.

"I cannot regret Tavesco. My life here has been one long agony. I would like sometime to see again the priest and the wife of Salvator."

He had never heard her speak so softly, so sweetly before.

"You shall be happy in your own way," he said tenderly, "and not in mine."

"Oh, I know I shall be happy with you, especially if you can live without sin. Now that I am free I would not wish to offend God."

He did not understand, and looked at her questioningly. She, somewhat pale, murmured very softly: "I think you love me as I love you. I love you forever and ever. When I was a prisoner, when this man was separating us, I did not care if I lived like a pagan."

She hesitated. Jean was deeply agitated by her answer; when their lips had met he believed that the uncertainties and sufferings of the past were at an end, and now a new shadow seemed to fall upon his life.

"Speak quickly," he said feverishly. "I thought that happiness was at last within our grasp——"

"If you love me, it is."

He took her in his arms and asked anxiously: "Are you not my wife, Desolina?"

"What would you require of a young girl of your own rank?"

"Ah!" he exclaimed bitterly. "With a young girl of my own rank I should not have had to endure these long tortures. Besides, the young girl would have been free. Now, must I wait for you a year? What difference does it make to you anyhow? Do you think I will not keep my word?"

"Yes, but we will have committed a sin."

"If you love me, you would not even think of such a thing."

She stood looking dreamily out of the window. Then her lips moved; she was praying silently. Finally she said: "My love, it shall be as you wish—but it may be wrong, and perhaps we may be punished."

She put her arms about him lovingly and pressed him to her, kissing his cheeks, whereon she left the traces of her tears.

"I would gladly be damned for you, for I love you more than you love me. I know that I should lose your love if we acted as those do who do not obey the laws of God."

He listened to her in silence, feeling that there was nothing to answer. Centuries of superstition separated them like an impassable gulf. Yet, he understood and almost approved. As a slave, she would have committed any crime, respecting neither religion nor any social law—or rather, she had a different sentiment of religion and morals. Formerly she prayed God and the Virgin to help her flee with her lover, and believed sincerely that they should have assisted her. There was no contradiction here, nothing but the subtle adaptation of the Latin soul to circumstances. This subtlety protects it from English casuistry and American cynicism.

It was with an almost unbearable emotion that he gazed at her pale and passionate face, into those eyes in which, although blinded by tears, there burned a sombre fire. The delay, in itself, did not frighten him. If he could be near Desolina, could pass hours in her company, he could wait. But he was terrified by the uncertainty; for a long time everything seemed to have turned against him. This new period of waiting was not a pause, but a time during which there could be hatched new accidents, new sufferings.

"You will come with me at once, if I wish it?"

"Yes," she replied with the look of a slave that obeys a beloved master.

"You will forgive me for having wished it?"

"Oh, my love, I would pardon you if you thrust a knife into my heart."

"But you would be unhappy?"

"I would be afraid of God—I would fear misfortune."

Taking her in his arms he said tremblingly: "My own, my own, could I ever be happy if you were suffering?"

XIV

He did not wish to take Desolina to France during the winter season; he feared the sudden change of climate and environment. He rented two houses at Lugano on the shore of the lake. He lived in one, and Desolina, with an old woman companion and a servant, in the other. They were not always alone. Besides the Shepherd of the Bees, who often brought his boat to anchor at the foot of the garden, besides Gennaro who called two or three time a week, they saw Lampuniani, Vacounine and even his daughters.

Vacounine, whose conduct in a hundred ways contradicted his doctrine, was in thorough accord with both the theory and the practice of marriage. He had been married without any ceremony. The young she-bears had neither virtues nor vices: they never expected any man ever to love them; they preferred roast beef, entrées and truffles. At first they received Desolina with indifference, but later with pleasure, for they were tender-hearted. Although they were heavy and clumsy and walked like young tapirs, they possessed some taste. Knowing that their forms were not adapted for handsome dressing, they ran about in long dressing-gowns and peasants' skirts, and wore men's shoes. But they could distinguish elegance and grace in others. Vacounine, interested in the future of the young artist, requested his huge daughters to take care of Desolina, and they did it with great delicacy. By degrees they modified the Tessinese costume and taught her some civilized customs.

They had an excellent pupil, vigilant, attentive and adroit. From the very beginning she worked passionately toward this metamorphosis, for she understood that much of her future depended upon it.

Before the end of the winter, her colossal friends had taught her all they knew upon the subject of dress and the science of *salons*. One thing that troubled them, however, was her manner of walking. It was exquisite, but too perfect. They spoke to Vacounine about it. He was indignant. "Be sure that all those who have a walk like that should keep it. Art cannot destroy the beauty of nature. If it is not fashionable, what of it? Do you want to change her voice or her looks?"

As time went on, Jean's anxiety increased. Every day, and at all hours of the day, he could see his beautiful fiancée and note the strong and successful efforts she was making to lift herself out of her caste into that of the man she loved. Yet this quiet happiness was mingled with an element of fear. Our ancestors seem to have transmitted to us a mysterious feeling or instinct which makes us anxious in the midst of the greatest happiness. We feel that once our object attained, our wish granted, we will want to seek another object, to try new chances; this is life, doubtless, but there is also the fear that there may be someone ambushed on our path to happiness, something dark, unknown, intangible.

Like the very essence of beauty, the spring descended upon the lake and melted the white forehead of Monte Generosa. The Ticino sparkled like the garden of the Hesperides.

One day the Shepherd of the Bees came with his boat. He loved the young people and they by no means disliked the strange figure nor his incessant chatter. The air was warm, but now and then there was a breeze that had been cooled by the snows of the higher Alps. The bees were intoxicated by their work. The boat seemed scarcely to move over the water.

"These bees," said the shepherd, answering a question of the artist, "are perhaps the fifteenth generation of those I first brought to the lake, and they know every corner and turn of it. The older ones know where the boat is when no human eye could see it. Besides, if it were necessary, all I would have to do would be to strike this iron pot. They would distinguish the sound from every other, no matter if a band were playing at the time."

The old man became pensive. After

a long silence he spoke again: "I often wonder what will happen to us in the other world. Dante, I believe, is the only one who has ever described it. He says nothing about bees, but I can't imagine a paradise without them."

The lovers, intoxicated by their happiness, listened to his chatter. Close together, they did not note the passing of the hours; it seemed to them that the great vault of blue satin and crystal would last forever, that the exquisite tints of the trees and flowers, the flashing jewels of the water, would never change. They were children, absorbing the divine life and not thinking of happiness, because they were happiness itself. They had ceased to fear the future; they knew only the present which would stretch out indefinitely.

Jean put his arm about Desolina and drawing her to him covered her face with kisses. In an ecstasy of delight, her great eyes reflecting the color of the water and of the trees, she kissed him in return.

"Ah," he said, "how hard it is to wait so long, Desolina. Every morning I awaken with a start, and the thought comes to me that I may lose you."

She almost understood, now, the soul of the man who loved her.

"Only death will take me from you, dear, and as for death, we can promise nothing about that."

"Is that true?" he cried. "Are you sure that nothing else would separate us?"

They had landed on one of the beautiful shores of the lake. She looked about her as if seeking something, and then said to him: "Come with me."

She led him to a huge poplar tree where she knew there was a sort of cage containing an image of the Virgin and child. She pointed to it. "Listen, my own: if I am ever unfaithful, my love, I ask that Christ and His mother strike me with death, and my soul with eternal malediction."

Jean looked at her, standing as she was, radiantly beautiful, and kneeling, he took the hand with which she had pointed to the Virgin and reverently kissed it. When he arose, he noticed that the woman was pale and that her eyes were fixed upon some object. He followed her gaze and saw, only a few yards from them, the haggard, menacing, terrible face of Armanio.

XV

THE following day he had forgotten the incident, but a week later he observed the old man close to the house of Desolina. Could it be a coincidence? he thought to himself.

A few days later, just after he had left Desolina, he saw again, in the moonlight, the silhouette of the old man. He stopped for a moment to watch it, but it disappeared. He thought that he might have been mistaken.

Subsequently he saw Armanio in Lugano and again one afternoon on the shore of the lake. Jean was more angry than afraid. He felt that Desolina might be annoyed and decided to speak to the old man the first time he met him. He did not have long to wait. Two days later he met Armanio on the road that leads to the house of Vacounine. The artist stopped and turning to him said abruptly: "You live in Lugano now, Signor Armanio?"

Armanio looked at him in embarrassment and answered: "No, Signor Artist. I still live in Tavesco, but I pass two or three days sometimes at the inn of the Windmill, which is not far from here."

Jean felt annoyed. He was convinced he would learn nothing from this crafty old man by these indirect questions, and he determined to go directly to the point.

"Why are you wandering about my house all the time?"

"I?" answered Armanio with an idiotic look. "But I go everywhere, no more in the neighborhood of your house than elsewhere."

"Very well," replied the painter rudely. "I will find means to keep you away."

Armanio looked at him. "Perhaps I go there without knowing it," he said

in a low tone. "I am all alone, I think of Giovanni, and Desolina is the only being in the world that reminds me of him. I will keep away from your house hereafter, Signor Artist."

For a moment Jean almost had a feeling of sympathy, but the ferocious hatred in the old man's eyes and vibrating in his hoarse voice, belied the words.

"You will do well," Jean answered shortly.

He was somewhat reassured. The loneliness and sorrow of the old man seemed to the artist a sufficient explanation for his conduct.

The next day Gennaro called on Jean. While he was always familiar and demonstrative, he knew how to keep his distance. With his Italian tact, he knew that he must not speak to Desolina so familiarly as he had done formerly. He nearly always called on Jean when he knew the latter was alone, and the young man received him with pleasure. He could not fail to be touched by this devotion which asked nothing in return.

Gennaro looked anxious; he spoke in an embarrassed way and did not look Jean full in the eye. Knowing that at such times the smuggler liked to be questioned, the artist said:

"One would think by your looks, my old Gennaro, that something is troubling you. Have the custom-house officers been making things unpleasant for you?"

"They?" replied Gennaro, shrugging his shoulders disdainfully. "Those poor devils? On the contrary, they have afforded me an infinite amount of amusement since the season opened." Then putting his hard hand on Jean's shoulder, he added: "It's about you that I'm worried."

Jean looked at him with astonishment and then with anxiety, for though he could not think of anything that menaced him, for a moment his heart beat faster.

"What is it?" he asked.

"It's about old Armanio."

"What have I to do with old Armanio or he with me?"

"Nothing. Only I think the old man is going crazy," replied the smuggler, gritting his teeth. "In his insanity he might strike at you or at the signora. He has been watching your house."

"I know it, and I've spoken to him about it," said Jean. "He seemed to me stupid and harmless."

Gennaro cast down his eyes and gave a long, low whistle. Then, with an expression of ferocity, he said: "It would be better if the old devil were dead."

"But what can the poor fellow do to me, Gennaro?"

"Anything that comes into his fool head, dear heart, and it will not be anything good for you."

The smuggler looked sharply at Jean. His affection, his anxiety, some vague apprehension of danger, troubled the artist.

"I came to give you some advice," continued Gennaro. "Why can't you go away for a few months? The old man is getting weaker every day. By summer he won't be able to walk any more or he will be dead, unless he is in the insane asylum."

"If he's so weak as all that he is not to be feared."

"Oh, I know you could crush him with a blow of your fist, but he will never attack you in front. Were he ten times as mad as he is, remember he belongs to a race that is accustomed to strike from behind. You don't want to expose the signora to danger?"

Jean recognized the fact that there might be some truth in what the man said. Besides, he was homesick, and it was necessary for him to return to Paris to arrange some business matters. But would it not make Desolina unhappy? He decided to speak to her about it at once.

She was in the garden, surrounded by roses, when he met her.

"You told me, the other night, that you would willingly accompany me wherever I went," he murmured. "Will you go with me to Paris?"

She gave an exclamation of delight.

"Oh, at once, if you wish it!" and then throwing her arms about the

young man's neck, she added: "I wanted to ask you that, but did not dare."

He was delighted at the pleasure which shone in the face of this beautiful human flower, but still somewhere in his mind there was a doubt, an uncertainty, something vague, as one may see a wild animal moving about in a dark cavern, but is unable to distinguish its form.

In Paris their life was delightful. The last trace of melancholy disappeared from the face of Desolina. With the ardor of a lover and the delight of a child Jean showed her about the great city, tragic in reality, though to her inexperienced eyes it had the aspect of a new world and a Paradise.

The Tessinese girl thought herself in a universe of joy. Then she guessed that the great city would give her more power to hold the love of Jean. There, in the Ticino, she feared to have to contend with the real life of her lover, that she would not bear comparison with the women of France. However, she soon learned her own value. She read it in the eyes of all the men and sometimes in the eyes of the women. Desolina felt sure of herself.

"I will keep him," she said to herself when they returned from the theater, or from a walk. She understood that she must neglect no detail; she closely observed her rivals; she was becoming civilized at a tremendous pace.

Jean was astonished, and Cormières, a less intuitive but more careful observer, remarked:

"The little fire-fly is getting along very well."

He had been shocked when Jean returned to Paris with the Tessinese woman. As for marrying her, he thought it sheer stupidity. "Love her if you like," he advised, "but always leave an opening to get away."

He believed at first that Desolina would never be faithful to Jean, and did not hesitate to say so.

"She simply cannot be, and, as a matter of fact, it would not be right for her to be. Such women are not made for one man only. When you tire of her, it would be absurd that this splendid beauty should be withdrawn from general circulation."

Desolina felt that he was her enemy, but that he was inconsistent. She did not commit the blunder of hating him, but whenever she met him she was natural and simple. He began to understand her character.

"I was mistaken," he acknowledged to Jean one evening. "Her character is not in accordance with her style of beauty. She will be faithful, more than faithful. Besides, she is becoming civilized with a rapidity that simply turns my head. Now, what was I afraid of for you? The savage. I was sure that you would not get out of that hole without receiving a knife thrust or committing some infamous act. Accident served you well: in getting smashed up the villain saved you some very bad business. Becoming civilized, the fire-fly will make your mésalliance comparatively inoffensive. You're in luck, and what is more, you don't deserve it."

Jean laughed joyously. "Why don't I deserve it? Because I am not worthy of Desolina? Who would be worthy of her? At least I made a tremendous effort to win her and am proud of that. Yes, I ran the risk of receiving or causing to be given a few knife thrusts; I mingled with the barbarians. Was not Desolina worth as much as anything that an explorer goes to find among the negroes or the Esquimaux? I claim that I did right. I might have been punished, yes. It is the history of all those who go out of their own narrow circle. If they fail, they bow to fate, but if they triumph, what a victory!"

"You have absolutely no sense of the fitness of things," remarked Cormières, shrugging his shoulders. "The truth is that you were mixed up with a lot of criminals and you dug a jewel out of a mess. Pure luck, nothing else. You nevertheless dirtied your hands by clasping those of Giovanni Preda and Gennaro Tagliamente. Do you want me to admire you for this?"

"No, old man," replied Jean, somewhat angrily, "I admit that Giovanni was of a low type, but still his declaration of war against society was clean cut; there may be something to admire in his courage. As for Gennaro, you will never understand that character; you see the worst of him when you look at him, but for greatness of heart—you understand what I mean by these words —have never met the equal of this scoundrel."

"Oh, I don't deny his good qualities!" cried Cormières, vehemently. "You can find plenty of them in the lowest quarters of Paris. I don't reproach you. My opinion is that an act is only bad under any circumstances when it hurts oneself or others. You got out of the scrape, you are happy and have done nothing to be blamed for. Everything is going splendidly. Is the bridge less rotten? Is there less danger in crossing it, simply because one individual has been able to do so? Well, let's drop the subject and hope that the dark powers which you have conquered for the nonce will never rise up against you in the future."

Jean passed the entire summer in Paris. The passionate love of the Tessinese woman held him enthralled. She seemed to adapt herself readily to a life that was simple, almost monotonous. If she could walk through a few streets every day, she was happy. She did not care to spend money, she was content to look at the jewels in the shop windows.

Autumn was approaching, and Jean and Desolina had to make arrangements for their marriage. All the legal formalities had been complied with, the priest of Tavesco having sent on the necessary papers of the Tessinese woman. It is just possible that there may have been some lurking doubt in the soul of Desolina that Jean would really ever marry her, for when, accompanied by him and Cormières, she left the Government office where she had been to sign her name, she was nearly suffocated by joy. Like all those of her class, she had an unbounded faith in officials bans.

"The devil!" said Cormières, when he saw that face, tragic with happiness, "she really takes life seriously."

She wanted to go to church and pray, and she remained there a half hour on her knees. All day she seemed to be somewhat delirious and in the evening when Jean left her, she murmured: "If you only knew, dear heart, how afraid I was of sin! Every day I felt that God might abandon me."

He held her a long time in his arms, and when he left her, dazed by the thought of his happiness, he wandered for a time aimlessly about the streets, when suddenly, and without warning, a dark spectre rose before him.

XVI

In the spectre Jean recognized Gennaro Tagliamente, and the surprise was not an agreeable one. In fact, he was irritated by the unexpected arrival of the smuggler.

"Eh, you were not expecting your friend," said the fierce Tessinese, seizing him by the arm. "Well, I was bored, for after you left I found no pleasure in anything, not even in fooling the custom-house officers. Then I said to myself: 'I will see my little one again, and that will satisfy me.' I took the train. It is a long trip, so long I thought I would never get here."

He seemed to avoid the eyes of Savigny. He had the same implacable, almost ferocious look that Jean had noticed so many times, and he felt the same strange fear that had come upon him just before he left Ticino.

He said coldly: "You should have notified me."

"Yes, I know, only you know that the art of writing and Gennaro are not good friends. Then, I thought you would be displeased when you got the letter; I was ashamed of myself. I said to myself: 'When he sees me face to face he will forgive me, his friend.' You're not angry, *carissimo*? I won't annoy you. I won't weigh any more upon you than a sparrow does upon the branch of an oak." His voice became

very soft, and in his eyes there was a look of deep friendship. The artist felt his annoyance vanish and he remembered all that this savage had done for him in that luminous, perfumed land.

"I am pleased to see you, my old Gennaro," he said in a friendly tone.

"Oh! I knew it; I recognized there your good heart," exclaimed the rascal. "You see, little one, I can never live without you again. You told me once that you could find work for me in Paris."

Jean remembered exactly what he had said. It did not occur to him for a moment that he should not carry out his contract, only he hated to have to do it *now*.

"Certainly," he answered in a voice that lacked enthusiasm. "What can you do and what do you want to do?"

"I like horses," replied Gennaro, "and I know them well. When I was twenty years old I took care of a stable."

"We will try to find something of that kind for you."

"Not right away," said the smuggler hastily. "I want to live a month or six weeks according to my taste. I have some good bank bills in my pocket, and a little vacation won't hurt me."

There was a false look in his eyes when he said this, and he twisted his hands, one into the other, until the joints of his fingers cracked.

"Just as you like. And where are you going tonight? Where is your luggage?"

"I followed the advice of a man from my part of the country. I left my trunk at the depot. I can get it as soon as I know where I am going to lodge." He seemed confused, and spoke in a very humble tone. "I would like to lodge near you—not to annoy you, dear heart, but only to be at your disposition."

Jean, very much perplexed, looked at the man. With his green, pointed hat, his rust-colored coat and knee-breeches, and his high boots, Gennaro did not inspire confidence. His face denoted a man who was capable of any violent act, cunning and unmoral. Where could he lodge him without attracting too much attention and exposing himself to annoyance? He remembered a hotel near by which was much frequented by artists and models.

"My old Gennaro," he said, "as you have not your trunk with you, it is not so easy to find a place for you. You must have some kind of a trade or profession. Shall I say that you are going to serve as a model for me?"

"You will say what you like. Let us go and get my room, and then you will show me some place where I can get a bite to eat."

Jean led his companion to the Hotel of the Rhône. A fat Southerner, with a face as oily as an olive and almost of the same color, met them at the door. He recognized Savigny.

"What can I do for you?" he said between two fits of coughing that sounded like the frying of an egg in a hot pan.

"This good fellow wants a room. As he is not acquainted in Paris, I recommend him."

"Oh, you recommend him, do you?" asked the owner of the Rhôme, and his look indicated that the recommendation was by no means superfluous. "What is he going to do in Paris?"

"You ought to have guessed it," replied the painter, smiling. "He is going to pose for me."

"All right. All models come from his country, so he'll probably succeed. Besides, he is under your protection and my hotel is open to him. How much does he want to pay?"

The price was agreed upon and Gennaro went to look at the room assigned to him, but as a matter of form only, for he would have been perfectly willing to sleep in a stable.

"We will be back later," said Savigny.

"'Later' doesn't exist here," replied the owner. "We never close."

Jean felt considerably relieved at having found a place where Gennaro could lodge. He would have been willing to give him a room in his own quarters, but he feared the criticism of Cor-

mières, and had perhaps some lurking superstition that the smuggler might be the harbinger of evil. He called a coachman and cried out to him: "*Alcide! Rue Royale.*"

Alcide kept a bar which was frequented by jockeys, stable-boys, horse trainers, Italian singers and Spanish guitar players as well as negroes who danced jigs or did the cakewalk.

When they entered, two little girls dressed in red were dancing a Spanish dance to the accompaniment of the music of the guitars. The smuggler was delighted. His eyes sparkled, and he began to hum the tune that the woman was singing.

"What will you eat?" asked Savigny. "There is ham, roast beef, anchovies, salt herrings, and every drink on earth."

"I'll take some bread, wine, herring, ham and gorgonzola cheese," cried the rascal joyously.

He ate horribly, his jaws cracking as he conveyed the food to them with his dirty hands. When he had satisfied his hunger Jean asked him: "What news from over there? Has Salvator cut open the priest yet?"

Gennaro emitted a roar of laughter which startled everyone in the place.

"The truth is, if anyone even so much as touched a hair of the priest's head, Salvator would kill him."

"And Panscri?"

"His six daughters are still in the marriage market. He regrets your absence. As for the Golden Pebble, the poor devil is still hunting for his mine, and the Shepherd of the Bees—well, he's the happiest of them all."

Jean paused for a moment to permit Gennaro to swallow several huge pieces of the cheese, and then remarked: "What has become of that old brute, Armanio?"

Gennaro shrugged his shoulders.

"He's completely off his head. I advised the syndic to put him in a cage; it wouldn't cost the community anything, for the old idiot has some property. But the syndic decided that he wasn't crazy. It will be a good thing when that old hog is in his coffin."

He emptied a tumbler of wine at a single gulp. When the bar closed and they were out on the street, the smuggler put his arms around Jean and pressed him to him, shouting: "If anyone ever lays the weight of his finger on you, he will never eat *polenta* again."

The following morning Jean did not dare present the smuggler to Desolina without notifying her in advance. He asked Gennaro to await him in the studio, where the presence of a man dressed in moss and punk was not surprising. The smuggler found the place very agreeable as a smoking-room and was much interested in the plaster casts.

"Take your time," he said. "I've got a whole pocketful of cigars."

The artist found Desolina in a condition of inexpressible happiness; the beauty of this exquisite creature had become as innocent, as quiet and as placid as that of a child. He looked at her in ecstasy, almost ashamed that such a wonderful work of nature was to belong to one so little worthy as himself. For a long time he did not speak of Gennaro, but finally he said:

"I have a little piece of news for you, dear."

Desolina, by nature, or perhaps on account of the abominable life which she had led for so many years, did not like "news." Her dream was that nothing should ever change, that her present life should never be interrupted by any event.

"Not bad news, I hope, sweetheart," she said.

"Bad, no. We have received a visit from over there—that big fool, Gennaro."

"He's in Paris!" she exclaimed.

"Yes."

She had no time to hide her emotion. It was a storm. Her face became as pale as death and her hands, which she lifted up to heaven, trembled violently. He seized her in his arms and questioned her anxiously. At last, with a feigned smile she said:

"Oh! it was nothing. I was fright-

ened. Everything that comes from there hurts me, just as if *he* were still living."

Although surprised at the excess of this emotion, he understood it. Had he not felt something of the kind himself? He asked her tenderly: "It would be better then for you not to see him at all?"

"Why not?" she asked with a more natural smile. "It was only the surprise that agitated me. I have nothing against Gennaro—quite the contrary. He is your friend, he did everything for us that it was possible for a man to do. I am certain that I shall be pleased to see him."

Her pallor had disappeared, but there was still a look of anxiety in her eyes. He decided to take her to the studio. Gennaro was there, pouring forth smoke like a volcano. He bowed respectfully to Desolina.

"Well, Signor Gennaro," she said, "what news do you bring us from the country?"

"Nothing, Signora. All the houses are still standing in the same places—old Ferrari is dead—the Signora Salvator often speaks about you."

He chatted on, and she listened to him with apparent indifference. But when Jean turned away for a moment, Gennaro and Desolina exchanged strange looks. That of the man was sombre, that of the young woman anxiously questioning.

If Jean had hesitated to announce to Desolina the arrival of the smuggler, he hesitated much more when he was compelled to tell Cormières. Before announcing the fact to his friend, he persuaded Gennaro to change his costume for one more suited to the city. The smuggler did not object; he seemed to understand that in Paris one must wear clothes quite different from those which are suitable to Tavesco. He looked clumsy in his dark blue suit and black slouch hat, but at least the street boys did not run after him and make fun of him.

Cormières at first did not recognize this huge animal in his new clothes. He smiled at Gennaro, whom he knew did not understand a word of French, and talked to Jean in this language. He offered the smuggler a glass of brandy and asked Jean:

"What did he come to Paris for?"

"Nothing. He was simply boring himself out there."

Cormières examined the smuggler attentively, but if the latter had anything to hide, it was certainly not the Frenchman who would have found it out. Gennaro understood the look and said to Jean, with a smile:

"Your friend has no confidence in me. I don't care, dear heart, I pardon him for your sake." He made a politely disdainful gesture, like a very strong man who finds himself in the presence of one who is very weak.

"He despises me," said Cormières, "and he is right. What could I do, I won't say among barbarians, but even in the age of Louis XIII., against a man like that? I wouldn't weigh an ounce. I understand, in a way, how men like him despise us. They are strong, mentally and physically, brutally strong; but the progress of modern society tends to eliminate them. What can you do with these creatures who are quick, energetic, cunning and have many other admirable qualities? They can never adapt themselves, and they must go down." He remained thoughtful for a moment, watching the smoke of his cigarettte, and then continued: "You say, Jean, that he came here only to see you?"

"He says so."

"It is not that I think him incapable of it. I admit the perfect sincerity of the friendships of these people, as well as the strength of their hatreds. For them everything is either black or white. Still, his presence here makes me uneasy."

XVII

Since the arrival of the smuggler, Desolina seemed to have lost the childish happiness she had displayed since she had been in Paris. She would suddenly turn pale, apparently without any reason; she would start at the slightest

sound, and when she spoke to Jean her voice had a strained note in it which worried him. He first believed, or rather forced himself to believe, that this change in her had been brought about solely by the fact that the arrival of Gennaro had renewed bitter memories of the past. He began to be suspicious; yet what ground was there for any possible suspicion? The idea of a secret between Gennaro and Desolina was absurd. He knew that his fiancée and the smuggler had never been alone together for a moment. In spite of all he began to watch the gestures, to analyze the words and follow the movements of the Tessinese woman. This was not difficult, as Desolina never went out alone. She never even went out with the old woman who served her as maid. It was evident that she had no means of communication with the smuggler. Jean confided his anxiety to Philippe Cormières, who listened to him very attentively.

"I agree with you," he said. "I don't believe that Desolina has any communication with the smuggler."

"Well, what then?"

"Simply that we are getting back to the savage life."

"You're always singing the same song," exclaimed Savigny, with a note of anger in his voice, "but that explains nothing. What interest do you suppose Gennaro can have in me if he has not some secret understanding with Desolina?"

"I don't know. You can't deny that the appearance of this savage mountaineer has produced a strange change in the woman you love. This is the unknown quantity, *x*, and neither you nor I can find the solution. There is one thing of which you may rest assured, and that is that if these two are conspiring, it is not *against you.*"

"But what in the name of heaven could they do *for* me!" exclaimed Jean impatiently. "Desolina's free. There is not a human being in the world who could threaten her."

"I am not saying that there is anything that the smuggler can do for you, nor even that he is thinking of anything of the kind; I only say it's impossible that he should do anything detrimental to your happiness. If with the fire-fly it is not simply the question of evoking the past, we must eliminate all possibility of any danger to you from that source in any event. That gives us a chance to look further once more. Now, if you had an enemy, everything would be clear, but Giovanni being dead this hypothesis falls."

Jean's lips tightened and he remained thoughtful for some minutes. At first he wished to keep to himself the suspicion which had arisen within him, but finally he decided to tell his friend.

"I have an enemy," he said in a low voice, "but it is really absurd to think about him. How could a poor, decrepit, stupid individual in Ticino do me any harm?"

"You had not spoken to me about that," said Philippe, slowly. "Do you mean the old brute who watched Desolina?"

"Yes."

"Did he do anything to show his hostility?"

"At Lugano he was continually watching our house, and Gennaro asserted that he had some bad motive in doing so. Then, on her account——"

He stopped, somewhat embarrassed. Philippe smoked quietly for a while.

"Perhaps we are on the wrong track, but we have no other clue. As a matter of fact, did Gennaro seem to be afraid that the old man would commit some act of violence?"

"The act of one who is insane."

"Then we have only two plans to follow. Either have Gennaro shadowed by a detective or ask him frankly what he is doing."

"And which do you yourself think the better plan?"

"Have him shadowed."

Jean followed this advice. During a week he received daily a report from the detective agency. He ascertained that the Tessinese wandered about the streets and that he followed Jean and Desolina at a distance whenever they

went out, appearing to watch them. All this indicated that there was something, but still gave no certain clue to the man's actions. Desolina continued to look anxious and unhappy. Finally, in sheer desperation the artist determined to demand of Gennaro the motive of his conduct.

One evening he took the smuggler to the barroom of Alcide. Gennaro liked this place; he had gone there three or four times alone and made some acquaintances. Jean waited until the man had had several drinks, and then, looking him square in the eyes, said:

"Gennaro, why have you not told me the truth?"

The smuggler never flinched. "And in what have I not told you the truth?" he asked quietly.

"You had a motive for coming to Paris other than the one you told me."

Gennaro began to hum a tune which the old Spanish woman was playing on her guitar, and finally said: "Dear heart, I had no other motive."

Jean looked at his impenetrable face, with its cunning lips and crafty eyes. He began to understand that the more questions he asked, the more readily the other would dupe him. A straight attack was the only way.

"Armanio is in Paris!" he exclaimed.

The face of the Tessinese showed intense interest.

"You have seen him?" he inquired excitedly.

"No, but I know—*we* know that he is here."

Gennaro leaned back in his chair and replied in a melancholy, far-off tone: "I didn't know it. By my bones, dear one, I didn't know it. Tell me what you know about it and I will catch the old hog."

"Gennaro!" exclaimed Jean with violence. "Do you dare to look me in the face and tell me that you didn't know it?"

"May this glass of wine poison me," returned the smuggler placidly, "if I know anything about it."

He seemed to be telling the truth. In any event, if he lied it would be absolutely impossible to find it out. Jean looked at him entreatingly.

"Gennaro, I beg of you, tell me the truth. Is he in Paris?"

An expression of indescribable tenderness passed over the savage face. "Believe me, *carissimo*, I know absolutely nothing about it."

This reply ended the conversation. Later he again questioned Desolina, but she answered:

"I have told you, dear, that it was the coming of Gennaro that worried me—I am afraid—I will not be happy until we are married."

"But," insisted Jean, "did he tell you anything? Did he bring you any news?"

"He told me nothing, and I have received no news from anyone." She answered so sadly that he feared to put any more questions, and he was persuaded that she was only suffering from vague fears.

"Would you like to have Gennaro go back?"

"No!" she said excitedly. "His departure would do no good. Only let the day of our marriage come and I will believe that God is with us."

That day was not far away, and Jean resigned himself to await its coming like a fatalist. He told this to Cormières, and the artist approved of it.

"Either there is nothing at all to fear and all this will pass away like a bad dream, or there is something and it is certain that you won't find it out. I am now inclined to believe that there is nothing real; still, the situation is an annoying one for you."

An anxious week passed. Desolina appeared to become more worried and nervous as the date of the marriage approached. She seemed to be continually on the watch. Her face showed an extraordinary weariness. Every now and then her hands would tremble and when Jean spoke to her she appeared distrait and did not seem to hear. After they had taken a short walk she was very tired and sometimes went to sleep. On the other hand, she did not sleep at night. The presence of

Gennaro did not seem to worry her. When she met him in Jean's studio, she scarcely looked at him or listened to him. The smuggler always showed the same respect and deference; he seemed to wish to emphasize the fact that he appreciated the social distance between them.

"He is getting civilized," remarked Cormières one day, "but only on the surface. You can't change the character of these people."

The day of the marriage arrived. It was one of those wonderful days when all nature seems young and fresh and healthy. Jean was intensely happy; all the agony of the past seemed to be blotted out forever in one tremendous flood of joy. He remembered the night of the fire-flies, the meeting at the fountain, the day of the first kiss, the night of the death of Giovanni, the boat of the Shepherd of the Bees and all these months of anxious waiting in Paris. And now he was to receive his reward.

Just as he was about to leave his studio to meet his fiancée he received a telegram. It was from Gennaro. He excused himself from being present at the marriage on the ground that his presence might bring up to Desolina unpleasant memories of the past. Jean was pleased at this delicacy, and appreciated it. He found Desolina more nervous than usual, more frightened. When the painter appeared she arose and threw her beautiful arms about his neck, and it seemed as if she could not let him go.

"My darling!" he exclaimed. "Is this strange sorrow never going to end?"

"Oh, yes," she cried passionately, "in a few moments, as soon as God has accepted me."

Cormières was at the church with a sculptor who was one of his friends, and there were two women, old Francesca, the maid of Desolina, and the owner of the house. When she came before the mayor, Desolina was cold, almost indifferent; but as soon as she entered the church she seemed about to faint. She passed her hand over her eyes and then entered quickly. The organ rolled out its torrent of music, which sounded strange and pathetic in this empty church.

The transformation which took place in Desolina was extraordinary; joy, gratitude radiated from her beautiful face. The ceremony concluded, she knelt in prayer for some moments and then, rising, turned to Jean and putting her hands in his, murmured:

"Now, my own, I am happy. God has accepted me."

XVIII

When Jean awoke the next morning, Desolina was still asleep. So many wearying and sleepless nights, so many emotions, had exhausted her. She was sleeping soundly. He looked at her for a long time. It is a well-known fact that very few women, however beautiful they may appear when awake, appear the same when they are asleep. The features seem to relax, the contour of the face becomes vague, neutral, impersonal and sometimes stupid; wrinkles and defects are more easily seen.

Desolina *could* sleep. Her complexion was like white ivory, lightly touched with the pink of a southern sunset; her mouth, like that of Aphrodite, could open slightly and still be beautiful. Silently he kissed her dark hair and then took up the daily papers which old Francesco had placed upon the table. He glanced over them carelessly, for he cared little what might have happened to the world during the last twenty-four hours. Suddenly his eye fell upon an article; he read a few lines and shivered from head to foot. An indescribable feeling of fear and horror arose within him. He could not believe his eyes. He read it over and over again, spelling the words out like a child who has just learned the alphabet. This was the article:

Yesterday there was found in the Seine, at Saint-Cloud, the corpse of an old man with white hair and beard. Judging from

the condition of the body, it must have been in the water about a week. He was dressed in an Italian costume, velveteen coat and trousers, laced boots of a very coarse kind, and brown cotton stockings. On his shirt were found the initials A. P. In the pockets of his coat were found a portfolio containing several bank bills, French and Swiss, and documents establishing his identity as Armanio Palmieri, from Tavesco, in the Ticino. The corpse was carried to the morgue. There were no marks of violence upon the body to suggest a crime, and it was more probably an accident than a suicide.

A feeling of unbearable agony seemed to wrench every nerve in the artist's body. He could hear the blood surging from his heart to his brain. As in a dream, a thousand occurrences passed before him, not haphazard, but in order, logically. The death of Giovanni Preda, the presence of Armanio at the lake, the fright and anxiety of Desolina, the affectionate but ferocious threats of Gennaro and his peculiar manner, were now explained, were all very clear. At the same time he could see the sarcastic smile of his friend, Philippe Cormières, and hear him say: "The savages, the savages."

For a quarter of an hour he was plunged into a sort of stupor, and then he arose and went back to the bedroom. Desolina was still sleeping, and he looked at her with a mingled sentiment of love and terror.

"I will not awaken her," he said to himself. "Let her sleep and rest."

He felt an infinite pity for her, for he knew now that she had suffered more than he had ever dreamed of. He would not admit to himself that she could be cruel; she was half savage and had lived in a frightful environment. Besides, he did not yet know whether she had had anything to do, directly or indirectly, with these dramas: only, he suspected. He sat down beside her and dropped his head upon the bed; he could not awaken her nor would he leave her. Perhaps, sub-consciously, she felt a premonition; she moved, murmured a few, indistinct words, and opened her glorious eyes. Instantly she guessed that some great misfortune had come upon him, and became very pale. She stammered: "What is the matter, *caro mio?*"

Then the pity of Jean became so intense that the tears rose to his eyes, and she, frightened, bounded up.

"What is it? You must tell me! I must know."

Perhaps if he had been able to go away then he would have kept the secret, but the little hands of Desolina had seized his with a grip which he could not shake off. Then tremblingly, he whispered:

"Desolina, you knew all the time that Gennaro had killed Giovanni!"

From the bottom of his heart he hoped that she would say no, but she did not answer. Then he repeated, very slowly, over and over:

"You knew it—you knew it."

She had bowed her head and was sobbing. For a long time neither of them could say anything, but finally she spoke.

"I knew it," she said, "but I knew it only——"

But he interrupted her, asking huskily: "But he told you he would do it?"

She shook her head: "He never told me anything. I guessed it."

He was sure she was not lying, and he felt somewhat relieved. He suddenly remembered how much he himself had wished for the death of Giovanni Preda—and then that death, over there in the mountains, seemed to him less culpable than the other one. He picked up the paper which he had dropped upon the floor, and unfolding it remarked:

"Did you know of the death of Armanio?"

She tore the paper from his hand and read the article excitedly.

"I did not know it," she murmured, but there was a shadow of untruth in her eyes when she said this. A moment later, however, she confessed.

"I didn't know he was dead," she sobbed, "but I knew why Gennaro came here."

"Then why did you not tell me?" he cried despairingly. "We might have saved the life of this miserable wretch."

She shrugged her shoulders, while her eyes filled with tears.

"Yes, dear heart, we could have saved him, but then he would not have missed taking your life or mine; I did not fear for my own, but for yours."

There was a long silence. Jean felt himself enveloped in an atmosphere of crime. Centuries of civilization seemed to separate him from this tender, loyal, devoted woman whom he worshiped. Was she guilty? He did not know. Surely her only complicity had been silence; she had done nothing but hold her tongue. But, *she had known,* and this was terrible. He wanted to think it over calmly, quietly, but could not. His ideas ran hither and thither like a herd of panic-stricken cattle; they caused him an actual physical pain.

It was impossible for him to stay there; an invincible force pushed him out; he felt that for many hours he could have nothing more to say to his wife. He arose and whispered:

"Au revoir, Desolina."

She started violently and threw herself upon him, pressing him frantically in her arms.

"Don't leave me alone, dear, I will be so cold and so afraid."

He looked with profound pity into those beautiful eyes—those savage eyes. He tried to return her embrace, but he was distracted, absent-minded.

"So be it then," he said softly. "We will go together and find Gennaro."

She began to tremble, and made a movement of repulsion. Nevertheless, she understood that this interview was inevitable. She did not protest, but dressed quickly. When they were in the street, however, she said: "Dear heart, do not be too harsh. Gennaro did it all for love of you."

These words seemed to him abominable. He felt that his soul was responsible for the death of these two men. He asked himself whether in truth the real assassin were not himself, for without him Giovanni Preda and Armanio Palmieri would still be living.

Gennaro did not manifest the slightest emotion when Jean, very pale, and Desolina, trembling in every limb, appeared before him.

"I want to speak with you, Gennaro," the artist said to him.

The smuggler looked significantly around his little room, which was separated from others only by very thin partitions. He asked quickly:

"Nothing serious, I hope. If it is, it would be better to go to the studio—here our neighbors can overhear everything we say."

"Well, then, let us go back to the studio."

When they reached the room, Jean looked at Gennaro for a long time in silence. His throat was parched, his larynx was paralyzed; he stood before the smuggler, distressed, but without indignation or anger. Finally he cried hoarsely:

"Why have you charged my conscience with the death of these two men? Who gave you the right to kill on my account?"

Gennaro lifted his shoulders slowly. He was a little pale, his lips were drawn in but in his eyes there was an expression of infinite tenderness and devotion. The eyes admitted the truth of the charge, but his tongue lied without a tremor.

"What makes you think that I ever killed anybody? A stone killed Giovanni, and as for the other man, I don't know who you are talking about."

"You pushed one into the river as you hurled the stone at the other!"

"And who on earth has fallen into the river?" asked Gennaro gravely.

This hypocrisy irritated Jean. He cried: "It is my duty to denounce you to justice!"

The savage rose to his feet and, looking fixedly at him, said in a voice that had something very noble in it: "You know that if I killed ten men you would not betray me, your friend, any more than I would betray you, but I swear to you that I have killed no one." He continued to look Savigny square in the eyes, while a tender irony played about his lips. Then he added pityingly: "Why do you worry? The mountain

did a good work—the death of Giovanni was a good thing for the whole world with the exception of an old fool, who remembers him. So be happy, my little one." Then with a gesture he indicated Desolina: "This child loves you to the death, and the life of your friend also belongs to you."

There was a long, terrible silence. Jean felt that no anger, no supplication, would drag a confession from this strong man. Of these horrible occurrences of which he was as sure as he was of his own existence, neither he nor anyone else would ever have any proof. Was it not better so? In view of the uncertainty, of the absence of positive proof, could he not salve his conscience with the thought that possibly these things had not occurred? But the thought angered him. He hated himself as much as if he had committed these crimes personally. He exclaimed:

"Wretch! Do you think if I told of your mysterious arrival in Paris that the Court would doubt for a moment that it was you who assassinated Armanio?"

"What! Is Armanio dead?" asked Gennaro quietly. "So much the better for you, *caro mio,* for he was crazy enough to use his knife on you or the signora at the first opportunity. This is good news; I am pleased to hear it."

"If at least you would only acknowledge it!" screamed the young man, losing all control of himself. "Your lies render this murder all the more horrible."

"If I acknowledged it, I would acknowledge a falsehood," replied the smuggler calmly.

Jean was suffocating; he tore off his cravat and collar and in a delirium of disgust paced back and forth across the floor of his studio, swearing every oath he knew. Then he fell into an armchair and, breaking down, began to cry like a child.

Desolina threw herself upon him and for a long time, filled with an immense compassion for each other, they mingled their tears, while Gennaro, with an expression of sorrow, but not the least indication of regret, stood leaning against the wall and looking at them.

When Jean arose, he was completely exhausted. He put on his collar and cravat and washed his face. Then he turned to Gennaro and said: "I can never, never see you again!"

"You will see me later," said the Tessinese, shrugging his shoulders. "You have too great a heart to abandon the best friend you ever had."

He extended his hand and the painter, thinking that probably it was for the last time, did not refuse to take it.

When they returned to their lodgings, he said to Desolina: "Would it be all the same to you dear, if we left Europe?"

"My life is with you, wherever you are," she answered softly, "and I will be happy wherever you are."

They said nothing further that day. She understood that he needed silence. He acted like a man who had been stunned. He would pace about the studio, stop and gaze at an old sketch or a statue as if he had never seen them before and wonder how they came there. He wandered mechanically, and when the thought of the present condition arose within him from time to time, he would say to himself, "How can I live my life in the future after *that* has happened?"

Then he would sit down and plan out voyages to the ends of the earth, but the thought would always come back, importunate, menacing, like the fall of a heavy weight. On one side of his life he saw hope, and desire, to love and to be happy with Desolina. On the other side he saw these dead men whose wraiths darkened his present and his future. Would they always weigh upon him, or would he forget them in future years? In the meantime, how could he sleep? And now his great love seemed to him very sorrowful, sad as the crushed body of Giovanni, as the corpse of Armanio, floating in the muddy waters of the Seine.

"This is absurd!" he would say to himself. "I have done nothing nor de-

sired it. It was accident, pure accident, so far as I am concerned."

In a vague way this thought at times consoled him. Then, the roar of a passing trolley car, the shouting of a crowd in the street, or even the buzzing of a fly, would frighten him. Always these words came to him: "They were killed for me!" Oh, yes, but it was really he who had killed. He had killed because he loved. By his presence alone he had committed the crimes. Could he forget where he was, with whom he was living? He pressed his forehead against the cold window glass and looked out. People seemed to be floating along the streets like flocks of swallows skimming over the surface of the river. He envied all of these people, even those who were old and infirm and sickly. The weather was beautiful and the sun shone brilliantly. Then suddenly everything seemed to him dead and decaying; a hideous misery seemed to rise from these bodies; they were all perishing, dying. How did they not understand that death was watching them, awaiting them? Every step they took was toward the grave, toward the end.

There seemed nothing left to him but flight; fast moving trains and boats, landscapes flying rapidly by. Why not? Why should he pass a terrible night here? Should he find no relief, he could always return. Even the preparations for the voyage would serve to divert his mind.

He hesitated no longer, but turned to Desolina and said: "We leave this evening, Desolina. Get ready everything that we need for a long voyage."

She was not astonished. She dared not put her arms about his neck, but she looked at him so humbly and so sweetly that he was compelled to turn away in order that she might not see his emotion. He felt that she was suffering as much as he, but with this difference, that she suffered for him and not for herself.

The preparations for departure took up his mind. He scarcely ate anything, but was occupied in calculation, consulting timetables and picking out such clothing as they might need. Thus the hours flew by. They were ready two hours before the time of departure. Then he turned to Desolina and said: "I must go and see Philippe!"

He did not really know what he would say to him, for he could not speak to him of Gennaro and the dead man. For that reason he would have preferred to leave without seeing his friend, but this was impossible. So he went there, accompanied by Desolina, who he felt would not on that day consent to leave him for a moment.

His interview with Philippe was very embarrassing. The latter suspected nothing, and the idea of a honeymoon trip did not surprise him. He talked as he always did, intelligently and without enthusiasm. Jean felt so badly that he was pleased when he heard the clock strike.

"Adieu, Philippe," he said softly. "Don't forget me."

"There are no reasons why I should forget you, but there will be a hundred daily why you should cease to think of me. Never mind, our friendship in the past has brought no pain to either of us."

"Philippe," exclaimed Jean warmly, "I will never change so far as you are concerned."

Philippe smiled coldly. "What does truth matter? Your formula of saying good-bye is better than mine, anyway."

"How is it possible that he did not understand?" thought Jean as he entered his carriage. "Did he mistake our looks of agony for those of happiness?"

He felt appeased. He remembered that after all, remorse is only a reflex action: the rebounding of the act against the actor. So that, when the first impression of horror had passed away, a sharp memory of this act which was not his, would grow dim to ultimate effacement.

They reached the station, and after a few necessary preparations took their places in their private compartment. There was a glare of electric lights, a confused scene of people running hither

and thither, then the giant machine, like a cannon ball, launched them into space.

Jean sighed happily, as he held Desolina in his arms. With an emotion that was due more to kindness of heart than love, he whispered: "We are going to be happy, sweetheart!" And it seemed to him that in the far country whither they were going he would find the happiness he had so long sought, and of which he had so many times doubted.

The whirr of wheels, the clatter and clash of the swiftly moving train seemed to drown all the evil thoughts of the past. A great breath of felicity swept over them. He sealed it upon her lips with one long kiss, and seemed to hear a whisper from heaven: "Thou art not guilty!"

* * *

PLACING THE RESPONSIBILITY

"AND what will become of the children, Elsie, when we get a divorce?"

"Why, you'll take them, of course. You're the guilty one."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

CORRECT

TEACHER—I have explained to you, children, what the fabrics we wear are made of. Now, Johnnie, tell me what your suit is made of.

JOHNNIE—Father's old trousers.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

BREAKING IT GENTLY

"DOCTOR, my poor husband is very ill, is he not?"

"Yes, madame."

"Please, doctor, when you are sure that there is no hope left, let me know, but in such a way that I won't understand."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

* * *

IN THE SWISS MOUNTAINS

"ETHEL, that awfully handsome guide kissed me a moment ago. Do you think I ought to deduct something from his pay, or add to it?"—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

LOTTERY AND LOVE

BY EMILIA PARDO BAZAN

THE story of my marriage, did you say? All right! It was rather extraordinary. One cold December day, years ago, a young beggar girl standing at the door of a café, sold me a lottery ticket. She was a slender slip of a girl, with a dark tangle of curls and a dirty, ragged shawl thrown over her shoulders. I gave her about three times the value of the ticket and she thanked me humbly, with a sweet smile of infinite charm.

"You will draw the prize," she declared, with the clear, ingratiating accent of the girls of Madrid.

"Are you sure?" I asked jokingly, while I slipped the ticket into the pocket of my overcoat.

"Well, I guess I am sure! Why, its number is 1,420, and that stands for my age exactly—fourteen years and twenty days. You are bound to win."

"Well, little girl," I answered, "don't worry. If I do win the prize I shall go halves with you."

An expression of joy spread over her thin little face, so confident was she of the future. She clutched my sleeve and exclaimed:

"Ah, Señorito, give me the number and street of your house. Please, Señorito! It will only be a few days now before we can get our money."

With some misgivings I gave her my name and address, but in half an hour, after a brisk walk, I had quite forgotten the incident.

A few days later it was forcibly recalled to me. I was lounging in my room, lazily listening to the incoherent shouting of the newsboys in the street, when all at once I discovered that they were calling out the lottery returns. I sent my man at once to get a paper. The first thing that greeted my eyes, as I opened it, was the number which had drawn the first prize. I thought that I was dreaming, but I was not. There was no doubt of it. There it stood in large black characters: "1,420," the age of the little ticket seller and my number. Those four printed figures represented many thousand dollars, and as I suddenly realized the fact, I began to tremble all over.

I may say to my own credit that it never even occurred to me to break my promise to the little girl. She had brought me luck; had been my mascot. Besides, I considered her a partner in a business transaction.

Suddenly I was seized with a keen desire to feel that blessed ticket with my own hands. I remembered perfectly that it was a cold day when I bought it and that I had slipped it into the outside pocket of my overcoat so I need not trouble to unfasten it. I made a bee line for my coat, which was hanging in the closet, and feverishly dived into every pocket, but the ticket was nowhere to be found. I called my man savagely and asked him if he had shaken the coat out of the window. Yes, he had beaten and shaken it, but nothing had fallen out, he was quite sure. I looked him searchingly in the face, but he seemed the incarnation of honesty. During the five years he had been in my service, he had never committed the least misdemeanor, and I felt that I must keep to myself the many things that I wished to say about the disappearance of that ticket. I already despaired of finding it, but nevertheless I lighted a taper and began a systematic search of every dark corner in my room. I looked through my closets, sifted the contents of the waste-paper basket and turned over the papers in my desk. All was in

vain. I could not find the least trace of the ticket.

Towards evening, as I was stretched out in my armchair, smoking quietly and trying to make the best of my horrible disappointment, there was a short imperative ring at the door. An altercation followed, and the quick, sharp words of someone who insisted upon coming in sounded up the stairway. The door of my study was burst open and the little girl ticket-seller, excited and weeping with joy, rushed up to me.

"Señorito," she said, "what did I tell you? Was I not right? You see, we have won the prize!"

I had thought that I had already passed through the worst of the affair, but I was mistaken, for I was not to be alone in my disappointment. It was too cruel. There I stood, stammering like a criminal, trying to explain to the child the loss of the ticket, how we had looked for it everywhere, that it could not be found and that her hopes must be disappointed. But I only saw her eyes fill with tears, and she said, with a quick shrug of her shoulders:

"By our dear Virgin, Señorito, neither you nor I were born to be millionaires—that's all!"

How could I reward such absolute confidence and disinterestedness? How could I make amends and make good my debt to her? For I was her debtor. Remorse for my carelessness and sympathy for my plucky little fellow-sufferer resulted in a conviction of responsibility for her. This feeling weighed so heavily upon me, that I took her into my home, supported her, educated her—and finally married her. But the most extraordinary part of my tale is that we are happy.

* * *

OVERHEARD ON THE ROOF GARDEN

SHE—That's a beautiful watch! How much did it cost you?
HE—Six months in jail.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

* * *

MORE WAYS THAN ONE

"LOOK at that couple over there. What red cheeks the woman has!"
"They're painted."
"But what a red nose he has."
"That's painted, too, but not in the same way."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende Blätter."*

* * *

AN ACCIDENT

BYSTANDER—Come, cheer up, old man. You may not be so badly hurt after all!
VICTIM—How can I tell how badly hurt I am until after I have seen my lawyer?—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

THE BAYADÈRE

BY MAURUS JOKAI

WHITHER have the beautiful poetic scenes of the days of warfare vanished? Everything tends toward uniformity; all Europe wears the black dress coat and high silk hat.

In former times there were events from which pictures could be made; for instance, when the Sultan set forth for war with his bands of spahis and Janizaries. Every costume sparkled and glittered. Every one wore the magnificent girdle which his beloved had made; pearls were fastened in the turbans, and heron feathers waved in the wind, while the trappings of the noble steeds swept the ground, and every lance was adorned with a ribbon of a different color. This brilliant army was confronted by the Hungarian troops—heroes sparkling with gold and silver, their richly embroidered, heavy velvet cloaks fluttering in the breeze like wings as they rode, and their coats of mail, decked with silver stars and steel points, shining in the sunlight; and who could have counted the thousands of coats of arms of noble houses upon their shields?

Today everything is different. Hundreds of thousands of short blouses are made according to one pattern at Stamboul, without braid, ornament, or gems, and the worthy champions must wear them whether they fit or not. Two hostile camps are like two huge forests; one is a palm grove, the other a pinewood, and no one tree can be distinguished from another. Science has taken the place of poetry; engineers decide the fate of battles, not the courage of the soldiers.

It must have presented a strange spectacle to foreign eyes that, when oppressed Islam cried out a little, at the brief exclamation of pain—this occurred only a few years ago—hordes of the most varied and diverse appearance rushed from all directions to defend the Prophet; figures never dreamed of, with strange, old-fashioned weapons, in garments that seemed to belong to another world and probably dated from the time of the Crusades, and with battleaxes and maces meant to shatter the heavy armor and helmets of the Frank knights. Many years have passed since that time, most noble Paladins!

The Franks wore mail no longer; gunpowder had made giants and dwarfs equal. The Franks did not come to Stamboul to gain the Holy Sepulchre; they came rather to defend it against a new and powerful foe, a foe that in the time of Richard Coeur de Lion, was not yet reckoned among the nations. But what mirth was excited when the famous Amazon, Kara-Guy, led her band of horsemen, the half ragged, but magnificent Kurds, along the palace front! This woman bestrode a horse and led bearded men to battle.

II

"WHO are you, swaying lily? Where did you spring from on this bloody battlefield? A white lily on this crimson soil?"

"I am the Bayadère," the girl, lowering her eyes, answered the knight. "I am the desert flower, born of the rain and the sunshine, who knows neither father nor mother. I am she who sings beneath your window; if you wake, I sing of what pleases you, love and battles. I am she who dances before you when you wish to be amused, and who, at your desire, twines garlands around your brow. I am she who makes your

coffee, saddles your horse, cleans your sword, loads your pistols, washes your linen. I am she who, at night, will sleep at your feet before the entrance of your tent, who will kiss your hand and wet it with burning tears if you kindly extend it to her. I am she who will ride beside you, on a swift horse when you go into battle, who will swing a sword by your side, double your thrusts as if you had four hands, receive the stroke aimed at you, and whisper your name while dying. I am the Bayadère—take me! I will be a faithful slave to the end. If you are sorrowful, I will cheer you; I will starve to feed you; I will watch that your slumber may be undisturbed. If you have a wife, I will serve her faithfully; if you have a sweetheart, I will bring her news of you; if you have neither wife nor sweetheart, I will be your slave. If you kiss me, you will find a smile on my face; if you beat me, I shall also smile. Take the Bayadère!"

The youth seized the Bayadère's hand, led her into his tent, bade her sit by his side, and rejoiced that such beautiful white blossoms bloomed on bloody battlefields.

III

THE battle trumpets pealed, the devils of war and murder seized upon the nations; men and animals were intoxicated. The horse was even more eager for battle than his master; but fiercer still were the glistening bullets that fell among the combatants.

How can living man, in whose veins the hot blood flows, fail to become mad with enthusiasm, when he hears the blare of the trumpets, the whistling of swords?

There, on yonder plain, along the bank of the blue river, the conflict was going on; it was beautiful to see from the hilltop how the square gradually became a triangle; then was swept away to half its size by the hostile bullets. From the opposite side came a cloud of dust, in which appeared the tips of the standards, and the blades of swords. A body of cavalry was rushing upon the decimated square.

On dashed the riders; the manes of the horses floated in the wind, their hoofs struck showers of sparks, sabers whistled through the air. The tops of glittering helmets flashed before the assailants; a triple row of bayonets menaced the foe.

On the right wing rode two figures, flying with the tempest. Brave Saif and beautiful Nuhamil, the Bayadère sword bearer. They looked constantly at each other, thinking: "We will always remain together."

"When you fight, I will fight, too; when you conquer, I will conquer, too; when you die, I will die, too."

The drums beat; the soldiers in the square, which had been cut diagonally into a triangle, fired three times—a triple murderous crash.

A triple death-cry answered from the ranks of the assailants. Many a brave warrior fell lifeless on the ground; many a noble horse dashed riderless from the battlefield.

Saif and Nuhamil fell side by side. At the first volley Saif cried:

"Farewell, victory and fame!"

At the second: "Farewell, beautiful Bayadère!"

At the third: "Farewell, beautiful life!"

Fame and life had instantly abandoned him; only the Bayadère remained by his side. She took him in her arms, pressed her hand upon his gaping wounds, and protected him with her own delicate body, that the flying steeds of fallen heroes might not trample upon him.

The roar of battle grew more distant and then drew nearer; wild, frantic throngs fought madly together—now one, now the other held the field. Wounded men with mangled limbs and yawning wounds pleaded vainly for a drink of water, one last thrust of the bayonet. In their last agonies they vainly sighed to God, vainly gazed toward heaven, vainly kissed the earth; neither heaven nor earth heeded them.

Only one wounded man found a consoling breast to soothe his moans of anguish. Only the Bayadère lingered

beside her fallen warrior. She took him in her arms. Her heart lent her wonderful power, so that the weight of the wounded man seemed no greater than the child's to its nurse, and her strength sufficed to bear him out of the hail of bullets and the tumult of battle. She carried him home to his tent. There she prepared a soft couch, washed the blood from his wounds with cool water, bandaged them, and sought by tender words and caresses to rouse him.

The tender words and the faithful nursing did call the wounded knight back to life. His limbs grew less rigid, and how happy he felt when, as he opened his eyes, he saw a lovely, smiling fairy by his side, who stroked his cheeks with a caressing hand.

The knight lay a long time suffering from his wounds. The army had marched on, leaving him in a strange city; of course he had long been forgotten. The Bayadère cured him by means of herbs gathered in the forest, which a wise woman had taught her how to use. The Bayadère fed him with the best food. She had hung a triple row of gold coins round her neck; one after another the coins disappeared; for the food and strengthening drinks which she gave the sick man were very dear. When the last coin had gone, she went to the coffee houses, where she danced, sang, and begged for her wounded hero, whom everybody had forgotten, and who had no one to care for him except herself.

For that is the nature of the Bayadère; your mother, if you are ill; your sweetheart, if you are gay; your slave, if you are hungry; your faithful watcher while you sleep, and your sorrowing companion when you die.

IV

"Beautiful Bayadère," said the knight one morning, when he could stand and felt somewhat stronger; "Where are my sword and my horse? Where are our soldiers?"

"Your sword?" replied the Bayadère. "Alas! it slipped from your hand on the battlefield. Your horse? Alas, the bullets killed it under you. Our soldiers? Alas, they have marched far away!"

Deep sorrow overwhelmed the knight. For three days he did not speak a word to the Bayadère; for three long days he desired neither food nor drink. The fourth day he said to Nuhamil:

"Follow me to the bazaar."

The girl obeyed without remonstrance. The knight leaned on her arm, for he was still weak and unsteady on his feet.

In the bazaar the old merchants sat in rows with their chibouks between their knees, and when Saif passed with the Bayadère, they said to one another: "A beautiful girl, a very beautiful girl."

At these words Saif turned. "Is she not beautiful? Who will offer the most for her?"

At these words the dealers, horse-buyers and slave traders flocked toward them in throngs to look at the girl more closely. They pulled her hair to try whether it was false; rubbed her cheeks to find out whether they were rouged, and asked what she could do?

The Bayadère obediently answered that she could dance and sing, amuse men and serve women.

The dealers offered five hundred—six hundred—a thousand dinars. Then a tall, stout Moor came up, pushed them all aside, and said:

"I'll give three thousand dinars for her."

The rest of the buyers scattered and went back to their seats. The Moor took the Bayadère from the knight, handed him a purse of gold, and led her away with him. And the Bayadère was so good, so loving, that she did not even weep when she looked at Saif for the last time.

But Saif went to buy weapons and horses with the money he had received and, as he looked after Nuhamil, he wept enough for both.

"Why do you weep?" asked the dealers, comforting him. "You sold her high enough—for three thousand dinars!"

"If I only had a sword and a horse,"

sighed Saif, "I would not have sold her for three thousand dinars, nor for three thousand stars, nor for three thousand houris in heaven!"

V

WHO had bought her; who had taken away the beautiful desert blossom? Some rich dealer who hoped to sell her at a still higher price to some pasha? Some hateful, ugly dervish who would drag her with him from city to city to earn money by her? Or, some ill-natured old man, whose breath would wither the delicate flower? Who would love her? Who would know what a treasure he possessed in her? Where would she be taken—to the East or to the North?

These and similar thoughts constantly occupied the mind of Saif. He already had a sword and a horse. He could not drive from his heart the image of the beautiful Bayadère.

On the white plains beneath the open sky the Kurdish Amazon, Kara-Guy, was encamped with her brave, tried warriors.

She sat alone on the soft turf, puffing clouds of smoke from her chibouk. No tent arched above her head, no carpet covered the ground on which she sat. Let the sun shine on her brown face, which could no longer be marred, for sixty years had already marked many lines upon it, and the fierce heat of the desert had scorched it black and brown. This was the meaning of her name, Kara-Guy: "Brown Maiden."

Her seat was a mound on the plain. Around her lay her brave soldiers beside their horses, which were tethered to lances stuck in the sand. Now and then the fearless warrior laid down her chibouk and let her gaze rove over the wide scene. Then she addressed short, broken sentences to her men, who treasured them in their hearts.

"You see the forests around, which border the horizon and cast such deep shadows upon the earth and on my heart. These trees, not men, are our foes. These trees show us how far Osman has penetrated. The sons of Islam ought never to have left the deserts. The realm of the Believers stretches only so far as the palm and olive trees thrive. These dry, fruitless trees, which lose their leaves, are the curse of the Infidels. Where they begin is the frontier of their infamous kingdom. If I should fall in battle, do not bury me under these accursed trees, for every falling leaf would press upon me more heavily than the tombstone of Mecca. Ah, the trees of Kurdistan never lose their leaves. Allah gave them eternal youth, as he gave the people of Islam eternal life, instead of the yearly death bestowed on the soil of the Infidels."

All these wise words sank deep into the minds of the sons of the desert.

Far away, from the direction of the city, a camel was approaching at a measured pace. Beside it rode a large, strong man, while in the camel's saddle sat Nuhamil, the Bayadère.

On reaching the camp of the Kurds, the man sprang from his horse, lifted the Bayadère down, and led her to the Amazon.

The odalisque kissed the hand of the elderly commander and, in a gentle voice expressed her pleasure that henceforth she might be her slave.

"You will be mine, though not my slave," replied the Amazon. "You will be mine, because I have bought you and no one can take you back! They would offer silver and gold in vain, I would not give you up. For worthy of gold is the woman who, in the presence of the enemy, is all man, and by the side of her lover is all woman, and accursed is the man who would sell such a treasure."

"Oh, do not curse him," pleaded the girl, "he had neither sword nor horse."

"You will fight by my side," said the Amazon, drawing Nuhamil down by her. "You shall have steed and sword, and enjoy the fullest liberty; but promise me, by Allah, that you will never faithlessly desert me. Neither from fear, nor for love; promise me to obey

no tempting summons if I say: 'Stay here!'"

The Bayadère threw herself face downward on the ground, and laying her hand on the edge of the Brown Maiden's cloak, which was embroidered with verses from the Koran, she promised never, for any reason, to abandon her.

"And now look at me carefully," said Kara-Guy to the girl. "Forty years ago my cheeks, too, were like roses and lilies, while today I resemble the black, sharp thorn, which wounds everyone who stretches a hand toward it. After forty years you will be like me."

A sigh from the Bayadère answered her.

VI

"SALEIKUM Unallah, valiant Amazon! May all the angels of Allah protect you, and may the Prophet make an exception in your favor and, after your death, raise you to the seventh heaven.'

With these words Saif one day greeted the black Amazon. He was riding the very horse he had bought with the money received for the woman he loved, and wore the cloak which the beautiful Nuhamil had embroidered for him, and which now hung torn and tattered on his body.

"Welcome," replied the woman warrior, coldly. "What do you desire? If you came to serve me for pay, you will receive less than elsewhere; if you long for danger, you can find more with me than under any other leader, and if you came merely to gape, there is not much in me to admire."

"I do not come to be hired, for I have plenty of gold and silver," replied the knight. "Nor do I seek danger, since I can find enough along my own road. Neither did I come to admire you, noble lady. I am here to buy back a lovely girl whom you once bought from me for three thousand dinars; for if I had been obliged to give my right arm or the heart out of my body, I should have done so, for I possessed no weapons. My good right arm has gained back all that I once lost, and on both sides of my horse hang bags filled with gold and silver. But I vowed to wear no other cloak until I had bought back Nuhamil, so I still have the one she made me, in which Russian swords and spears have opened many a seam. Fix any sum you please for which you will give her back to me; I will not haggle, but pay cash. If you want silver, silver I will pay; if you desire gold, gold shall be yours, and even if you command one of my eyes, I will yield you even that."

"I thank you," Kara-Guy answered roughly, "for your permission to reach, after my death, the heaven from which you selfish men desire to exclude women, as you shut them out from everything desirable here below. You buy and sell them like a horse, like a gay cloak, in which dwells no soul. But the Bayadère whom you seek I will not give back. You know how beautiful she is, and that is worth much; you know how brave she is, and that is worth still more; you know how faithful she is, and that is worth most of all. And yet I know how to value her higher than to buy her today and sell her tomorrow, though I am no man to find delight in her. So draw up the cords of your sacks again. You shall have the Bayadère neither for gold, nor for silver, nor for both your handsome eyes. You will never possess her again."

But the Bayadère, sitting at the feet of the Brown Maiden, had leaned her face on her hand and dared not raise her eyes to Saif.

The young knight turned away from the wrathful Amazon, and, sighing heavily, bowed over his horse's neck. The Amazon felt two burning tears fall from Nuhamil's eyes upon her hand. She still loved the youth.

A new thought entered the mind of Kara-Guy.

"Listen," she said to the youth. "There is still one way by which you can reach your goal. What I have said I will not take back. I will restore the girl you love neither for gold nor for silver; if you pay the price I ask, she shall be yours again. I gave you three thousand dinars for the Bayadère and

she is well worth the sum. I am doing the Russians no special honor when I say that a Russian's head is worth a hundred dinars. So if you can lay before me the heads of thirty Russians, either in succession or all at once, I will give you back the girl."

Nuhamil pressed the Amazon's rough hand to her heart with fervent gratitude. Saif swung himself proudly into the saddle, and as he dashed away, shouted back with a radiant face:

"Within two days the ransom shall lie at your feet."

VII

"THERE can be no cheaper ransom in the world than the heads of Russians," Saif said to himself as he returned from Kara-Guy to his camp.

In the first skirmish, the most insignificent conflict between the outposts, from thirty to forty Russians fell; the soldiers would gladly bring him the severed heads for a gold coin, and Kara-Guy would be paid.

Long hair, short sense. Women would always be ignorant. Kara-Guy might have foreseen this, if Allah had really granted women souls. In war the heads of men had the same value as the heads of blackcock in hunting. People cut them off to throw them away.

Just as he reached his camp, two trumpeters with a herald were riding along, proclaiming loudly, amid the blare of trumpets, the orders of the commander forbidding every soldier from cutting off the heads of the enemy who fell in battle, since it was unworthy of a true warrior to mutilate his foe, and also because those who wished to cut off the heads of the enemy were obliged to fall out of the ranks of the advancing troops. Whoever lingered behind was a coward, and a coward deserved a bullet through his head. Therefore, whoever returned from battle with the heads of the enemy would be shot without distinction of person. These were the orders of Omar Pacha, and he kept his promises.

Saif felt the blood freeze in his veins as he heard this proclamation. That woman was evidently a witch, who looked into the future. When women grow old, evil spirits enter their hearts; for how else could she have known that she was asking for the Bayadère a ransom that neither gold nor gifts could procure? What, an hour before, had been cheaper than the pebbles on the seashore, had now become more costly than the diamonds fastened in the turbans.

VIII

STRANGE rumors began to circulate among the soldiers in the Russian camp. At night, when the moon was setting, the specter of the Sultan Omar, on horseback, in his ancient armor, rose from the earth, and rode within musket shot of the Russian lines. People saw his horse, but heard no hoof beats. Sometimes he came so near the last posts that he was within pistol shot; but woe betide the man who dared to fire at him. He was never seen again after. The evil spirit, the ghost of the sultan, carried him off on his specter steed.

More enlightened persons, on the contrary, said it was true that every night a mysterious horseman *did* come from the opposite shore, swimming the river on his horse, whose hoofs were wrapped with straw that no sound should be heard, and dashing with astonishing boldness past the outposts, sometimes so near that the soldiers could fire on him. But the bullets never hit, and the men had no time for a second shot, for, with marvelous skill, the next moment the rider killed him and dragged him into the thicket, where the bodies were always found headless. The dead men always had one wound only, and that was in the middle of the breast; but it could never be learned what weapon had inflicted the wound. It could be neither spear nor bullet.

But every morning the Amazon Kara-Guy received the heads demanded for ransom money. They were brought in large sacks filled with tobacco, so that the contents could not be seen from the outside.

The Brown Maiden could convince herself that she was being paid in good money. They were freshly cut heads, with the horrible expression of mortal terror on their features. It was the most dangerous smuggled merchandise ever brought across the Danube; on one side the gallows, on the other death by shooting awaited the man who was caught with it.

Sometimes Saif, too, returned with a wound, where a bullet had grazed him. But he did not heed it in the least; though an inch deeper and he would have been lying on the battlefield outside.

Nuhamil trembled for him. To ask his life thirty times in the boldest way; to bring the ransom from the midst of all the terrors of hell—this was greater love than the woman sold by her lover deserved; this was a more severe atonement than the man who had sold his sweetheart merited. But one night the mounted guards were at the spot directly after the shot was heard, so that the mysterious rider was obliged to dash away on his swift steed and leave the sentinel dead. An arrow had pierced his breast. So the strange horseman used arrows, and so skilfully that he never missed his mark. This method was absolutely noiseless, and that the secret might not be discovered, he always tore the arrow from the wound.

Henceforth the sentinels were always stationed in pairs and ordered to fire singly, the second man keeping his weapon ready to use after the first had discharged his.

After a few days Saif reached the Amazon's camp one morning unusually weary. The turban was pulled low over his brow to hide the bandage of a wound he had received.

"I've brought two heads at once," he said, opening his sack of tobacco, and pulling them out by the hair. "The sentinels are now stationed in pairs. I met two mounted soldiers and, as they would not separate, I was obliged to kill both, but one gave me a blow on the head while I was fighting with the other. May Allah punish them in the next world for attacking a single man."

Nuhamil, weeping, threw herself upon the youth's breast, and kissed the wound which he had received for her sake. Then, sinking on her knees before Kara-Guy, she kissed the hem of her garment.

"See how much he has already done for me," pleaded the loving girl. "See how brave he is. Do not let him perish in his labors; spare him any more heads! Spare him only ten of the thirty—only five—only two."

But Kara-Guy steadily shook her head in refusal. "No, not a single one. Thirty is a round number, from which I shall not recede. I asked from him neither precious pearls, which he would have been obliged to bring from the depths of the sea, nor dragon feathers, for which he would have had to roam through the Kaf mountains. I asked only the heads of the foe, whom he sees a thousand paces in front of him, and which he simply has to take. What is spoken, remains spoken; no one can recall the word he has uttered."

"Then I will help him," said the girl, with glowing cheeks. "We shall finish more quicky with two."

"You may be allowed to do that," said Kara-Guy, and the lovers kissed her hand for the permission.

IX

Beyond the two hostile camps, at the last outposts, was a small island in the midst of the Danube, an island surrounded by clumps of silvery willows, while further toward the center were groves of pines. The little island was nearer the Wallachian than the Turkish shore. The Russians often went there to cut firewood, for a moderately good swimmer could easily cross.

The Wallachians, who were always great believers in fairy tales and legends said that in ancient times the little island was the home of a wonderfully beautiful fairy, who still sometimes rose from the waves to dry her long hair on the shore and sing the most bewitching

melodies. But no mortal ear ought to listen to the songs, which had power to delude and destroy men. So ran the tales of the fisher folk, whose rush huts the wandering Russians sometimes entered.

We wish the fairy would appear to us once, thought the Russians. Their ears and hearts were not sufficiently sensitive to be deluded by the singing of a beautiful girl.

At last this wish was gratified. Two young Cossacks were riding along the Wallachian shore opposite to the island, when low sounds reached their ears. Stopping their horses, they began to listen. And lo! From the silvery willow thicket, a slender, beautiful woman appeared on the opposite bank, singing carelessly as if there were no one but herself in the world.

By the shore, overhanging the water, lay an uprooted pine tree. The fairy, or the girl, or whatever she was, tripped out with her tiny feet upon the swaying pine. She seemed as light as a bird, for the stem scarcely moved under her. Then she let herself down on the extreme end of the tree, as only fairies can, and, drawing off her little slippers, dipped her snow white feet into the water.

The two Cossacks dismounted from their horses and tied them to a tree. The apparition began to be still more bewitching. She loosed the turban from her head, took off the red kerchief beneath it, and let her long, raven hair float over her slender back to the water. Then, unbuckling the girdle from her dainty hips, she removed her thin robe and hung it on a higher branch of the tree. Only a thin linen garment revealed rather than hid the lovely outlines of her figure. Smiling, the bewitching nymph gazed at her own beautiful image in the water, which returned her smile. It seemed as if she were completely absorbed in it, as if she wanted to sing to it, embrace it. And even as she dived into the stream, it seemed as if she were seeking to catch the lovely reflection, which sank with her into the waves, to the chin, to the lips, that they might kiss each other. Then the bathing naiad rose again from the water, first her round shoulders, then her slender hips, and lastly her whole figure, swinging and rocking on the elastic pine branches. The girl laughed merrily during this sport.

The two Cossacks on the shore had quickly made an agreement. One would swim to the island from the right, the other from the left. This fairy would not be hard to capture.

Laying aside their weapons and heavy garments, they slid into the water and glided noiselessly toward the laughing fairy. Both heads moved swiftly across the stream, rapidly approaching the girl, till suddenly perceiving them, she uttered a cry and, dropping from the trunk of the tree, vanished beneath the surface of the water.

The two men swam toward the island for a moment longer. Suddenly one flung both arms into the air, while the water rushing into his mouth drowned his cry for help as he sank. A few seconds later the other also disappeared. But the two heads soon appeared again and floated quietly on; only the faces were turned upward, like those of dead men. The current bore them down the river.

The wicked fairy was waiting for them at the curve in the shore, where the water casts up every lifeless burden, and her white fingers played with a thin, sharp knife. There were only two strokes, and the weapon sustained no injury.

Again the ransom was increased by two heads.

X

ONLY three heads were needed to make up the thirty; they had collected twenty-seven.

Two specters kept the Russian soldiers in perpetual terror; the mysterious horseman who paid nocturnal visits to the camp, and the nymph who bathed in the Danube. Both thirsted for the blood of the bravest heroes. Only three heads were needed to make up the number. The Russians might easily have

spared them without noticing it, and two loving hearts would have been united.

War and love are such contradictory ideas. The latter delights in flowery peaceful fields, the former in blood-stained, trampled plains; the latter longs for a bright, cloudless sky, the former for tempests and crashing thunderbolts; the latter has the motto: "Let us be together forever"; the former "One only of us shall remain here."

The main body of the Russians marched to Bessarabia. And meanwhile came an order from the Sirdar that part of the Turkish army should go to the Crimea and the other guard the Bulgarian frontier. Kara-Guy was sent with her troops to the peninsula, while Saif remained with the volunteer forces at Tulesa.

Army commanders, on these occasions, care very little whether loving hearts are torn asunder or not. Alma and Inkerman were sad names to the Turkish heroes camping on the Danube, since sorrowful memories were connected with them; but Balaclava was doubtless a hundred times worse, for there the Turkish troops were routed.

"If we had only been there," sighed those left behind.

But with what bitterness the grieving Saif doubtless watched the days drag slowly by! With what impatience he rode along the shore of the Danube, where no trace of the enemy could be discovered far or near! With what fervor he prayed to his Prophet to send him foes, at least one, at least two—only they must be Russians.

The Prophet heard, and sent him three at once. While wandering, as was his custom, along the bank at night, he saw three mounted Russians who, under cover of the darkness, were coming in a boat from the opposite shore to spy around for booty.

Saif was like a starving wolf who, after fasting for weeks, ventures out of the woods into the village, expecting only a goat, and suddenly sees the defenders of the herd, three huge bulls, before him. The three are as magnificent as they are a dangerous mouthful. Hunger tortures, fear repels—three to one!

Saif secretly followed the horsemen, remaining close behind them in the darkness, his sword hanging on his arm and in each hand a pistol. He had already cut off their return to their boat. The game could no longer escape the hunter; but would the hunter be able to escape the game?

"Help, Allah," prayed the youth, constantly drawing nearer to the Russians, who, talking busily together, had not seen him.

Suddenly, like the starving wild beast, the fierce knight rushed upon them. His spurs were buried in the flanks of his steed. The Russians turned back, three carbines crashed at the same instant, and the bullets whistled the wonderful harmony of death around Saif's ears. Death is a strange singer; he can chant both high and low. None of the bullets hit Saif.

Now he fired with both hands at two of his foes. Allah Akbar! Those were good shots. The horses sprang aside; one of the riders slipped from the saddle and hung from the stirrups with his spurs; the other fell forward lifeless on his horse's neck. Allah Akbar! Now it was only one against one, sword against sword, man against man.

In the darkness of the night the two blades crossed. They saw no battle, nothing was heard except the furious clashing of the swords, while the sparks from the steel lighted the features of the combatants. The Turk had met a brave hero, who was worthy of him and did not cry out when he received a wound, but returned it. Neither knew whether his sword struck; each thrust at random. Neither of the two men uttered a sound. Mutely they received the wounds inflicted upon each other in the darkness.

They had come so near that they could no longer use their swords, and suddenly grasped each other with their powerful arms. In the violent conflict one dragged the other from the saddle, and the two horses stood snorting, while

their riders rolled, wrestling furiously, in the dust. The Russian had drawn his two-edged knife from the leg of his boot, Saif had snatched his crooked dagger from his girdle, and while each of the two men strove with his left hand to prevent his opponent from striking, they tried to deal the enemy a mortal blow with the right.

Both were equally strong, equally brave, equally skilful. Sometimes one, sometimes the other was uppermost, while trying to hold each other with their feet and pressing their heads and bodies against their antagonist's breast; but neither succeeded in liberating the hand that held the weapon from the other's clutch.

While rolling on the earth, struggling frantically, and feeling every moment their strength decreasing, the Russian suddenly spoke.

"Comrade! You are a valiant champion, so am I, and we are both good soldiers. Let us give up the battle, let us give our solemn pledge to part from each other, one going to the right the other to the left."

At the moment the Russian had the upper hand, and was lying on Saif's breast; but Saif clenched his teeth, and his answer was to bite his enemy in the shoulder like a wild beast.

The other stifled his pain, and began again: "Neither of us can conquer the other, so why do we continue the conflict? We shall bleed to death and perish on this spot. Let us part. You will find rich booty on my two comrades. Let it be yours. If you choose, take my share too, but let us give up the battle. My steed and weapons shall be yours also."

Gasping, yet in a tone which expressed the utmost fury, Saif answered: "I want neither your booty, nor your horse, nor arms, only and solely your head. This chattering head of yours! Either you will get mine, or I yours. For I want nothing but your head!"

And the desperate struggle began again. Vainly Saif put forth all his strength to shake off his foe, who lay like a mountain on his breast. The earth around them was already slimy from the blood that had been shed; they were actually rolling in a marsh. At last Saif seemed to be gradualy growing weaker, his left hand could no longer hold his foe's right hand firmly enough, the point of the knife already touched the living flesh, and at last he lay as if dead, with his arms hanging loosely down.

But at the instant the Russian's weapon was piercing his side, he released his right arm with a sudden jerk, and by a single bow severed his enemy's head from his neck, so that only the quivering trunk remained lying on him, the right hand still clutching the knife which was thrust into Saif's body like a wasp's sting.

Saif flung off the corpse, drew his knife from the wound, and measured how far it had pierced his body. Pooh! Barely five inches. Quickly bandaging the hurt with his turban, he collected the heads, the last three heads which he still owed, mounted his horse painfully, and dragged himself in the darkness of the night to his tent.

There he ordered his servants to lift him from his horse and, calling the most trustworthy, said to him:

"Take, my dear son Ali, a large skin, fill it with the best oil, and put in myrtle and rose leaves enough to make it fragrant. Then loose from my saddle the gold embroidered bag, which contains three exquisitely ripe, rare melons, and drop them into the oil, after which you must carefully close the skin. Next get from my turban all the gold you find there, hire a ship, and sail with the oilskin to the Crimea, where the Giaours and the Believers are waging an inglorious war. Seek out the brave Amazon Kara-Guy and deliver the melons. Tell her I sent them. I plucked the gifts from their stems with my own hand. They are fine, ripe especially the third, which cost me the most dearly. Say that I send her my compliments."

The servant faithfully obeyed the order. But Saif lay on his couch utterly

exhausted, letting his head sink back feebly, as if he longed to say: "Here, too, a ripe fruit awaits you, O cruel Amazon!"

XI

THE battle was bloody and futile.

Ten thousand fell, and no one knew for what purpose. Not their deaths, but that their deaths were useless—that was the cause of mourning. They had been flowers of the soil; they had become carrion. A profitless hail-storm had destroyed them.

Evening was closing in when Ali arrived. Since early morning he had heard the incessant cannonading maintained on the mainland. He hastened at once in search of Kara-Guy. When he found her she was just dismounting in front of her tent. Her tent was the only one still standing; all the rest had been destroyed by the bombs, and the wind was playing with the tatters which still clung to the tent poles.

"See, noble Amazon, how your people's tents are destroyed," said Ali after the first greeting.

"I shall no longer need them," said the Brown Maiden.

"Have your warriors found a better shelter?" asked Ali.

"They have indeed found a better shelter," replied Kara-Guy.

Ali delivered to her the melons Saif had sent. Kara-Guy took them into her tent, and gazed silently at the pallid faces. Then she came out again, and asked:

"Did not your master tell you to bring the girl to him?"

"He would have come himself, but I think he was a little weary. Perhaps he has rested by this time."

"Then follow me," said Kara-Guy, mounting her horse again, and rode with Ali to the battle-field, where peace and rest already reigned. Only in the distance a few flashes of light could still be seen, as if from a departing thunder-storm. The battle-worn troops were returning from every direction. Here and there soldiers were bearing on their guns a wounded man. While riding across the battle-field, Kara-Guy repeatedly pointed out to the right and left the bodies of fallen Mussulmans.

"Look, this was one of my soldiers too. He was alive this morning."

Ali counted in this way two hundred men, and the larger the number, the heavier grew his heart.

At last the Amazon dismounted at the foot of a green hillock, and leading Ali a few steps farther, parted a tamarind bush, and there on the turf lay Nuhamil, pale and cold.

The robe above her beautiful white bosom was torn by cruel lance thrusts, her long, silken hair was tangled among the thorns. The delicate, white face still seemed suffused with a roseate hue. Only the sweet lips were colorless, and through the lids shimmered, like the moon through thin clouds, the dark stars of her eyes. But her fair hand, her slender white hand, still firmly clenched the crimson sword.

Kara-Guy bent over her, covered her bared breast, and said: "Here is the girl." And almost inaudibly she added: "She was the last."

Then both lifted her on the Amazon's horse and carried her back to the camp —the last hero in woman's form.

That very night Kara-Guy bathed the beautiful odalisque's body in balsam and costly oils, and the next day bade farewell to the other leaders. She had fulfilled her mission. Those whom she had brought with her had done their duty and fallen on the field of battle. The body of the last one she took to the man to whom she had belonged in life. Yes, belonged, for he had faithfully paid the price for her. She had no cause to fear that death might do its work of corruption on the way. It was midwinter, and the dead odalisque's face and hands were like stone.

When Kara-Guy reached the shore of the Danube with Saif's servant, they began to enquire for the brave youth. In front of the mosque Ali met an old Moslemite who had served a long time under Saif.

"Where does our master await us?"

The old soldier wiped his eyes with

the sleeve of his caftan, and then answered, like a true Turk: "Where he awaits us, we shall surely all go. And no one is impatient there, since there is ample time for waiting."

As he spoke, he led them to a little grove of cypress trees, where were the small, oblong mounds in which there is time for waiting, and showed the grave-stone adorned with a turban, beneath which brave Saif was waiting for his companion.

On the grave-stone was inscribed:

"Dameh Allah! Rest here Saif, the son of Oglanli, the terror of the foe, who died because he was a hero."

Kara-Guy ordered the grave to be opened, and laid the second body beside the dead warrior lying with his face turned toward the East. There was room for both. And when they lay side by side, it seemed to the three living mortals as if a smile hovered upon the faces of the dead.

"Mashallah!"

The grave was closed again, and the stone replaced. On the other side Kara-Guy ordered the inscription:

"Here rests Nuhamil, the flower of the Osman race, the thorn of the Giaours, who died because she loved. Dameh Allah!"

* * *

SHE KNEW

NEIGHBOR—Eggs are so dear in winter I simply cannot afford to buy them.

MRS. NEWLYWED—That's true. I'm going to lay in a big stock next summer, when they are cheap.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

OVERDOING IT

"DARLING, whenever I take a drink out of this beautiful glass I shall think of you."

"Don't think of me too often."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

A LIMIT

HE—Before we were married you told me you would trust to my judgment in everything in the world.

SHE—I know, but that did not mean that you could ask me to wear my last year's hat at Easter.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

THE NEW BUTLER

BY ALFRED AF HEDENSTJERNA

A PROVIDENCE had blessed the house of Bykvist, so that now they were millionaires, although both husband and wife had started as poor little "kids" with broken shoes, and without any absolute certainty as to their daily provender. They had reached an age between fifty and sixty, and had remained free from cancer, chronic dyspepsia, heart disease, or anything else in that line which occasionally hampers the enjoyment of the rich and shadows their sunny existence. The Bykvists fared well and heartily, and they even enjoyed the rare luxury of a good conscience, favorable circumstances having brought them extraordinary riches without demanding extraordinary rascalities on the part of Mr. Bykvist.

They had a fine, capable son, who practically directed the business. They also had two pretty daughters in the early twenties, gentle girls with golden hair, dainty figures, and delicate complexions. As a matter of fact, they had about everything commonly conceded to be worldly happiness.

Yet husband and wife were deliberating whether the present standard of their fortunes did not require decisive measures, destined to lift the family once for all above all their fellow citizens. Not that they meant to withdraw from their old friends. On the contrary, their triumph was to derive its chief flavor from shining before their circle of acquaintances. Something must be done that could not be imitated by any one in Strandholm.

How about building a palatial mansion? This was already planned, but for obvious reasons the palace could not be completed before three years from date.

How about a Lucullian banquet, with champagne for the cheapest wine, a choice variety of *entremets,* and all the vegetables and fruits at least six months ahead of time? No, that had been done on a previous occasion, when one of the guests had gorged herself with new asparagus at Christmas time, without being at all impressed with the fact. The Strandholm gentlemen, moreover, called all brands of wine superior, as soon as they had guzzled a certain amount.

"I know!" said Fru Bykvist at last. She fetched the newspaper and read aloud with a slightly trembling voice:

"A capable man-servant and experienced butler, with excellent references, who has served for eleven years in a baronial castle, desires a position in an aristocratic family. Kindly address Reliable, Esperoed, General Delivery."

"We must have him, John?" said Fru Bykvist.

"Hmm! yes, that would certainly impress the small fry," answered Father Bykvist.

"Oh, how splendid! Of course, he must have a beautiful livery," said the girls.

"He would have plenty of time to assist occasionally in the warehouse," interpolated Bykvist, Jr., who had an eye for business.

Half an hour later, each member of the family was wielding a pen. The daughters ordered fashion papers with livery patterns, Bykvist, Jr., asked for a price list of buttons, gaiters, etc., and the old man himself wrote to "Reliable, Esperoed, General Delivery."

"Heaven grant that he has not already accepted an engagement!" sighed Miss Emmy.

The only one who did not write was Mother Bykvist, who was promenading up and down the avenue with a friend.

"Yes, my dear, there is going to be quite a change in our house very soon," said Fru Bykvist in conclusion.

"You don't say so! How very interesting. Pardon me, but I must hurry home now, Edward is expecting me!" answered the friend, hurrying away as if she had stepped upon a firecracker.

Edward, however, did not get a glimpse of her for the next three hours, for she first peeped into every house in Strandholm to report:

"What do you think? One of the Bykvist girls is engaged to be married! The mother herself hinted as much to me!"

Whereupon a certain ambitious young iron merchant, who loved Miss Emmy better than his life, experienced all the torments of doubt and jealousy, so that he began to dust his revolver case and polish the weapon.

Fortunately, "Reliable" was as yet free. His services were available for a paltry five hundred dollars a year.

"No more than our bookkeeper's salary," commented Bykvist, Sr.

When "Reliable" arrived at the station and inquired for the home of the millionaire merchant, some Strandholm ladies, who happened to be promenading in the vicinity, nudged each other and whispered: "Just see, will you—that's the father-in-law, who has come to take a look around."

"How peculiar that none of the family is here to meet him?"

"Why, it's to be kept secret for the present, my dear, don't you see?" explained the first speaker.

When the bell rang soon afterwards in the Bykvist home, Miss Louise herself went to open the door. Seeing a middle-aged, very well dressed and distinguished looking gentleman, with gray whiskers and a silk top hat, she inquired respectfully for his name.

"Let's not stand on ceremony, little girl! We are going to be comrades, I take it. You just go in and announce that Jousson has arrived," replied "Reliable," chucking the young lady condescendingly under the chin.

"Mamma—Jousson—M. Jousson has come," said Louise excitedly and with some embarrassment, as she opened the door of the parlor.

Fru Bykvist had, it is true, traveled through a few large cities, where she had seen head waiters and lackeys in plenty, whose appearance fully equalled that of any judge or counselor at law. When, however, "Reliable," *alias* Jousson, made her a formal obeisance in her own hall, she lost her equanimity altogether, held out her plump hand, and stammered politely: "I bid you welcome, M. Jousson—I mean Jousson. I trust you will like our simple home—our home—I mean."

"Thank you, milady, thank you. When once I understand my duties, I——"

"Yes, indeed—well—that is—yes, my husband and myself are not at all hard to please. Everything will be all right, if you will begin at once by doing everything just the way it is done in a really aristocratic house. As to your room——"

Miss Louise kept pulling her mother's sleeve so persistently that Fru Bykvist at last followed her into the dining room.

"Mamma, that little closet behind the office is impossible. We must let him have the room next to papa's."

"I'm afraid you are right. I didn't expect him to be so distinguished looking. Did you hear him address me as milady? That will be the finish of your Aunt Cederlund, and of the Browall set."

It cannot be denied that Miss Emmy, as well as Bykvist, Sr., himself, also felt somewhat oppressed when they first set eyes on Jousson. The only one who was not over-awed was the son of the house. He was a child of the modern era, vice-president of several associations, and not so easily dazed.

"These barrels must be taken to the loft before noon," was his short and sharp order, when Jousson accidentally passed by the office door.

"Very well, sir," answered Jousson politely, uncovering his head.

At the end of an hour he returned. "Sir?"

"What is it?"

"The barrels have been attended to."

"All right."

"The man who has moved them wants a dollar."

Now this did overwhelm young Bykvist, great, big strong fellow though he was. He gazed in awed surprise at his father's servant, and in some embarrassment paid him a dollar and a silver quarter besides. "Many thanks, sir!"

At the approach of the dinner hour, which had been postponed from two o'clock to half past five, for the sake of appearances, the entire family happened to be assembled in the parlor adjoining the dining room.

"Go to your rooms, girls, and you, John, step into the office, so that Jousson may have a chance to announce dinner."

"But, Martha, my dear, why cannot we simply walk into the dining-room? I'm hungry as a bear," said Father Bykvist plaintively.

"John, what are you paying five hundred a year for, if you want to sit down to dinner by the clock, like a cobbler?"

When Jousson returned from the girl's rooms, he informed Fru Bykvist with a bow that the young ladies were not yet dressed.

"Were you taking a bath, girls?" asked their mother, when both promptly entered the dining room.

"No indeed—why do you ask?"

"Jousson said—hmm." The solution suddenly dawned upon Fru Bykvist. Jousson was evidently accustomed to see the ladies dressed for dinner. She almost withered with mortification.

At table, the family looked at each other, ate, chewed, and kept silence. Eleven years of baronial references crushed the small home circle, generally so bright and cheerful, with a heavy and almost annihilating weight. They were so terribly afraid of committing some dreadful mistake!

"I beg your pardon, milady, but I have not yet been entrusted with the key to the wine cellar. Perhaps the maid is to serve the wine to-day?"

Fru Bykvist rang the bell. She was ready to drop under the table. "Bring us some claret, Christina."

"Both bottles, or will one of them do?" answered the maid.

Fru Bykvist felt like crying. Meanwhile Jousson poured the wine with a pained expression in his noble features, as if the grape juice were his own life blood. "I humbly beg your pardon, milady; the temperature of this wine is all wrong. But it shall not happen again."

The table service was indeed admirable of its kind. Hardly had the cakes and preserves been discussed, when Jousson placed a lighted taper before each of the two gentlemen.

"What is he going to do now, mamma?" whispered Emmy, brimful of respectful curiosity.

"I have no idea, child."

"Presumably, we are to smoke," Bykvist, Jr., informed his sister, for he had seen a little more of the world than the rest of his family.

This proved to be the case. Fortunately there was a box of cigarettes in Father Bykvist's room, else there would have been another source of mortification. When the family at last arose, the joys of the table were found to have consumed exactly an hour and three-quarters. The maid Christina had usually managed to supply their needs in considerably less time.

Ostentatiously, though noiselessly, Jousson threw open the folding doors to the parlor and withdrew humbly behind the sideboard, where he stationed himself like a show horse on parade. They all felt that something was expected of them, without knowing what to do. Bykvist, Sr., politely offered his arm to his wife, and solemnly led her into the parlor, fondly hoping that he was living up to Jousson's expectations.

When coffee had been served, the old man invited a few friends over the telephone to a small impromptu card party—just enough to fill two tables, for there was a dearth of "swell" gentlemen in Strandholm.

"He is going to introduce us to the new father-in-law," said the invited guests. When they arrived and entered the parlor, they did not find any father-in-law, however. What they did see, through the door leading into the room of the master of the house, was a stately old gentleman, who was arranging the card tables with serious dignity.

"The new relative is making himself at home," whispered the guests as they nudged each other. "He does look confoundedly aristocratic."

As they came into the room to draw lots for their places at the tables, the strange gentleman busied himself unconcernedly at the sideboard with a tray of punch glasses, as if the company did not interest him in the least. All the guests stopped at the door, looking reproachfully at Bykvist, and asked him in a half whisper: "Introduce us—why don't you?"

"Some more soda water, Jousson!" ordered Bykvist briskly; and as the butler walked off, and the others gazed at the host in speechless surprise, he added nonchalantly: "That's the new manservant I have engaged. Those confounded servant girls have almost killed me with their slovenliness."

Everything went off well, until the very strong and expensive cognac took its effect, and master-tanner Barkhom began to use some more forceful than elegant language over his bad luck at cards. At the uncouth words Jousson shuddered as at a serpent's bite, and looked so imploringly at his master that they all felt ashamed of themselves.

At supper the doctor waxed wroth when the attentive Jousson placed three clean forks beside him, having seen him indiscriminately thrust the same fork he was using to eat with into all the side dishes and preserve jars upon the table, in deference to a time-honored custom of the Simple Life.

Meanwhile, poor Christina sat in the kitchen shedding bitter tears, because she was no longer entrusted with waiting on the table.

Fru Bykvist's face fell when Jousson asked her for the finger bowls. And when the beer made its appearance in crystal pitchers, so that it was impossible to distinguish the brew, the railroad inspector said pointblank: "Look here, Bykvist, what do you mean by all this tomfoolery?"

None of the guests enjoyed themselves at the Bykvist's upon that occasion as they were in the habit of doing; although certainly no one could find fault with the service. On the following day, Jousson, *alias* "Reliable," *alias* Bykvist's father-in-law, took his departure by the noonday train, with a fair sum in his pocket to indemnify him for the position he had lost. In the train he happened to meet an old friend of his, who filled the position of major-domo on an estate adjacent to the baronial castle where Jousson had served for eleven years. To him the erstwhile Bykvist butler confided his recent experiences, concluding his tale with the words:

"They were good, simple-minded, generous people, although unhappily without any education whatsoever. But if I had remained, no doubt I would have gradually succeeded in teaching them manners."

* * *

SHE HAD MISUNDERSTOOD

"MARIE, since I've been away you've been wearing my dresses."

"But didn't madam give me explicit orders that they should be aired?"—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

LUCIA

BY PAUL HEYSE

FOR several long days a fierce south wind had lashed the sea into fury; copious showers had swept the earth and stirred the sap in the fig-trees with the first promise of spring. So violently and persistently had the wild storm raged that the peasants imagined they heard a perturbed rumbling in the vicinity of Vesuvius and had predicted a coming eruption. The houses often seemed to rock to their foundations, and by night a menacing rattle of the utensils in the cupboard could be heard.

But when at last the sun had quelled this revolt of the weather, the little cities on the plain of Sorrento stood uninjured among their vine and orange gardens, the rocky foundations had not yawned to swallow them up and the cliffs opposed to the surging surf had been too high to allow the sea to destroy everything planted by man. And immediately all fear of the volcano vanished.

On the afternoon of this last day of April, which was also Sunday, a German poet—what his name was doesn't matter—left the house in which, much against his will, he had been held captive by the storm. For days he had stared from the window out upon the sea, his hat on his head, and his cloak thrown around his knees—for the stone floor of his room was very cold—and had sipped one glass of wine after another without being able to warm himself in the least. Finally the cold excluded every thought except the desire to see the sun again. When it came out at last, he spent half of the first blessed day basking on the flat roof in its warm, welcome rays.

As he climbed up the mountain path after dinner, all his benumbed feelings again became active. Those leaves on the fig-trees had grown a finger's length in a single night. The sun had brought these bushes to blossom in half a day. The air was alive with butterflies which were not older than this day; all the paths were filled with people on foot or in little creaking wagons. To this was added the bells of the church and chapel ringing for vespers, the shouting of the fellow who climbed the hill to celebrate the church-festival in Saint Agatha, and the long-drawn-out song of the women standing on the sunny roofs and looking out toward the sea.

The German, following the gradually rising street, would have liked to stand on the cliff there and sing out over the broad landscape a song without words, just an echo of all the spring voices around him. But he had some reason for mistrusting that his voice would be a worthy herald of his feelings.

"Why do they extol poesy as the highest art?" he cried in vexation. "Think of the artist! The most unimportant and humble, if he has only learned how to place on paper the line of the mountains there and the cloister on its farther side behind the forest, the sea-line, and in the foreground the tree recently uprooted by the wind—how happy must it make him! And if he is a master, and can paint that trembling brightness over the yellow bluff, that sea which always rolls and tosses the waves like shreds of a silver embroidered garment, the vapor up there on Vesuvius, the white clock-towers among the young greenness of the chestnuts—I could kill him for very jealousy!"

In this strangely excited frame of mind he sat down on a stone by the wayside and looked darkly around him. He was now alone on the mountain

path. He had climbed on and on with the firm, insolent conviction that he would meet the long absent muse. He carried his note-book, and behind every rocky projection, every grove or garden corner he confidently expected to find a lyrical motive. But he had not been able to overcome his jealousy of those who, as he thought, were more able than he. "Now they come from their haunts," he murmured in sullen anger, "and cover the land with portfolios and umbrellas and campstools. They need only to stretch out their hands and they are filled. And when their senses have reveled enough they carry their studies and sketches home as a guest-offering from the feast. They are right to visit the south, for here they have an open board. But we—but I? Before man could paint, that was the proper time for poets. In the north, where there are no colors and no formations, there poesy may imagine herself queen. She's nothing but a beggar maid here!"

During this monologue he had riveted his eyes upon the sea, which every quarter of an hour assumed a deeper color and now remained interlined with long, bright, sparkling streaks. It did not occur to the feverish fool that an artist would have had equal reason to throw away his pencil in despair. For the greater part of the indescribable charm of the scene lay in the change and play of the tints, in the living variation of the elements.

A vision of maiden loveliness that suddenly appeared did not lighten his despair. The beauty of her contour! He raged at himself that he could not compose a poem worthy of her beauty. She was fingering her neck-chain and her face was turned out toward the sea. What a mass of black braids she had! And what was it that gleamed red from them? A coral ornament?—no, fresh red flowers.

The wind played with her loose unbuttoned headdress; how dark-red glowed her cheeks, and how deeply dark were her eyes! "If I could only sketch her!" he murmured. "Instead I must go back to my friends empty-handed and when I tell them how pretty she was, I must hear them say: 'If you could only have painted her!'"

He had stood up and awaited the rider, who, undisturbed by the foreigner, remained in her place on the donkey and only urged the animal on by a slap of the bridle. Now she had ridden past him and his greeting, which he had to call after her, was rewarded only by a stiff nod of the head seen from the rear.

A very distinct impression of repose surrounded the entire vision, and as she rode farther on her way, no expression of her face betrayed that the encounter with the stranger had awakened even so much curiosity as might naturally be expected when, in a lonely hour, upon a deserted mountain path, a young man and a beautiful woman unexpectedly meet.

Whether she was married or not, the wanderer could guess neither by her dress nor by her conduct. A freshness and purity, which was seldom seen among the married women in that neighborhood, animated the calm face. Although her bearing and dress were somewhat rustic, there was a touch of unaccountable distinction about her. She had rolled up her tight sleeves; her face was screened from the sun by no cloth and a broad straw hat hung from the saddle.

When she was about to disappear from the stranger's sight around a winding in the road, he bestirred himself and followed her with rapid strides. He was soon beside her, but, wilful as before, she guided the animal close to the mountain and left but little room for him.

During the conversation which he now began, the fair rider did not honor him with one look. Her voice was deep, her dialect a poor Neapolitan. Although she answered his remarks concisely, her tone betrayed neither the wish to dismiss the questioner nor to fascinate him.

"You come from Sorrento, beautiful recluse?" he asked.

"No, from Meta."

"You have visited friends there?"

"I was in the church."

"And ride up to Saint Agatha to the festival?"

"No, sir."

"But this is the road that leads to it?"

"No, sir."

"Please be so kind as to point out to me the right way."

"You must go straight back without turning aside and follow the next path to the left; you will then come to the high-road."

"If I must go back, I would prefer to relinquish the festival rather than the pleasure of accompanying you, if this arrangement would not bore you."

"As you wish; the road was not made for me only."

"Do you know, I wish you would only once turn your face my way?"

She did it coolly, without moving a feature. "What is it?" she asked. "What have you to show me?"

"I believe you have something to show me."

"I?"

"You are beautiful. Show me your eyes."

"The sea is more beautiful than I and you would be wiser to look at it than at eyes which have nothing to say to you."

"The sea? I see that every day from my terrace."

"But I do not. So allow me to avail myself of the opportunity"—and she again turned from him.

"Can one not see the water from all these mountains round about?" he asked.

"My brother's mill lies deep down in the cañon; the cliffs jut far out in front of it and the bushes above have choked up the last opening to the sea."

"You live with your brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"But you will not live there much longer, else the young men of Meta have no eyes."

"They may have their eyes. What are their looks to me. I am happier with my brother than all the married women on the plain of Sorrento, and even as far as Naples."

"Do you never have trouble with your brother's wife?"

"He hasn't any and never will have any. He and I, I and he—what more do we want except the protection of the holy Madonna?"

"And you are so sure that it will always be so, that no maiden will ever please him?"

"As certain as that I live. But what is that to you?" And she urged on the donkey, with so sharp a slap of her hand that his long ears twitched.

"Why was your brother not with you in Meta?" again asked the German, although that also was none of his business.

"He never leaves the mill except when he goes to confession up there in Deserta."

"Is he ill?"

"He cannot see anyone except me. And the sight of the sea gives him pain, since that time when he—but who are you, to question me like this? Are you a priest or from the police in Naples?"

He had to laugh. "Neither one," he said; "but don't you yourself compel me to question? If you'd only turn your face this way, I would soon forget speech. Now I must endeavor to compensate myself through your voice."

She measured him with an earnest look, and then asked: "What do you want with my face? Are you an artist?"

He remained silent a moment and the old jealous anger was again aroused in him that it was the painters only who were allowed to look at a beauty. For how could he make it clear to her that he also had a right by virtue of his art to pore over her features?

Finally he answered boldly: "Certainly I am an artist, and if you will permit it—but what is your name?"

"Teresa."

"With your permission, beautiful Teresa, I will gladly accompany you to your mill in order to get a picture of you in my sketch-book."

He made this request frivolously. It seemed the easiest way to gratify his

curiosity to see the brother, and it would probably be pleasant to get a peep at the domestic life of the two who lived in such seclusion.

She considered a little while and then said: "If you are an artist, then make a portrait of me which I can give my brother. If I should die, he would then always have me with him, as in life. Do you see the wide rill over there that springs out of the defile and hurls itself over the road into the depths? It feeds our mill and we must turn to the right and follow it. The rain has swollen it so that the narrow path in the gorge cannot be used. Wait! You shall sit on the donkey and ride up while I lead him."

"Never, Teresa."

"Then you must remain where you are; for if you should go up barefooted like me through the water, as you know neither the way nor the bed, you would fall at every step."

She had already brought the animal to a standstill and had swung herself lightly down. While he, somewhat disconcerted by the thought that he was deceiving her, stood hesitating, she took her shoes and stockings from her pretty feet, and, quietly looking at the stranger, grasped the bridle of the donkey.

"Let it be so, then!" he said, half laughing. "Although I will cut but a sorry figure in leaving the disagreeable part to you."

He mounted and they approached the stream, the maiden in front with the reins slung over her arm. When they came to the gorge, she cast a last long look out to sea; then she turned directly into the brook, not heeding the water surging around her, which whirled madly past huge stones and filled the entire width of the cleft. In here it was cool and shady after the sunny brightness outside, as the bushes hung far down on both sides of the close-crowded cliffs.

As the animal cautiously bore him from stone to stone, and the foam sprinkled him up to the knees, the German looked upwards and saw the mill, gray as the cliff next it, built deep into the rock some hundred steps up the height. The wheel lay motionless, for it was Sunday; no sound disturbed the roaring of the brook except the cry of a sparrow-hawk, which, hovering over the ravine, seemed to cool its breast on the rising vapor.

Meanwhile Teresa walked along one side close to the cliff. Here and there the path was visible, while in other places it was wholly flooded over. She said nothing. In the neighborhood of the house the walls of the cliffs began to separate, the path lifted itself out of the water, and the rider, as soon as he saw firm land beneath the donkey's feet, sprang down satisfied that at least no third person had witnessed the adventurous ride.

The mill lay as quiet as the grave; indeed the German was almost tempted to think it a stage scene. The window shutters were closed and the shadows under the projecting roof might have been painted just that way.

Teresa opened the lattice to a stable in the riven rock and led her gray friend in. She then gave the house-door a light pressure inwards and walked in, followed by the stranger.

One look sufficed to make the German acquainted with the three rooms. In the center was a rather large apartment which extended the entire depth of the house; this room contained an ample fireplace, a wall cupboard, a number of wooden chairs and a heavy table in the center. On the side next the cliff was a small bedroom. Opposite it, overlooking the stream, was the millroom with its machinery. A door in the back wall of the house stood wide open and showed a green cleared place beyond, upon which a single broad sunbeam fell. It was high enough above the stream to be used for a garden, but the mountain chain which hemmed in this ground was too high and the air too cool to allow of profitable cultivation, so only grass grew in the place. A goat grazed on the bank by the water. But full in the light of the single sunbeam that penetrated the cleft of the mountain stood two lone orange trees,

in truth with little fruit on them, but replete with greenness.

"Your brother is not at home, Teresa," said the German.

She swept the meadow quietly with her eye and then said: "Don't you see him up there where the ravine closes? He is building a dam so that the meadow will not become flooded. He thinks of everything, my brother, and can do everything. You could hunt a thousand years and not find any one with more genius."

"But why does he waste it here in solitude?"

"Because he wishes to."

"And have you grown up here in the mill, my poor child, and have you never seen more of the sun than shines there among the orange twigs? I can't believe it; your cheeks could scarcely become so tanned by the ride Sundays to church."

"No," she said; "it is not quite four years since Tomaso bought the mill and we moved here. Could you believe it? Once he didn't even know what a mill-wheel was or how the stones revolve. And on the first day we came here—the old miller had just died—Toma started it as though he had done it from childhood. Oh, a man like Toma! At the king's court there is no wiser!"

During this speech the stranger did not succeed in seeing the face of the man who was busy with his work on the outer edge of the meadow-land. He saw only a tall figure, black, curly hair under a gray hat and a jacket of darker color hanging loosely about his shoulders.

"What disgusted your brother with the city and the sea and his fine trade?" he now asked the sister who stood near him.

She seemed not to hear the question.

"Are you ready?" she said. "If so, sit down and begin my portrait, so that it will be ready by the time my brother comes into the house. Then ask him who it is and if he recognizes it, he will pay your price for it; for we are not poor, you must know. When we lived in Naples my brother had seven fishermen under him and three boats on the sea, and could have bought an estate instead of the mill here. But how can his gold lighten his heavy heart! Be seated, sir; I won't chatter any more.

Our friend was greatly embarrassed as he saw that he was really in a predicament. "It is somewhat dark here," he said.

"Then we will go out upon the meadow."

"There it is too bright, Teresa. You do not know how difficult it is to find the proper light."

"Wait," she said, and hastily opened the shutters. "I think now there is a beautiful light in the house. I, at least, could draw you exactly on the wall if I had studied art."

"Now, then," he said boldly, "we will begin."

He placed two chairs to the one window which overlooked the cañon, and asked her to be seated. He drew out the tablet which he had brought to jot his thoughts upon in case his muse inspired him, and took up his pencil. A deep red dyed the brown cheeks of the maiden when she felt his look resting anxiously on her. Her eyes, over which the thick lashes moved up and down like the wings of a black butterfly, were inflexibly directed outward, and in a few moments the intensity of the look clouded them with tears. He begged her to sit more at her ease, so as to lessen the difficulty of drawing.

"Teresa," he said.

"What is it?"

"Nothing." It was impossible for him to say anything insipid while her great eyes were upon him. How firm and broad and smooth was her forehead, how perfect the curve of the brows! He had now decided to pretend for half an hour that he was working hard, then hastily tear up the paper, complain of bad eyes, of being out of sorts, and then—leave.

When he had chosen his position and made a pretense of beginning, he noticed a man's portrait on the wall of the bedroom; this gave him a welcome pretext for still delaying the sitting.

"You have a good portrait of your brother there on the wall," he said as he stood up to examine it more closely. "Who painted it? In truth, a choice work. What a kind, yet fiery face! It makes me still more anxious to meet him."

"The original of the portrait," she said hesitatingly, "will never more be seen alive."

"So it is not your brother?"

"It was his friend. He died young and many have wept for him."

"It gives you pain to speak of it, Teresa; forgive me for asking so many officious questions."

He again took his place at the window. The color had gone from her face and her eyes looked stony. After a pause, in which only the swish of the brook could be heard, she voluntarily continued:

"You are right, he was kind and impetuous; a child could deceive him, and yet for those whom he loved he would have cast himself into Vesuvius if they had asked it. Men are all bad, Tomaso says. But Toma selected him from the rest and chose wisely. Whoever looked at him knew that no purer soul breathed. Is it a wonder that Tomaso hates the sea which has swallowed up such a friend?—that he has carried a heavy heart since that day they sailed out together, and my brother came home alone?"

"He, too, was a fisherman like your brother?"

"He was a singer, sir, but a poor fisher lad; his parents still live. While yet a child he moved all hearts when he began to sing in the churches. A rich uncle of his, who kept a hotel on the beach, let him study music under a master; he intended to appear in opera. And now to think that it was on the day of his debut, when all Naples talked of nothing else, that he came toward evening to my brother—for they had known each other from childhood and had always been fast friends.

"'Toma,' he said, 'shall we go sailing?'

"'I have work to do, Nino,' said my brother; 'the nets must be pulled in and my man Beppo must go with me.'

"'Leave him at home, Toma, I will help you. I haven't forgotten how to handle them.'

"And so the two sailed out. I can see them yet, my brother at the rudder, Nino at the oars. His hair was lighted up by the evening sun and his eyes were turned toward our house. Always that look appears before my soul. And the sun had scarcely set when I heard strokes of the oars, and sprang to the door to greet him—but Tomaso was alone in the boat and rowed like one crazed and called to me:

"'Good evening, Teresa; I greet you from Nino—he sleeps at the bottom of the sea!' and I heard no more."

"Horrible! How was it possible for such a catastrophe to happen when the two were together?" said the German.

"The heavy net dragged him under. The woooden peg upon which it was fastened suddenly gave way and shot overboard while he was entangled in the mesh. The boat turned over, and when Tomaso rose to the surface, he saw the empty boat quietly drifting in the evening glow, and of Nino only the straw-hat, with the band which I had put on it the day before—"

"Poor Nino!"

"Do you pity him? He went immediately to Paradise and sings before the throne of the Madonna with his golden voice. Pity my brother, sir; for his happiness lies buried in the sea and no diver can bring it back. Since that day he has never laughed, my poor Tomaso. Before he came into the mountains he burned his boat and his nets, and the people who stood on shore said: 'He is right, poor fellow!' for everyone knew that they had been like brothers."

She was silent and looked down into the ravine, her hands in her lap. But the poet held his tablet idly on his knee and mused over the singular fate which could be read in her face. All the bitterness of the experience seemed to be gone, and only the pure picture of the youth stood before her soul, and the golden voice seemed to surround her.

The German was horrified when he saw her beautiful features suddenly darken in ungovernable agitation. Like a swan that sees a snake, she trembled all over and sprang from her seat; she breathed excitedly; her lips grew pale and twitched convulsively.

"What is it, Teresa, for Heaven's sake?" he asked, bewildered.

She tried in vain to speak. His look followed the direction of hers, which was fixed intently upon a point at the end of the ravine. But what he saw amazed him; for it was nothing gruesome, but a form not less attractive than Teresa's.

A blond young woman, clad entirely in black, was wading cautiously through the water on her way to the mill. She carried her shoes and stockings in her left hand, with her right she held her folded coat. A straw hat, from which fluttered broad black ribbons, had been blown far back on her head by the wind, and the pink and white of her fair face could already be discerned from the distance. But her eyes rested on the path.

"Who is that woman, Teresa?" asked the visitor, "and why did the sight of her change you so?"

"What will he say?" she muttered to herself, without heeding the question. "She has become still more beautiful—worse than ever. What does that black mean? If the old man should be dead! Holy Madonna!"

A wild torrent of thoughts seemed to engulf her. "She is coming!" she finally said. "She is coming! We do not fear her, we know her."

Then, recollecting that she was not alone, she spoke rapidly: "You must go into the mill-room. She must not find you here; she hates me and who knows how she would slander me if she should meet a stranger here with me. Get up, sir, and for God's sake keep quiet, so that she cannot hear you. I think you will not be detained long."

"If I am in your way here, Teresa, I will go out there on the other side of the gorge."

"You could not get out on that side, and you dare not go down past the vixen."

"Have you considered it well, Teresa? What if your brother should come into the mill-room and find a stranger hidden there?"

"My brother knows me," she replied proudly. "Go!"

"But wait. Who is she? What do you fear from this woman?"

"Everything; but I know Tomaso. She is the wife of Nino's uncle. When they found him washed up on the bank, she shed no tear; may God forgive her—I cannot! Now she wishes to rob me of my brother, the deceitful creature. But Tomaso knows her. He and I—I and he—who can part us? Go into that room, sir, and keep still. I shall tell my brother afterwards why I have done it."

She hurried him in and shut the door tight; then he heard how she hastened through the back door to the meadow. Left alone in his prison he could not at first restrain his excitement and anxiety. But soon the charm of the adventure gained the upper hand and he pondered as to how he should conduct himself in the event of any possible emergency. He looked around at the many strange appliances; he saw the simple wheelwork, the large sieves and tubs, the millstones of different sizes that leaned against the wall.

There in the corner was Tomaso's bed; a prayer book lay on the cover, a consecrated bowl of holy water hung on the wall at its head. On the side of the room next the gorge, there were large openings through which the light sifted in past the great clumsy spokes of the wheel. Having discovered an opening in the wall which overlooked most of the room he had just left, he posted himself at it and waited with watchful anxiety for what might happen.

It was not long before the brother and sister came in from the meadow. Tomaso's face under his thick black hair was as like his sister's in expression as though they were twins. A deep though controlled agitation made every muscle tense, and an expression of dread was

to be seen in his dark eyes. His jacket slipped from his shoulder without his noticing it; he stood long at the table with crossed arms, and nodded at times, as though attentive to his sister, who held his arm, and spoke in excited whispers, inaudible to the German.

But his thoughts seemed far away. At times his full underlip trembled; yet he was silent. He could not be over thirty years old; the spy in the mill-room thought he had never seen a finer specimen of a man.

Some one knocked at the outer door. In an instant Teresa flew from her brother's side to a seat on the hearth, on which the distaff stood leaning. When Tomaso, without leaving his place, called "Come in!" and the door opened, Teresa was swinging her distaff as though she had been sitting there for an hour. Her face, also, was cold and placid.

The blond woman came in with some hesitation, and when she had given her first greeting, busied herself with her clothes in order to hide her embarrassment. She shook the drops from her cloak, threw down her shoes, and drew them on her naked feet. Her face, heated by the climb, glowed becomingly, and the black dress made the delicacy of her coloring and the golden blond of her hair, seem so much the more wonderful in this southern land. Every movement was quiet, graceful, half consciously, half naturally charming. And the brown eyes carried in them all the fire of the Neapolitan heaven.

"Good evening, Teresa! How do you do, Tomaso?" she said.

"Is it you, Lucia?" said Teresa. "What brings you from Naples to our solitude?"

"Take a seat, Lucia, and be welcome," said the brother, without approaching her.

She accepted the invitation and seated herself at the window.

"I had business in Carotta," she began, while she took off the straw hat and pushed her hair from her forehead. "I thought I'd visit you once more before I return home, Teresa. The path up here is rough; we have had bad weather."

"It was good for the mill," said Teresa shortly.

Lucia's eyes glanced around the room and at Tomaso's face. The three people knew that decisive words would be uttered, and each wished to leave the beginning to one of the others.

"Bring a glass of wine for Lucia!" said Tomaso, without looking at his sister. Teresa spun diligently on.

After some irresolution, the visitor spoke: "Never mind the wine; I have not long to stay. Evening is about to close in, and my boat waits for me at the landing of Carotta, for I must be in Naples to-night. How long it is since we met! Why do you never come to Naples, Teresa? The winter must be hard here in the gorge."

"No time is hard for me when I have my brother," answered the maiden. "And what have I to seek in Naples? No one there attracts me—no one."

Again all were silent. At last the man turned to his sister and said quietly: "Have you stabled the animal for the night, Teresa?"

She quivered, for she understood the hint. And when she glanced up she knew from his steadfast look that he wished her to go. She hastily pushed the distaff away and left the room. She could be heard outside noisily busying herself with the barred door of the stable in order to avert any suspicion that she listened.

The heart of the German beat fast as he watched the two alone. Although the past of these people was unknown to him, yet he knew enough to expect a scene of the most tragic kind. Now he looked at the man, now at the beautiful woman, and his own position became every moment more painful, for he felt that the words which hovered on the lips of both ought to be heard by no other. He determined to withdraw into the farthest corner of the mill-room. But a step might betray him, so he remained where he stood. The silence within lasted only a short time. Then Lucia said:

"Your sister hates me, Tomaso; what harm have I done her?"

The brother shrugged his shoulders.

"See," she continued, "it has often robbed me of rest to think that she and you are so alone. She will allow no one to speak to you. She will have you all to herself."

"You are wrong," he said dryly. "I had my own reasons for leaving Naples."

"I know, Toma, I know. A child could understand that you lost all pleasure in the sea after that misfortune. But it would have returned to you by this time if Teresa had not talked you into shutting yourself up here in the wilderness. Do we not all live through our fate and yet are obliged to endure it among men? Does not affliction come from Heaven, and dare we let it so harden us that we hate the people who are not responsible for it?"

"Who are not responsible? That is the question."

She looked at him penetratingly. "I do not understand you, Toma. There is much that I do not understand since you left. Why did you not answer the letters which I sent you by Angelo the farmer? He told me that he handed them both to you; otherwise I might think that Teresa had intercepted them."

"The letters? I burnt them."

"And what do you now answer to them?"

"Lucia, I did not read one word of them." She trembled, but he continued: "Angelo told me that your husband was dead. You are young and beautiful, Lucia, you will soon find another—a younger. Be happy with him."

He threw the piece of chalk away and paced up and down with his hands behind him. She followed his perturbation with anxious attention. Finally she said:

"Does Teresa know that I have become a widow?"

"She first guessed it from your black dress. Your name has not been mentioned by us for four years."

"As you did not read the letters, you do not know that my husband willed you three hundred piasters; they are laid aside for you at Naples."

"They may lie there till the judgment day," he said without consideration, "if you do not decide to give them to the poor. I would not take them even if I needed them more than I do, thank God! Money from your husband, Lucia! Rather starvation!"

"How you rave," she said quietly, but in a voice which shook with dismay. "How shall I take all this? It used to be otherwise between us, Tomaso!"

"So much the worse that it was otherwise!"

She got up from her seat, took a few steps forward, and then timidly looked at him. But he occupied himself with the boards of the table, behind which he had retreated, as though he wanted something between him and the beautiful woman as a protection against her charms. She had laid her right hand close under her full breast. The German saw through the wall-crack the blue veins of the round arm and how the little hand trembled over the beating heart.

"What have I done to you, Toma?" She spoke almost inaudibly. "If anyone has slandered me to you, tell me all, and I will lay my finger on the Host and swear that I am guiltless. Since you left I have lived with my husband like one buried, and no one can say that the landlady of the Siren has given him a look or a smile."

"That is your affair, and was the affair of the dead. Why did you come here, and why do you say that to me?"

Great tears filled her eyes when she heard the hard words, and he felt keenly how deep the stab had gone, although he did not look at her. After awhile he said:

"How does it help us to speak as we have done? Let us be plain, Lucia. You have come to tell me that you are now free and no one stands between us. But I say to you, that someone does stand between us, and we are doomed to eternal fires, and to be forever parted."

Notwithstanding this firm speech, hope again rose in her.

"For our sins?" she replied quickly. "With what have we to reproach ourselves? Has our love ever borne other fruit than sighs and tears? If I should now fall into your arms, would it not be our first kiss? I know too well who stands between us, Tomaso; it is your sister."

He shook his head decisively. "No! not she. But do not ask me, and do not think that you can ever remove our enemy from the way; he is not among the living. Go back to Naples, Lucia, and never come to the mill again. I will not, I dare not, see you again."

She came close to the table opposite him; a violent agitation convulsed him, and he suddenly looked up. All the horror of a despairing passion was depicted on her face.

"I will not go," she said with firmness, "unless I know all. Tomaso, my husband is dead. Nino has long been in his grave, and you say—and I see it—that your heart is not changed; who still stands between us, Tomaso?"

The table upon which the young man leaned trembled.

"I will confess it to you," he gasped in a hollow voice, "but then go, and do not ask anything more. Nino stands between us."

"You deceive me," she answered. "You wish to divert my thoughts from Teresa. But some day you will repent that you played with me and then cast me off. And she also shall repent the unnaturalness of holding you hidden away here as the miser hides his treasure. I go."

"Before God, I do not deceive you, Lucia. It is true that my sister has never forgiven you a certain thing. But that is not it—and you do not understand when I say: 'Nino stands between us!' No one knows it, Teresa least of all. It would kill her if she knew."

"And if I knew it?" she questioned.

"Then all thoughts of the suffering Tomaso would vanish, and you would never again find your way to the mill," he replied, and covered his face with his hands.

"You are wrong," she said; "that can never happen. It is a delusion which separates us and I will blow it aside as smoke if you but show it to me. If not, I will have no rest day or night, and before a year has passed you will hear that you have sent me to my grave."

He shuddered, and seemed to struggle desperately with himself. Then, motionless, he looked at her long, ardently, disconsolately, and spoke:

"It must out, I will not have the consuming torture of seeing and renouncing you a second time hanging over me. Swear to me by your eternal happiness, Lucia, that you will tell no one what, till now, no one has heard from me, and what you now shall hear; that even in the confessional and at death your lips will not divulge the secret. It is not because it would undo me if people were to know it; but Teresa could not live through it. Swear, Lucia!"

She lifted her hand. "By our eternal salvation, I swear too you, Tomaso, that no one beside you and me shall know it."

He sighed deeply and threw himself into a chair, clasping his knee in his hands and staring at the floor.

"Lucia," he said faintly, "I told the truth; Nino does stand between us, now in death as formerly in life. He was pure and blameless as Abel, and his Cain also stood at his side. Cain fled to the wilderness; do you now understand?"

She was silent.

"You are right," he continued. "Who can comprehend it? But there come times when the power of hell sways us, so that it is as though an evil spirit entered our breast, overpowering all upright thoughts, and leaving the devilish free to dominate us.

"How I loved the young man! I would have killed the one who had dared to speak to me of him with even a breath of wrong! When I heard him sing, I forgot all cares; when he came into my house, everything seemed bright. One could not think more of

his own brother. I was proud of him. And how he loved me! Even when he had become famous and sang to counts and princes, and the proud ladies themselves were envious of each other, awaiting a glance from him—even then he came as formerly to our house on the beach, and many a time when I, with my net over my shoulder, met him on the Avenue, he made some grand acquaintance wait, while he took my arm and walked on with me.

"No one was so amiable as he; nothing false was in him, nothing sinful. He could have had any woman in Naples, but he did not care for one of them. I often laughed at him on this account; I did not know at that time who was the cause of his indifference.

"The only mistake of his life was to take me to his uncle's house in Naples—where I met you, Lucia! In that hour I lost Nino, through no fault of his, Heaven knows. Who could bear him a grudge for guarding the honor of his benefactor? It never occurred to him to reproach me. He was blameless as the archangel Raphael; but he also knew the world and understood that all were not as he.

"When he discovered how it stood between us, Lucia, never a word escaped his lips. But I well knew that he watched us. I chafed under this; a hundred times I swore to renounce all friendship for him; but when I saw him I bit my lips and said nothing, and when I heard his voice I would almost repent my love for you.

"It seemed as though he could read my every thought. Many a time he talked to me about his uncle; how good he was, how unsuspicious, and how much the old man had done for him. Then he would look at me confidingly, as though to say:

" 'No, Toma, it is not possible for you to grieve a man to whom your friend owes everything. And does he not place the utmost confidence in you?'

"I understood him well, but when I next met you, the madness of love cast aside all resolutions, all scruples. My conscience withered like a tree near the flowing lava. A whole year I walked about at my wits' end—I, who had never learned the lesson of patience! I began to have dark thoughs. I wished to mix something which an acquaintance had given me in Nino's wine; it would cause one to sleep twenty-four hours without waking. Then I shuddered at myself. What if it were poison or would injure his voice? I did not do it, but he remained a thorn in my flesh, and from that hour I lost ground.

"And the day approached when he was to sing in opera for the first time. You well know, Lucia, how we had looked forward to that hour. Had I not known you—my house might have burned to the ground, and I would not have left my seat until Nino had uttered his last note—the note that would mark his triumph. But my thoughts were all turned on seeing you, who had feigned illness so that you could stay at home, and I slipped out after the first act.

"After the play, and his great triumph, he came and persuaded me to take him out on the sea. What angel or devil had whispered to him our secret? For he knew it, and scarcely were we alone when he said that he must speak plainly to me. I denied every charge.

" 'Toma,' he said, 'if you do not promise by our long friendship to keep away, it will break my heart, and all that I have hoped for will be lost. My brother, I expect this of you! I could indeed go and warn my uncle, but then he would know that his wife does not love him, and we would be forever separated, you and I. But promise me; surely I am worth this one sacrifice from you.'

"I, stiff-necked, remained silent and looked at the nets, and finally did not hear what he said, for your likeness stood before me, Lucia, and the blood throbbed in my temples.

"An hour afterward I came back to the coast alone in the boat—"

The last words died away somber and

toneless, and the two forms, he in his seat, his face falling lower toward his knees, the woman, pale as death, still as a statue, remained there while the light in the room waned.

Outside Teresa's voice rang out suddenly above the rushing of the stream, as though to remind her brother that it was time to call her back.

At sound of the voice he started, arose, and bent over the table near the motionless woman.

"No, Lucia," he said very quietly, "I did not lie about it. The net did drag him into the water, his feet did get entangled in the mesh, and I did not turn the boat over, but that is not all—I still sat at the rudder when he had already sunk. My body was ice, my eyes stared at the whirlpoool near me which had closed again over his head. I saw the bubbles rising as though to call to me: 'He still breathes under there.'

"And then—then, one of his hands appeared above the waves and reached up for the strong hand of his friend—only a boat's length from him—a silver ring on his little finger glanced in the sun—I had only to push out the oar to him, and he would have been saved, Lucia! Did I not wish to save him? Must I not have wished it?

"But there sat the demon in my breast and paralyzed every fiber, and hardened my heart. I sat as though struck; I was giddy. I tried to scream—and still I stared at the hand—and the hand sank, now to the ring, now to the finger-tips, and now—it disappeared.

"Then hell was let loose in me; I screamed as though mad. I sprang overboard, so that the boat upset, and dived down, and again came up, and again down, and could not find him, although I have, hundreds of times, obtained a small coin thrown into the sea—and at last I swam back to my boat with despair in my heart.

"But the measure was not yet full. When I came back to the house without him, my sister collapsed and fell to the floor; the ring on the finger of that hand which had risen above the waves was her ring. Days before, they had exchanged rings without my knowledge."

He cast himself back again into the chair and turned his face with closed eyes to the ceiling. The listener in the mill room heard his heavy breathing, while the wretched young woman passed her hand repeatedly over her forehead to wipe away the cold drops. The terrible revelation had ennobled her features, which were white and thoughtful; she was more beautiful than before, but she did not now think of her looks.

At last Tomaso seemed to awake as from a stupor.

"Are you still here, Lucia?" he said quickly. "What can you now want of Tomaso? Do you not see now what stands between us—the hand with the silver ring, which appears to me everywhere, and points to Heaven? If I should take you to the altar, and you reached out your hand with its golden circlet, my hair would stand on end, my eyes would leave their sockets; gold or silver, Lucia's hand seems like Nino's. Go home, Lucia; keep your oath and pray for Tomaso!"

He stood up and walked to the hearth. The German saw how violently Lucia trembled.

"Will it never be otherwise?" she finally breathed.

Standing with veiled face, he only shook his head with a gesture of denial.

"May God have you in his keeping, Toma; and the Madonna shed comfort on your heart, and sleep by night on your eyes, Toma, and—upon mine—which will forever weep for you! I thank you that I know all; otherwise I could not have borne it, that we had to lose each other. I thank you for still loving me; do not cease to, it is all that is left in life for me."

He did not look around at her, did not see the tears which silently trickled from her eyes, nor the gesture of both hands in leave-taking, as though wrenching herself away. She left the door open behind her, and Teresa, who entered immediately after her de-

parture, found her brother, still at the hearth.

"Toma!" she wildly sobbed, as she threw her arms around the impassive man. "You have renounced her! You are mine, we remain free!"

She now noticed the deep paleness of his face and was afraid.

"Oh, is she so deeply wrapped up in your life?" she wailed. "No, Toma, not that, you shall not do that for me. Your voice can still reach her; call her back, my brother, say to her——"

"Still, child!" he sharply interrupted, and forced a smile to his lips—but his eyes looked down upon her with the most intense pain. "It is over and at an end. I make no sacrifice. If you had not wakened from your swoon four years ago, I would have spoken to her just as I did. It will soon be night. I will go out into the ravine and see how it is up above with the millstream. I will see you again before bedtime, my sister, my Teresa! To-morrow will be a new day!"

He kissed her on the forehead and disappeared through the door which looked out upon the meadow.

After some time had elapsed, the stranger took courage to open the mill-room door. Teresa shrank back; she had wholly forgotten him.

"You heard everything?" she said earnestly. "Do not fear that I will question you. Tomaso does not wish me to know it; that is enough for me. Where lives such another brother as he? Say whether my lot is not to be envied! O Tomaso!"

He assented silently and stretched out his hand to her. "Good night, Teresa," he said. "I need not ask you never to tell your brother who heard his talk with Lucia. It could only be a hateful thought to him that a stranger was witness, where his only sister was shut out."

"He shall never know it," she replied solemnly. "To grieve a brother like him—how could that be, when he devotes his whole life to me!"

The poet felt that he ought to leave lest he betray how fearfully her innocent devotion to her brother was misplaced. Words of deepest sympathy leaped to his tongue; he suppressed them, for she expected a pleasant greeting and the assurance that her lot was enviable.

He saw the silver ring on her finger, and up on the wall the likeness of the dead, and said to himself, "Tomaso sees this day after day, and must live and endure, so that his sister will love him!

"Teresa," he said, "may God preserve to you the peace which you now have. Farewell! I will take your picture with me otherwise than I had thought, but imperishable!"

They did not talk much on the way down the gorge, for he was again on the animal's back. After he had parted with her, he stood long and looked up to the mill, and allowed his hot forehead to be fanned by the coolness from the brook.

As he climbed a steep declivity which jutted abruptly into the sea, he spied on its outer edge the form of a man whose hair was tossed about his head in the wind. The man, immovable, looked out over the sea upon the route from Carotta to Naples, where a tiny boat sped on with full sails.

* * *

FORTUNATE

BETTINA—Lately I've had such wonderful luck! My last cook stayed with me six months and my last husband one year!"—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

FATHER

BY MAURICE LEVEL

WHEN the last shovelful of earth had fallen upon the coffin, when the last handclasp had been given, the father and son went home, walking very slowly, with the strange feeling of men who have struggled a long time and have lost.

The cottage was still impregnated with the perfume of flowers, and all about it was very still; at least it seemed so, after all the coming and going of the last few days. Now it appeared to be very empty to these two, when they opened the door. The old servant had put everything in order, yet when they entered it seemed as though they had returned from a very long voyage, but without the joy of home-coming, without that exquisite sensation which translates itself into the words: "Oh! how good it is to get home." Everything was very clean. Everything was in its place. The cat was curled up by the fireplace and the winter sun stole timidly through the windows.

Father sat down in his armchair by the fireplace and sighed: "Your poor mamma!" That was all he said. And then two tears came from his good, honest eyes and rolled down the dear old face which the cold had reddened a little. Then, feeling the desire to hear something besides the purring of the cat, the tick-tack of the clock, and the crackling of the wood that was burning in the fireplace; feeling, without knowing it, that peculiar pride of those who yet live, when they have bidden farewell to those who will never return, he said:

"Did you see the Duponts? They were all there, and I was so glad to see that the grandfather came too. Your mother liked them so much. But how is it that your friend Bremaud did not come? Oh, yes, I understand, I understand. There were so many people there that I probably did not see him." Then he sighed again. "My own poor, little boy!" He looked tenderly at this big boy of twenty-five, who was seated close to him, crying all by himself.

The old servant came in on tiptoes, opening the door so quietly that no one could have heard her. Then she said: "Come, sir, you must not stay like that. You must eat something."

Both looked up; yes, it was true. It was necessary to eat. Life seemed to be flowing back to them. They were hungry; not the good hunger of happy days when it was so comfortable to sit down and put their elbows on the table, but the hunger of an animal with an empty stomach. Hitherto it had seemed to both of them that it would be shameful to think of eating at such a moment. Now they looked at each other, both fearing to sit down at that table and see the vacant chair.

Then the father, his voice broken by a sob, murmured:

"Yes, you are right. We must eat something," and then turning to his son he said: "Yes, dear, we must eat."

The son nodded and stood up: "Yes, father," he said. "I will change my coat and be back in a minute."

He went out and as he was going to his room the old servant came to him and whispered: "Monsieur Jean, I have something for you. A letter your mamma gave to me, a week ago when she knew that she could not recover. She asked me to give it to you after—well, after—here it is."

He stared at the servant, startled. She stood before him hesitating, timidly holding out the envelope with her trembling hand. There seemed to come to him the premonition of an infinite suf-

fering, of some secret thing about to be revealed, which was right there, close to him. It was with an effort that he managed to answer very low:

"Give it to me."

Then he went into his mother's room. Once there, without thinking, he turned the key. How deserted, how desolate the room looked! There was no fire in the grate and the furniture seemed to be artificially arranged.

He turned the letter over and over and this living writing of the dead one sent a cold tremor through him. This well-loved writing that he had so often seen before and that now seemed to quiver strangely upon the white paper!

In the other room he could hear the servant going back and forth, arranging the table for supper.

He opened the envelope and read:

MY DARLING SON: I feel that the hour is coming when we must say an eternal farewell. I feel no weakness, and almost no regret, because the time has come when you have reached the age of manhood and do not need me any more. I believe that I have been a good mother to you. But there is a secret which I have not had the courage to tell you hitherto, and yet you must know it. The mother you have loved, and above all respected, to whom you appealed in all your childish troubles and to whom you confided all your sorrows as a man, is guilty—guilty of a great crime. You are not the son of the man you have always called father. In my life I had one great love. My crime was that I did not confess it. Your father, your real father, lives. He has watched you and has loved you. I know that. You are now old enough to decide upon your future. You can remake your whole life if you wish to. You can be rich to-morrow if you can have the courage which I never had. I am doing a cowardly act, I have lived a cowardly life, but I do not wish to die like a coward. A hundred times I have been upon the point of fleeing from this house and carrying you away with me in my arms. I lacked the energy, the strength of mind, to do it. I would have done it had the slightest occasion arisen; had your father had a suspicion; had he ever said to me a single word in anger. But no, none. He was always, always good.

The young man stopped, stunned by this revelation. His mother had loved! And she had kept the secret so long. She had been able to talk, to smile, without a quiver of her lips to betray her secret or her remorse. And he, he had always been pitiless toward the weaknesses of other women, and all his pride and joy, all his veneration had been condensed in one word: "Mother." And he had grown up there, with them, a living insult to that grand, good man who had so loved him.

All the memories of his youth came to him. Looking back he could see himself a very little boy, taking long walks through the streets and holding desperately to father's hand. Then he grew older. A serious illness held him for months between life and death, and he could see his father, always seated at his bedside, trying to smile through the tears that always would come to his eyes. Then the wheel of time revolves. There are business troubles and he remembers the conversations he had overheard while he was lying in bed, supposed to be asleep. His mother said very little; his father said: "I will economize; I will not smoke any more; I will not go to the restaurant; the clothes I have will last for some time; the boy must not want for anything. By saving here and there we will be able to do everything for him that he needs. Children have time enough to suffer in the future, why add to their sorrows when they are young?"

And that was the kind of man she deceived!

He began to cry. That sentence in the letter came back to him: "You are old enough to decide upon your future."

It was true. He had not the right to hesitate. Not for a moment did the question of wealth tempt him, but he must have the courage she did not have. He would go away and say nothing. He would go very, very far away and never come back. And then the shame, the shame of it all would go with him. How would it be possible for him now to sit down at table with this good man and hear his kindly voice say: "Darling," and then talk about his mother.

He had taken his decision. "Oh, mother, mother," he sobbed. "How could you do it?"

Farewell to that quiet, pleasant life which he had always lived, farewell to the home, farewell to the hearty welcome, for now he had no right to it, no right to continue a life of lying and hypocrisy.

He sat very quiet, numbed by his suffering. Then he heard voices in the dining-room:

"My poor little boy! How he will feel it. He is now in his mother's room and I know he is crying. What a misfortune! I am getting very old, but fortunately for me I have him left. He is a good boy, and will never leave me."

The young man listened, startled, and bit his lips till the blood came. The father kept on talking, and little by little, as the son listened, his thoughts took another turn. That which he had thought his duty now seemed less easy. The words: "He will not leave me," rang in his ears.

Had he the right to leave this poor being, to let him grow old seated alone by a deserted fireside? Leave him! Would that be fair payment for all the tenderness he had had lavished upon him, all the efforts that had been made to protect him, all the privations that had been endured for his sake? But he was not *his* son. His very presence here, under this roof, had something odious about it, something that could not be endured. But he must decide, decide now, without a moment's delay.

He still held the letter in his hand, and he began to read it again. "I would have done it had the slightest occasion arisen; had your father had a suspicion, had he ever said a single word to me in anger. But no, none. He was always, always good."

Now he could hear his father's voice again. He was talking to the old servant.

"Yes, I lived twenty-seven years with her, and during all that time there never was a cloud that obscured for a moment the sun of our happiness, not a cloud."

The young man took up the letter again and began to read: "Now I am going to tell you the name of your real father. It is——"

His hand shook. One more look and the name would be forever graven upon his memory, would permeate his whole being and then he could not——

Now a voice called him, very softly and very tenderly. "Come, come, my boy, come to supper."

A great tremor shook him from head to foot and for a second he closed his eyes. Then he took a match and set fire to the letter. He watched it burn slowly, and when the flame reached his fingers he dropped the ashes upon the floor.

He went to the door, opened it and stood for a moment looking at that kindly face, at those eyes reddened by weeping, and at those trembling hands; and then he went to him and took him in his arms and said:

"Father! My own, dear, old father!"

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TO burn a candle at both ends is a bad way to make both ends meet.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

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BOOKKEEPING

SECRETARY—Under what head shall I put down the cost of the operation performed on the baroness?

BARON—General repairs.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Simplicissimus."*

THE FOUNT OF LIFE

BY HENRIK PONTOPPIDAN

THE front door bell of the mayor's large, silent house was rung very softly. It was the corpulent little wife of the apothecary who stood waiting out on the paved doorstep, with a large bouquet of yellow easter-lilies in her hand.

After a long wait she was admitted by the housekeeper, who, with a mute greeting, conducted her into the dining-room on the other side of the hall, where the faithful domestics had so often of late received people calling to inquire after their sick mistress.

"How are things today, my dear Miss Mogensen?"

"Well, they're no better, I'm afraid," the housekeeper replied, in the manner of one who knows more than she cares to tell. "Mrs. Hagenstorm's sister arrived from Germany today."

"So it was really she! Walking up the hill by the mill this morning with my husband, I saw a strange lady driving, with a trunk in the back of her carriage. She wore a veil, so I couldn't distinguish her face. But she looked so like a foreigner that I made up my mind about it. Has she changed much?"

"Mrs. von Rauch?"

"Yes."

The housekeeper smiled sympathetically. "I can't say, you know. She was never here in my time."

"Of course not; how silly of me. But believe me, Miss Morgensen, as a young woman she was a beauty. You could never decide which of those two sisters was the better looking. But I, for my part, was fonder of your mistress. Do you think I may come in?"

"No, I'm afraid not. Mrs. Hagenstorm has passed a bad night. But I'll gladly inquire."

"Oh, please do, my dear Miss Morgensen."

"Perhaps you'd like me to take these flowers to Mrs. Hagenstorm?"

"Yes, if you please, but they're so modest."

In the bluish white bed, turned out from the wall so as to leave an ample space at both sides, the sick woman was lying on her back, a small cushion under her head. The bed was about the only article of furniture in the fairly large chamber, where the curtains had been taken down and replaced by a narrow strip of fringe at the top, to make the room as light and airy as possible.

Over by the head of the bed stood low toilet tables which were crowded with bottles and fine little jars, articles so adored by women who are beautiful in themselves and happy, and rejoice in their charm, and which with their mirrors and various embellishments represent an altar of love for all women who love.

The mayor's wife had not wished to be without all these familiar trifles, even during her illness. Besides, they hid from sight the medicine flasks and pill-boxes, which she did not care to see.

The table moreover contained several long-stemmed roses in a vase, already somewhat withered, and a small silver bowl with peppermints and bon-bons. In the center of all this a cabinet size photograph of the mayor was to be seen.

This last article she had also wanted to have at hand always, and had often taken it up and gazed at it through the long, lonely hours she had lain here, struggling with her fear of death and her self-reproaches.

Seated in the wicker chair, on the other side of the bed, was her sister—tall and stately, alive with vigorous health. She had her back turned toward the unshaded windows. Outside was a garden where the spring sun shone down upon the naked tree-tops.

Major von Rauch's wife was five years her sister's senior. In Germany she generally declared her age to be thirty-three, but in reality forty would have been nearer the truth. However, she looked extremely well, elegantly dressed as she was. A resemblance between the sisters it was no longer easy to discover; the years and this wasting disease of months had been too unsparing for that, with the delicate beauty of the mayor's wife. The light of her warm brown eyes was extinguished. Her delicate mouth, which had had the freshness of a dewy flower, lay now bloodlessly drawn about the white rows of teeth. These teeth and the long brown-red hair had alone defied the destructive approach of death.

The two ladies were daughters of a notorious speculator, who back in the sixties had led a gay life in the very same little Jutlandish town, where the younger of the girls afterward married her present husband. A year after the war the older one had married an officer in the enemy's army, who during the siege had been quartered at their home. Since then she had not visited her own country, and only once had she seen her sister, that being on the latter's wedding journey. They had then arranged for a meeting at one of the large hotels by Lake Como, where that spring Mrs. von Rauch was alleged to be taking the "open air cure," while in reality she was there for the purpose of being near her lover, an Austrian country squire.

However, during all these years the sisters had corresponded regularly, and the reunion this morning affected both deeply.

Nevertheless, the mayor's wife had little by little grown somewhat reticent. Again and again she betrayed a sense of distraction which it was plain could not be the result of her usually restless self-centeredness. It was almost as if she felt afraid of her sister and that lady's many questions, some of which, at times, she appeared not to hear. Simultaneously, she would watch her intently in a stealthy fashion, her eyelashes drawn down, as if to read her thoughts in her face.

They had spoken at length of the wedding journey, fifteen years ago, and of their meeting among the greenish-blue mountains of Northern Italy. The sick woman, who largely preferred to avoid a discussion about present things, continually led the tide of their talk back to the far-away days by Lake Como, "the most delightful days of her life," as she called them, until suddenly she turned her head away and interrupted herself, because she could not bear the thought of them any more.

A moment later there was a light tap at the door. The housekeeper entered stealthily, carrying the apothecary's wife's bouquet.

"What is it now?" she asked a little impatiently.

"Mrs. Bergmann is outside. She asks if she may come in and see you."

"No, no; it's out of the question. I can receive no one today. Tell Mrs. Bergmann that."

"She asked me to bring you these flowers. May I leave them here?"

"Oh, no; there are so many. They smell too strong, too, I think. Take them into the sitting room."

"That's almost a shame," said the lady's sister, who had risen and taken the bouquet. "It's really nice. Let me at least take out a few flowers and put them into a glass here in place of the roses. They are withering anyway."

"Oh, please don't. I don't want to part with them. They will last a little longer at any rate. It was my doctor who brought them. They were so beautiful. Please express my gratitude to Mrs. Bergmann, and tell her I'm terribly sorry, but I can receive no one today."

"Who is this Mrs. Bergmann?" asked Mrs. von Rauch, when the house-

keeper had disappeared with the flowers. "One of your friends here?"

"She's the apothecary's wife. But, of course, that's so; you know her. She's my old class-mate, Laurine Holm."

"Yes, the name sounds familiar."

"Don't you remember her? Mother used to set her up as the horrible example to us—'wiggle-waggle,' she called her."

"Ah, yes; yes, indeed; she looked pretty well, didn't she? Blond and of a rather fine complexion. And so now she's here."

"Yes, she comes about every day to hear how I'm getting on, and when I'm not too broken up, I let her come in. Really she's so nice, though she bores me awfully."

In the midst of all her serious concern for the sick woman, her sister had to smile a bit at her. In this indifference toward her women well-wishers and admirers, she recognized her spoilt little sister.

"I should really like to see her again," she said. "Do you suppose she would remember me?"

The sister did not reply. It was not that she pretended not to have heard the question, but she had caught the sound of a man's step inside on the carpeted sitting-room floor, and the sound forced the meagre remainder of her blood to leap up into her cheeks.

Immediately thereupon the door opened, revealing the tall form of the mayor. He came straight from his office and was therefore attired in uniform.

He bowed formally to his sister-in-law, and seeing that she made a motion as if to leave the room, he said:

"I hope you are not going on my account?"

"Not at all," she replied. "But I hear that an old schoolmate of mine is in the house just now, and I should like to meet her. You'll excuse me?"

The mayor bowed again with somewhat strained politeness.

Over in the bed, however, his wife had already stretched out her hand to him. Because of the presence of the sister, she was sorry to see him in uniform. She knew not why, but in spite of his erectness, the uniform was not becoming to him. And then he always buttoned the frock in such a way as to make it show wrinkles in the chest and back. At the first glance she had noticed also that the hanger projected over the collar in the neck.

And yet, when Mrs. von Rauch had retired, and he had stepped over by the bed, she beamed with tenderness. She took his big hand and laid its vein-bulging back to her mouth, kissing it almost stealthily.

"Do you know that we've hardly seen each other all day?" she asked.

"I didn't want to disturb you. Naturally, you and your sister must have had a good deal to talk about together."

"You never disturb me. I have missed you so much all the morning. It's strange, but I almost believe I miss you less when I'm alone than when I have company."

"Yes, so you generally say," he replied, while his face, which was as if carved in knotty oak, assumed an expression still colder and more taciturn. "I think you've overtaxed yourself by talking; your cheeks are literally aglow."

"Yes, and I'm tired now—and so restless," she sighed, and as she pressed her cheek against his hand, like a child seeking comfort on a pillow, she added: "Lise and I have been speaking a great deal of days of old—of the time we met her in Bellagio, while on our honeymoon. That wonderful night by the water—do you remember it?"

"Yes; we had nice weather," he answered drily.

She again sighed, this time more deeply, and lay now for a while with her eyes closed. She had observed how at her questions a slight start had passed through his form. Immediately afterward he had gently but firmly withdrawn his hand.

"Won't you sit here by me a little while?" she asked, indicating the wicker chair with a wave of her hand, but

without opening her eyes. It was as if she was quite conscious of the humiliation of her appeal, and felt ashamed.

"I haven't time just now. In fact I am on my way to Miss Mogensen's for my cup of cocoa. There are people at the office waiting for me, and at four I must be back in court."

"What time is it now?"

"It's half past two."

"And will you promise to come in and say goodbye before you go?"

"Now, what new foolish notion is that, Marie?"

"You understand me very well. For suppose I were to die while you were away."

"Must you always deal in such unreasonable talk!" he said, but lowered his eyes before the anxiously strained and penetrating look with which she suddenly covered him in mute appeal.

"You know, don't you, what the doctor has said?"

The mayor straightened himself. "Well, yes," he said indulgently. "He says this and he says that. But you ought to try to get a little rest now. You've surely talked more than is good for you."

He turned abruptly and went away. She lay immovable, her mouth quivering, and looked at the closed door, through which his form had disappeared, until her eyes filled and overflowed with tears—like those of a child.

Whenever Mayor Hagenstorm moved about in his office, which was located in a side wing of the building, his manner was both easier and more sympathetic than when he was in his own rooms. He never, it is true, quite cast off a certain professional air of stiffness, and as his self-esteem was a very sensitive quality, it was necessary to deal with him with some caution. But toward people who did not forget his station in life, he would show a simple quality of human kindness, which had made him well liked by the community. Even before coarse criminals he would reveal a sincere appreciation which proved that he possessed, in circumstances where he had no personal interest to take into account, that rare, subtle, deep-divining understanding which seeks the underlying motives, and hence becomes one with the quality of forgiveness.

Altogether he was no ordinary police mannikin, and it was not without good cause that his townspeople felt greatly honored by his presence in their community. He had, in his day, been a prominent member of the bar in Copenhagen, was an LL.D., and considered one of the most excellent names within the world of law. It was accordingly believed, as a matter of course, that he would some day enter the Supreme Court and be clothed in the purple of jurisprudence—when to the general surprise he terminated this promising career and caused himself to be transferred to the wee little town in Jutland, to occupy the office of Mayor.

In Copenhagen, this self-expatriation of his was regarded as a sacrifice he had made in his generous consideration for his wife, whose birth-place the little town was. He himself had no explanation whatever to offer, and now he had been living here for five years, far from all friends and congenial spirits, already half forgotten by these, though never did he make a sign to show that he was not residing here of his own free will and inclination, or that in spite of his reticence he was anything but a perfectly happy man in every respect.

When Mrs. von Rauch, after the lapse of a quarter of an hour, re-entered the sick room, her face wore a thoughtful expression.

In the meantime the sister had raised herself unassisted on her elbow and taken a hand mirror from the dresser in order to arrange her hair a little.

"Do you know it's nearly two o'clock, she remarked. "We may expect the doctor any moment. Won't you sprinkle some cologne about—the air isn't good, I believe."

Mrs. von Rauch complied with her sister's request, and further took a hand at shaking up the bed and smoothing the pillow under the patient's head, all the

while without her sister noticing her altered manner. Thereupon she sat down again in the wicker chair.

But the talk soon flagged. The bodily exertion had been a severe strain upon the invalid's strength. During the moments of low, careless chatter, her eyelids closed, and at length she fell asleep.

The visitor remained sitting by the bed. Her hand under her chin, she looked absently at her sister's face, now so emaciated, so bloodless.

The fact that her little sister's married life was unhappy had been known to her for long. True, Marie had never literally confessed as much in her letters. Indeed, rarely had she been able to write her husband's name without affixing to it a long list of affectionately tender adjectives, all of which, no doubt, were sincerely meant. But between the fine flowing lines of writing there could be distinctly read a loss, a hidden sorrow, which the years had deepened, and which finally had terminated in a state of despair.

Concerning this, Mrs. von Rauch, in her German home, had quickly drawn her own conclusions. Her experience, gathered in the circles where she then moved, and especially in her marriage to a roué of a soldier, had not left her with any great confidence in married life. When her sister, on the occasion of her husband's migration to the provincial town, wrote her to the effect that *she* had absolutely in no way furthered this step, but yet with a little sigh, yielded to her husband's wish—Mrs. von Rauch had interpreted these words as an attempt to cover up a humiliating truth for her. Even though the numerous words of praise she showered upon her husband excluded the possibility of a breach of faith on his part, her sister, she thought, could well have come to wish that he were elsewhere than among the temptations of metropolitan life.

After her talk with the apothecary's wife, however, she had begun to understand that matters stood otherwise with her sister's love-tragedy. The little provincial lady had spoken of the mayor in the most estimable of terms and seemed moreover to entertain no suspicion whatever reflecting on any marital misfortune. Mrs. von Rauch thus had to admit to herself that the mayor, with all his reserved manner of a paragon, did not answer the description she had formed of him in her exile, partly in the image of her own wine-smelling husband.

Then what in heaven's name had happened?

Her thoughts harked back anew to places in the past. She recalled a cousin, the lanky Alexander, who during the early girlhood of her sister was employed in her father's office, and was a daily visitor at their home. He had been much attracted by Marie, who on her part did not seem indifferent to his attentions—happy, as she showed herself to be at an early age, to receive men's homage. At any rate, the cousin at that time was certainly the one she preferred to all the hoard of young and old suitors who each, individually, possessed a little part of her heart. But this fellow was a good-for-nothing, as lazy and unreliable as he was good-looking. It suddenly became necessary to get him out of the town, and from then on, they saw nothing more of him.

Marie was then 17 years of age. Three years were still to pass before all the little loves could merge and mount to one great passion, and she could throw her arms around a man with all the ardent impulsiveness of her little body.

Mrs. von Rauch still remembered distinctly the letter which had announced the engagement. In this she confessed, quite frankly, that her sweetheart was not at all handsome, and yet she was evidently much attracted by his personality. The criminal lawyer—as he then was—had spent a month in her home in connection with a murder case, and this space of time represented the entire length of their acquaintance. The strangeness of the man's manner and habits, which when compared to those of the provincial people, might

easily have acquired a coloring of superior gentlemanliness, in addition to the prominence of his position, and the fame that crowned his name after the discovery of the culprits—all this had tended to make her idealize him.

Mrs. von Rauch's impression of the mayor, at that meeting on the wedding journey, had been quite effaced in the course of the years. In reality she only remembered his eyes, in which there must have dwelt a certain power. On the other hand, she still recollected very vividly the fresh cool breeze which the young people brought with them into the kitchen-odored hotel town, from the mountains, where for a week they had roamed about with staff and bag, like a pair of real fascinated vagabonds, engrossed in themselves and turning their backs upon the rest of the world.

Later, she had often thought that she had never seen two human beings so happy. Marie, who could not generally be accused of candor, least of all when matters of the heart were concerned, had then confided to her that never had she dreamed life could be so wonderfully beautiful. Like a symbol of enraptured charm, she had stood on the steamer's deck, at the departure, her cheek resting on her husband's shoulder, and waved her farewell, until their blending forms disappeared like a vision in the sun's haze.

Yet it was doubtful if she had ever quite forgotten her tall cousin. Mrs. von Rauch could well remember that Marie had on several occasions after her marriage mentioned him in letters and betrayed great sympathy with him because of his wretched fate. With that peculiarly maternal loyalty she kept for those she had once liked, she surely followed him in thought over his crooked ways, which led him more than once within those gray walls where there is ample time for self-communion.

Could it be that this mischievous cousin had crossed her path again? One had heard at times of that grim spectral power, with which a first love can take a well fortified soul by assault.

Oh, nonsense! Now she recollected that the fellow had died years ago in America. No, she must search elsewhere for the solution of the riddle.

The sick woman opened her eyes, looked about in surprise, and then said:

"What time is it now?"

"The clock just struck half past three; I think it was the clock inside that waked you."

"Then I suppose we will have to give up expecting the doctor today," said Marie, still half asleep, and with a weary sigh, turning her head to slumber on. But after a while she put forth her thin hand for a cologne bottle and rubbed its glass stopper across her forehead.

"How warm it is here," she complained. "I'm not at all well."

"Shall I open the window?"

Some long minutes again passed in detached talk about the weather, the townspeople, and about Ingrid, Marie's only living child, who was staying at a boarding school in one of the near Jutlandish cities.

Finally Mrs. von Rauch inquired why in the world Hagenstorm had allowed himself to be transferred to this little mouse's nest of a place, where it was impossible that they should be able to find proper associations. Considering the schooling and education of their daughter alone, it would have been much better to have remained at the capital.

This question seemed to frighten Marie somewhat. Her look assumed anew that shy and searching expression with which she had faced her sister before when the latter put questions.

"For Ingrid's sake the period chosen was not, perhaps, a favorable one," she replied. "But the office was vacant then, and that was the deciding thing, since my husband was bent on coming here. However, I'm very glad to be here. I don't miss Copenhagen at all. If only I could get well! After all, if I may only be with my husband, they may send me to Greenland, for all I care."

"Yes, yes, dear. It's our wont to say such things, and of course we mean

them in a certain sense. But anyhow it seems to me the transition must have been bad for you. At bottom I believe you were very fond of the Copenhagen atmosphere."

"Ah, dear, I had no time to think of the change. We were hardly settled here after the moving before little Kaj was taken ill. Three months later he died."

"Oh, yes, I remember. Yes, and now, of course, I can understand better. You have his little grave here. And by the way, you may believe it has been strange for me to think of your actually having had a big six-year-old boy whom I have never seen and shall never see. He was so handsome, wasn't he?"

"Handsome? I don't know. But he was a delightful boy. He had his father's eyes—so full of thought."

"It must have been a hard time for you, little sister."

"Well, yes; I dare say it was," she said. She lay staring at the ceiling, her hand supporting her head. "And yet, it's so strange, for I sometimes think it was a beautiful time after all. Those who belong together—they get so intimately close to each other under such a misfortune. You cannot know what a source of unspeakable comfort and sustaining strength my husband was to me in those days. He stood faithfully by me through all that time. I should have lost my reason without him. It's almost wicked to say so, but it seems to me at times, whenever I think of it, that through his infinite love in those days, he gave me compensation for what I had lost."

These words uttered, she lapsed into silence, and her eyes filled with tears. For a while stillness reigned in the room. Out in the garden an indefatigable starling converted, as it were, the radiant sunshine into music.

"I am still unable to understand, nevertheless, that you do not miss social intercourse here," Mrs. von Rauch then resumed. "You had, I'm sure, quite a number of pleasant acquainances in Copenhagen. I recall that you wrote me about one of your husband's colleagues, whom you used to see something of. You told me so little about him. Now, what was his name? Assessor Lunding, I think."

"Oh, well, yes—he was fairly amusing. But he proved a bad sort. My husband had always said that his reputation was questionable. He had an affair with a married woman. The last year we were strangers to each other."

She said this very calmly, at the most with a little touch of regret in her voice, so that Mrs. von Rauch now abandoned her disingenuous examination.

"Isn't it getting too cold?" she asked. "Don't you want me to close the windows?"

"Yes, please do. That bird is shrieking so horribly."

And the current of their talk flowed back to town matters and to little Ingrid, who was expected home for a few days on account of the aunt's visit.

"How I look forward to seeing her," said Mrs. von Rauch. "You must miss her awfully."

"Yes, awfully," said the mother. It was as if the word was painfully breathed through a sigh.

"But don't you really think now it would have been better both for the child's sake as well as your own, to have kept her at home? Of course, it must be possible to procure instruction here, even if not of the first class. How do other people manage? For instance, Mrs. Bergmann? Does she too send away her children?"

No, no. For that matter, the local school is altogether efficient. And Ingrid attended it up to about a year ago. But then my husband decided to send her away. That was the best thing for her, he believed."

"That was unreasonable, it seems to me. Especially now, when you are ill. You ought to speak about this with your husband."

"Don't you think I have done so?" Her eyes were quite closed now, and there was a tremor about her mouth.

"Well—pardon my saying it—but

really, I find it unwise in your husband. Your lying here and longing for the child can only make you worse. He should understand that—will you allow me to speak to him about it?"

"It will be of no use—I know it won't."

There was something so unrestrained, so desperately hopeless in this expression that Mrs. von Rauch started.

"But I don't see," she said. "You've been telling me that your husband is so considerate, so kind. And he must himself long to see the child. Or—" It shot across her face like the glare of a flash of lightning—"or doesn't he?"

Mrs. Hagenstorm tentatively turned her face toward her sister, and looked long and half-ashamed at her.

"Then you haven't noticed anything, Lise?"

"What?"

"That my husband is—is—ill?"

"Ill? Your husband ill? Why he seems, considering his age, to be most remarkably strong."

"No, it's not in that sense; I—I don't mean that. You don't understand."

She again averted her head and let both her hands fall heavily on the bedquilt. But Mrs. von Rauch *had* just begun to understand, and the misfortune she suspected, was so much sadder than she had imagined it that she could not bring herself to question further. The fear silenced her. Besides, her thoughts became otherwise preoccupied. Her sister again complained of the heat, and asked for something to drink. She was also to take her medicine and her moist hands had to be dried. Mrs. von Rauch helped her with all this. She insisted that Miss Mogensen, the housekeeper, should not be called in.

"You know I so want to be of some little service to you," she said, endeavoring through the tone of her voice to infuse a deeper significance into the words.

At this moment the physician stepped in. Neither of the sisters had heard his ring, nor even his knock.

"So you've come anyway," Mrs. Hagenstorm said querulously, a bit displeased. "We had ceased looking for you today. Doctor Bjerring, my sister, Mrs. von Rauch."

The physician was a fairly young, slightly deformed person. He was dressed with that conspicuous elegance which people of his kind often employ to conceal a physical defect, and which, besides, so highly pleases their vanity. The impression conveyed by his personality was unpleasant rather than ludicrous. He had a long, beardless, pale-white face, with rounded forehead, across which there lay a thin jet black crop of hair, greased fast to the skull so that it seemed to be painted upon it. His large, bulging eyes had a glass-like glint that to an informed mind betrayed secret perversities.

Obviously, he was very sorry to have brought down upon himself the displeasure of his patient; he made many apologies, explaining that he had been detained on his way.

"All right; and please take a chair, doctor, and let us hear something about the reception last night. Of myself, there is nothing to tell. I am the same today as I was yesterday. No appetite, no strength—nothing."

"And sleep?" he inquired, taking hold of her wrist with his long fingers to feel her pulse. "Haven't the powders helped?"

"Not the least bit. You're a poor doctor, who can do nothing for me. But don't ask me any more questions now. I want a day off. And tell me about the soirée at Krogstrup. I've really been impatient to hear about it. Were there many people?"

"Yes, it was a splendid affair. All the evening suits available in the neighborhood were on view. But that reminds me—the mayor sent regrets!"

"Yes, unfortunately. It would have done him good to get away from the office for a little while, and I could then have got the story quite fresh. I told him that, but he remembered that he couldn't go. Some pressing trial or the like kept him. Well, but the ladies? Were there many pretty gowns?"

"Yes, there were really several ladies, who didn't, practically speaking, have much on."

"And whom did you have the honor of escorting to table?"

"Miss Lang, the new governess at the Master of Hounds's place."

"They say she's pretty. I haven't seen her. What do you think?"

"Yes, she was very pretty."

"And she was jolly?"

"In a certain sense, yes. For an hour and a quarter she didn't open her mouth but to eat. She must have been wearing a very strong corset."

The patient laughed with pleasure.

"You are terrible, doctor. I see now that this Miss Lank wouldn't suit you after all?" She turned toward her sister. "You know, I am doing all I can to find a wife for Dr. Bjerring. I commend to him the prettiest and most well-to-do young women of these parts. But the results are naught."

"Perhaps Dr. Bjerring does not want to marry at all," said her sister, "for of course, it's usually a risky game."

"Ah, that's not precisely my consideration, Mrs. von Rauch," said the doctor playfully. "But it's with love as it is with theatre-tickets; the seat we are bent on getting is usually already taken."

"Yes, you've always a subterfuge," said Mrs. Hagenstorm, and hurriedly changed the subject. "Did you get nice things to eat last night?"

In this manner the talk went on for a while, as in a drawing room. Mrs. von Rauch soon began to take part in the conversation, quite interested, as she seemed to have become, in the little provincial man-about-town.

When at length he arose, she accompanied him into the hall to discuss her sister's condition alone. There he shook his head and said that in reality he was awaiting a catastrophe. However, a sudden improvement might also be hoped for. Such liver-complaints were capricious. One might live to be a hundred years of age with them, or they might kill in an hour.

Returning, through the dining-room, Mrs. von Rauch met the mayor. He had come from his office to get his overcoat to attend a trial at the court-house. He inquired how things were "inside," and his sister-in-law replied that Marie had not been feeling very well.

"But the doctor was here just now, and his visit cheered her somewhat."

To this the mayor had nothing to say.

In reality, it was his intention, out of consideration for his wife's sister, to go in and say goodbye, as she had asked, but he now gave up that plan.

"The doctor, it appears, isn't satisfied with Marie. When I questioned him, he said frankly that we should be prepared for a catastrophe."

"Oh, well, we must not take Dr. Bjerring's word at its face value. Apparently he is himself suffering from a deranged nervous system, and sees everything in a false light."

At this he walked away.

Mrs. Hagenstorm was still lying in the same position, with her hands under her chin, as when her sister and the doctor left her. Her eyes stared pensively out of the window.

"Well, how do you like my doctor?" she asked Mrs. von Rauch, having reoccupied the wicker chair. "Of course he's not handsome, but he is really so nice. People here make so much fun of him, and that's awfully wicked."

"But do you think he's a good physician?"

"Why, my dear, he's considered a wonder. People come to him from a distance of many miles. Had it not been for his physical infirmity he would never have settled down in the provinces. That is what has made a cynic of him. He once told me so himself. For at bottom he's frightfully melancholy. It's almost agonizing to see how depressed he is at times. Now and then he spends a whole hour with me just because he needs to talk to some person who can understand him. By the way, did you notice his hands, how beautiful they are, and how white? The clock struck four now."

It was the sitting-room clock that reminded her.

"Are you expecting any one?"

"No; no one but my husband. Him I am always expecting."

"Your husband went out. I just met him. I think he had to go to court."

Mrs. Hagenstorm grew silent. She shut her eyes, and after a little, she averted her face as if to slumber a bit. But when her sister, a few minutes having passed, leaned over to ascertain if she were asleep she discovered that tears upon tears were trickling down her cheeks.

Mrs. von Rauch could restrain herself no longer. She bent down over the bed, took her sister's hand and said:

"Marie! Little sister? Please tell me what has happened. Confide it to me—perhaps I can help you."

"No, nothing will avail! Nothing, in my case."

"But speak anyway. It will relieve you."

No further persuasion was necessary. Marie began to talk of herself, hurriedly, in short breaths, like one who out of fear is no longer able to keep a secret dark.

She began by speaking of her mother-in-law, the long lamented Mrs. Hagenstorm, wife of the titular counselor of justice, who during the first years of her married life lived as a pensioned widow of a good-natured postmaster. She was a lanky, dry-as-dust lady with keen, though very prejudiced intellectual interests. She came from a well-known family of theologians, and she was very proud of her maiden name —Sidenius. Round about in the country she had brothers, cousins and second cousins, who were all preachers, and who all wrote books on exalted subjects —a matter of which she was equally proud. In view of the fact that, to her mind, the Sidenius family were a race singled out before all others by Providence to perform a holy mission in the country. These tracts were to her truth's last inspiring word on the great mysteries of life and death.

Her son's choice of a life-companion had roused in her a sense of deep displeasure and regret. And in accord with her incorruptible uprightness of heart, she made no attempt to conceal this before the young woman, not to speak of the son himself. And yet, for the sake of her sweetheart, Marie had set in motion every resource of her politic powers to gain the favor of the stern mother-in-law. With the angelic patience of one doomed, she had sat night after night, as a young bride, hearing her endless readings from the meditations of cousin Jonathan or brother Lazarus. After a while the relations between them had improved somewhat, for Marie's husband had nobly taken her part in the battle, and often called his mother to account with much decision.

It was this state of affairs that Marie now endeavored to lay bare before her sister, who already knew the greater part of it from letters. But when afterward, she came to explain how the mother-in-law's distrust and displeasure began to revive in the son after her demise, and with him grew to a veritable fixed idea, a very craze, her thoughts fell into the mould of speech with great difficulty. She was also unable to reveal the whole truth, which she could hardly acknowledge before to herself; the terrible humiliation, that her husband, under a pretext, had sent her daughter away, because he did not consider her worthy of having charge of her education.

But Mrs. von Rauch had begun to understand the sad state of affairs. In silence she held her sister's hand, while waves of resentment rose and sank like stormy billows in her heart.

III

THE mayor had occupied his seat behind the desk but half an hour, when he abruptly interrupted the hearing and went out to take a walk. He had found it impossible to collect his thoughts about the case at issue. The anxious utterances of his sister-in-law concerning the condition of his wife, though they did not entirely surprise him, had caused an upheaval in his mind. He had himself occasionally fancied that

death was bearing down upon her, but this was the first time his suspicions were confirmed by anyone save the physician, in whose judgment he had no faith.

He walked around the rear part of the village, in the beautiful weather, and sought the high-lying road, where he would be more undisturbed than in the town's little park. Then, besides, he felt the need of being in the open. In recent years he had grown to be a quiet nature-worshiper. In youth he had ever denied himself all kinds of impersonal devotion. While his classmates at college sought the woods in summer or in winter, danced themselves into a new love affair at every ball, he would sit at home in his dingy room, in his tomb of books and law journals. Only with love did the desire of beauty awaken within him. At that period he was almost thirty years of age.

And even then Nature was only a sort of high class entertainment, compared with the theatre or the fine arts. Now, however, she was the object of his reverence. Like many others, in whose bosoms a disappointment, a loss, or a bitterness of spirit had dried up or frozen the bubbling fount of life, he had sought compensation in the petrified kingdom of dead things. When his heart was ill at ease, he went to Nature as to a church, finding comfort and balm with this great merciful sister.

He was now walking upon the very road over which, fifteen years ago, on a day of spring nearly like this one, he had traveled to ask the consent of Marie's parents to their marriage. These people inhabited an old dilapidated cottage on the slope of the hill, a little distance beyond the town. It had been a very painful journey for the self-conscious attorney-at-law. Even today it appeared to him as a vindicating testimony of the sincerity and strength of his love, that he had been able to persuade himself to appeal to a man who, he knew, had only succeeded in escaping from the loss of office and the stigma of disgrace, thanks to the aid of certain club friends. It had moreover been something of a risk on his part to endanger the future that he could call his own, by means of so much self-denial, by marrying into a family Dame Rumor had incessantly had to do with, and whose reputation had certainly not been amended by the fact of the youngest daughter marrying a German officer.

And yet he was quite happy that day, sitting in the sunny garden house with Marie's soft hand in his. In matters of love he was inexperienced, nor knew knew that so much sweetness could lie in a woman's kiss.

That he was not her first love, indeed, that she had had several casual passions, entirely innocent, he knew from the town's mouth of gossip, but he did not take it to heart then. Whatever belonged to the past he would forget and a new life should begin for both of them.

It was not long, nevertheless, before this phase of her nature aroused his doubts. It now struck him that she seemed to be preoccupied exclusively by the memory of the various gentlemen she had met. Without being aware of it, her talk constantly centered about what a Mr. Smith, or Jones, or Brown had said or done, and it was obvious that nothing had escaped her eye. She was well informed on the matters of their figure, the color of their eyes, the shape of their hands and feet, which in furtive phrases she either praised or ridiculed.

He had not the heart to speak his thoughts to her—for after all it all revealed her guilelessness, her simplicity. But privately he promised himself that he would get married even that very Spring, in order to remove her as soon as possible out of the range of the influences of her home and provincial conditions.

On the wedding journey, however, his confidence sustained a new, and this time a deeper and more serious wound.

This occurred after they had left Switzerland to go down to the Italian lakes to meet the sister-in-law at Bellagio. For a few weeks they roamed about in the vast solitude of the moun-

tains, where Marie had fully overcome her maidenly shyness before him, and had joyously yielded to her need of affection. That she had really no taste whatever for nature, he had discovered early. When, in spite of this, she proved so enthusiastic over the journey and merrily stood even exhausting ascents, it was because the impressions of nature, as everything else that she experienced, nourished her love and converted itself into vitality. Sunshine across a green emerald-like mountain lake, a breeze through the tree-tops, the murmur of a hidden spring, and even disappointments and mishaps on the journey, came to be the inspiration to renewed love. He was himself so steeped in his own love that they only felt the presence of one another.

In the beginning their relation suffered no mentionable change, on account of the meeting with her sister and the transit from the mountainous region to the crowded hotel resort. But the day after their arrival, as they were sitting out upon the terrace in front of the hotel, a gentleman approached to greet Mrs. von Rauch, who thereupon introduced him to her husband. He was a young man of the lieutenant type, of a fairly handsome, though trivial presence, an Austrian country squire. She knew German well enough to be able to carry on a conversation in that tongue, but her linguistic difficulties only afforded the young stranger a further opportunity to prove amiable and pay compliments. So completely did she forget the company of her husband, that she made no attempt to bring him into the conversation.

For a while he assumed a mien of careless unconcern, though his blood tingled. In order to make a test, he rose, under the pretense of going for the mail, but she stayed behind, bowing to him with her most winsome smile and saying that she would wait for him.

In the first moment of anger he thought of interrupting their travels then and there and returning home. But little by little he calmed himself. The stern sense of justice which was an elemental quality of his nature and which his judicial experience had intensified, cooled his blood, and—hearing the voice of his love—he concluded to become his wife's protector.

When he came back to the terrace, the young man had just gone away. Soon thereupon the sister too retired, and Hagenstorm and his wife went for a walk along the lake shore. The sun was sinking behind the mountain ridges in the west, and the ruddy twilight was changed all of a sudden to moonlit night. Marie acted as if nothing had happened. Not a feature betrayed the thought that she had guessed his motive for going away. She walked by his side, leaning her head on his shoulder very affectionately, and though he had his doubts at first, he could not resist for long her passionate tenderness. There was something of the implacability of a natural force in the love of this frail little woman. It was like the eruption of a fiery deep, when she clung to him, and that evening, for the first time, he felt somewhat uneasy at being in her power.

The last part of their journey assumed on this account a different character from the first. Now, his attention being aroused, he could not help watching her whenever she was in the company of men; and constantly she seemed to be seized by the same little nervous disquietude. But on the other hand, it was quite natural that their common life could never grow so intimate here on the public thoroughfares and in the thronging towns, as when they wandered together alone across the mountainous wilderness.

After their arrival home, they spent the remainder of the summer in the country, where he was again perfectly happy, and where he finally forgot his discouragements. But with the beginning of the winter's social life, his discontent was stirred afresh.

Marie's impetuous youthfulness and beauty attracted notice, and she accepted, evidently with satisfaction, the most trivial form of love-making, even such kinds as were, in his opinion, im-

proper. It was long, however, before he could persuade himself to discuss this matter with her. In a certain sense he had no cause for complaining, he said to himself. Marie's care for him in their home, her gratitude and almost humble tenderness had actually never been greater.

But at last he managed to find occasion to caution her. Perfectly calm, without revealing any ill-feeling whatever, not to say jealousy, he begged her for her own sake to be a little careful. With all consideration, he let her understand to what danger a young and pretty woman exposed herself by appearing too familiar with admirers, and that in his opinion it was unbecoming to her to be so gay and beaming. She was most beautiful when her features were at rest. A certain reserve was equally becoming to men and women: it lent distinction, bearing, grace.

Marie listened, convinced, with a growing sense of self-reproach, and the talk ended by her throwing herself tearfully on his breast and begging his forgiveness.

The next evening they were to attend a large reception. Marie looked very attractive with her bare throat and arms. As they were about to drive off, she put her arms around his neck, and looking steadfastly into his eyes, she said:

"Tonight you'll find no reason for reproaching me. That I promise you."

A few hours later she had already repeatedly attracted attention at the reception by her excessive gaiety, and the men crowded about her with keen gratification. In order to caution her and at the same time to appear master of the situation, and reassured before those present, among whom several had begun to cast sly glances of sympathy at him, he once smilingly joined the group of her admirers. But she seemed not to observe him, nor tried in the slightest degree to curb herself. She was under the sway of a natural instinct, which was not to be checked.

Seated in the carriage on their homeward journey, he expected that she would have something to say. But she appeared not to notice his manner, laughed and chatted, and leaned her head caressingly against his shoulder. He could not understand her. Was she shamming? Was it a brazen attempt at deception? Was it self-illusionment? Or did women possess a sensibility and temperamental state which a man could neither fathom nor name?

Year by year she continued to become more of a mystery to him. The longer they lived together and the more intimate their common life became, in one way, the more he came to regard her as a stranger. Of a sudden, when the time had arrived when he at last thought he quite knew her, she would somehow with a word, a gesture, or merely an emphasis, uncover unsuspected and significant phases of her nature, lay bare hidden sentiments, illuminate secret courses of thought which lost themselves in a new darkness, a new maze. Her soul was like one of those earth-warm springs whose restive waters now play artlessly with the sunshine above the green sod, now plunge heavenward and embrace the sky in a cascade, rain-bow crowned, then sink suddenly into the earth, hiding themselves in abysses immeasurable.

Thus it once happened, while they were seated at dinner, that they received a letter from America, announcing the death of her cousin. They had now been married for several years, and Marie had told nothing more about this cousin than the mere facts that in her early youth he had frequented the house of her parents; that they had been slightly in love with each other, and that later he had grown wayward. Her husband was therefore highly surprised to notice the strange effect produced upon her by the message of his death—not immediately, but little by little. At length she became pale, and he observed how she strove to act as if she were partaking of food. During the evening, on stepping into the room, he noticed that she hastily concealed some object behind a newspaper. He demanded with some stern-

ness to see what proved to be some small mementoes of her cousin—several withered bouquets, a few ball ribbons with inscribed dates, and the like, which she had preserved.

Some time later, accidentally, he made the discovery that she was still keeping, in girlish fashion, tokens from such men as had made an impression upon her, and whom she had known but very casually. But he had then abandoned the practice of questioning her about matters so childish, and acted as if he knew nothing. He had now learned how fruitless it was to talk with her on the perplexities of her feelings or her thoughts. When he failed to catch her in the act, she resorted to all kinds of evasive replies. At first she would listen self-reproachfully to him, and then with tears streaming down her face, she would beg him to be patient with her—and remain the same as before.

In a certain sense, he found it easy to forgive her, because, in spite of everything, he could not doubt the sincerity of her love. Though he was beginning to age, he was constantly in some degree the object of her adulation. But wholly and inseparably he did not nevertheless possess her.

One evening, returning from a reception, she clung to him in one of those passionately tender paroxysms that instantly roused his suspicions. By mentally summing up the happenings of the evening, it struck him that he had seen her a number of times in company with one of his younger colleagues, Assessor Lunding, a very handsome man of fine physique, endowed with extraordinary conversational ability, and who had the reputation of being dangerous for women. They had of late frequently met him socially, and on several occasions they had seen him even in their own home at their annual "counselor's dinner." Mayor Hagenstorm now got a chance to tell his wife what he thought of this man's affairs with women. She grew somewhat serious at his words, and thanked him for what he had said.

A week later, as it happened, he was detained by an important trial so that he was unable to take lunch until a little late in the afternoon. From the window of the restaurant opposite to the Mechanics' Hall, where he was wont to eat, he now observed Marie coming up the other side of the street, a music-portfolio in her muff. This surprised him, because it was at least half an hour earlier than her appointment with her vocal tutor, and yet she seemed to be in a hurry. He now noticed, furthermore, that she was wearing her newest hat, though the weather was dull and threatening. In the course of these reflections he came to remember that Marie had recently informed him that she had encountered Assessor Lunding in the street and that on the same occasion she had further expressed her surprise over the fact that Lunding, who had been carrying his law documents under his arm, could get away from court at so early an hour, a matter he had explained by telling her that Lunding at present conducted the court of general sessions, which closed at a definite hour, It now struck him that it was just at this time Lunding might be expected on his way home through the main street.

In order to be positive in this case, a few days afterward when, as he knew, Lunding was again holding court, he entered the restaurant at the same time as before, and indeed observed in due time his wife walking by on the opposite sidewalk. He then got up and followed her at a distance, concealed in the crowds on the other side of the street. In Fredericksberg street she looked up at a clock in a shop window, and thereupon eased her pace. But, when Lunding appeared in front of her, some paces off, after a little, she hastened on again, and in passing him, she responded to his polite greeting, as if she had had no thought of him, and was in very much of a hurry. Nevertheless he brought her to a stop, and for a few minutes they stood talking. Her cheeks were flushed and she smiled, but kept at least a yard away from him, ready to rush on at any moment.

He considered the question of speak-

ing to her about this strange conduct of hers, on arriving home, but gave it up, partly because he was aware that Lunding had just applied for a leave of absence from his duties, intending to go on a short trip abroad. He decided, therefore, to wait and watch the course of events.

One evening, a few weeks afterward, they were at the theatre, in a balcony box, which afforded a perfect view of the entire orchestra. During the first intermission he noticed that Marie was very restless, and continually directed her opera glasses at a certain end seat in the unlighted quarters of the parquet, straight across from their place, and on glancing in that direction he perceived Lunding, evidently engaged in animated and confidential talk with the lady occupying the seat in front, a Mrs. Illingson, one of the most celebrated "beauties" of all Copenhagen. After a while the mayor asked his wife if she had seen any of their acquaintances in the audience, which question in the most natural manner she answered in the negative. But all the evening he noticed her nervousness. Even while the performance was going on, she repeatedly turned her opera glasses upon the whispering couple in the parquet, for whom the dark of the theatre was obviously agreeable.

On the way home, he remarked in that careless tone of voice he was wont to employ at the trials, when he was bent on luring an accused into a trap:

"Assessor Lunding was at the play. So he's back again. Did you see him?"

She hesitated the least bit. "No; where did he sit?" she inquired.

It was the first time he had caught her in a deliberate falsehood, and he felt a chill creep into his heart. However, he resolved to say nothing. He took pity on her. He well knew that she was tortured by her concealments, and when she lied, she did so even out of a kind of love for him only, afraid of losing his confidence and affection.

Soon thereafter, the office of mayor at Marie's native town became vacant. In his deeply depressed mental state he saw in this something of a providential indication, and decided to follow it. To rescue, if possible, the last remnants of his happiness he would make this sacrifice, thinking that a return to the world of memories would help Marie to collect her thoughts, and that altogether life in the little town would be more to her liking.

In the beginning, this hope really seemed about to be fulfilled. The illness and subsequent death of their little son tended no doubt to make it so appear. The mutual sense of grief, of loss, the common solace in their belief in meeting again in the beyond, brought the parents very close together once again, and the consciousness of how dearly bought their reconciliation had been this time, cast a glow of sanctity over their reunion, visible to both of them. After all, it was doubtful if he had ever been happier than he was the first year of their residence in the dead little town where outside his own home, he felt like a stranger in a country whose language he could barely speak.

He was again so full of confidence that his suspicions were not aroused, when, after a large party, at which Dr. Bjerring had been her companion on the drive, Marie was seized by a new and violent mood of affectionateness. She had often mentioned her disgust at the sight of Dr. Bjerring's person, and she had been very displeased, in spite of his acknowledged ability as a physician, at his being retained as their family doctor. Only one day when, on returning from court, he found the doctor at his house on a visit and saw wine and other delicacies on the table, contrary to their custom, did he begin to feel alarmed, and subsequently it had not taken him long to determine that she was fascinated by the little crippled man and his fate. He remarked how often she spoke, not of the doctor himself, but about his patients, about people he had successfully cured; and about what his townsmen said of him. He made the observation that at hearing his name she grew thoughtful, and when seated in the sitting-room she heard a carriage roll by, she would look out of the window, and behind his news-

paper he could read it in her face that she was thinking of and wondering if it might be he.

The emotion that filled him at all this was no longer jealousy or anger, it was a quality of pity which soon fossilized into contempt. At any rate, it was with comparative indifference that he observed how Marie's new relationship was developing in perfect conformity to all the previous ones, how more and more she again concealed things from him, in a tangle of perverted thoughts and suppressions, and real self-deceptions.

His love was dead, and no caress, no prayer, no assurance could revive it any more.

Mayor Hagenstorm got up and started to walk home, in the rays of the sinking sun. At dinner, Mrs. von Rauch at once began to speak, with a certain vehemence, of her sister's condition. She said boldly that Marie's illness was hardly of a physical nature only, and inquired if she might not have some grief or other, or if, for instance, the loss of her daughter could not be thought to have weakened her will-power. The mayor avoided the reply, shielding himself behind some commonplace, and began thereupon to question his sister-in-law on social and political conditions in Germany, and further if she were still contented with her residence in her new country.

To this Mrs. von Rauch replied that the large community possessed at least this advantage over the small, that its inhabitants were not absolutely bent on measuring character by one and the same standard, and when the mayor, helping her to another piece of steak, with an unintelligent mien asked to know to what conditions in particular she alluded, she defined matrimony as being a Procrustean bed in which so many of the best women of small communities bled to death.

With a strained smile, the mayor answered that he was fairly cognizant of how matrimony and its obligations were regarded by the socalled modern Europe. But he had to confess, nevertheless, such an emancipation from all bonds as it seemed to advocate did not have his sympathy.

"Nor mine," Mrs. von Rauch replied. "But if it comes to that, I prefer it to that sort of fidelity which coils itself about the neck of its victim like a noose."

"Moreover, I do not understand," the mayor went on as if he had not heard her last remark, "why women particularly should suffer more from marital restraint than men. That marriage is no ideal institution, I am very ready to grant you. In my capacity of referee, I've too often had occasion to see that fact confirmed. But the case is essentially this, that nature has once and for all created man and woman so heterogeneous——"

"Ah, as if that were all? But it's precisely the diversity that produces the attraction. We see that often enough. The reticent are attracted by the vivacious, the melancholy by the happy, etc. And the greater the friction the more heat we get! It is an instinctive need of supplanting oneself that finds expression in our choice, and it's either cowardice or brutality not to allow the individual forces to wrestle together. It's exactly this incessant struggle that keeps a relation fresh and our feelings quick. When one flees from it, it's not strange that the heart warps or becomes the prey of a new passion."

The mayor again attempted to change the subject, but Mrs. von Rauch energetically held him to it, and forced him to make answer. He then said, that as for the passion she spoke of, he had the greatest regard for it. It was a great and sacred power, before which it was only possible to yield. Yet according to his own experience, it was only in the exceptional case that such exalted feelings wrecked a union. After all, he believed, it was much oftener the love of pleasing, and the petty inconsistancies of vanity and flirtation than actual infidelity itself that undermined and destroyed the relations between so many married couples.

"Well, why so?" Mrs. von Rauch

asked. "Didn't men have their vanities, which they sought to gratify outside of love-affairs, and they found it entirely proper, that their wife or fiancée looked happy or proud over their most ridiculous striving to gain distinction? As a rule, it was ever a very small fraction of a man that was left to the woman who loved him. And nevertheless, he demanded to possess her wholly and inseparably, to own and master her, even to the length of her most fleeting thoughts, her most immaterial dreamings. That was a barbarism quite medieval. Then a poor woman gave herself up to a man and sacrificed all the wealth of her love far, far more than he and even a large brood of children were able to accept. And so there she was, with her unused tenderness, and was not even allowed, in thought, to pour out to others from her own superabundance."

She spoke with growing ardor, and courage, and at length, resolutely, she brought Marie into the talk. But at that junction the mayor rose, and the meal was over.

The change for the worse that the physician had expected would take place in the illness of the mayor's wife, occurred a few days later. In the night, she awoke in a painful state of fatigue, which, after a number of slight attacks of cramps in the course of the next day, developed into real paralysis. It was clear to all, including the sick woman herself, then, that this meant death. Accordingly Ingrid was at once sent for, and the beautiful little girl, with the warm brown eyes, the exact image of Marie, reached home just in time to receive, and as it were, be consecrated by the mother's last kiss.

The mayor sat silently at the bedside. The unlooked-for abrupt close had moved him greatly. As he was sitting there in the light of the late afternoon, he looked almost like a dying man, so wan was his hard face.

Marie now and then opened her fixed eyes and looked at him. She could speak no longer, and her look could pray no more, and then death's heavy finger hurriedly pressed her eyelids down.

On the other side sat Mrs. von Rauch, holding the head of the frightened little Ingrid in her lap. With overwhelming despair she looked at her sister and then at the mayor, and from him back again to her sister. But no word was spoken. On preceding days she had again repeatedly endeavored to resume the conversation on Marie's condition, in the hopes of bringing about that reconciliation in which she saw her sister's only chance of rescue. However, it was rendered plain to her that it was all in vain, that his love was dead, and that for him she lived but as the ghost of a memory.

It was consequently out of human sympathy that he was sitting there with Marie's hand in his own, and that his eyes were dim with tears. In vain did Marie, in the failing light of her life, look for that little ray of old affection and gratitude, or even of forgiveness, which would have cast a golden radiance across death's very night of darkness.

There still lingered in the room, an odor of perfume from the doctor's last visit, and there had obviously been a look of sorrow in Marie's eyes when she bade him good-bye.

It was not until all life had ebbed, and Marie was at rest, in the dreamless sleep of death, that emotion overwhelmed the mayor. Then, with quivering lips, he kissed the cold forehead.

* * *

FORCE OF HABIT

"HELLO! butcher, what is that you are carrying home?"
"Ten and half pounds of school books for my daughter."—
Translated for TALES *from "Fliegende-Blätter."*

IN THE HAPPY SUMMER TIME

BY ANTON CHEKHOV

IT was seven o'clock on a June evening.

A crowd of summer visitors had just left the railway station of Hilkovo and were trudging v earily homewards, heavily laden with bundles, paper boxes and portfolios, looking tired, hungry and out-of-sorts, as if the beautiful sunset and the green fields through which they passed did not exist for them at all.

"Do you come out here every day?" asked one of the weary ones, clad in a pair of maroon-colored trousers, of Pavel Matveich Zaikin, a judge of the district court, a tall man with slightly stooping shoulders, who looked very hot, sunburned and gloomy.

"No, not every day," he replied morosely. "My wife and son live here during the summer and I run over twice a week. I am too busy—and besides, it is too expensive."

"That is true, it is expensive," the other agreed with a sigh. "In the city you have to take a droshka to the depot, because you can't walk such a distance, then comes the railway-fare, a paper, a little glass of vodka for the inner man—they are, of course, trifling expenses and don't amount to much, but during the summer they mount up to some two hundred roubles. Of course I don't say that to live in the country among idyllic surroundings ought to cost dear, but when you earn only two thousand a year you have to be careful of every kopeck, and often refuse yourself the most necessary things."

"It is horrible!" replied Zaikin after a short pause. "In my opinion the summer resorts were invented by the Devil and the women; the Devil out of pure spite and the women for sheer frivolity. Why, it's simply purgatory, the life we men lead in summer—worse than penal servitude! It is hot, humid and stifling; you can hardly breathe and you have to toss around from place to place like one accursed, unable to find shelter for yourself. In the city the house is turned topsy-turvy, all the furniture is gone and, the servants—everything is taken away to the summer 'home.' You eat like a dog, can't even get a cup of tea, because there is no one to prepare the samovar; your things are never in order; you can't find a clean towel when you want it. And when you come here, you have to walk miles in the heat and dust to get to the accursed place. Phew! Are you a married man?"

"Yes, married and have three children," replied the man in the maroon-colored trousers with a sigh.

"On the whole, it is a miserable existence. I really wonder sometimes how we men can bear it," said Zaikin.

At last the "resorters" reached their destination. Zaikin took leave of his new acquaintance and entered his cottage. The silence of the grave reigned in the house; not a soul in the corridor, kitchen or dining-room; only in the parlor Zaikin found his son Petia, a six-year-old boy who sat at the table trying to cut the knave of diamonds out of a playing-card with a large pair of shears which he could hardly handle.

"Ah, it is you, papa!" he said, without even turning his head towards his father. "How are you?"

"How are you, Petia—and where is mamma?" asked Zaikin.

"Mamma? She went away with Olga Kirilovna to the rehearsal. The day after tomorrow they will give a performance. They're going to take me along, too. Are you coming?"

"M-m-m! When is she coming back?"

"She said she would be back in the evening."

"And where is Natalia?"

"Mamma took her along to help her with the dressing for the rehearsal, and Akulina has gone to the woods to gather mushrooms. Papa, when mosquitoes bite why do their little stomachs get red?"

"I don't know—probably because they suck in the blood. Then there is no one at home?"

"No one, only I."

Zaikin sank into an easy-chair and looked out of the window with dull eyes.

"But who is to serve us dinner?" he asked.

"They didn't cook any dinner. Mamma thought that you wouldn't come today, and as she is to have her dinner with Olga Kirilovna at the rehearsal, she ordered cook not to prepare any."

"Many thanks! And you? What did you eat?"

"I ate milk. They bought some for six kopecks, just enough for me. Papa, tell me, why do the mosquistoes like blood?"

Zaikin suddenly felt an acute pain from which he often suffered. He felt such bitterness and mortification that his breath came with difficulty and he trembled; he longed to jump to his feet, throw something on the floor, and break out into a torrent of abuse, but on recollecting that the doctors had strictly forbidden him to become excited, he tried to calm himself by whistling an air from "The Huguenots."

"Papa, do you know how to play in a theater?" he heard Petia's voice.

"Stop bothering me with your foolish questions!" Zaikin shouted angrily. "Why are you annoying me! You are six years old, and you're just as stupid as you were three years ago—foolish, spoiled youngster that you are! Now, why are you spoiling and cutting up these cards? How dare you cut them?"

"These cards are not yours," said Petia, turning round and facing him. "Natalia gave them to me."

"You lie, you bad boy!" Zaikin shouted, getting angrier and angrier. "You always lie! You ought to get a good flogging, you little pig! I'll box your ears for you!"

Petia sprang from his seat and stretched out his neck, looking straight into his father's angry, red face. His large eyes began to wink and fill with tears and his little face puckered.

"Why are you scolding me?" he cried. "Why are you finding fault with me? I'm not doing any mischief, I sit still and do what I am told, and you are—mad! Why do you scold me?"

The child spoke convincingly and wept so bitterly that Zaikin felt sorry for him.

"And in truth, what do I want to do to the poor child?" he thought. "Well, never mind. Stop crying, Petia," he said, touching the child's shoulder. "It is my fault, Petia. Forgive me. You are my clever, fine boy, and I love you."

Petia wiped his eyes with his sleeve, resumed his old place with a sigh and began to cut the queen of spades. Zaikin went into his room, stretched himself on the sofa and clasping his hands under his head, gave himself up to thought. The tears of the child had softened him a little and he felt much better, but he was still very tired and hungry.

"Papa!" Zaikin heard from behind the door. "Shall I show you my collection of insects?"

"Let's see them."

Petia came into the room carrying a long green box which he handed to his father. A terrible buzz met Zaikin's ears and as soon as he uncovered the box he found that all the butterflies, dragon-flies, maybugs and beetles, except two or three, were still alive and struggling on the pins with which they were stuck to the bottom of the box.

"And the grasshopper is still alive!" Petia said wonderingly. "It was caught yesterday morning and it is still alive!"

"Who taught you to fasten them with pins?" asked Zaikin.

"Olga Kirilovna."

"She ought to be fastened like that herself!" Zaikin said with disgust. "Take this box out of here! It is a shame to torture insects in this way!"

"Great God, how badly he is brought up!" he thought on Petia's leaving the room.

Zaikin forgot his weariness and hunger and now thought only of the fate of his little son. In the meantime, the day was gradually waning. He could hear the voices of the summer residents who were returning in crowds from their evening dip. Some one stopped at the open window of the dining-room and shouted: "Do you want to buy mushrooms?" and not receiving any reply went away, shuffling his bare feet. At last, when the evening had deepened so much that the geraniums could not be seen through the diaphanous white muslin curtains, and the cool, fresh evening breeze was wafted through the windows, the door of the corridor flew noisily open and the sounds of quick steps, laughter and talking filled the house.

"Mamma!" screamed Petia.

Zaikin looked into the parlor, where he saw his wife, Nadiezhda Stepanovna, in the pink of health as usual. With her was Olga Kirilovna, a dry blond with a freckled face, and two strangers: one a red-headed young man, the other short and stout, with the clean-shaven face of an actor.

"Natalia, prepare the samovar!" Nadiezhda Stepanovna ordered, rustling her skirts noisily. "I heard that Pavel Matveich has come. Pavel, where are you? How are you, Pavel!" she said, running into her husband's room, out of breath. "You have come home? I am very glad. I brought along with me two of our amateurs. Come, I'll introduce you. The tall one is Koromislov; he sings beautifully. And the other, the small one, is Smerkalov, a real actor; he recites splendidly. Ugh! How tired I am! We have come straight from a rehearsal. It goes first rate! We will produce 'The Lodger with the Trombone' and 'She is Awaiting Him.' The day after tomorrow we will give the performance."

"Why did you bring them here tonight?" asked Zaikin.

"It was necessary, papa. After tea we must study our roles and sing something. I am to sing a duet with Koromislov. But it is well that I remembered! Please, darling, send Natalia over to get some sardines, cheese, vodka and a few more things. They will probably stay for supper. How tired I am!"

"M-m! But I have no money."

"Oh, but we must have it, papa! It is not nice, you know! Please don't compel me to blush before them all!"

A half hour later Natalia was dispatched after vodka and delicacies, and Zaikin, after drinking a cup of tea and eating a whole French loaf, went into the bed-room and lay down to sleep. Nadiezhda Stepanovna with her guests began to study their respective parts noisily.

For a long time Zaikin could not sleep on account of the noise. First came the reading of the roles by Koromislov, and the dramatic exclamations of Smerkalov. After the reading followed a prolonged discussion, often broken by Olga Kirilovna's screeching laughter. Then Smerkalov, proud of his superior artistic knowledge, began to explain the roles with great earnestness. After this came the duet, followed by the rattle of dishes. Half asleep, Zaikin heard them begging Smerkalov to recite "The Sinner," which that worthy did after the usual refusals and excuses, treating poor Zaikin to a long recitation, weeping, hissing, and laughing in a hoarse basso till the unfortunate listener had to cover his head with the bed clothes, cursing his fate and all would-be actors.

"It is too dark and too far for you to walk," he heard Nadiezhda Stepanovna say an hour later. "Why should you not stay here over night? Koromislov will lie down here in the parlor, and you, Smerkalov, on Petia's bed. Petia can sleep in my husband's room. Really, it will be best for you to stay!"

At last the clock struck two and everything became quiet. Suddenly the door to the bedroom opened and Nadiezhda Stepanovna appeared.

"Pavel, are you sleeping?"

"No, why?"

"Please go into your room and lie down on the sofa. I must put Olga Kirilovna in your bed. Go, darling, I would put her in your room, but she is afraid to sleep alone. Come, get up!"

Zaikin rose, put on his dressing-gown and went into his room. Feeling his way carefully in the dark, he came close to the sofa and lit a match. On the sofa lay Petia. The boy was not asleep, but gazed with his large, dark eyes upon the burning match.

"Papa, why don't mosquitoes sleep in the night?" he asked.

"Because — because —" murmured Zaikin, "because you and I, my child, are entirely superfluous here. We have not even a place to lay our heads!"

"And papa, why has Olga Kirilovna so many freckles on her face?"

"Oh, don't bother me! You are—a bore!"

After deliberating with himself for a short time, Zaikin dressed and went out in the street to refresh himself a little. He gazed upon the gray sky, upon the motionless clouds, listened to the lazy cry of the sleepy corn-crake and began to dream of the coming day, when he would return to town, and as soon as he had finished his duties at the court, go to his abandoned town-house and get a good sleep. Suddenly he saw the figure of a man appear around the corner.

"The watchman, I suppose," thought Zaikin.

But on looking closer he recognized in the man his acquaintance of the day before—the summer resident in the maroon-colored trousers.

"You are not sleeping?" he asked.

"No, somehow I cannot get asleep," sighed the man. "I enjoy nature—I have visitors, you must know—very dear guests. They arrived by the last train—my mother-in-law and two of my wife's nieces—fine girls. I am very glad, though it is—very damp. And you are also, it seems, enjoying the beauties of nature?"

"Yes," muttered Zaikin. "I also contemplate the beauties of nature. Do you know of a tavern anywhere near here?"

The man in the maroon-colored trousers lifted his eyes to heaven and began to think deeply.

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RUBE—Tomorrow I'm goin' to take twelve pigs to market.

MISS VASSARA—Don't! Thirteen is an unlucky number!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

NEITHER WORTH MUCH

ARTIST *(in country)*—How much do I have to pay you for this glass of milk?

FARMER—Oh, it's not worth mentioning. Just paint a landscape for me, and we'll call it square.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Fliegende-Blätter."*

VOICES AND IMAGES OF THE NIGHT

BY E. CORRADINI

I LIVED then on a third floor in one of the least frequented parts of the city. The windows of my room looked out upon an almost uninhabited alley. There was a large building opposite which looked as if it might be a barracks or hospital. Being naturally very absent-minded, it never occurred to me that I was ignorant of the precise nature of this large building with its many windows, all of the same size and all symmetrical, with that material symmetry seen in the uniformity of modern edifices.

However, it had struck me that I had never seen anyone at these windows. What went on there behind them? Who could tell? As for me, I had never even put this question to myself.

At that time, being still fairly young, I had the habit of writing at night. During the day I read, strolled about the town, saw a few friends, studied, and slept. Every night I wrote until the small hours of the morning or even until dawn.

I was writing my Work, which I purposed—either because I had chanced to find a very vast subject, or because instinct led me thus in understanding art—which I purposed should be the unique fruit of my secluded, laborious life. Until then I had published nothing—not a single line. Only my few friends knew that I had always studied and continued to study, that I had certain ideas of my own upon art, and that I wrote. But they did not know what I wrote, and I would not even tell them the title of my work.

But I will tell about it now. For what has been, has been, and I am quite resigned to pass to the other world less great than any other man, without leaving any trace behind me. All I desire is that those who must execute this, my last will and testament, should believe me when I declare that I had consecrated my whole existence to this work of mine. I had no family, so that I might be freer and alone; I had lived very modestly for years in two small rooms, with my books and scant furniture; I had fled from all pleasures and all kinds of material occupations; I had never in any way taken part in anything my fellow-creatures did, for fear of distracting my thoughts and spoiling or enfeebling my powers.

In short, I had become like an anchorite who spends his time in prayer. And my Work was my prayer—it was all my world! For in this work, child of my solitude, of my imagination, of my intellect and my culture, it was my purpose to represent the world as I saw it, felt it, and understood it myself. It should be a universal work, poetical and philosophical; and so to this end I had directed all my studies, all my meditations, all my patient exercises in style and composition for years and years, to acquire the simplest and most concise forms of expression.

Perhaps this work would have made me a name, or at least would have shown that I had formed no intentions of living like a brutish beast.

One night I was writing as usual. I was at the first page of one of the first chapters of my book. Suddenly, in the midst of the deepest silence, an infant wail reached my ears. It was without doubt a baby's voice, and I at once thought it might have come from the building opposite, that I have described. At the same time I recollected that other nights, too, I had heard the

same crying, but without taking any notice of it, as was certainly quite natural.

But that night, I know not why, the wailing made an impression upon me and distracted me from work. It broke the thread of my ideas and periods. It was a shrill, tearing wail, one of that choleric sort by which newly-born infants express their vague accusation against life in general.

When it ceased I returned to my work; but once more it compelled me to lay down my pen, and so acute was it that I felt it actually penetrating my brain!

I went to the window. The building was almost invisible in the darkness, and I saw only a light flickering in one window. But the sound had ceased again, so that I could not be sure if it come from there or from some other house near by. And besides, it did not concern me to know whence it came, provided it was quiet and let me work.

But each time I engrossed myself afresh in my work, it began again as if on purpose, and disordered my ideas in the very middle of a period! In the end I had to go to bed without having achieved the small amount of work I had assigned for that night.

The next day the matter had passed out of my mind; only in the evening, when setting to work, I had a vague fear of being disturbed as on the previous night. But on that night and others following it I was not disturbed at all, either because the mysterious child remained quiet and silent, or because I was in such a good vein for working that I did not notice it.

After several days, therefore, I was completely reassured, forgetting the building opposite and the nocturnal wailing. Then, one night, again a wail suddenly rent the silence, and my own spirit too! An arrow seemed to shoot through my head from ear to ear. And immediately after, two other yells followed the first. They were quite distinct from the other—three babies were then squalling and complaining! I went to the window and saw three lights flickering in the building exactly at the respective points whence the three sounds came.

So I was opposite an orphanage or a hospital or who knows what, and absolutely *must* change my house. However, neither the next day nor for many days after did I decide to move, half through indolence, half because I hoped my ear would become impervious to the nocturnal crying, as it had to all the other street noises which I no longer noticed while I worked. But this was a different matter: they had the most strident voices in the world, these unknown babes of the silent night.

Some nights it was a real martyrdom. It seemed to me that they did it to spite and irritate me. They were no longer babies crying, they were malevolent little genii of the night that had a grudge against me and my work. Thus I must fight against them, vanquish them, and work in spite of them!

I sealed up the windows hermetically, and placed myself at the table with my head between my hands, and my eyes on my paper. But suddenly a wail, two acute wails, rending and tearing, penetrated through the windows, pierced my ears like darts and raised the devil in my brain!

Sometimes it seemed a tumult, or strife, or the giving vent to a series of jeering, angry cries. I had to press the palms of my hands over my ears: but it is well known how prone authors and artists are to exaggeration, and how they manage to magnify in fancy things which are small in reality, so that it can be guessed what a turmoil my brain was in!

It seemed that my room was full of howls, that the whole building opposite was full of them, that the whole night was full of them! But they were more than howls—yells, shrieks rather, that seemed the more horrible the more my imagination pictured to itself the smallness of the creatures which uttered them!

My imagination saw nothing else but babies raging in the obscurity of the night, inveighing passionately against

some unknown enemy of theirs, and making effeorts to express vague griefs of their one-day-old life!

Then suddenly all was sunk again in the stillness of night.

I observed that the babies' voices were not always the same. Sometimes I seemed all at once to hear one that I had never heard before. Was it not the first cry of a newly-born infant?

Sometimes, when the night's stillness was deepest, I stayed for a long time in attentive suspense to catch that first plaint. And it happened not seldom that I felt certain I heard the first tones of one newly-born.

Around me all was calm: it was as if the whole universe were in the most absolute silence. My ear only was living, and the eye of my imagination. It was as if I alone among all living beings were to be the witness of a great miracle about to be accomplished at any moment. I was awaiting a birth—the birth of a being. All other ideas disappeared. Suddenly I heard what I had never heard before: the new wail broke the nocturnal silence, the new being had leaped into life, had leaped from the night into the night!

I was obliged to confess to myself that these simple night sounds had assumed an extraordinary meaning in my mind, and that what at first had seemed a bore and nuisance to flee from, had now an invincible seduction for me. They had given me two of the grandest and most terrible images possible: that of the first entry into life, and that of human despair.

And of death, too. When they ceased suddenly, I thought: are those babies already dead? Never before had the cradle and the tomb seemed to me so close together. Those little morsels of humanity had been swiftly whirled from the cradle to the tomb. What matter if they interrupted and spoiled my work? I had never before conceived anything so grand and so terrible!

But superstition has great power over those who are accustomed to conceive many things outside the limited confines of reality. At this time it reawakened in me the instinct of paternity. I felt a great void within me, and at the bottom of it remorse. Had I omitted to regulate myself according to nature for the sake of art? But now I recognized that the fate of my art was closely linked with the obeying or not obeying the new admonitions of my conscience.

Not obeying, I could not have written another single syllable; obeying, who knows what new and marvelous beauties would unfold themselves in my work! Must I then do what others had done, take a wife, furnish a house, call down upon my head cares and worries of all sorts? Was this required of me? I was greatly perturbed, but meanwhile my work remained there, and at sight of the pen and ink-stand I experienced a kind of superstitious fear.

One morning I strolled round the great hospital. I had not closed an eye the whole night, because the wails not only distracted me from work but prevented me from sleeping too.

At the door of the building I saw an old porter sitting with his hands dangling between his legs, and his eyes fixed upon his own boots. Overcoming my agitation as if I were about to undertake some grave enterprise, I approached him and said:

"This house is, then—?"

"The Maternity Hospital."

"Are there babies born every night?"

"Of course—more or less of them—the race isn't extinct yet."

The old man's tone was half-mocking, half bored, and he did not raise his eyes from his boots the whole time. He doubtless took me for a curious idler.

But I continued: "Can you tell me how many were born last night and whose they are?"

He raised his eyes and leered at me, struck by my question (which was put as ingenuously as a judge's), took off his hat, scratched his forehead, and, after having thus taken his time, answered at his ease:

"Drops that fall into the sea!"

"Drops that fall into the sea?"

But the old man had fallen again into the contemplation of his own boots. He must have been a philosopher and perhaps I had interrupted him in the middle of drawing from his poor boots some profound deduction regarding the miseries of existence! So that, in spite of his reserve, he inspired me with great kindliness and confidence; so much so that I should have liked to confess to him that I had a serious motive for putting my questions; but I thought I would do it another time.

For several nights I listened for the new drops falling into the sea. I should have liked one single drop to fall one night, and to mark the precise moment.

The propitious night arrived: a deep silence—the new wail—the drop had fallen into the sea, the new being had leaped into life! And I heard no others the whole of that strangely agitated night.

In the morning I returned to my old man, and said to him:

"I will give you a handsome tip if you will tell me about the baby—the only one that was born last night!"

He did not give me time to finish. He disappeared up a staircase. But I could not move from the spot. I was as upset as if threatened by a catastrophe.

After a short time, the old man returned and said to me:

"If you want to adopt it, the little brat, you may rest assured the mother will thank heaven with all her heart. She is a woman of the people and those are her very own words."

The old man spoke with a kind of dull anger that reminded me of the nocturnal wails, as if there were nothing in life but a terrible fury to suppress, from babyhood to old age.

So that for the present I gave him as much money as I could and fled away.

But a few days later, I adopted the unknown creature. I stretched out my arm across the night to catch in the hollow of my hand the drop that was falling into the sea!

To be brief, I confided the boy's upbringing to certain good country-people of my acquaintance. My love for him was great, as was my happiness and my renewed industry. I now realized that my life and my work had formerly been arid, and it seemed that I had now at last discovered, in my heart and intellect, inexhaustible treasures to shower by the handful upon the universe.

New human forces stirred my spirit as the springtide winds shake the woods, and, like the trees, new buds shot forth in my work. It was truly the spring with its fruitful waters, its winds diffusing vital seeds, its countless awakening and creating energies! Now, night after night, the wailing of the new-born infants made an accompaniment for, and elevated, my inspiration with voices of blessing, because once I had taken one in with a paternal spirit.

Was not I his real father? I had stretched out my hand to take my child at the moment when he leaped from the night into the night. Knowing nothing of him who was not yet born even, I had felt myself called to his birth and had waited long for it. I had waited in my paternal love. Not conceived by me in any material sense, he was yet the child of my will, and my voluntary paternity must be superior to the simply natural kind.

My son stayed in the country until he was well grown. I wanted him then to be with me, for I wished to educate and instruct himself myself. Before he arrived, I had left the two rooms opposite the Maternity Hospital, and had rented a small villa outside the city gate with a garden and field. Thus Notturno (I had named him so in jest and it stuck to him) would still have almost the same liberty and fresh air to which he was accustomed. The country had truly returned him to me more wild and untamed than can be well imagined; but I thought I could soon tame him, and I took pleasure in

the prospect, and liked him all the same.

"I will make a man of him," I said to myself, perfectly happy. That was the first thing, and then, to make a happy man of him. For this he must necessarily be good, brave and strong, fine both in mind and body. I did not purpose to make him so much a gentleman or a shining light in learning, or this and that other thing; but simply to make him a happy man, and all the rest would come by itself.

Notturno, from whom it was often impossible to draw a word, had made me fall into the habit of talking to myself.

"And many rules will not be needed. It will be enough to follow the instincts of happiness that I feel within myself."

For the time, I began teaching him the first elements of knowledge, but without tiring him. Besides, Notturno was anything but docile and obedient, and would never have allowed me to tire him! He stayed as little as possible in the house and with me, but was always in the field. This little being, born in the night and called Notturno, was, nevertheless, a creature made to live in the sun under the open sky.

Sometimes I placed myself at the window to spy upon him in the distance, at the end of the field, because he did not like the neighborhood of the villa and always fled away to the end of the field. I saw him running, jumping, climbing, appearing and disappearing among the plants and thick crops and in the ditches, flashing here and there like a streak of lightning! It was then that I best caught the characteristic expression of his person. It was the spring of the feline race—the very same leaps and bounds!

His character was revealed to me in this way only—at a distance, in the silence and liberty of the open fields. I saw the little animal, so mute and so extraordinarily lively, acting according to his nature. His vivacity was so great that he appeared drunk. He was, doubtless drunk with sunshine or with something I did not know of. To me he was always like a barbarian, or a wild beast, leaping for the first time into conquered territory.

Was he pretty? I do not know. Beautiful and ugly are merely different modes of expressing oneself, and I could not say which Notturno was. I know that he had black hair, thick and curly, and eyes wherein I saw two fiery darts always ready to fly forth.

Two or three years passed, and Notturno had become a little giant. It is superfluous to repeat that he became more and more the heart of my heart, life of my life. But, alas! when he was with me, when I wanted to caress him, arrange his clothes, teach him to read and write, or moralize a little with him, he always looked at me in such a strange way, half-derisive, half-hostile (he always looked at my hands or my face), that I felt almost afraid of feeling two claws upon me at any moment, or that he would let fly at me those two darts from his eyes.

Only too true was my comparison of him to a little enemy that would not yet be reconciled to me—no, not at any cost! Only too well I read between his brows the question: "But who are you?" And only too well, when I taught him to read and write, I saw that within himself he accused me of stealing his time; and never when I moralized with him did a gesture or a single syllable of his reveal whether there was, or even might be in the future, any affinity between him and morality. But what was it he wanted to say?

Nevertheless, I was at that time hopeful of being able to subdue my son to me sooner or later. My will should bring about the miracle. Notturno was without doubt armed against me by all the obscure instincts of his obscure origin. In time they would be vanquished. And then, perhaps in order to atone for the lack of blood relationship, I had tried to be too much the father, and had ended by being it too little. Or at least I had exercised my paternity unnaturally, almost timidly and humbly, remembering that this

paternity had only begun by waiting for the night cry of a baby! I should, on the contrary, have energetically asserted my claim to absolute paternity to myself, to my son, before the whole world!

And this claim I maintained for a whole year. Notturno was in his twelfth year. Without his being aware of it I struggled with him day by day, hour by hour, always vigilant without pestering him. I could be severe, authoritative and inflexible without harshness; affectionate without over-indulgence. I could concentrate in my eyes and voice enough fire from the paternal spirit within me to inflame my son with all the filial instincts that blood had failed to give him.

It was during this period of paternal passion that devoured me—during this continual effort to express from within me the most human impulses—that my son and my Work became linked together in the depths of my being. I was creating my book—creating the future of my son—what a name and what wealth I should leave him—and I was creating his filial conscience.

I worked and worked with a fury of intellect and sentiment that others can have rarely experienced. When at night I heard the boy breathing in his sleep in the next room, all the abysses of nature were spread out before my spiritual eyes while I wrote. I penetrated the Unknown of men and of things, discovered the laws that ruled the world immutably, saw the veins that run in the universal being like those that run through the bodies of animals. The sacred images of primordial humanity were revealed to me, while the simple, powerful words of elementary truth glided from my pen. Sometimes I seemed an aerial spirit set free between the sea and a stormy sky, while in the tumbling waves I saw the abysses of the ocean, and in the flashes of lightning that rent the clouds I saw the abysses of the heavens!

And then I went on tip-toe into Notturno's room and watched him sleeping. And I imprinted a kiss upon his forehead, just on the spot where I seemed always to read the question: "But who are you?" As a reply to it I kissed him, moving lightly the black curls as I did so; while the most boundless human pride swelled in my breast!

Thus pages upon pages accumulated until in a year I had completed more than half my Work. And Notturno unfolded little by little, the rascal! I had given a terrible blow to the dark instincts of his origin. In his eyes, it is true, there were still those two fiery darts ready to fly forth; but his hostile derision had changed into burlesque insolence. I was doubtless a comical enough object to him, but no longer repulsive.

"Well, old fellow, shall we make a truce?" was what I seemed to read in the sign of interrogation between his brows. And in fact, the little foe, already stirred up against me by those suspicions and rancors produced by his origin, now hinted at a capitulation, seemingly disposed for reconciliation once for all.

He roamed round me in my study, now and then touching some object—a book or newspaper—and watched me silently as I wrote. He was still silent, but less than formerly; he seemed in short to be seeking a pretext for making a truce.

I let him alone; I kissed him no longer, and dined very often alone, letting the little savage feed himself, how, when, and where he liked; I avoided forcing his new sentiments in the least degree.

Was it curiosity only that now prompted him to approach me, or was he already begining to love me? Sometimes, when I wrote, I felt him come stealing quietly into the room and place himself in a corner, and I felt that his eyes were occupied with me and my work. I pretended not to see him, but when I did raise my head it was to catch a fleeting glimpse of him, crouching in that feline, spring-like attitude of his. Then he hurled the two darts

from his eyes, shot by me, and disappeared!

Did my work attract him? I began to observe that he must have taken an interest in it during my absence too, for more than once on returning from the town I discovered disorder on my writing table. The books and papers were not in their precise places, some pages of my work had evidently been turned over one by one by other hands than mine. In short, I was convinced that Notturno fumbled my work about, and the more so because one day, on entering the room, I caught him rummaging among the sheets. I scolded him severely.

What followed was so strange, so unexpected, that all my conclusions concerning the boy's mind were upset, and I found myself left in the dark once more. He burst out crying—for the first time!—sobbing so convulsively that I was terrified. I wanted to comfort him, but he glided away from my hand.

For some days he acted the wild beast tracked and pursued in the forest. What dark communication passed between Notturno and his father's work?

Perhaps he was simply a philosopher who considered my Work utterly useless, and with a very fair bit of reasoning did not like to be rebuked for the sake of a nothing. I wanted to discover and clearly understand what idea the child had formed of my Work. Some strange sentiment inspired him. He certainly could not have cried on account of the scolding, for he had had worse ones, and his tears were a new feature produced by a new motive. But what motive? Could I throw no light upon it? How had I exercised, how above all united, the two sole forces of my life—paternity and art?

I managed to subdue him once more. I made him study more and even begin new subjects. He was more docile and intelligent, and I understood better that I had in reality to do with a philosopher who considered my teaching utterly useless. But now I observed that the savage little philosopher was determined to show, almost to parade, his own intelligence, yet with a certain amount of disdain, which served as a vent to his feelings.

I noted that something lay deep within him, something was stirring more darkly but more actively within him. Was it stirring against me still?

Notturno had no longer a derisive or burlesque air, neither was he now hostile nor insolent; he had simply the air of one who watched. His dart-like eyes, blacker now, more deeply-set and more tenacious when fixed, reminded me more of a man armed in self-defence than of an enemy about to attack. Or rather, the enemy had renewed hostilities but only because he had been wronged. In other words, I discerned a reproach against me in Notturno's face.

I made an experiment; one day, while giving him his lessons, I put one of my pages before him to read. He stared at me, and all at once, like a liquid that overflows a glass, like a flame that bursts forth from slow combustion, all the hatred—the terrible, unreasonable and inextinguishable infantile hatred—blazed out at his eyes, his lips, his whole person!

Was his savage heart jealous of my work then? This unknown creature, adopted as my own since his first cry—did he wish to abolish the work of my whole existence—that work which had been refructified by him, continued for him, linked with him?

Then occurred the terrible illness which brought Notturno to the brink of the grave; and then returned that terrible health of his, in which all his dark instincts were developed unchecked. He was now really a wild beast let loose in the fields. He evinced a mania for destruction, spoiling, and killing. His pastime was to set fire to whatever he could in the fields, and to kill innocent animals.

One day, I just prevented him from setting fire to a field of crops ripe for harvest. Like all natures born to destroy, he preferred the most formidable

instruments of destruction—fire and steel. In the sitting-room and other rooms I had some old weapons, especially daggers. I noticed that he stole them away to empale upon them all the poor animals which fell into his hands.

What blood-thirsty being had I introduced into my peaceful life? What ferocities of his unknown blood were revealed in him? What evil germs had been engendered in him by his obscure birth, and what father and what relations were resuscitated in him? I began to feel fear of the Unknown. I, who for so many years had exerted all my energies in discovering it, was now affrighted by the Unknown that lay enveloped in the corporeal shell of a boy!

Was this *my* son? Were such eyes those of *my* son? Could this strong, cruel boy be child of mine? I was a wretchedly small man, and he was already a little giant! I experienced strange misgivings that I should never have imagined before. My fancy became peopled with grinning men, bloody and livid, who roamed about the cross roads of the city during the night hours—men who killed and were killed; it became peopled with grim, rough women, with all vilenesses and nameless horrors! I felt fear of the Unknown!

Unhappy man that I was, so obstinately determined to subdue him, to be a father!

I shut Notturno up, kept him tied to my side like a little dog chained to the leg of my table. I hid all the arms and kept him from the sight of steel and fire—those instruments which he had learnt to use, who knows when or against whom, before his birth. He chafed at his bonds, but remained silent. His eyes burned, stabbing like two dagger points, but he remained silent. For weeks and weeks, desperately, face to face, by my words and my actions, I repeated to him: "You must study! You must be good, do you understand! You must become a good man! You must love me, do you understand! I am your father! You know it—you know it—you know it!"

And I said it to myself, too, with a kind of frenzied exaltation, a sort of fury: "I am his father! his father! his father!" each time that the Unknown which lay concealed in the boy frightened me, each time that I saw a crowd of obscene beings appear in the darkness of the room around him.

"I am his father!" And I must knit together all the threads of his life with those of mine! My paternal care must be like a net ready to catch the little wild beast in spite of bites and scratches!

I kept him by my side in my room while I worked. I wanted him to see and understand that I was working. Besides, he had his own studies to do. I do not know whether he worked or not. I know that he always said his lessons splendidly, with a certain frown, as if to say: "Take it, I render you more than you have given me!" And this did not displease me entirely.

It was I who gave him his food, and he had all his meals with me. I abstained almost entirely from meat for his sake, and we lived on vegetables. It was I who put him to bed, I who went to wake him in the morning. I took him, moreover, for walks with me in the country, and said to him: "Look! look!" while pointing out and explaining the beauties and good things of nature.

But, above all, I wanted him to love me, know me, esteem me. Remembering the emotion he had one day evinced about my work, I wished to inspire him with others, with good ones. While writing, I sometimes raised my eyes suddenly to catch the expression of his face, and often surprised him with eyes fearfully widened and fixed upon me.

One day I said to him suddenly: "I am working for you."

"What are you doing?"

My heart leaped with joy at being questioned, as if at that instant Notturno had become fond of my work.

Then I told him as much about it as the brain of a boy could take in. I also

repeated to him clearly that I was doing it all for him. He scrutinized me deeply, and said:

"Don't keep me here any longer. Let me go out!"

"No, you must study!"

"Do you keep me here to see what you are doing?"

I felt a cold chill to the very marrow of my bones. Had this child cast a deep look into the spirit of his father, and read what he himself had been unable to read there? Did my paternity need that he should look on at what I was doing for him? Was it necessary to display it in order to assert it? Unhappy I was, who understood too late with what dark bands I had incautiously linked Notturno to my work! He must have felt himself the slave of my unjust and tyrannical mania—that of obstinately trying to overcome the dark instincts of his origin—and in him that idea was confounded with my work!

The next day (I had begun to give him a little liberty), I found upon my study table some sheets empaled upon a dagger. I felt that dagger in my breast! So he had stolen the weapons again! Again I felt fear of the Unknown, a terror as if obscene and depraved beings had entered my house, beings who used steel and fire in order to destroy! And while I was looking with consternation at the perforated sheets, I felt myself cut to the heart by a loud burst of laughter. I turned —Notturno flashed by the door. I wanted to follow him, but he fled away! From the square and by-ways outside rose that same burst of laughter at the noblest work of my existence. I decided to send Notturno away from me.

But from the window, shortly after, I saw him at the end of the field, among heaps of burning and smoking hay, leaping frantically as if he were possessed of a demon, sending metallic reflections from a dagger he was grasping and whirling against the sun, as if he were celebrating some deadly rite with fire and steel. I could contain myself no longer. I ran out, rushed up to him, seized the dagger and raised my hand to strike him. But he slipped from my grasp, glided away and cowered down in the distance at the trunk of a fruit tree, like a wild beast ready to spring. From his fixed and glittering eyes he began to dart at me all the rage, all the hatred and scorn, all the darkest emotions that lived in him.

Then I rushed at him again and, for the first time, beat him furiously, blindly, with all my poor strength. Yes, I beat the unknown creature, the bloodthirsty creature who had defied me, the animal I had failed to tame, the malignant being that had fixed the dagger in my Work! I beat a whole troop of obscene and depraved beings!

Not a cry, not a tear did my blows draw from him. I dragged him into the house, locked him into his room, and went off to the town to arrange how to get rid of him as soon as possible.

On my return, the servant ran crying to meet me:

"Oh, sir! Oh, sir! I had to let him out. He was going to throw himself out of the window. He had got up on the window-sill."

"What has happened?"

My legs trembled. Near the door of the house I saw an excited group of people.

"It is burning, burning!"

It came upon me like a thunder-bolt. I rushed to the stairs—the fire was in my study! The table, with all the books and all the papers, was in flames. My Work, my noble Work—the labor of my whole life—was destroyed!

And yet I had the courge to search for him. I do not know whether I should have killed him, or whether I should have clung to him as to the sole rock in the wreck of my existence.

But I could find him nowhere, either that day or ever after. He had fled forever. Since that day I have seen him no more. He had destroyed my Work and had fled forever!

And since that day I have done nothing more at all. Old age has come upon me as upon one who has nothing to do.

THE BETRAYAL

BY JACQUES CONSTANT

"AT last, at last, Dmitri! Why do you frighten your Maroussia so? You leave right after dinner without saying a word, and I have been awaiting your return, counting the hours, mad with anxiety. Where do you come from so late at night? What were you doing? Whom were you with?"

"No, I am not reproaching you, only I have been so afraid—I don't know why."

"No, don't joke. I know there are no wolves in Helsingfors, but there are men who are more ferocious than wolves. I know that the hospital of Saint-Vladimir is filled with wounded; that every night the soldiers fire upon people who walk through the streets after ten o'clock. It is dangerous to be out after that hour."

"Sleep when you are absent, exposed to danger! You know I could not do it."

"How did I pass my time? Crying, darling, and praying to God. Don't laugh, don't blaspheme, heaven would punish us. As soon as I had put our little son, Sasha, to bed, I knelt before the image of the Virgin. My prayer was not in vain, for you have returned safely.

"You say you are thirsty? Take some of this vodka with water. It is true that I talk so much and I notice nothing. You are flushed, out of breath, covered with mud; you look somber and preoccupied. Dmitri, do you know that you have not even kissed me? And do you know that you went away without even kissing your son? Oh, bad papa! But, great God—I hadn't seen it! You are wounded! Your right hand is covered with blood."

"Not your blood? What? You were attacked? You fought? You struck your adversary? Perhaps you killed him? Speak, tell me what has happened. You see that I had good reason for being anxious!"

"Some terrible mystery, and I must not know it! There are things you keep secret from me now. Still, think well, I must know what you are doing in order not to compromise you. In these days a thoughtless phrase, an imprudent word, is enough to condemn a man to death or to Siberia."

"I understand now. I will say that you came home to dinner, and went to bed at ten o'clock as usual. If only no one saw you come in! I can guess that something very serious must have occurred. Why do you hesitate to confide in me, your wife? You know you can have confidence in me."

"I annoy you? You would not have said that to me two years ago. What has become of our loving intimacy, of those pleasant evenings we spent seated in front of the fire, while Sasha rolled at our feet on the bear rug, holding out his little hands and calling to us in his childish voice. You smoked your pipe, you know—the one that was carved in the likeness of Tolstoy."

"Dmitri, you are crying. Oh, why did you ever join this society of the Invisibles?"

"Don't deny it. I know it. A letter

fell from your pocket one day with that horrible black seal. What were you preparing for? I don't know; but I do know that everyone lowers his voice and looks about him in terror when the name of this mysterious association is pronounced. Besides, since you have been frequenting these people you don't laugh any more, and you seem plunged in gloomy thoughts. You read books that speak of a better condition of society, liberty and justice, but counsel crime."

"Oh, it is possible that I do not understand. I have never studied as much as you have; only it seemed to me that Christ had already said these things more humanely, more lovingly. Don't be angry, Dmitri; if all the world followed the precepts of the gospel there would be less suffering and less iniquity. Laws were not to be changed by violence, but by love. He who strikes with the sword shall perish by the sword."

"What do I care about the universe, Dmitri? You and Sasha are all the universe that I have, and it is because of this that I am afraid when you leave me. My happiness may be selfish—so much the worse. Swear to me that you will not risk your life! There are plenty of men who have neither wives nor children; let them sacrifice themselves first."

"No, all rich men are not bad. Look at that little toy horse over there that Sasha received as a present today!"

"Who? I dare you to guess. Well it was a present from His Excellency, Prince Ourivan."

"Yes, the Governor of Helsingfors himself. But what is the matter with you? How curiously you are looking at me. Don't you remember that my cousin, Fedora, is governess at the palace? We met her this afternoon when we were out walking and she insisted upon my seeing the apartments of the prince. She thought he would be away all day, but he returned sooner than usual and entered the great ball-room where we were standing in esctasy before the pictures and tapestries. But far from seeming to be annoyed, he showed us the greatest courtesy. Sasha conquered him at once; he took him on his knees, kissed him and complimented me on his looks. He thought he was very big for a boy five years of age."

"Why do you object to my accepting the toy which the prince offered me so graciously? A refusal would certainly have annoyed him."

"He certainly looks more like an honest man than a cruel executioner. I imagine that a good many evil deeds are attributed to him that he is in no way guilty of."

"Killed? How? By whom? Oh, this must be the act of some member of your terrible society. Sooner or later the assassin will be discovered and he will be punished as he deserves."

"You say he is prepared for death and martyrdom? Then you know him? He is one of your friends? I am sorry for him. But— how stupid I am! This inexplicable absence, this secret which you dare not reveal, the blood on your hands!

"This man might have been a thousand times worse than he was, yet he was one of God's creatures and you had no right to take his life. Oh, my darling, I feel that a terrible misfortune is about to happen to us. You see, he who strikes with the sword shall perish by the sword."

"Yes, your excellency, I am the wife of Dmitri Propopov, lithographer, but judge, I swear to you that I do not know for what reason they have brought me before you.

"This morning, when I awoke, the police brutally invaded our little house and compelled us to follow them. In spite of our protestations they took us to prison—my husband, me and even

this poor little innocent boy who is now smiling at you.

"There must be some mistake, judge. I know you are good and just and I am confident that you will set us at liberty."

"The crime that was committed last night?"

"Prince Ourivan assassinated? It is horrible! I saw him only yesterday afternoon. He was such an amiable, good man."

"I met him because my cousin is governess at the palace. He gave my little boy a toy. Oh! this is a sad misfortune for Helsingfors! I suppose the assassins have already been arrested?"

"Dmitri suspected? But that is infamous, your excellency. A man so quiet, so honest as he is would be incapable of such an action. You're on a false track."

"You say that the information you have received about him is bad? Doubtless there are some people who hate him because he is proud and will not associate with them, because he earns his living honestly and fears no one. Then think for a moment, your excellency: the crime, you say, was committed between midnight and one o'clock. At that hour Dmitri was sleeping."

"Am I certain of that? Why, of course, I was lying beside him."

"You say my testimony is suspicious! Of course I have no one to corroborate it. My house is isolated and we know few people. No one saw him go out that night, that is certain."

"Excellency, this is my son. He was sleeping at the time, and then he is so little, he doesn't know. Sasha! Answer the gentleman! Do you love your papa?"

"Last night? Hush, Sasha, you're a bad boy. You do not know what you are saying."

"Judge, I will not allow him to annoy you any more with his babble!"

"It is false, your excellency, it is false! The child has invented all that. You are crazy, Sasha!"

"I have no intention whatever of intimidating him, judge, but you can see yourself that he is lying. How could I have exclaimed: 'My God! It is midnight and Dmitri has not returned!' when Dmitri was sleeping beside me? Oh, God! I tell you he was sleeping, sleeping soundly."

"No, you cannot, you must not believe what a child says. Your excellency will certainly not credit his statement. He is subject to hallucinations, to nightmares—and yesterday, now I remember, he was very feverish. He dreamed all that he has just told you. Oh, my God, believe me, he has no notion of time. Yesterday or last week are all the same to him. Silence, Sasha! Yes, yes, yes, you know you are sick. But he is repeating it again and with an accent of sincerity! Oh! Children, your excellency knows, are terrible, and could cause a catastrophe without knowing what they are doing. But do not believe him, judge, do not believe him!"

"Oh, heaven, we are innocent! Be just, do not hold us under arrest! You have no proof! You could not be so cruel as to base your accusation upon the denunciation of a child who is but five years old, and does not know what he says. On my knees, excellency, I beg of you; you have a wife, children. Sasha, poor child, get down on your knees and pray the judge to give you back your father."

"It is all useless. We are lost. My God! I do not believe in your goodness and mercy any more, since you have permitted a child to betray its own father."

JOHNNY'S LEG

BY ENRICO CASTELNUOVO

I HAD nothing serious to complain of in Adele——

(I beg the reader to understand that it is not the author who is speaking; this Adele has not known me or even seen me. The speaker is Robert Cefali, engineer and husband of Signora Adele.)

I had nothing serious to complain of in Adele; Adele had nothing serious to complain of in me, but we could not endure one another. To be honest, it was I who wearied of her. Adele was too phlegmatic to be capable of a vigorous antipathy. Speaking of her to my friends, I called her a "slow-poke," not because I thought her fragile—God preserve me!—but when she moved or opened her mouth she had the air of a person who is afraid of breaking something.

I confess that I was a rather frivolous youth. I had married carelessly and now set myself up for a victim of matrimony. At my age, with my genius (excuse my modesty!) with my title of Doctor of Mathematics, with a sufficient income, with an assured independence—for many of my relatives had died—I would have made a fine figure in the world if it had not been for my blessed consort, who had not one spark of ideality. It is enough to say that when, during the honeymoon, I read my verses to her I could not draw from her one expression of admiration. This may have been the origin of my antipathy. People often say: "Seek a wife." I would say, to seek a wife is very well, but it is not bad to seek for the reason of things in human vanity. Wounded vanity, satisfied vanity, these are the sources of much love and much hatred. You see, as I grow older I have became a philosopher.

In fact, it would be difficult to find a marriage more wearisome than ours. When we were together we yawned in each other's faces in a way to amuse an onlooker. Johnny's arrival did not change this interesting situation; quite otherwise. Adele insisted on taking sole charge of her baby. She set a room aside for a nursery, which she occupied with him until she lost all desire to return to her former habits. It was wrong of her, I said with my superior wisdom. But Adele was harder than a rock. Like most virtuous wives, it was enough for her to have a son.

I must confess that Adele loved her little Johnny and took the greatest care of him. She was always busy in adorning him, dressing him and jumping him upon her knees. It seemed to me that she made a plaything of the baby. I cherished a dignified affection for my son and felt myself superior to all foolish fondness. It was not to be doubted that I felt myself fitted for great sacrifices and great virtues—but the century is so prosaic!

Certain it is that Johnny flourished. At the age of three years and a half he was beautiful, active, a veritable rosebud that would have been the delight of a more serious man than I; but I paid little attention to him. The child did not make much account of me—it was his mother whom he continually called for.

I quarreled with Adele about Johnny. I cannot tell why I did so; certainly it was for a very slight cause. One word led to another.

"What a fine life we are leading together!" said Adele.

"Each goes his own way," I answered.

"Oh, as to me—" she began.

I seized this opportunity and spoke plainly of my idea of a separation. She grew a trifle pale, but when she found that all could be arranged quietly and that I would let her have Johnny until he was twelve years old, and that she need send him to me only fifteen days every six months, she decided that perhaps, for me, it was better so.

"Better for both," I added in conclusion. Then I continued: "It will be necessary to write to your father and ask him to come for you."

"I will write to him myself tomorrow."

"There is no need to tell him everything."

"No, certainly not, it would displease him."

"Let us find a pretext," I suggested. "Your health—the need of a little of your native air—or Johnny, the change would do him good——"

"Oh, Johnny was never better than he is now," she assured me.

"Never mind, it is only something to say—when the time comes, little by little, you can make it all clear."

She did not answer, but seemed convinced by what I said. I went away light as a feather. I was on the point of regaining my liberty, and I meditated upon the best way of using it. Now I could do anything but marry. This impossibility was not disagreeable to me. I did not intend to conceal my true position; I was not so much of a villain as all that. To speak truthfully, Adele's presence, while it was far from unpleasant, affected my nerves and fettered me. Fatality!

My friends, all bachelors, congratulated me upon my resolution. It was the best thing to do. "When two can not get on well together it is better to separate," was the profound decision of a doctor of philosophy who was the Solon of the band.

The oldest among us was thirty-two; I was but a boy when I married, and was now but twenty-seven. I had married at twenty-two, before I had completed my studies at the University. What folly it had been! At that age one is not responsible for his own actions, said our oracle. Truly, one is not responsible.

My conscience was easy, my spirits were lighter than they had been for a long time. I wished to be truthful; that evening they opened a bottle of champagne in honor of my emancipation and drank to my future literary triumphs. Who could doubt these triumphs? The others perhaps; surely not I.

I had gone from home soon after dinner and returned at a late hour. To my great amazement my wife came to meet me.

"Johnny has fallen," she said, "and has hurt his knee badly."

"Fallen? How? Good God! The child—who knows—he should have been watched more closely."

"No one is to blame," she replied calmly but seriously. "I called the doctor without delay."

"It's probably not serious," I remarked. "He ought to be bathed with arnica."

"But the doctor says that he will have to wait and see."

"Oh! The doctor——"

"He put on a bandage and will return tomorrow," continued my wife.

"Stuff and nonsense! Why are you up so late?"

"Because the blessed child is not quiet a moment. There, I hear a scream! I am going. Do you want to see him?"

"It won't do any good. I'll see him to-morrow."

I returned to my room, which was on the opposite side of the apartment. I carefully closed the two doors so that I should not hear any noise, then undressed and buried myself under the blankets.

Wives, I reflected, lead one an infernal chase for every trifle, and the doctors throw oil on the flames, merely to give themselves an air of importance, to bring grist to their own mill. The world is full of egotists. I lazily stretched out my arms, arranged the pillow more comfortably under my head

and soon fell asleep, persuaded of three things:

First, that very little was the matter with Johnny; second, that Adele had exaggerated the trouble in order to annoy me; third, that I was the only calm person in the family.

In the morning I rose somewhat late and went to the nursery, where my wife had watched all night. Johnny was moaning faintly; he was red in the face and had some fever.

The doctor examined the limb, which was swollen to the knee, and ordered leeches to be applied.

"Is it a fracture?" I asked.

"Fracture? No."

"If it isn't a fracture—" I said gravely.

"Oh!" the doctor answered. "There are contusions worse than fractures."

What a strange taste the doctors have for arousing all sorts of fears, I thought. At any rate, I couldn't see how it was possible just now for me to write to my father-in-law to come and take Adele away.

Johnny did not get better; the swelling persisted, and he could not put his foot to the ground, nor was he able to move without great pain. Accustomed as he was to run and jump all day, it was a sore trial for the poor little one to remain there stretched out on the bed, or on the sofa. A few days were enough to make him lose his rosy color, to plant hollows in his cheeks, to make his bright eyes languid. Adele stayed close by his side, did all she could to cheer him, and every time that I went out she said to me: "Bring some new toy for Johnny."

She said it as if it were the most natural thing in the world, as if it were an obligation for me to go in person to the toy-shop, and as if there had never been any question of a separation between us. For my part, what was I to do? Buy the toys in spite of the loud laughter of my friends? Quite a difference between this and emancipation! This illness of Johnny's was an unfortunate misadventure.

Things dragged along. The doctor demanded a consultation and called in a very skilful surgeon, who, after many preambles, concluded that a tumor had formed, and that the boy had lymphatic tendencies which would take a long time to cure.

From this time on poor Johnny's leg was martyred in every way; plastered, poulticed, cut, cauterized—every morning there was a new torture.

It was torture beyond my strength, so when the doctor came I felt an urgent desire to take the air. Happily, my wife, with her phlegmatic disposition, could assist in the doctoring, could hold the poor boy's leg, and merited the title of a model hospital nurse. When I, grieved in truth by the child's sufferings, let two or three imprecations escape my lips, she was able to smile and say:

"What is the good of murmuring against Providence?"

I wondered not so much at her calmness as at her physical endurance. At first glance you would have judged her to be a rather slight woman, but she must have had nerves of steel not to become ill herself watching night after night, shut up within the four walls of the sick-room. I was miserable, yet I could take a constitutional regularly every evening and pass the greater part of the day away from the house. It was a question of temperament, of nerves.

Four weeks had passed since Johnny hurt his leg, and the miserable tumor that had formed gave no sign of healing. The two doctors in attendance showed a slight embarrassment in answering our questions. They hoped that all would end well, but they must admit that the case was a prolonged one and that many unexpected complications had arisen.

Adele, serious but tranquil, expressed a desire to hear the opinion of a third party. This time a celebrated surgeon from another city was called in consultation, a great man whose word was worth its weight in gold. I do not say it metaphorically.

He examined Johnny's leg for a good

hour, feeling of it, moving it, using the probe without mercy. A stone would have pitied Johnny. I grew cold with perspiration and had to leave the room after three repetitions. My wife held the poor martyr's hand and made no movement, uttered no word. Her eyes were dry, her lips pressed tightly together.

After the local examination came the general examination, which seemed to give more satisfactory results. In spite of his lymphatic tendencies Johnny was robust. The three physicians withdrew to a corner of the room to consult together; then, with one accord, they suggested a new treatment. But even this might not succeed, said Doctor Allinori, who was the last called.

"And then?" said my wife in a faint voice.

"Then it will be necessary to think of something else," the doctor added without any further explanation.

When he withdrew I followed him to the door, slipped a bank-bill for a large amount into his hand and whispered: "Well, then?"

"Why, if you should make another trial——"

He hesitated.

"Don't you believe you will be successful?"

"We hope so. If we are not obliged to resort to extreme measures——"

"What do you mean?" I demanded.

Doctor Allinori lowered his voice. "Amputation."

There was a repressed cry. It was my wife. She had come up behind us on the tips of her toes and in the dark entrance she had been able to approach unseen and had heard the terrible word pronounced by the doctor.

"Signora, signora," said he, grieved at what had happened. "Don't be disheartened. They are remote possibilities. We physicians must take everything into consideration."

Adele was already calm. "I know it," she answered. "But you will return, will you not?"

It was settled that Doctor Allinori should return in about fifteen days. Meanwhile we would place our hopes on the new remedy.

The idea of amputation was horrible. I could not conceive of this little devil of a Johnny without a leg. One need only lift his petticoat to see his full round form, his beautiful pink and white flesh that was his mother's pride. All these things I had not valued when Johnny was well, but I appreciated them now when misfortune had fallen so heavily upon the poor little creature. Yes, I confess that now, for the first time, I began to know what a father's feelings really were. Johnny's leg belonged to me; I ought not to permit a surgeon's knife to cut it. I tried to win my wife to my views, to excite a strong decisive protest against the barbarism that plotted to work us harm. She contented herself with the reply:

"Let us hope there will be no need for it."

Johnny did not suffer all the time. He had his lucid intervals in which he laughed and joked as in times past. We had a comfortable little carriage made expressly for him that could be drawn by hand. When the weather was fine I drew him in it, in the garden and even beyond the house, where he eagerly drank in the fresh air and sun and delighted in the perfume of the flowers and the capricious flight of the butterflies. I had to hold him firmly on the seat, because, forgetting his infirmity, he wanted every moment to jump and run as the other boys were doing. Oh, why must he be different from other boys? However, he had no knowledge of how serious his trouble was. He always expected to get up tomorrow, to be the same tomorrow as he had been in the days before. His mother seconded this fancy. I found it difficult, when I was present, to restain my tears. When the little fellow was weary of his carriage Adele was the only one who had any authority over him. She kept close to his side to prevent him from moving and said to me:

"Robert, put yourself in Johnny's place for a little while."

I obeyed, and began to win my son's

confidence. How beautiful Johnny was! The wind tossed his rich blond curls over his forehead and tinged his pallid cheeks with rose. For a moment his eyes lost their expression of suffering and acquired a spark of their old-time brightness. He moved his graceful arms with delight and clapped his little hands.

"How beautiful he is!" I exclaimed one day before Adele.

"Oh!" she replied. "Now?" Her eyes grew moist and she seemed to look into the past. She seemed to say, he was so once! Then I had scarcely noticed him.

Every morning that the doctor did not come Adele doctored the child's leg, and she discharged the delicate office with great skill and calmness. You would have said that she had lived for ten years in a hospital as assistant nurse. It was undeniable: my wife had her good qualities, and it was at least strange that I had wished to separate from such a wife while so many husbands— But enough. On the other hand, there was this incompatibility of temper. And then Adele desired the separation as much as I did!

Of course we could not think of such a thing while Johnny's illness lasted. When he should be cured it would be quite another thing. But if he should not be cured? It was an idea that I pushed away from me, but it returned inexorably to torment me. If he should not be cured? Surely then the separation would be still more easy; what fetters would bind Adele and me? If he should not be cured? The thought was horrible!

I did not feel that I could be present when the treatment was applied, so I always asked Adele: "How is it getting on now?"

Unfortunately neither from her nor from the doctor did I succeed in obtaining a favorable reply. The next visit of Doctor Allinori had a discouraging result.

"Unhappily there is no improvement," he said in response to our anxious looks. He shook his head and discoursed in an undertone with his colleagues.

"We must wait for a little," he said, taking me aside. "Who knows? Nature works miracles. But if the miracle does not come, it is useless, we must resort to the last means that science suggests."

The others assented.

"Amputation," I exclaimed. The terrible word parched my tongue and I frantically twisted the handkerchief in my hand. My wife quickly joined me. She had guessed it all. I placed my hand on her shoulder and whispered:

"Courage!"

"It is not an urgent matter," Doctor Allinori went on, "but it is better not to wait until the trouble has progressed too far and the strength is too much exhausted. I shall be here again towards the end of next week, and then——"

"You are sure that you can save him by amputation?" interrupted my wife in a voice that was firmer than mine had been.

"Positively sure I can never be, but relatively, yes. If the child had not been robust and if the troubles which have developed had not originated from a wound, I confess that I should not have dared to counsel this move, which is serious. But in fact, in such cases, there are sixty out of a hundred chances that it may be favorable."

"Sixty out of a hundred," I said wistfully. "And the other forty?"

"My dear sir," the doctor answered, "we are in troubled waters and ought not to deceive ourselves. Sixty per cent. of favorable probabilities is better than ninety per cent. of unfavorable."

"Then there is no way out of it?" I cried from the anguish of my heart.

"If in eight or ten days a crisis does not come I see no other alternative." replied the doctor. "At least this is how it appears to me. What do my colleagues say?"

His colleagues said just what he said. They were like two parrots.

I could not bear it any longer and left the room, while my wife said to Doctor Allinori again:

"Then you will come back to him next week?"

During the day I seized a moment while Johnny slept to speak aside to Adele.

"No, no," I said. "The physicians can predict whatever they wish, we must not let them cut off Johnny's leg. To make him a cripple, to make him a wretched—no, no, they positively must not do it."

"Suppose he should die?"

"It would be a misfortune, a terrible misfortune, but we will not have committed a barbarism. No, I would rather sacrifice him."

"Robert! Robert! And could you let him die?" she burst out with a shrill cry.

I wanter to answer yes, but instead I raised my head and shook it violently.

"A curse upon medicines and upon doctors. All are ignorant, impostors, quacks! Is there not one that can be of some use?" I sprang up from the seat, explaining with admirable logic: "I want to consult a fourth one. It will be the fourth—never mind, I will go and seek him wherever he may be."

Adele did not oppose me, but evidently she did not hope anything from this new consultation that I had decided to have. I did not yet know with whom.

Some days passed before I fixed my choice upon one of the three or four celebrities who had been pointed out to me. I finally gave the preference to one who was in great demand and who lived in Florence. I resolved to make a journey to that city and bring him back with me.

"Bring me a new toy from Florence," said Johnny.

He had a collection of toys around him, some entire, some broken. There were a dozen leaden soldiers, there were puppets that, when you gave them a push, became prodigious acrobats, bleating sheep and mice that would run about the room, a train of cars, a pair of lame horses, a fish with silvery scales, a theater with colored scenery, a tin kitchen, some boxes of building blocks, a magic lantern with broken glasses, all the stuff accumulated from day to day in three months' illness. But whatever Johnny might ask for, Adele and I would have thrown ourselves into the fire to get for him. I promised him the new toy, and he kissed me with a smile. He was thin and pale. Poor Johnny!

"Come back quickly," Adele called to me as she accompanied me to the stairs.

"The day after tomorrow I will be here. And you, if there is anything new, telegraph to the Northern Hotel."

"I understand."

We pressed each other's hands without a word. In truth no one would have believed we were two married people resolved to separate.

The devil had played tricks. I had made my plans and left out politics. My Hippocrates was a senator and, as such, was now in Rome. On learning this I uttered some rank heresy, and expressed myself warmly about senator doctors, which did no great harm; then I swore at the transferring of the seat of government to Rome, and even dared to attack the parliamentary management.

I was a little perplexed as to what was to be done, but I was so possessed by the idea of this consultation that I decided to take the train direct for Rome. Naturally, before starting, I telegraphed to Adele not to be disturbed by my delay.

At Rome a new misadventure. It was Sunday and my great man had gone to take the air at Frascati. They expected him to return that evening at midnight. At eleven I was in his room counting the minutes. At a quarter after twelve the luminary of Italian medical science arrived and appeared somewhat annoyed to find someone in his room. When I had explained the motive of my coming and my intention of taking him with me: "Impossible," said he, "absolutely impossible. Tomorrow the sanitary code comes up before the Senate for discussion and I must lay before it the work of the Commission of which I am one."

"But day after tomorrow?" I persisted.

"Oh, but these are not things that can be arranged in a day," he said with a lofty air.

I could not make up my mind to go away. I wanted, at least, to refer the case to him and get his opinion of it.

"When I do not see the sick person," he said, "it is very difficult to decide. The remedies used seem to me the best. He is well looked after; Doctor Allinori is a very reliable man. We disagree about some of the fundamental principles of practice, but for the rest we are in accord. In this case I should have done as he has done."

"But now, what would you do now?"

"I believe that I would resort to amputation."

He rose from his chair, accompanied me politely to the door, refused any recompense for his opinion and said good night. In a couple of weeks, perhaps, if we still had need of him, he might be able to come.

How much profit I had got from my journey to Rome! I had been absent from home four days and knew nothing of Johnny.

Had Adele wished to telegraph me at Rome, she would not have known where to direct the dispatch, for I had forgotten to tell her where I would stay. I sent her another telegram stating that I was compelled to give up the new doctor and that I would soon be on my way home. She might send me word at the Florence station.

In the morning I took the first train for Northern Italy. Fatality upon fatality! A wretched delay at Orte made me lose the connection. I had to wait five hours.

A telegram was waiting me at the station; it read thus:

We are in trouble here. We wait for you. Have you received my other dispatch that I sent two days ago to the Northern Hotel?

ADELE.

Another dispatch? I could not resist my curiosity to read it and I took a carriage to the hotel. I had time enough left to go and come. This was the dispatch that had crossed mine and had been sent before Adele knew of my starting for Rome:

I am expecting Doctor Allinori. He says there is no time to lose. Come back quickly, quickly, quickly.

This entreaty wrung my heart. What had happened? In truth the latter dispatch was much more quieting, but in any case, Adele would not have written me this without a grave reason.

"There is no time to lose." This signified that it was necessary to perform the horrible, abominable amputation! They called me to assist at such a torture, they wished me to be present while they crippled my son!

"There is no time to lose!" Meanwhile I had lost two days with my journey to Rome, and I might lose still a third one at Florence. I seemed to see Doctor Allinori in the sick-room, with his instruments of torture in his hand, only waiting for my coming to cut without mercy.

What if there should not be any more time? What if my delay should be fatal? If, now, I should arrive only to see Johnny die? I wanted to persuade myself anew that it was better to see him dead than crippled, but I did not succeed. I grew angry at myself for my past hesitation, and said:

"Yes, yes, I will let them perform the operation, they can do what they choose if they will only save him."

I traveled in a state of uneasiness and anxiety that may be imagined. No one met me at the station; in fact, no one knew by what train I would come. When I reached the house I went up stairs like a flash. Adele heard me and met me on the landing. I trembled at sight of her, for she was white as a rag.

"Well?" I cried in a stifled voice.

"He sleeps now, we hope—come in—Oh, God, poor Robert, what a troubled face you have!"

"And you, Adele, if you saw yourself in the glass— But what has happened? Tell me everything."

"First come inside."

I let her lead me mechanically into the dining-room.

"Are you hungry?" said Adele, going toward the sideboard.

"No, I am not hungry, I am not anything. I want to know the truth about Johnny. Where is Doctor Allinori?"

"He has gone."

"Gone? We must call him back quickly. There is no time to lose, so you telegraphed. No, I don't oppose it any longer, I don't oppose the amputation——"

"Ah!" she exclaimed with an accent of joy that seemed very singular to me at this moment, on the eve of such a terrible trial.

"But let us do it quickly," I added. "I hope to heaven we haven't waited too long."

"Robert," replied Adele as she put both hands in mine, "you will pardon me then?"

"Pardon you? Pardon whom? Speak, for the love of heaven! Is there any misfortune that you do not dare to share with me?"

"No, I swear to you, no misfortune; yet——"

"You are so embarrassed! I want so much to see Johnny!" I tore myself away from her.

"One moment," she cried. "Listen." I stopped on the threshold. "I telegrauhed to Florence that Doctor Allinori said there was no time to lose, and added: 'come back, quickly, quickly, quickly.'"

"Yes."

"Then you did not receive this telegram?"

"No, I had set out for Rome, and I found it on my return as I passed through Florence."

"Doctor Allinori had consented to remain a day, but not more than one day, because pressing engagements called him elsewhere. So it was urgent; the condition had grown worse during the week—gangrene might set in at any moment."

I began to discern the truth, but I had not strength to utter a word. I was all ears, I scarcely breathed.

My wife went on: "He said to me: 'Signora Adele, do you feel able to take upon yourself so great a responsibility?'"

Oh God! Now I began to understand.

"But he will save him for me!" I cried.

"The three doctors were all agreed: 'Yes, we will save him, you will see. Have faith in us, have faith in Providence.'"

"My poor little Johnny!" I cried again. "Poor creature! Did he resist?"

"They gave him chloroform. He looked at me with eyes full of affection and fright, and said to me: 'Mamma, what is this? No, mamma, no.' He shook his head twice, raised his hand as if to brush off some tormenting insect, and fell back in a stupor. Then——"

"Oh, don't tell me. Were you present?"

"They wished to send me into another room. Imagine if I would go. I remained there to the end, several minutes, a second—I don't know how long. And when the operation was ended I will admit that I felt as if my strength would leave me and I would faint. But one thought sustained me. Johnny was unconscious; they must bring him back to consciousness. Ought not I, his mother, to be here then? It was no easy matter to awaken him. Twice the doctors looked at each other. I looked at them; what moments! what agony! At last the child moved his arm a little, opened his eyes with difficulty and looked at me, looked so anxiously for me. 'Mamma, I don't want any more of that dreadful smelling stuff,' he said."

"Didn't he feel his leg pain him?"

"No, not then. Later."

"Oh, enough, enough." I wept like a child.

"Then," she went on to console me, "just then he didn't seem to feel any more pain, he was resigned to the loss of his leg and said: 'Naughty leg, they did quite right to throw you away.'"

I wept as I listened.

"Then you will pardon me?" she said timidly.

"Pardon you," I broke out. "I pardon you? It is you who ought to pardon me, Adele." I would have continued, but she imposed silence.

"Not one word more, Robert, not one word, I beg—at least, so long as Johnny is not out of danger. If you are convinced that I have acted for the best, that is enough for me. Whatever else you add will be a bad omen for me today."

"And how long will the danger last?"

"Eight days, possibly ten days; they can't tell precisely. We have had so much patience, let us have still more."

The eight, the ten days passed, but not without considerable uneasiness on the part of the doctors and ourselves. At the end of two weeks every trace of fever had left him, and on the sixteenth day, a Wednesday—I shall always remember it—Doctor Allinori, who had come to visit his little patient, shook my wife's hand with an air of triumph, exclaiming:

"Did I not tell you, Signora Adele, that we would save him? Put your heart at rest after so many anxious days; your Johnny is saved. Unfortunately he will grow up without a leg, but he will grow strong and will be a fine lad, all the same." Turning to me, he added: "And you, thank your wife, for without Signora Adele the boy would have died before this."

I was so sure of it that I turned towards Adele. I felt like throwing myself at her feet, but instead I had to support her, for her strength, which had so wonderfully resisted grief, seemed to give way before joy. At the physicians' words she turned first red, then white as the wall; she tried to force herself to smile, to say something, but in vain. Then, feeling the ground going from under her, she sought for a support and would have fallen if I had not caught her.

"It will soon pass off, it is the excitement," said the doctor, giving her some ammonia to smell.

She smiled, passed her hand over her forehead, and whispered in a thread of a voice: "It is only for a moment. I am so weak, so tired—I will go to bed. Where is Norina?"

"I will call her, but meantime let me assist you."

I led her, leaning heavily on me, to her room, where for four years she had slept alone like a child, like a widow—worse still, like one repudiated.

"I will watch her," I said to the maid; "you can go away."

I watched all night, thinking that Johnny was cured, but alas, at what a price! My wife might prove to be on the eve of a serious illness, but above all I thought of the great sin that I had on my conscience, and of the impossibility of expiating it. I had looked down upon Adele, I had preferred more frivolous women; I had proposed a separation!

At last she fell asleep. Her breathing, so troubled at first, had gradually become calm and regular; the expression of her face was quiet; and yet I was so uneasy! Every ten minutes I rose from my seat and went to look at Adele's clock which stood on the chest of drawers near the night lamp. Seconds followed seconds, and my heart beat faster. It was strange. It seemed to me I was not worthy to be in this room, which had formerly been ours, but which I had so stupidly abandoned. This air of womanliness, that breathed in everything about me, penetrated my whole being. I caressed Adele's garments, which she had thrown across the back of an arm-chair, and involuntarily my thoughts flew to my past life with its defects and sins.

The dawn began to penetrate the room through the half-shut windows. A little before six Adele stirred, opened her eyes and, seeing me standing by the bedside, started up.

"You, Robert? What time is it?"

"About six o'clock."

"You are up early; perhaps Johnny is not so well?"

"Johnny is still sleeping like an angel," I answered, placing my ear at

the door of the adjoining room, where the boy was with his nurse.

"But then," she added, seeking to recover her senses, "I don't understand. Why are you here?"

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"Oh, now I remember! Yesterday evening I must have had vertigo. Now it has passed; it was nothing. It was not reason enough to make you rise so early."

"I didn't rise," I said timidly.

"Then where were you? Have you been away?"

"I was—here."

"You remained here all night? Oh, Robert!" she exclaimed, fixing her beautiful eyes on my face.

I could not contain myself any longer, but threw myself on my knees at the foot of the bed, where, bursting into sobs, I told her all that had weighed upon my mind for such a long time. The words I do not recall. I know that I did not spare myself any reproaches, that I did not keep back any of my past sins. I called Adele the sweetest names: angelic, saintly, divine. I called her the preserver of our son, worthy of a man who knew how to appreciate her, while I——!

She did everything to calm me. "No, Robert, it is not true. I too have had my faults; I was cold and disdainful, I was too proud to confess how much I felt for you. Johnny's trouble has made us both better; we will love each other more, and in this strong love we will seek the expiation of our sins!"

That Adele should speak of her sins! "You will not drive me away then?" I pleaded. "You will not insist upon the separation?"

She did not let me finish the sentence. Reaching out from the bed she clasped my neck with her two arms: her long, thick hair, escaping from the cap that confined it, fell upon my shoulders, her tears mingled with mine, while she repeated in a trembling voice:

"Poor Robert, we have suffered so much these past months!"

The first rays of the sun shimmered on the wall, a bright light flooded the room; outside the birds saluted the spring, and spring exulted in my heart.

Several years have passed since that morning. Johny wears his wooden leg with ease; he has grown rather tall, with fine face, an even, serene disposition, and he is good, intelligent and studious. At school he is always at the head of his class. His mates fairly worship him, the professors love and esteem him and say: "You can be anything you choose but a soldier."

Johnny has younger brothers, active, healthy, with all their limbs intact, and you can imagine how dear Adele and I hold this nest-full of boys. When we hear Johnny's leg strike the pavement, a deeper tenderness comes over us, an electric current passes through us. We force ourselves to show no preference, but Arthur, who is the most mischievous of our sons, sometimes says:

"Oh, they are speaking of Johnny; he is always right."

Our firstborn receives liberally of his father's affection. Possibly he loves his mother a little the best. How could it be otherwise? The impressions of early childhood are not effaced; his mother adored him when I only showed him a superb indifference, and, during his long illness, it was she who was with him, who watched by his bed, who knew how to make him smile while she kept back her tears.

Surrounded by an atmosphere of sympathy, Adele has shaken off the excessive reserve that made her appear cold and indifferent. No one can do otherwise than admire her rectitude and the clearness of her judgment, and when any of my faithful friends gather at my house, it is the custom to let her have the last word in all discussions. And her word is always so just!

I am thirty-five, she is only thirty-two, and we love each other like two newly married people—no, in our case more than when we were newly married. And to think that we were on the point of separating!

Ah! Johnny does not know what a miracle his leg has wrought!

THE FOOL'S ADVICE

BY JUHANI AHO

COLLECTED in the square, between the courthouse and the cathedral, were all sorts of implements of torture—pillories, thumbscrews, spiked chairs, spiked barrels, red hot tongs. In the middle of the square were the pile and the stake, ready to receive the heretic, in case he should refuse to acknowledge his waywardness, abjure his false creed and accept the only redeeming Catholic church.

They hang him up to a beam by the hands, and leave him thus suspended, with balls of lead fastened to his feet. But he only cries: "I will not confess! I will not abjure! I will not surrenrender!"

They lead him to the spiked chair, but his protestation rings out even louder at his persecutors and at the crowds that have congregated in the square, in the streets, on roofs and in windows.

They pinch him with red hot tongs till his skin scorches—without success. He will not confess, nor abjure, nor surrender.

The Inquisitor-in-chief—the Cardinal who had come from the great city of Rome by the Pope's order to put a stop to heresy—knows not how to deal with this stubborn man. A confession of guilt, an abjuration, a voluntary surrender, were things more to be wished for, he thought, than an *auto da Fé*, which constitutes the last resource, and is rarely resorted to within the highest circles of the Church. He summons his servant to the balcony of the courthouse, where he sits attired in his red robe, and directs him to say to the accused that all grace will be granted to him and to all his family, and even to his home town, if he will give in. But the tortured one receives the message of his tempters with scorn.

Then the Inquisitor-in-chief's patience fails, and in a fit of rage he orders the headsman to cut off the heretic's left hand. But the heretic puts forth his right arm and requests him to cut that off, too. The greater his suffering, the intenser his pain, the louder he cries and the further does his voice reach. It is heard across the square, along the streets, it penetrates the walls of the houses and sounds even beyond the city's gates.

Beads of perspiration stand out on the Cardinal's forehead. He has been commissioned to receive an adjuration, a confession, a surrender. Disgrace threateningly awaits him with the Holy Father and his Council of Cardinals.

"What is it that gives him this supernatural power?" he asked himself and those about him. But no one can find the explanation. For hitherto all persons tortured had surrendered.

Then the court jester steps forward—the fellow who generally accompanied His Reverence, even on his travels—and asks leave to speak.

"Speak!" said the Inquisitor-in-chief.

"Gag him!" the fool advises. "His crying relieves his pain, but his pain will increase twofold if he is prevented from crying it out."

"A fool's advice," the Inquisitor-in-chief remarks. "How will it be possible for him to confess his waywardness and abjure his false creed if we stop his mouth."

"Silence is assent."

"Thou wise fool. Thou ingenious madman!" cries the Inquisitor-in-chief, delighted.

And immediately he commands the headsman to act according to the fool's suggestion. A gag is shoved into the mouth of the accused and tied behind his

neck. And when they hang him up to the beam again and fasten balls of lead to his feet, he makes no sound. And when they seat him in the spiked chair, he utters not a word—nor even when they pinch him with red hot tongs.

But on hearing his cries no more, the people themselves begin to cry. Squares and streets, roofs and windows, echo one mighty shout:

"Do not abjure! Do not confess! Do not surrender!"

And he did not surrender. For although the man was incapable of voicing his protest, his pain was mitigated and courage infused into his heart by hearing the shouting of others.

And he held out until he fell dead into the arms of his persecutors.

But at that moment there thundered from the square, from the streets, the roofs and the windows a new cry:

"He did not abjure! He did not confess! He did not surrender!"

The Inquisitor-in-chief raved and tore his hair.

But the fool laughed quietly to himself. For it was *his* advice that had caused the whole crowd to cry out, when one man was forced into silence.

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IN THE EDITOR'S SANCTUM

POET—I have a little poem here I would like to show you. It is so pathetic that when I read it to my mother, she cried.

EDITOR—You ought to be ashamed of yourself. Take your poem away and never make your mother cry again.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

❧ ❧ ❧

NOT INTENDED

HE *(after introduction)*—Allow me to inform you that I am the last of the great family of the Van Siltens.

SHE *(thoughtlessly)*—Delighted to hear it, I'm sure!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

❧ ❧ ❧

POINT OF VIEW

MISS UNMARRIED—I do so love to read the newspaper descriptions of marriages.

BENEDICT—I never miss a line of the divorce proceedings.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

❧ ❧ ❧

GRIDGE—That will be a fine marriage, a splendid alliance. The bride's father is rich. She just rolls in gold. The bridegroom is rich, too, he made a fortune in copper.

BRIDGE—That's not an alliance, it's an alloy.—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

OFF GUARD

BY CAMILLE MAUCLAIR

HAVING assured himself that not a living soul was near this sequestered spot, meagerly illuminated by a few isolated gas lanterns and the pale radiance of the moon, Victor Deleutre heaved a deep sigh of relief and leaning for a moment for support against the stone parapet of the bridge, waited for the violent throbbing of his heart to subside into its normal beat. Then, very carefully and without the least manifestation of haste, he examined his attire and found it had not in any way become disarranged.

After all, the struggle had been a short one; and to hurl Julian Navière into the Seine, Deleutre had caught him entirely off his guard and with such dexterity of hold, that a realization of peril must have come to his victim when it was too late. A gurgling cry of despair, and Navière had disappeared beneath the dark and swiftly flowing waters of the river. No other sound had disturbed the tranquillity of the night.

Deleutre was not long in gaining complete control over himself; yet he lingered for a moment or two at his post. On yonder side of the river, some distance from where he stood, but far enough that no one could have seen what had happened on the bridge, there lay a number of life boats. He waited lest one of these might be pushed from its moorings out on the river in response to Navière's cry of distress, but discerned no sign of activity. There was deathlike stillness all around. Evidently there had been no witness to the deed. Then he moved. With a long and steady stride he left the bridge, the faint rays of the moon, now risen higher in the starlit heaven, encompassing his athletic frame with a dim and weird luster.

Deleutre was a business man of a cool calculating disposition. He had attended a commercial banquet, that had lasted well into the night. As he was leaving, Julian Navière, his competitor in business, offered his company and not being able to secure a cab proposed a walk in the cold crisp October air. Deleutre accepted, although he could not bear the man. More than once of late he had been severely hit financially by Navière's foresight and cunning and even now, under the influence of the banquet's liquid concomitants, the man made bold to speak quite freely of still greater plans, which revealed to Deleutres' view an endless store of future troubles. But he showed nothing of impatience in his manner. Indeed, he listened attentively, though with a growing inward irritation. Then of a sudden, as they neared the bridge, an uncontrollable desire arose within him, to rid himself of this dangerous rival by one fell blow. A terrible determination and a peculiar indifference to consequences had taken possession of him. The possibility of committing a crime blazed upon his feverish imagination simultaneously with a lightning consideration of the means by which to execute it. He, Deleutre, otherwise deliberate and self-possessed, felt himself unexpectedly under the spell of a strange and horrible impulse, which seemed to cause his hands, as it were, to move in reflex action, as they clutched his companion's throat and shoulder and hurled him to his watery grave.

He made his way home unmolested, went to bed, and fell into a deep slumber untroubled by either dreams or morbid fancies. When he at length awoke it was broad day. He arose, dressed him-

self with care and attended to his regular duties with customary punctiliousness. Absolute calm seemed to reside within him; nor did his thoughts cling to the recollection of the preceding night's drama; only from time to time would they revert to it. Not until he had arrived at his office and there disposed of his mail did he reflect upon his deed. With the methodical precision of the trained professional he passed in review in logical sequence the separate circumstances that had led up to the murder. He was sensible of a certain callous apathy towards the moral phase of his act. He felt neither contented nor distressed at the death of Navière; yet he was alive to the fact of having committed a crime. But what seemed to appeal to him more forcibly was the circumstances that his friend's demise would result in pecuniary profit to himself; and he began to ponder over the manner and means by which he might with prudence repair his recent losses with his most dangerous competitor removed. Fear of discovery seemed absent. Indeed, he was quite astonished at his calmness and at a strange feeling of superiority and self-reliance, which appeared to raise him above all considerations of moral guilt or thoughts of personal peril.

He ate a hearty lunch and smoked his cigar with an apparent relish. After returning to the seclusion of his office he again fell to musing, when he was abruptly arrested by an extraordinary impulse. On his desk before him lay his opened letter copy book. With an air of complete abstraction he drew from his pocket a pencil and in a bold hand on the blank page of the copy book he wrote:

"In reply to your favor of the .... inst. we hasten to inform you that on the night of .... inst. Mr. Victor Deleutre, threw Mr. Julian Navière into the Seine river from the Grenelle bridge."

He paused. He felt a chill creep down his back, a momentary faintness overcame him, and with a swift and furtive glance around his office to assure himself that he was unobserved, he tore the leaf from the book and flung it into the grate, where it soon was burnt to ashes. The temporary gloom which had oppressed him, lifted. For an instant only had he labored under its gruesome pall, and then with so indistinct a perception of its significance, that he dismissed the incident with a contemptuous smile while he watched the incriminating message curl up in smoke. "Bosh," he mumbled to himself, "if I told the story it would be out —but as I won't ever be again so foolish as to set it down in black and white —" He stopped, drew himself up sharply, starled at the sound of his own voice.

The disappearance of Mr. Navière occasioned a considerable stir throughout Paris. His body was taken two days later from the Seine near St. Cloud. There were no visible marks of physical violence, and neither money nor valuables were missing. His circumstances in life had been such as to preclude supposition of suicide. Indications pointed rather to an unfortunate accident or a murder through some other motive than that of robbery.

Mr. Deleutre was asked to appear before the prefect of police. Being a man of good standing in the community he was treated with consideration. In response to questions by the prefect, he related without the slightest show of embarrassment how he had accompanied Mr. Navière from the banquet hall to the bridge and how, after offering to escort him home and having been refused, he left him there and returned to his own residence. He remained silent as to what Navière had told him of his various business plans, but indulged in warm words of praise concerning the character and habits of the deceased, deploring at the same time the horrible fate that had befallen him. When he had concluded the prefect thanked him and he was allowed to leave.

The following day he attended the funeral obsequies of his friend. He was disturbed neither by a sense of fear

nor lulled into an incautious repose. Moreover he felt no necessity for the exercise of any great amount of self-control. The part he played came to him quite naturally, as if he were carrying out a preconceived plan, carefully rehearsed in every detail. But he did it all in a rather perfunctory, mechanical sort of way, much as one reads a newspaper without stopping to spell the words or analyze the sentences.

A week passed and he gradually lapsed into his former staid and exemplary mode of life, apparently oblivious to the excitement he had caused or the possibility of further developments. Then there arrived another summons from the prefect. The officer of the law was as courteous and affable as at their first meeting and explained that the matter had practically been disposed of, that all the evidence tended toward the confirmation of the accident theory, and that Mr. Deleutre's presence had only been requested for the purpose of obtaining from him some light on the man's business prospects and plans, which perchance he may have revealed to so close a friend. Deleutre again appeared perfectly at ease and in a voice devoid of any trace of emotion or suppressed excitement, proceeded to tell at some length all Navière had confided to him. The prefect listened attentively and, as Deleutre progressed, began to manifest an obsequiousness of conduct bordering on friendly interest. When Deleutre had concluded he assured him that this was the last time he would be importuned and, handing him a pen, bade him affix his signature to the transcript of the statements he had just made. Deleutre mechanically took the pen and wrote:

"In reply to your favor of the —— inst. we hasten to inform you that on the night of the .... inst. Mr. Victor Deleutre threw Mr. Julian Navière into the Seine river from the Grenelle bridge."

He had written very rapidly, not so rapidly, however, that his action escaped the notice of the watchful official, who said:

"What are you doing, Mr. Deleutre? I asked you only for your signature."

Deleutre looked blankly at the official. "I am through," he mumbled, "all you need now is the date——" He started. The veil of oblivion lifting as suddenly as it had enshrouded his mind, exposed to him with awful vividness the harrowing consequences that would follow in the train of this fatal lapse. An ashy pallor spread over his features. In speechless terror and with trembling knees he tottered forward and reached for the document—too late.

* * *

UNKIND

LILY—A man just went by in an automobile. He looked at me and said: "What a beautiful woman."

JULIETTE—Heavens! he must have been going fast!—*Translated for* TALES *from "Meggendorfer Blätter."*

* * *

ROUGE

HE—"How pale you are tonight, Miss Van Siclen?"

SHE *(quickly)*—"I know it! Tell me one of your good stories, something that will make me blush."—*Translated for* TALES *from "Le Rire."*

TALES AND THEIR TELLERS

COLLABORATION is an art much in evidence in French literature, and, curiously enough, it has in recent years been practised by a number of pairs of remarkable brothers. Whether or not the fact really illustrates the unity of the French family, it is interesting to recall the instances of fraternal co-partnership in modern French literature, beginning with the brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, and including such popular writers of the present moment as Paul and Victor Margueritte and Max and Alex Fischer. One of the most curious instances of this method of working is, however, less known for the reason that it involves the fame of a single name. The romances and semi-scientific works of J. H. Rosny have been read and keenly enjoyed by thousands of readers who never guessed that the name is the joint possession of two brothers, who have completely merged their separate identity in it. The earliest works of the brothers Rosny, which appeared a generation back, bore the strong impress of the influence of Zola. With the passing of the years they have abated something of the rigors of their early "veristic" method and have developed a remarkably rich and poetic style, but without having lost their preoccupation with the scientific aspects of life or their conviction that the novel may be made a means of conveying ideas. The long list of novels by J. H. Rosny, may be divided into two classes: one, of those which are severely scientific, "Darwinian epics," devoted to the representation of the primitive, natural man in an environment of chaotic nature; the other, of modern psychological studies, no less scientific in their regard for the truth, but more informed with the spirit of romance. Of the latter class there is no better example than the novel entitled "Fire-fly," which appears in this issue of TALES.

IN America, until recently, literary men have rarely commanded political confidence or been consulted by legislators in regard to the framing of statutes which bear upon social relations. The French believe, however, that the opinions of men and women who have devoted their lives to the study and analysis of relations between the sexes should be heard and their opinions given due weight. When the question of reform in the marriage and divorce laws came up recently before the Chamber of Deputies, a committee was appointed composed largely of prominent authors, both men and women. This committee has just submitted to the legislature a proposed law which will probably be passed without amendment. Among the members of the committee are such well-known writers as Mme. Sévérine, who has interviewed so many celebrated people for the newspapers and magazines; M. Marcel Prévost, who was elected last year to the presidency of the Society of French Authors; M. Paul Adam, who, if he did not discover, at least popularized the law of inter-psychology; M. Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian poet; M. Octave Mirbeau, the dramatist; Mme. Bertáult-Séguin, writer and editor and the European representative of TALES; and others of distinction. The law is the most liberal ever passed in any country, providing for the granting of divorce after two years' marriage on the joint application of husband and wife.

MME. OCTAVE FEUILLET, whose death was recently chronicled in the French papers, was a remarkable woman as well as the wife or a distinguished man. Her union with the author when the

latter was very young was regarded as what the French call a *marriage de convenance* rather than a love match, but in time Feuillet came to adore his wife, and she exercised a powerful influence on his career. Born at Saint Lô in 1821, Octave Feuillet was strongly attracted at the beginning of his literary career by Alfred de Musset and his school of ultra scepticism. Doubtless he would have followed in the footsteps of the author of *Rolla* had it not been for the influence of his wife. She induced him to follow a healthier and more optimistic line of writing, and realizing that the feverish life of Paris was not conducive to this, she persuaded him to take up his residence at Saint Lô. For some years Feuillet made frequent visits to Paris to arrange for the publication of his works and the production of his plays, but he generally remained for only a few days and returned quickly to the woman he loved, of whom he said: "She is much more than my wife; she is my friend and partner."

JUHANI AHO is the pen-name of Juhani Brofeldt, the most prominent author using the Finnish language. He was born in 1861, the son of a clergyman, and after his course at the University of Helsingfors became a journalist and helped to establish the *Paivalehti*, the only Liberal Finnish newspaper. He now devotes himself exclusively to literature. He is a master of fine expression, a maker of rhythmical and lyrical phrases; the analytical novel is his forte. He is well known throughout Europe, his novels having been translated into German, Italian, French, Danish and Spanish. His best known works are: "The Clergyman's Wife," "The Clergyman's Daughter," "Alone," and three or four collections of short stories and sketches, pictures of moods and impressions, entitled "Chips." His latest novel, published three months ago, is called "Days of Spring and Nights of Frost." Aho lives at Jarvenpaa, a picturesque country place, half an hour's journey by rail from Helsingfors. The place is mainly an artists' colony, and Aho's nearest neighbor is the famous Finnish composer, Jan Sibelius.

HENRIK Pontoppidan is considered the first novelist of Denmark. Soberer than Herman Bang, broader than Karl Larsen, and the equal of both of these admirable writers as an artist, he is a story-teller of great distinction. A quaint humor mollifies his somewhat hard realism, and his irony never misses fire. In whatever you read from Pontoppidan's pen, you feel that he has caught the color of life.

Pontoppidan, who was born in 1857, has a score of books to his credit. Many of these are collections of short tales dealing with phases of peasant life. He knows the simple rustic, the melancholy Danish tiller of the soil to the marrow. But his art extends to the middle classes, and the bureaucracy, as well. Those productions which give the fullest impression of his merit are the cycle of novels entitled "Earth," "The Promised Land," and "The Day of Judgment." Most of his works are also published in German.

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