

MAGDALEN

J. S. MACHAR

THE SLAVIC TRANSLATIONS
BY LEO WIENER

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AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION

FROM THE BOHEMIAN OF

J. S. MACHAR

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE Bohemians have been the torchbearers in the Slavic revival which has awakened the dormant national consciousness of the minor Slavic peoples, and which had indirectly brought Russian literature to its fullest fruition. This task was accomplished by the great Čech philologists and historians of the first half of the nineteenth century, but the Čechs have also contributed substantially to the great and growing Slavic literature, which bids fair to occupy the foremost rank in the near future.

Bohemia is particularly rich in its poetic output. Until the appearance of J. S. Machar, Vrchlický, the Čech Longfellow, was considered the leading poet, even as he was the most voluminous. Machar himself, who was born at Kolin in 1864 of poor artisans and for the last twenty years has been a bank official at Vienna, began his

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literary career in Vrchlický's style, but he showed from the very start a strong tendency to neglect mere form and to treat reality in a straightforward and sober way, hence his poems lose little by being rendered in prose form. In his earnestness of purpose he is not unlike Tolstoy, from whom he differs by his advocacy of a life full of vigor, and not of asceticism. With Tolstoy, however, he shares a hatred of all shams; hence, though an ardent patriot, he despises the banality of the demagogues and of political charlatanism. This attitude is expressed most trenchantly in his "Tristium Vindobona," considered by his countrymen as having killed jingoism and the high-sounding patriotic phrase in Bohemia.

In 1894 appeared his "Magdalen," in which he mercilessly attacked those provincial philistines who would block the fervent endeavors of a fallen woman to be restored to a life of decency. Of his later poems probably the most remarkable is "Golgotha," in which he glorifies Christ, as he appeared to him to have been in reality, and not in St. Paul's philosophic transmutation.

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The pronunciation of the Čech names should cause no difficulty. The stress accent is always on the first syllable. The vowels have the Italian values, those with an accent being the corresponding long ones, and *e* sounding as *ye*. *J* sounds as *y*, *c* as *ts*, *ch* as *kh*; *č*, *š*, *ž*, *ř* are respectively *ch*, *sh*, *zh*, *rzh*. Thus *Jiří* sounds *Yeer'-zhee*, *Machar* is *Mah'-khar*, *Vrchlický* is *Virkh'-lits-kee*, etc.

L. W.

MAGDALEN

I

MY reader! You, no doubt, know many a well-drawn and many a hideous picture that in glowing colors,—in ruby, blood, gold, jasper,—paints the setting sun. You will forgive me this assumption, nay, perchance, will laud the author for saying briefly: The sun has just set over Prague. . . .

It is Saturday, in the month of May. The scene is in the Fifth Ward.

The sultry day for the first time draws a deep breath after the sun's decline. Moisture is borne through the air; ill odors, growing more intense, are wafted through the short, narrow, crooked streets. The wretched shops of the pious children of

Israel are shut, but the pulse of life still beats around them in boisterous measure. A variegated crowd of people surges here, talking, laughing, jesting: laborers who come in their grimy clothes after having received their pay; soldiers and loiterers; factory girls with yellow faces, their hair combed over their brows; prattling domestics vociferate around the water basin; women, with their pale babes in their arms, are standing at the doors of the houses, conversing in shrill voices; in the basement taverns the gaslight, subdued through the red curtains, already flickers, and here and there are heard the sounds of the accordion. The pulse of life is beating strong.

Eight o'clock. The bells are tolling over Prague. The proud harmonious tones fall upon this scene of animation. A sacred moment! Over this extinct sultry day, over this sea of red roofs, over this varied mass of spires, over this grey that is flooding the tangle of sweltering streets,—over all that

is there in motion, over its empty pleasure, its sorrow, pride, misery, passion, hypocrisy and love, over this weak, puny, ephemeral human "ego," the hollow brass sends forth into the vault of heaven its *Ave Maria!*

At the corner of two crooked streets rises a freshly white-washed house, towering by a whole story above the red roofs of its neighbors. The blinds are drawn in all the windows; a dead silence is everywhere. Only above, in a dormer window, are seen a white head and two folded, sere hands, those of an old woman who, praying, looks up to the ruddy clouds. A beautiful contrast: below,—the wild, whirling, untrammelled life; here,—its end. The white hair, the prayer, and . . .

Like some sentimental poet, I came very near spinning out a beautiful simile, but fortunately the old woman, blinded by the splendor of the sky, looked down upon the whirling life below. Her kindly old eyes suddenly flashed with surprise, and her dry,

wizened hands unfolded themselves from their attitude of prayer and smoothed her hair,—and the old woman disappeared from the window.

Some one had just entered the house. With sure steps he walked up the creaking staircase, touched the bell at one of the doors, stepped in, and crossed a small ante-chamber. There stood the pious woman of the dormer window: “Ah!” and she gave him her hand. He pressed it with the tips of his fingers. With her other hand the woman opened a door, and she began to tell him things,—a senseless chaos,—but her guest, without saying a word, stepped into the opened apartment, though it was merged in darkness.

“I should sooner have expected death to-day, than you,” proceeded the old woman’s hoarse voice. “How many weeks have passed since you last honored us with your visit? Why, ’tis half a year! Just dreadful! Your acquaintances told me that you

were married! I only laughed, for I am a doubting Thomas! He and marrying! Never, said I!"

A tall waiter lighted the three large chandeliers, and the parlor, with its gold-red wall paper and its multitude of small marble tables, was disclosed to the eye. Chromos of half-naked female figures in baroque frames looked down from the walls. A piano stood behind a drawn portière. In the air was a strange odor of wine, tobacco, and the scent of unbraided hair.

My hero (my reader will forgive me for dragging him into parentheses, but these are my study, where I will converse at liberty with my reader without witnesses. So, this my "hero" is not a hero in the sense of those ancient romanticists; I call him so only by habit, before announcing his name), my hero seated himself in a corner, crossed his legs, placed his silk hat upon the table, cast his gloves into it, and smiled at the old woman who sat opposite him.

“Well, how is it with you?” he said, wringing his hands so that they cracked in their joints.

“Everything has gone as usual. . . . But no, something has happened: my Kata has died!”

“Ah, when?”

“Five or six weeks ago. I just happened to call upon her at the hospital. Poor little creature! Would you believe it, she was but sixteen? She was so loath to die! How timidly and pitifully her eyes looked at me! And she was so changed, beyond recognition. . . .” Tiny tears glistened on the old lady’s lashes.

“Hem, you are sentimental, madam, I declare,” and the guest smiled.

“That moment is never to be forgotten,” added the madam.

The conversation slowly proceeded from one thing to another. The guest made ironical glosses, and the old lady, whenever possible, returned to the broad stream of her

feelings. Then the parlor brightened up. There entered female figures in gay, fantastic raiments, a bold glance in their burning eyes, their alabaster bosoms uncovered, their hair exhaling pungent perfumes, their arms bare, their calves filled out,— in short, these are the bankrupts of feeling, who in this gambling-house of the world play for a piece of bread. To-day they have youth, beauty, jests and smiles,— to-morrow another card will fall for them, and everything is forever lost. . . .

They greeted the guest with a mute inclination of their heads, while he scanned them with a forced and cold glance. They lighted their cigarettes, hummed tunes, made careless jests,— just as they had the day before, and as, perchance, they would again on the morrow.

“There, that slender one in the black dress,” the madam whispered to the guest. “I take the liberty of recommending her to your kind attention.”

But that slender one in the black dress, which daintily draped her bosom, was the only one among these Venuses of whom you might have said that she reminded you somehow of Marguerite: her face was fresh, her blue eyes had not sunk in their sockets, her hair was beautifully combed over her forehead. She tried to smoke a cigarette, but it was difficult work, as the smoke choked her and she coughed and laughed, until her small teeth shone like a row of pearls.

“Miss Lucy!” called the madam.

She came and bowed to the guest with graceful playfulness. She seated herself opposite him, looked into his eyes, and burst out laughing. The madam went out.

The laughter of those blue eyes shook every nerve of my hero: his ironical apathy fell from him, and a gentle warmth pervaded his whole soul. Something urged him on to laugh aloud with the careless laughter of a child, to joke harmlessly, and then again

to speak entertainingly.— Oh, that witchery of woman's eyes!

(My reader, pray, listen! The psychologist will regard my weak attempt at depicting the characters of my *dramatis personæ* in general as a kind of somersault,— so I will announce in advance: I do not believe in what people call character. My view differs from that of the best philosophers,— I see in character a little matter, a little mysticism and mystery, yet it is fit for my discourse. Our "ego" is nothing but a slave of the stomach, the weather, and the nerves, and it generally submits to another "ego" of our neighbor, if that be stronger, or more inviting, or the opposite of our own "ego." In fact, we are nothing but chameleons, though I do confess that we preserve a weak layer of our elementary color which generally shines through the mass of borrowed hues. Or, to speak in the language of the scientists,— man is the result of external forces, and the soul is a photographic plate.

Magnetism,— but enough of grey theories.) So the two were discoursing quite vivaciously and laughing.

What beautiful themes they touched upon! Whitsuntide pilgrimages and our country people, fireworks on the Moldau River, the gay life in the streets, and so forth, and so forth,— themes that have interested many people, even of finer mettle than my hero.

The parlor grew more noisy. The guests sat at the tables drinking wine and soda-water. Here, near the table of my hero, Mr. Plojhar knitted his beautiful brow as he started his third cigarette, and then somehow grew pale. There Mr. Brouček related his endless travels, until a lithesome maiden closed his lips with her hand; there Verunský, a dissipated sculptor, bent his head upon the table, while his friend, la Vie, kept on dinning into his ears poisonous maxims. Farther away Mr. Klement (I do not know his surname) sat alone in a cor-

ner writing a sentimental letter (I think the fourth) to his friend on the subject of his platonic love, all the time stealthily eyeing a seductive brunette. In another place Bohdan, a landed proprietor from Šumava, who had had bad luck with his countrywomen, threw himself at once upon the slippery path of life, and to all appearances was better off here: with one arm he embraced the neck of a black-eyed bayadere, while with the other he smilingly carried a glass to her lips. There again gloomy Ronovský made a desperate attempt to rival Onyegin's frosty calm.

(I have a long poem on Ronovský, I think some ten thousand verses, all in rhyme, put away in my desk. Like all poets I at one time wrote a Faust, but a higher Providence has watched over him: my Ronovský is forever buried in my desk, labelled: *antiqua*.)

A few more men, some older, others younger, whom I do not care to mention specially, were passing their time with the

maidens. The air was soon filled with smoke, and became stifling with the hot breaths of people, but our acquaintances peacefully continued their conversation.

“So you have been in Italy? I envy you. I should gladly give half of my life for half a year there.”

“Why?”

“Well, it is something grand, and it cannot be easily expressed in words. I feel a breath of it in the poem: ‘*Kennst du das Land*’ . . .”

“Dreams, dreams! It is but a poetic tradition. Just listen, I pray, to my impressions: On a hired donkey I crossed the Apennines. Well, there was Florence, the blue Arno, blue skies, immense olive groves, — but over everything lay the traces of millions of stupid eyes, open mouths, and echoes of Baedeker quotations.”

Just then Mr. Plojhar’s contemptuous, indignant look reached my hero from the neighboring table.

“Rome,” he continued, “is indeed a thing of beauty. I have run through the churches, have taken in the art collections, have crawled through every catacomb, have seen a couple of cardinals, the Pope, and in the Parliament have witnessed a fine sally of the Opposition, have wearied myself in walking through the Campagna, have cursed its stage-coaches, its heat, its flies, the radishes, and the garlic,—the terror of the Italian cuisine,—suddenly one’s breast is torn by a painful longing for one’s smoky Prague, and the fastest express that takes one north seems to one to be moving at a snail’s pace. . . .”

Here the sharp, whirling sounds from the piano interrupted my hero. They were playing a waltz.

The wave of tones brought new life to the company. One of the maidens marked time with her foot, another clapped her hands; a young fellow with a big shock of hair put his arm around the waist of a slen-

der blonde, and they danced between the tables.

As if in a dream, Lucy sang in a soft soprano voice:

“Only once we live down here:
Beauty, youth soon disappear;
Age runs riot with our face,
Of our youth leaves not a trace.”

She bent her head. Suddenly sadness flashed in her eyes, but only for a moment. She stroked her forehead with her open hand. She threw her head back, as if in defiance, and laughed: “Well, what else?”

Reader, do not judge from the characters and from the surroundings that the author of this poem is a worldly or licentious man, rebelling against the order of things, an immoral, worthless cynic, who wishes to hurl poesy from its pure azure heights into the mire of orgies. No, he is a common Philistine, a slave of his office, a citizen who pays his taxes and is peaceably inclined; who eats

and drinks in measure; who at supper reads the editorials and the news in the daily paper, for which, as is proper, he has paid his subscription in advance; who at times borrows a book that has been favorably reviewed, and, reading it, is glad if on the last page everything ends with a marriage; who retires after ten o'clock and sleeps a peaceful, restful sleep until half past seven. . . . The verses, which he has written in leisure hours, were at first a little strange, yet sounded harmonious and contained an approved moral,— so he is probably not far from right when he thinks that after his demise he will be pleasantly remembered by his acquaintances. Such, in reality, is the author.

Furthermore, he makes the solemn promise that from this place we shall issue among decent people, that he will describe peaceful life, christenings, weddings, the conversations of our good neighbors,— and so he

hopes that on the last page of his book he will bid his reader good-bye in the best of friendship. . . .

“. . . Tell me, how could you with such a pure soul, with those clear eyes of yours have come to this bagnio? Did not the world have some other place for you?”

“Oh, Lord,” she smiled, “you are not the first man to ask me this. It is easy enough to get here,—before one knows how. . . . A pretty face and a little misfortune,—and the world is at once as an inclined plane: one step,—and you are below. However, I often think that there is probably an eternal law that for some there is no other place than here below . . . below. . . .”

“With what enviable calm you look upon your life!” he said, with some irony. “What, is there not a moment in this impure atmosphere when you feel yourself choking terribly? Do you ever think of that? Do you ever think of the future?”

“What good would it do? How will it help me? No, I do not think, and there is no time for such foolishness as thinking.”

My hero was in a strange state. A certain solemn moral rectitude took possession of him. Every word which he spoke hovered for a while in his soul. He secretly admired himself, and somehow valued himself more highly on account of the wealth of morality which was suddenly manifested within him. He was, however, unpleasantly irritated by the calm of the girl. He would have preferred to see her sad, and in tears; would have wished to hear some story colored with romance; would have liked to see her press her hands to her brow in despair,—but no. She sat opposite him at a small table in her narrow room, her hands resting in her lap, her blue eyes, two brilliant points beaming in the pupils, looking into the flame of the lamp.

From below came the sounds of the piano, laughter and trampling of feet, but softly

and subdued, as if it were some echo from far, far away. . . .

“Future! Why should we think of something that is not yet?” she said calmly.

“No, you lack the proper understanding of this life,” he continued excitedly, “and what a fairy thing this life is! The sun, the stars, the fragrance of spring,— just think! Your dead eyes are lying somewhere down below in a coffin, and above, everything keeps growing, shining, blooming,— do you not feel a terrible, endless sorrow? And your life. . . . I swear to you, I would rather see you in that coffin than here. How will it all end? Just as with Kata, of whom your madam has been telling me to-day? Or will you grow old here in misery, slime, and shame?” My hero drew a deep breath, partly from moral excitement, partly from a feeling of pity.

“No, no, no, it will be different. It must be.”

“How?”

“I do not know. I shan’t grow old. I shall go away before that.”

“You will go away? Where, how? It is too ridiculous! You are talking at random! Tell me. . . .”

“I will. Listen. I have attacks of virtue, I know not why,—moments, when suddenly everything overpowers me, my youth, my life of to-day, my life of to-morrow, and I feel only an infinite pity for myself, and nothing else. And sometimes I think that some day I must, at such a moment, leave this house, must fly like an arrow through the muddy street and down to the water. . . . That’s the stronghold from which I look at my life, and at the future. . . . But the terror that freezes every nerve during such consolation! . . . The river is terrible, and greenish, and cold, ugh . . .” and a chill shook her body, her white hand fell upon the table, and the slender fingers tapped it nervously.

My hero, a man fond of complete effects

(we are all moderns), felt that something was lacking, as he beheld that attitude of the fair girl. 'Tis true, he felt a sympathetic pity, but that sympathy was only hunger (do you know, my reader, that the sufferings and sorrows of others are soothing to our nerves?) and he was the more hungry, since she had permitted him to taste a piece of her suffering soul. He wanted to have all of her, he again asked for her past, and he asked it in a sympathetic and subdued voice, looking all the time earnestly into her eyes.

She spoke softly, in short, abrupt sentences.

Her father had been a teacher in a country town. Her mother had died young. Lucy grew up by herself, without guidance or surveillance. Her father began to dissipate. He played at cards through whole nights, drank, and gave himself up to debauches. She, in the meantime, at home, read anything that fell into her hands.

While still young she allowed herself to be misled,—not from love or passion, but simply from curiosity. Then her father was discharged. They went to Prague. Here she became a governess to two children of a rich townsman. Her master was a man of the world, and her mistress pursued her at every step with groundless jealousy.

Her father took every penny from her, all the time complaining that it was too little. . . . Oh, that father! In all her life she had not heard one word of love from his lips. She held her mother in pious memory, and did not believe in the love of fathers. In three months that house was a veritable hell to her. She left. Her father found her a place as a saleswoman in a shop. A new hell. She did not manage to earn sufficient wages there. Her companions tormented her with biting remarks. Her employer scolded her with coarse words. She soon left the place.

Her father held a lengthy discourse with

her upon the whole misery of life and upon so-called virtue which, he said, was but a word with women; then he hinted to her that she should walk upon another road. So she did. She was now living better than in that other world: her father was satisfied, the old madam loved her,— what else could she wish? Of course, she understood the motives of the madam's love, but she accepted it gratefully, for love had, indeed, been a rare thing in her life. My hero was satisfied. With his right hand he drummed upon the table, with his left he supported his chin. They both remained silent for quite a while. Finally he arose. He pressed her hand and dryly remarked:

“It will be well, if to-day I leave you thus. . . .”

He went.

Reader, I see you looking with misgivings at the author of these lines! In fact, I am telling you of this hero, drag out hundreds

of verses on him, analyze his soul for you,—and yet, contrary to all proprieties, I have forgotten to describe him or at least to introduce him! You have probably said ten times: behold, the older generation is right when it says that the younger is slovenly in everything! Reader, I ask you in all earnestness, recall all the books that you have read, recall all the descriptions of people, which authors have given with praiseworthy minuteness! Your word of honor, tell me: are you able to reproduce a single one of them? I am not.

If I told you that my hero had scanty hair, as is the case with modern youths, a pointed moustache, dark eyes with nothing in them to attract you, his nose not more characteristic, a swarthy face, a not more distinctive figure, long nails on short fingers, that he was fashionably dressed,—tell me, would you know him any better? Then that is superfluous. His given name was Jiří.

That name is not my poetic license, though it may seem to be so: we have not a poem, romance, sketch, or novel, in which the hero's name is not "Jiří." His deceased father,—he had a large estate, extensive fields, and a mill in the country, two leagues from Prague,—was a reader of Bohemian history, and with his whole soul loved our Poděbrad,¹—so his son had to be called Jiří.

He was early sent to school. The kind eyes of an aunt watched over him; the old widow was childless and soon became the slave of the small despot. He passed the Gymnasium with honors, drank deeply from the ancient well of the eternally fresh classics, as we have drunk; and there were permanent traces of it in his soul: he knew that Cæsar was a great Roman with a big bald head, and that, alas! he had written dreadfully insipid memoirs; that Horace

¹ Jiří (George) of Poděbrad, born 1420, was the last and most famous of Bohemia's native kings (1458–1471).

had kept his poems for nine years in his desk (Jiří, by the way, thought they ought to have remained there forever); that Lucullus was sweet-tongued; that Cicero had spoken a great deal. The refined youth had with difficulty carried away from the Greek world an equally valuable store of information. Besides, he remembered the jokes and anecdotes about all the funny professors,—in short, he brought as much from school into life as we once did. . . .

Then he studied law, during which time he danced at all the great balls, talked in students' circles, dragged the carriages of famous singers, and in the morning thundered with his companions the national air in the sleeping streets, proudly wearing the Panslavic tricolor under his laced coat.

He had read a little. He remembered best such passages as he could use to interlard his talk with speeches. Finally he said forever "vare" to his studies and entered life. Being rich, he became the master of

his time. He rose late, and cursed the tiresome forenoons which he passed in the deserted Příkopí. After dinner he sat with his companions in the coffeehouse, where jokes, jests, anecdotes were told, and the daily papers run over, and then he went back to the Příkopí.

Here Jiří was in his element. A chain of lamps flickered in the darkness. Feminine eyes glistened from behind curtains. The rustling of dresses, the conversation, the clatter of steps, the passing of various forms gave him a pleasant thrill. He exchanged greetings with his feminine friends. Here and there he dropped a few words in passing: a new debauch, a new scandal, sometimes a new toilet. . . .

Then, towards seven, he visited the theatre,—not from any predilection, but because some of his friends went there, and because the next day he could wittily criticise the play and the actors. The ballet, in particular, was honored by his hearty applause.

A year before, his father had died. He had buried him with ostentatious pomp (five priests, fine music, all kinds of societies),—at once ordered for the tomb a marble monument with a gilt inscription, jumped into a coach, and had himself driven back to Prague. . . .

So he walked through the damp night. The gaslight merged upon the wet sidewalk with the pale reflection of the moon. The rows of houses were hid in a grey darkness. The windowpanes glistened with a feeble light. Nearby rattled a coach, dully resounding in the empty street; a citizen, stepping heavily on the sidewalk, muttered something to himself; a woman rushed by in the shadow of the walls.

Jiří strolled on with bent head. He was not meditating. He saw there in the room the slender maiden looking into the lamp light. Her lips said, "There is not time for such a foolish thing as thinking." Jiří

softly and unconsciously repeated these words.

Suddenly a crowd of persons crying, bellowing, scolding, rushed out of a small inn in front of him. In the stream of light which burst forth from the open door gleamed heavy fists; laughter resounded,—they were beating some one. Then the light and the disturbance disappeared, and from the interior of the inn were borne the deadened sounds of singing and the wailing of an accordion.

From the dark pavement arose the figure of a man, who kept on cursing: “Mob! Rascals! Rascals! Scoundrels! I a cheat at cards! . . . You, sir,” turning to Jiří, “you know yourself how easily a card will fall from your hands upon the ground! Serves me right, serves me right! Why do I, an educated man, have anything to do with such scoundrels!” He walked by the side of Jiří.

“There you have our people! What a

race we are! Eh? A cancer which destroys us nationally and politically,—no foundation . . .” he coughed. “I know the people. . . . I, sir, have been a teacher . . . you are surprised? I now no longer wonder . . . the product of circumstances and of the times . . . thus does fate hurl a man down. . . . ’Tis my good luck, sir, that I have a daughter. . . . A good child . . . she is the Antigone of my misery. . . . No doubt, sir, your heart is in the right spot, and you sympathize with me,— I thank you. Permit me to make you acquainted with my daughter,— there in that house,— don’t be surprised.”

Jiří quickened his steps, and he at once turned around the corner of the first street. He shook himself, as if a spray of mud had fallen upon him.

In some tower a clock droned out the hours in even measure. . . . At the distant railroad station a locomotive whistled . . . Again quiet . . . quiet. . . .

“The daughter a prostitute, her father a scoundrel of the worst type,— to-day I have had the honor of making the acquaintance of a charming family . . .” Jiří said ironically to himself, but immediately came the head with the unbraided hair, and those eyes, those pure eyes looked long at him with an unspeakable reproach.

II

READER, I warn you against psychological authors! Do not believe in the logical sequence of thoughts which, they say, manifests itself in the souls of heroes and heroines. Do not believe in their long-spun monologues, nor in the reminiscences which are drawn out in chainlike order from souls stirred by dreams,—those are old, well-known nets which the sly author, following the good examples of others, casts for your unwary faith: he spreads them out, rubs his hands in glee, and whispers softly: “Only read, and you will be mine.”

Our soul . . . just look into it: it is as though you saw the surface of the water. Upon it is beautifully reflected the azure of the skies, the white cloud, the splendor of the sun, the ruddy west, the bird that flits some-

where into the distance, the tree that leans over it. A soft breeze gently ripples it, but the raging storm destroys that pure mirror, and you see the dark waves towering and driving each other, you hear their despairing disconsolate melody,—even thus we know our soul to be.

Below, somewhere in the depth, a strange world is hidden from your view. There may be there an abyss, sand, rocks, a coral reef, nacre, whirlpools, strange creatures,—there is something within you that you know not of. . . . Only rarely, during quiet sleep, do you for a moment look into its mysterious depth. Sometimes a mighty storm throws up upon the shore some tiny shells, or some monstrous thing.

Our thoughts are nothing more than silvery fishes, daughters of the deep, which we see for a moment leisurely swimming in masses near the sunlit surface. Here and there one will flash like a silver coin in the air, will flash and disappear. . . . Where

are here the logical steps? Why did it flash by, why at that particular moment? Whence did it come, and whither does it swim? . . .

My reader, I warn you against psychological authors!

Nine o'clock. Jiří raised his head a little from his white feather bed, and looked with a sleepy eye at the green shade, through which the thin sunbeams burst into the room like rods of gold. He glanced at the cage where a canary was just then dipping its bushy head into its bathtub. Then he yawned loudly and looked at the ceiling, and at the lamp, around which tiny flies were whirling and softly buzzing.

Suddenly there flashed through his brain this picture, just this picture: he saw the maiden with unbraided blonde hair looking into the lamplight: "I do not think, and there is no time for such foolishness as thinking." The picture disappeared.

Another scene. The dissolute old man

approached him with wavering step: "She is my Antigone," said he. A weak smile twitched Jiří's lips. He stretched himself and placed his arms under his head. . . .

Then he saw a bit of Italy: a golden country, burnt by the sun. The air in motion. The Apennines. Rocks everywhere. Veined stones all around him. The view was open only in one direction: there, towering sharply against the azure sky, a cypress stood out,—black, sad, disconsolate. . . .

That flashed by. . . . "Rather would I see you lying dead in a coffin, than here alive," thus his own words now were dinning in his soul, and he kept repeating them to the slender maiden who drooped her head to one side.

"Was I not a fool last night? Did not the girl secretly laugh at my words?" the thought suddenly passed through his brain. And thus through his soul flashed scenes, pictures and words without logic or connec-

tion, like silvery fishes that gleam near the calm surface of the sunlit waters. . . .

Some one knocked softly at the door.

“Aunty?”

Into the room stepped a small, wizened, yellow-faced old woman, in a white cap, with pale-blue, kindly eyes, her sere lips muttering a “Good morning.” She placed a tray with coffee upon a small table near the bed, looked lovingly at the disheveled head upon the pillows, but did not speak.

“Well, Aunty,” began Jiří, “how did you rest? What is the news? Well, how are your poor people?” he asked in a careless manner, as he drank his coffee.

“I dreamt of the country and of your father,— a mixed-up dream. I really do not understand what it all comes from. . . . My poor? I sent yesterday a few rags to the mason’s wife nearby. That woman has five children. Her husband was killed a month ago while at work. . . . So I have now five families upon my hands. . . .”

"I see," smiled Jiří, "the whole Ward will soon be depending upon you. You will have more orders than the best tailor in Prague. Your whole house will be a small store for children's clothing!"

"Laugh as much as you please! I would not mind that. If only my eyes would serve me better. . . . O Lord, that is my pleasure, my amusement. Jiříček,¹ I just wanted to ask you what we are to do this year about going into the country? When shall we leave? It is already hot, and half of Prague is already away."

"Foolish woman, what is it that drives you out into the country? A fine life it is! To sit in a room, where through the windows you may smell manure. At night the frogs croak you to sleep. In the morning there is the cock. No end of flies everywhere. And then the gossips of the best local society, of Mrs. Judge, Mrs. Taxcollector, Mrs. Doctor. And those homely, awkward

¹ Diminutive of Jiří (George).

maidens, with their tiny brains. . . . Well, if you want to, go,”

“No, Jiříček, don’t be angry, I shan’t go. I meant it for your own good. You look bilious, and you are thin. Believe me, Italy did not do you any good.”

“Oh, leave me alone with your care of me! Thin! Do you expect me always to be well, until I give up the ghost?”

“My Jiříček.” His aunt wrung her hands, and two large tears glistened in her dim eyes. She shook her head and went out.

This nettled Jiří a little. Thus frequently ended their conversations. He felt pity for the good old soul, and often a kindly word stood on his lips, but was choked in his throat by some customary inconsiderateness. Perchance it was the fear lest he should suddenly find himself in a ridiculous, stupid attitude of sentimentality.

So he waved his hand, arose, and washed himself, dressed himself, combed his hair for

a long time, curled his mustache, poured some perfume upon his shirt front, handkerchief, and coat, rapidly surveyed himself in the mirror, pulled on his yellow gloves, and went out, whistling the march from Faust.

The day dragged on painfully, endlessly, and he waited for the evening. As if attracted by some magnetic power, he hastened at twilight to the house in the Fifth Ward.

(Enough. The reader will permit me to become a dry, businesslike, precise reporter. I have reasons for it. Many people, honest, respectable people, pastors of pious souls, virtuous ladies, will perhaps bid farewell to the author and this, his story. I should not like that, for I have in my head some six thousand verses more, and they echo within me and press me on,— may I not be so neglected as that famous man in the fable, who whispered his woe into the bosom of a hollow old willow.)

Jiří was for a whole evening drowned in the glitter of Lucy's eyes. For a whole evening he felt within himself a sense of moral rectitude, and he chid and pitied her. He spoke impassionately, and he spoke much. At midnight he pressed her hand, and went home through the damp night.

As he walked, the icy calm returned to him. He called himself an ideal ass and fool, to allow himself to be seduced by treacherously clear eyes to play a stupid comedy. He swore he would never put his foot again in that house. . . . On reaching home, he retired and slept a peaceful sleep, as ever, until nine.

So passed five or six days. Jiří became a target for the jokes of his friends. They teased him in the coffeehouse and in the street. They asked for his "Manon," his "charming Manon." They told him how the old madam was cursing him. They said that Lucy had for several days been as coy

as a nun, that she shut herself up in her room for the whole day and the whole evening, and that she neither spoke nor smiled, and only answered with a nod of her head all the questions of the old madam. They maintained that she would carry away the prize at an exhibition of virtue. Jiří laughed at all these remarks, but inwardly he felt their biting irony:

“They are right,” thought he; “I am acting ridiculously. A fine ending that! After all that life has taught me, after all that I have experienced, I have sunk into this mire. And what is it that attracts me to it? Is it that ancient Romanticism which they call love? Nonsense, nonsense! These strings have broken in me long ago. It is nothing but an every-day paradox, a flower cast into the mud, which I should otherwise never have noticed in my life. . . . Let us make an end of it!”

All kinds of things occurred to him: to disappear, to travel,—but then the final

effect would be lacking. He would only be over and again ridiculous, like a detected schoolboy. But why run? He would go once more into that place, would look her up like anybody else, would treat her like anybody else, would pay her like anybody else,—for had she not a superb body, and would it not be glorious to abate the fire of his passion by it? . . . a dainty morsel . . . why had he not thought sooner of it? Then he could again sit with a clear brow in the circle of his friends.

A gloomy, leaden night descended upon the jumble of streets. The sky was filled with heavy clouds, and stifling vapors rose into the hot air. The gaslight flickered weakly. Here and there a few small drops fell on the dust of the pavement. A murky moment that chokes the human throat. The soul is crowded in an awful circle, in which it tosses about aimlessly and hopelessly. Gloomy thoughts strike it; gloomy scenes

arise in it; disconsolate melodies stir its very depths. It would gladly fly out of the heavy fetters of its body, away from this beclouded earth, higher, higher, somewhere into the ether, beyond the darkling heavens. . . .

These moments Lucy was passing alone in her room. On the round table before her lay a book, nearby, some needle-work; perchance both had occupied her since noon. She was sitting with her hands folded in her lap. A lamp with a colored shade stood at the edge of the table, and threw a faint light upon her profile.

Her bewildered eyes scanned the paper on the opposite wall. At times she closed them, and she sighed, as if exhausted from thinking; at others, again, she softly turned her head, as if answering her own questions. For two or three days she had been thus inwardly agitated. It seemed to her that some illness was overpowering her. The nerves of her head were strained. She

often thought she could hear her blood beating in her temples.

At times she recalled how it all was a month, two weeks before,—and she was frightened, for it appeared to her to have happened long, long ago, two or three years ago. She was a stranger to herself, as if some one had withdrawn from under her feet the soil on which she had been standing firmly heretofore, as if, after a dizzy flight, she had fallen into some strange, unknown place.

She felt a constant sadness. Within her all was black,—in her childhood she had seen thus the church on Good-Friday,—some one had died. Ah, and her merriment? She would never laugh again. . . . And as a complement to these pictures appeared to her the head of a man, with thin hair, dark eyes, and impassioned, fervid speech, who said to her:

“You are wretched, you are miserable in this life! How can you breathe here? Do

you think of the future? Will your fate be like Kata's? Or, perhaps, otherwise? I would rather see you in the coffin!"

When that man for the first time crossed her thoughts (it was that Saturday evening, when she had unbraided her blonde hair), it occurred to her that he was not good-looking, but nothing else. Then he came again with that speech. And the words sounded in her soul like the buzzing of a bee in flight, as she wantonly laughed in the circle of her teasing companions. She was angry with herself, and wanted to laugh louder, but the voice whispered sternly to her: "You are wretched! You are judged!"—The laughter was choked in her throat. . . . The evening came. She awaited him with secret fear. He came. He again looked at her with pity. And he again spoke sternly. "You are wretched!"

Strange man! How many others had come before with such reproachful words!

But here, in her room, they all were silenced, and only showered kisses upon her body. . . . A feeling of disgust and loathing overcame her at the recollection of those moments. . . . *He* did not wish anything else from her but the pressure of her hand!

She was instinctively seized by terror in the presence of that man. It would be better, if he did not come at all, if he never came again! Why did he always speak of that which could nevermore be changed?

She now felt like one who had carried a heavy burden for many hours. Her hands lay helpless in her lap; all her limbs were relaxed; she felt a heavy weight pressing her down. . . .

An old, dim picture of childhood kept stubbornly returning to her; she was sitting somewhere in a distant room upon the floor, playing with a doll. Her mother, whose features she saw but indistinctly, was leaning over her, and with dried-up hand was

smoothing her hair: "May the Lord give you happiness, my angel!" she heard her whispering.

She was heavy with grief, and she felt like weeping: "Why did that man come? Why did he tear away from my eyes the veil through which I had been looking at the world and at myself? And at my life!—'Judged . . . and outcast!'— Will he come to-day?"— And she was worried lest he should not come.

She heard steps, and she recognized them.

She rapidly cast a look into the mirror, and with her soft hand smoothed the hair over her brow. Jiří entered, faultlessly polite, his hat in his hand, and, as ever, with a civil greeting upon his lips.

The first raindrops were beating against the windowpanes. There was lightning and thunder.

He sat opposite her and again looked at those eyes that formerly were gay and smiling, but now veiled with sadness. He

looked at her, and he felt embarrassed by all his latest plans. He did not wish to think of them even. The blood rushed to his head, and whole streams of great speeches flooded his brain and dinned in his soul.

In a subdued voice he told her that to-day was the last time he had come to see her; that for days and nights he had been doing nothing but thinking of her, and that now he wanted her decision. He asked her whether she wanted to give up her present life, and that poisonous atmosphere; whether she wished again to live in the world, among decent people,—and he continued speaking in that strain. A feeling of elation took possession of him, and he chose words, expressions, and elevated phrases from the poems and novels which he had read at some time or other.

He told her that he was sufficiently well-to-do, that he was endowed with an active mind, that he was experienced in the ways of the world, and that he also was quite cul-

tured, but that, like that man in Holy Writ, who had buried his treasure in the lap of the earth, he had not made use of his life before, neither for his good, nor for the good of the world. . . . He was a cipher among men, and his life had no aims. He had paid for it dearly; had despaired, had suffered cruel losses, much unspeakable torment, and he had nothing from all that but a series of wearisome hours. He knew full well that he would not in the future be any better, that his bones would be lying in a forgotten grave. . . .

Now, if he could at least draw her out of this mire, and turn her pure eyes once more to the light into which she was now looking, there would then be in his life at least one proper *tabula rasa*. . . .

He told her he had an aunt,—a good woman, like a child, like an angel,—he had himself sinned so much against her that he was ashamed of himself,—and he intended

to take Lucy to her. Her silvery hair would be Lucy's shield. He was sure she would take care of her as of her daughter. He intended to take her there soon, even that day, right away, if she only wanted. . . .

Lucy looked with clouded eyes at one spot: at his hand which was nervously twitching upon the table. Without a word, she suddenly seized it, pressed it to her lips, and sobbed out loud.

The door was softly opened, and the old madam looked discretely into the room.

"I knocked at least five times, so pardon me for interrupting you. I just wanted to say a few words to you, sir. . . ."

"And I to you," Jiří answered. "We shall both leave together this evening, the young lady and I, forever."

"So there will be a wedding?"

"No, no," Lucy quickly answered, her face and neck burning.

“The young lady will return to the world, to respectable people,” Jiří explained with dignity.

“I wish you luck, Lucy, with all my heart, only I do not know, I do not know. . . .”

“Enough, enough talking, let us rather pass to business, dear madam,” Jiří sternly interrupted her speech.

“Godspeed, Lucy, Godspeed, my sweet dove! Remember this: if you do not feel at home in that world, my house will always be open for you.”

Saying this, the old madam kissed Lucy’s brow. . . .

A beating rain fell slantingly upon the street pavement. The gaslight flickered in the lamps; the sky was black, the city empty. Only here and there a watchful janitor in a dark mantle pressed against the house gate.

That night Lucy walked to Jiří’s house, to begin a new life. . . .

III

A GREY head with a white morning cap, with pale-blue, kindly eyes, looked in through the door. Lucy opened her eyes.

“What, already up! Good morning! Once more welcome to our home! Through sleeping? And did you rest well? Dear child, I did not close an eye from joy of having you here,” chattered the old lady as she approached the bed.

She offered her withered hand, and Lucy was about to imprint a kiss upon it, but the old lady exclaimed loudly, “Never mind!” and stroked the girl’s forehead and luxuriant hair.

“I just wanted to ask you whether I might offer you something of my old wardrobe. Poor girl, your garments are so dreadfully

wet! — To be sure, there was a downpour last night, but why could not my Jiří have found a carriage somewhere? Well, well, done is done,— I will pick you out something of my own, just for to-day; to-morrow the tailor will bring you new raiment. Perhaps my clothes will fit you. I once was of your height, but that was very long ago, to-day I am but a dried-up old woman. . . . I will be back in fifteen minutes.”

She went away. Lucy was all that time as if on burning coals before that pure, dim eye. She drew her coverlet up to her chin.

Then she drew a deep breath, jumped out of bed like a doe, and slipped with lightning speed into her stockings and shoes. She threw on a morning gown of a flowery pattern, which the thoughtful old lady had left with her the night before, washed herself, arranged her hair a little, and looked curiously around the room.

The living room of a nascent old bachelor. The care of a woman's hand lay over it, but

the slovenliness of the inmate peeped out everywhere. Lucy could not harmonize that room with the man who had been so earnest, deep, and stern with her. The table, with photographs of half-naked ballet dancers upon it; the picture of some club upon the wall,—the photographer had immortalized it during a drinking bout,—with Jiří standing in the middle, smoking a pipe and grinning in a peculiar manner; the locked bookcase, with beautifully bound but dust covered books; the hopping canary in its cage, looking playful with its chubby head,—these impressions fell like molten drops into the depth of Lucy's soul, where lay the picture of the man, the first who had held her respect.

She stepped abashed to the window. Drawing the shades, she saw before her a large garden in all its flowery beauty. A fresh breeze bore upwards the scent of the elders and flooded the room with it. The trees were in bloom. Their tops looked as

though they had been powdered; their leaves, still wet, moved to and fro, glistening like diamonds. The grass lay prostrate, bent by the weight of the raindrops. The flowers gleamed in fresh colors in their beds. White and blue butterflies flew out of them and flitted upwards. A bird with an iridescent breast,—a finch it was,—flapped its wings in the damp sand of the walk, then flew upon a tree, and began to chirp. . . . Beyond the garden could be seen the red roofs of the houses. . . . Over everything lay the immeasurable azure of the heavens. . . .

The calm and peace of that morning, with the smile and power of the spring upon it, stirred Lucy's heart. All suddenly became clear to her oppressed and crushed soul. A new life, a new life! The past was shut out, and she would turn upon her new road with fresh vigor. . . .

She folded her hands: she was moved by the pious faith of her childish years. From

the depth of her soul poured forth fervent, whispered words of prayer.

She was praying for herself, her father, her dead mother, the kind lady, under whose roof she was living, Jiří, the old woman, her wretched companions, who were still weltering in the mire,—sympathy for everybody, love for everything flowed from her soul.

“Dear child, pray, forgive me,” were the gentle words which she heard. With gentle care, such as we use towards holy relics, the old lady spread strange, old-fashioned garments upon the table and the couch. The perfume of lavender issued from the folds of those raiments. In those colors, ribbons, and frills breathed the forties,—bygone pleasures, bygone beauty, bygone people, a bygone life. . . .

“Now this one here I had on as I went with my dear departed husband to the wedding of Jiří’s father.” The old lady handed her a green silk garment which glistened with a reddish-golden sheen.

Lucy timidly took off her robe, and still more timidly, began to put on that old-fashioned dress. . . .

“Don’t be afraid, dear child,” said the old lady, helping her to dress, “it will not tear so easily, for it is good old material. . . . This gown has lasted a long while,” she said, as she laced the girl’s waist in the back. “My husband was so fond of it! Ah, he has been lying in God’s earth these twenty-five years!”

She drew a sigh, straightened out the skirt, ruffled the sleeves a little, stepped three steps back, and smiled:

“Just see how becoming it is to you! What a beautiful girl you are! O Lord! At least take a look at yourself!”

She led her to the mirror, and, with folded hands, proudly gazed at her. In the looking-glass appeared the lithe form of a fair maiden; the bell-shaped skirt hung down from her slender waist, while a girdle of black ribbons wound around it. The bodice

was gathered in front into a series of ruffles, and was held below by a gold buckle. The large, puffed-up sleeve made her hand appear as small as a child's. Her neck stood out against the green garment like white marble. Her eyes glistened with a soft, liquid brilliancy.

"This is the way, my child, the hair used to be combed." The enthusiastic old lady showed her how. "Here over the temples, and down to the cheeks, and then back again, and behind, gathered into a braid,— you see, that is the way they wore it then,— O Lord, while I am talking to you, the coffee is getting cold! Come to breakfast!"

She led her into the next room. Lucy cast a passing glance around her. In the middle stood a round table, and the cloth, with its floral design, reached the floor. The coffee was steaming in dainty cups.

She saw a wealth of flowers in the windows: cacti, myrtles, azaleas and begonias. On a tall chest of drawers gleamed a gilt

crucifix under a glass bell, and nearby stood two wax candles and a clock, the face of which was supported by winding pillars of alabaster.

Above them, the wall was covered with ambrotypes, with black silhouettes and wax profiles,—all in pretty frames. Between the windows, at the head of the room, hung an oil painting of a stern-looking man, in a blue coat and black neckcloth. Underneath it, behind glass, were a few withered leaves,—a dried-up wedding wreath. Near the door was fastened a water basin, and from it peeped fresh twigs of pussy willow. In the corner stood a china closet lined with a shining mirror and full of cups, vases, and silver, and tiny porcelain figures. A yellow filigree spinet glistened dimly on the other side. Solid antiquity looked out of all corners with a soft and peaceful glance.

“Do take one more cup! The cream is not very good,—city quality! — Do you see

there," she pointed at the portrait between the windows, "that's he, my husband. He looks so stern,— that was his habit, but his heart was golden. Here you see him once more." She took down from the wall an ambrotype: "You, my dear one, are resting in the Lord!" and she shook her head over it.

"And this Jiří is just like him: he growls and gets angry, but that is only his shell; the kernel is gold, gold, I tell you," and the old lady continued in that strain.

Jiří was in the meantime sleeping, in his room that had been changed to the other end of the corridor. She told of his childhood, his parents, the town where Jiří had a mill and an estate,— she spoke with the pleasure of a person who had for a long time been deprived of her full say.

Then, without saying a word, an old wizened servant cleared off the table and, measuring Lucy with the eye of a basilisk, put upon the table linen, cloth, patterns,

ribbons, needles, and thread,— each in its proper place, as if by habit.

The old lady was not disturbed by all this, but continued speaking, holding her hands all the time upon her breast, while her eyes shone with the fire of joyful recollections.

The blood beat strongly in Lucy's temples. She had not yet spoken a word; she was waiting with trembling for some question, though she did not know what it was to be. She was waiting, like a captured animal, for some sudden injury; but the old lady kept on talking, never asking a question, and resting her eyes from time to time upon her with unspeakable kindness. Something was choking Lucy, and she would fain have put all her strength in one painful cry,— suddenly, some strange torrent carried her off her feet, sent her head a-whirling,— she sobbed out loud, tears burst forth in her eyes, and with a subdued cry she fell to the feet of the old lady.

"Dear child, my child, what is the matter with you?" The old lady was frightened, and she lifted her up.

Lucy hid her face in her hands and made a confession. Words, incoherent, bitter, terrible, poured forth from her stormy breast. Self-accusations followed each other without evasion; she read the blackest pages in the book of life, commenting upon them pitilessly.

The old lady could not grasp it all and kept silent for a moment; then she suddenly closed the reproachful mouth with a kiss.

"I know it all. Jiří told me. Calm yourself. It will be different now. That happened long ago," and large tears dropped on the girl's blonde hair. She pressed her to her breast and sobbed aloud: "Calm yourself, dear child!"

"My presence is a sin, a sin against you, kind lady, against this room, against everything," Lucy sobbed again. "As I look at the mire in which I have been. . . ."

“Dear child, last night, before Jiří came to me, my thoughts were heavy,—you see, I can’t sleep much,—I was thinking what little good there was in dragging along my old bones . . . why should I be living, since I am alone in this world, like a lonely pear-tree in a wide field? My husband is dead, I have no children, Jiří has long been as a stranger to me,—just then he entered. I was frightened, but he kissed my brow,—he had never done so before,—and he said: ‘You have a guest. I want to return to life a fallen girl,—but it can be done only with your help, dear aunt.’ You see, it is the will of the Lord. You are mine. When I saw you, wet through and through and trembling, I pitied you with my whole heart. You will stay here for my sake.”

Saying that, she kissed her brow and gently smoothed her hair, wiping her wet face with her handkerchief.

A new peace took possession of Lucy’s soul. She felt as though she had ascended

the summit of a mountain. A soft breeze circled around her. Infinity lay stretched out before her eyes. Beautiful colors gleamed in the splendor of the sun. Man was lost unto himself. . . .

Women's tears. . . . Reader, they are a salutary property of Eve's daughters in this world. There is not a sorrow of a woman, not a grief, burden, memory, not one shadow, that cannot be washed away by a few salty, bitter tears! Once again, her soul is changed and free, playing like the many-colored butterfly that flits about in the golden light over a flowery meadow. . . .

Lucy was sitting at the spinet. The old lady placed a sheet of music before her.

"Here is the song of which my deceased husband used to be very fond. It is a German song,—yet he was a patriot and a good Bohemian. As a student he used to frequent Jungmann's¹ house! My child,

¹ Josef Jungmann (1773–1847) was the most prominent of the founders of a New-Bohemian literature.

how many tears we used to shed over it! . . .
My husband too . . . both of us, both. . . .”

Lucy read the inscription of the song:
“*Die Thräne, ein Lied von Kücken.*” Her
hands then fell upon the keys. The weak,
subdued tones sounded like the whispered
words of a toothless old man. The old lady
rested her left hand upon her side, and with
beaming eyes looked at that yellow paper,
while with her right hand she beat time;
then she fell to singing:

“Macht man in's Leben
Kaum den ersten Schritt.”

It was a thin voice, which got to rasping
in the upper tones, as it trembled forth from
her lips. Her old heart was more and more
strongly agitated by the breath of recollec-
tions, and her sere face became colored with
the red hue of an autumn leaf. . . .

“Bringe man als Kind schon
Eine Thräne mit,
Und Freudenthränen
Giebt, als ersten Gruss,

Dem Kind die Mutter
Mit dem ersten Kuss;
Man wächst empor dann
Zwischen Freud' und Schmerz,
Da zieht die Liebe in das junge Herz,
Und offenbart
Das Herz der Jungfrau sich,
Spricht eine Thräne:
Ja! ich liebe dich! . . ."

A strong voice in the door sang out the refrain with them. The women grew silent.

"I see, Aunty," laughed Jiří, "you are making a good display of all your favorite things."

He stood there, foppishly dressed, in all his glory, and bowed urbanely.

Lucy rose from her seat. She offered him her hand for a greeting.

"That was not a bad idea, Aunty, this gown is becoming to the young lady," he remarked in a careless way, as he looked at her.

They seated themselves at the table, and

talked. The old lady told Lucy about her poor, about her sewing for the little folk, showed her the patterns, the cloth, the linen, needle, thread, and asked her opinion of this and that. Lucy seemed to be interested in everything. She listened attentively and announced her views with a clear voice. Jiří, in the meantime, looked at her with the usual scornful and ironical expression about his lips. From time to time he cracked a joke, put in a word or a short sentence, or yawned.

A secret unrest nestled in the souls of these three people. The old lady felt provoked for having been so moved by her "*Thräne*." Then she was seized with terror at the lack of consideration which showed in Jiří's words, and at this glimpse of the soul from which she had become estranged.

To Lucy his appearance brought the memory of her past days and of the place where she had lived, where she had seen him for the first time. Besides, he seemed to her

to be somehow changed, in some way smaller, more trifling, and empty. She thought of his room, those photographs of women, and the pictures on the wall,—and something urged her to watch every word and smile and motion of his. She felt a strange rustiness growing in her soul, and effacing his picture which was imprinted somewhere in its depth.

Jiří again saw himself in a very peculiar situation: he had sobered down from the enthusiasm of the night before, and that girl was a stranger to him in his aunt's house, at that table, and in that gown. There was no longer that penetrating perfume of orgies, and this was not the large parlor in that house. What would happen next? It occurred to him that he really had had no intention beforehand of doing what he later did,—what was it that had impelled him to take her away and bring her here? It was stupid and ridiculous! It was as though he had carelessly stepped upon the edge of a steep and precipitous rock: one unwary

moment, and he would be flying downwards. . . . As that picture arose in his mind, he closed his eyes a little, with the resignation of a fatalist.

They continued their conversation. An hour later Jiří rose from his seat and bade them good-bye. He said he would look in at the tailor's to order some gowns for Lucy, then he would buy a few things, and so forth, — in reality, ennui and his old habits drove him to the coffeehouse, to the Příklad, and to his friends. . . .

The women sat down to work. The old lady started again on her recollections, all the time sewing, cutting and measuring. Lucy with dainty stitches was hemming some babies' shirts. A gentle warmth filled their souls. Outside gleamed a bright spring day. The voices of chirping sparrows reached them from the street. . . .

Then Lucy burst out laughing,— for the first time here. The old lady was telling of her wedding: the bridegroom had arrived,

all dressed up; he ran into the room, immediately turned about, and ran back; he once more jumped into the coach, hunted in all the corners, and gloomily returned,— he had somewhere lost his bridal bouquet! Only at the dinner, after the toasts, did he suddenly fish it out from his endless folds, all crushed and withered. The old lady laughed so much that her eyes were filled with tears. . . .

IV

“**Y**OU see, you see, dear child, what the fashions can do? How it fits you! What a tailor that is! However, it is your figure that really does it!”

Up to noon a golden light fell into the room. Everything looked neat and trim, as in a show-case. The glass and the frames of the pictures, the surface of the spinet, and the armchairs, shone with a pale gleam. Lucy was standing before the looking-glass, buttoning her new gown. The grey cloth and the English cut were beautifully becoming to her slender body. Her eyes were beaming (there is not a woman, reader, who could pass that moment with frosty calm!). The aunt shook her head, as she walked all around her and commented:

“Where are our old fashions! Where

are those times! Where are those customs! I alone am left . . . and the scythe-bearer has forgotten me! . . .”

“Enough, Aunty, not another word,—you should be ashamed to talk that way!” Lucy threatened her.

“Well, may you wear the dress out in health,” the old lady laughed merrily, and from an old habit tapped Lucy’s ear.

In those few days she had found a new life through Lucy. Her soul was like one of those winding plants that grow only when they can climb up something stronger, a tree, a bush, or even a withe. They gently enfold it with their vines, leaves and flowers, running together with it into one inseparable life. A blow that is aimed at one, also reaches the other; with the death of the one, ends also the life of the other.

Even thus Lucy had attracted to herself that weak soul; she held the authority of a mother over the old lady. In the morning she combed her grey hair, put on her cap, and

had to tell her what should be prepared for dinner. Every moment the aunt asked: "What do you say, Lucy?"

Lucy lived her new life with a vim. In that atmosphere she breathed freely and softly. If at times she thought of the olden days, she felt as though she had a horrible dream from a long bygone past. Indeed, it was hard to identify her with that "Lucy" of the ill-famed house.

There was one thing which annoyed her: Jiří. She saw him but rarely, a moment in the morning, at dinner, and sometimes in the evening. She never felt at ease in his presence. The more she knew him, the more she saw his emptiness. She disliked his wit, which he ostensibly employed to sparkle with; in his remarks there was a breath of that perfume which she had scented in her former impure life. She was always in a rage over the inconsiderate tones in which he addressed his aunt. She would gladly have thrown herself upon him, would

have struck him with a clenched fist, would have choked him like a cat. . . .

Both were again sitting at their work. The old servant entered the room to announce the janitor, her basilisk eyes all the time measuring Lucy, who was bending over her sewing. The man stepped after her into the room, holding his cap under his arm. He hemmed, and his grey eyes rested upon Lucy,— a dumb terror made them bulge out, but only for a moment. Like a messenger of great things, he assumed a solemn pose:

“Madam, three times to-day a certain person has asked for our young gentleman. I got rid of him: ‘He is not at home.’— ‘When will he be back?’— Said I: ‘I do not know.’ Then he kept asking for a young lady. I think he meant that one there . . . that young lady there. Madam, it is a dreadful thing I have come to see you about. It is a disgrace, a deception, a frightful sin that the young gentleman has perpetrated

against you, madam! A fine guest he has brought into our honorable house! I know everything!"

The old lady grew suddenly pale: "Enough, enough! Not another word!"

But the janitor proceeded: "She is a fallen woman!"

"Out of here! And not another word!"

"I am only thinking of your honor. . . ."

"Out of here!" and trembling with rage, as he had never seen her before, the old lady fell to the ground.

"It makes no difference to me," the guardian of the house mumbled angrily at the door. The wizened old servant hurriedly followed after him.

"Those servants," stormed the old lady. . . . "But, Lucy," she turned with a gentle voice to Lucy, from whose eyes large tears were trickling, "please don't. I will have a talk with him. At heart he is a good man. You see for yourself, he means to protect me. He does not know the situa-

tion." And she kissed her, and smoothed the hair over her temples.

"Yes, this way," was heard the janitor's voice behind the door. Some one entered. . . . Lucy's blood curdled in her veins,—her father! . . . He looked around,—joy sparkled in his dim eyes,—they rested upon Lucy. Then he bowed to the aunt:

"Pardon me, lady. A sacred right brings me here, a father's right to his daughter!" and he pointed theatrically at Lucy. "Yes, my child. . . ."

Just then the door slammed behind him, and Jiří, with burning face, flew into the room. The two women breathed sighs of relief.

"You wished?" Jiří asked him with a trembling voice, as he recognized him.

"I am the father of this girl, and you, sir, are that bold man who have dared to snatch her out of my care. . . ."

"Care?" Jiří cried in rage.

“Care,” said the drunken man in a persuasive bass. “We have different views of life, sir. What is honor? But an empty name. But to business. I was once a teacher, yes, sir, a teacher,—you are surprised? But to-day. . . . Fate can easily cast down a man. I will not, however, allow any one to trample upon my rights. . . . My daughter belongs to me. I have the points of law all at hand. . . .”

“Enough of this,” Jiří interrupted him with a sudden calm, smiling scornfully. He drew out his pocketbook, and pressed something into the hand of the drunkard.

Being disarmed, and at the same time tamed, he grasped Jiří’s hand.

“Sir, you are an honorable man, you are in sympathy with us,” his deep bass trembled with unexpected gratefulness, “I entrust my daughter to you. She is my happiness,—the Antigone of my misery. You, sir, will come to value her . . . Lucy, make a note of my good fatherly advice:

esteem your benefactors! . . . Permit me," this to Jiří, "to call from time to time," and, inclining his head to him, he added, with a sly whisper: "My daughter may rebel, but the paternal authority will keep her within bounds."

Jiří opened the door for him. The good father shook his hands, bade the old lady good-bye, and, threatening Lucy with his finger, went away.

Quiet, an oppressive quiet, took possession of the room. Jiří stepped to the window, and drummed the quick measure of a march upon the pane. He suddenly turned to his aunt, who was looking sorrowfully at Lucy:

"We will go into the country to-day."

"To-day?"

"We will start right after dinner. Get everything ready. I have already ordered a coach."

He had, indeed, ordered it. He had flown like an arrow out of the coffeehouse. A real hell was seething within him. They

had been conversing. Some one remarked that Lucy had disappeared. Laughter. Questions rained down on Jiří. Just then a better sentiment took possession of him, just as if the glance of those blue eyes were resting upon him, and the maiden seemed to him purer, higher, better than all the company around him. He told them the truth. He spoke with fervor and conviction, from the depth of his soul. There was a burst of Homeric laughter. Sly Jiří! What a mantle! How cunningly he had done it all! He had taken her under his roof, had given her at home his simple-minded old aunt for a Cerberus, to whom he ranted of the penitent Magdalen with her untainted soul, in order to revel secretly in her beautiful, youthful body! What a sly fellow! What a sly fellow!

Jiří gave his word of honor that he spoke the truth. He was answered with renewed laughter. His blood boiled: he called them rascally good-for-nothings, fools, and people

without honor. He would forever turn his back upon their society. And he went home. On his way he hired a coach. He seized upon a journey into the country as a saving anchor. . . .

Pale, and breathing heavily, Lucy rose from her seat. Whole sentences were on her lips, but she only said: "Do not go. I shall go myself!" She fell back into the chair with the whole weight of her body. She did not weep, nor speak. Her eyes were fixed somewhere in space, as if she wished to reach something that was escaping her. The old lady went up to her. Jiří spoke more sternly: "Nonsense! We will go!"

Reader, how futile are our intentions! I had planned to sketch with epic calm a few pictures from the life of common, every-day people,—and behold, I must confess that my hand is trembling, my eyes are somehow moist, and the darkness of vain, barren

anxiety is upon my soul. Against all serious rules I push myself forward in place of my puny heroes.

A recollection. . . . Reader, suddenly a picture of my distant home rises in my soul. Under my window are the noises of Vienna, the steps and the conversations of the passers-by, and the din of the tinkling tramway,— but I see a road, far, far away. It leads out of Prague. A broad swath of dust winds through a sea of green fields, cuts through a few small villages, now goes down, now again rises. Here it turns, there it goes straight, like an endless strip of cloth, and it runs and runs, until at last it appears in the horizon as a narrow, grey ribbon. . . . The telegraph posts hum their monotonous song. . . . The rattle of the wagons that pass over it in slow, measured steps resounds afar. . . .

I see a little boy hurrying over it . . . happy little man! He is hurrying home for his vacation. Behind him lies the dreary

series of days, before him, eight weeks of bliss, and the boy weeps with joy as he sees the sparkling spires on the church towers he knows so well . . . I know that face . . . I see by its faint resemblance that it is myself sixteen years ago. . . .

No, reader, I will not write here an elegy on my bygone youth,—it was only a sigh, and enough of it. Here, in this abominable place one has, indeed, nothing but sighs and recollections.

The coach passed Vysočany. It slowly ascended a serpentine road. The two ladies protected themselves with parasols against the burning rays of the sun. Jiří was sitting opposite them, his hat pulled down over his brow, and leisurely smoking a cigarette. Lucy had just taken off the heavy veil from her face, and her blue eyes looked timidly around her.

The coach was still climbing the hill. Towards the left towered, like a phantom in

some weird story, grey Prague, shrouded in thick smoke. At the right lay the open plain. Burning through the pure air, the gleaming light of the sun trembled upon it like fleeting gold. All the colors were fresh as if the country had been newly washed.

Parallelograms of many hues ran, narrowing down, to the very edge of the horizon. The railroad track, roads with diminutive rows of trees, brown hills, villages that seemed to be drowning in the verdure of gardens, farther away dark-blue forests, and still farther, blue summits, lightly breathed upon the background,—a mere airy curtain,—an idyllic panorama, over which white cloudlets softly swam in the azure vault of heaven. Invisible sky-larks sent their gladsome shouts into the clear heights. On both sides of the road sounded the drumming of hosts of insects. The voices of men, the neighing of horses, the sharp click of whips now and then reached them from

afar. The air was intensely redolent with intoxicating freshness. . . .

Lucy was looking fixedly into the distance,—her eye did not take in the details, but her soul imbibed its full import, and felt the whole summer day within itself. Under its influence her spirit bent in indolence, but she felt blissful,—it was the feeling of an animal that after a cheerless, cold winter is warmed by the hot sun. She did not recall what had lately happened, nor thought what would come in the future,—but, compressing her long eyelashes, she kept on looking and looking. . . .

Reader, only a woman knows how to live a real life! For her there is no past; only at times there flashes an old picture through her spirit, while feeling is wisely silent. For her, too, there exists no “to-morrow,” except when it is to bring her a happy moment. A woman knows how to be happy. To us, happiness is a flighty dream, a flash of light. Her delicate nerves seize the flighty dream,

the gleam of light, and gourmandize on every atom of it. A yielding and soft soul lives on that dream and light, like a flower whose leaves turn their whole surface towards the rays of the sun. If it is uprooted and transplanted, it at once sends its roots into the new soil, and with its leaves drinks the sun, the sun. . . .

The coach reached the summit of the hill. All around lay the expanse of a level country. At both sides of the road stood the grain in greyish-green waves. There the rape seemed to shine with its ducat hue. In the straight-drawn rows of beets and potatoes stood laboring people; they shaded their eyes with their hands, conversed with each other, and looked into the road.

The horses began to trot. An endless avenue of chestnuts, full of pyramidal blossoms, lay before them, as if opened for their reception. A pleasant, greenish shade fell into the carriage. The old lady looked at the country through a black lorgnette. The

shade refreshed her. She saw Řip, and Ještěd, and Milešovka, familiar villages about her, and familiar roads, and she pointed them all out to Lucy. Thus they travelled on, the sunshine now and then beaming on their faces.

Lucy began to talk: she spoke of her childhood, and of the country, where she had lived,—happy recollections bubbled up unbidden in her soul.

Jiří was silent. Only, from time to time, he complained of the heat, the gnats, and the small flies. He took off his hat, wiped his forehead, yawned, and continued smoking. His soul was like a house from which people had just moved: no object, no picture, no voices, no motion,—only a wearisome calm. . . .

They travelled on. A village. Again the road. Again a village. A small pond. A mill nearby. Off the road grew some small trees, cherry and plum trees. They travelled on.

Suddenly the old lady pressed Lucy's hand. Two rude towers, whose gilded cupolas sparkled like two stars, appeared on the horizon.

"We are at home now," she whispered.

There came a flash like lightning in Jiří's eye, then he yawned again until the tears came to his eyes.

The horses began to trot faster, without being urged on by words or whip strokes, as if they felt the goal of their journey to be near.

V

THE town of the realm and crown has three thousand inhabitants, one church, twenty inns, a brewery, and a distillery, and two newspapers which appear once every two weeks,— the —*ýs Gazette*, a faithful organ of the conservative fathers of the town and *The Free Citizen*, the militant voice of the ruthless Opposition (the reader will find their genesis a few lines farther down).

The common is large and beautiful, the patrician houses about it forming a square. Above them rises the townhall with a dilapidated reddish tower, in the spire of which a two-tailed lion¹ turns with the wind. In the centre there is a stone statue of Jan of

¹ The coat of arms of Bohemia.

Nepomuk;¹ once a year, in the beautiful month of May, he is painted in a bright brown color, at the town's expense.

A hunchbacked, crooked sidewalk runs along the rows of houses, and is intercepted by malodorous rills that flow from the dwellings, and that form a filigree stream on the common. Throughout the day an old sweeper heaps small piles of straw, dust, and dirt, but the wind, or wanton youths, regularly disperse them at nightfall.

From the common there is a beautiful view towards the west. The streets lie somewhat lower here, and one can see through them the cemetery with its chapel and its crosses, its darkling cypresses, its grave-stones, where rest in peace the heroes

¹ A canon of Prague in the fourteenth century, who, a pious tradition tells, was drowned by the King under the bridge of Prague for not divulging the confession of his wife, Queen Johanna. He was canonized a saint in 1729, since which time he has been regarded as the patron saint of Bohemia. Most bridges have statues of Jan of Nepomuk. Pilgrimages in his honor are made in the month of May.

of local tradition; and farther off, the fields, the rows of trees along the roads, and brown cliffs. In one place the surface of the Elbe gleams on sunshiny days. Then there is the blue distance, against which is clearly drawn the bell of Řip with its white spire.

The pride of the town is its castle. The extensive and massive building with its tower, covered with colored tiles, rises majestically above the Elbe. The ages that have passed through it have here left their traces: a castle moat, strong ramparts, walls provided with battlements, old windows, coats of arms upon the wall, dark dungeons and corridors; and in the old, dilapidated park are mysterious pavilions, fountains, and large vases with moss-covered Cupids. One wing of the castle has purely modern windows, plush curtains, and a thermometer on a frame; and there, in the park, you suddenly pass from the ludicrous time of the rococo into beds of verdure. Thus does the silent conglomerate of the

past and present breathe majestically upon you.

Here the lords of Krajek once held sway over the Picards,¹ and pious songs then hovered over the treetops in the park. From that tower pensive Rudolf, the emperor, used to watch the course of the stars with master Tycho.² Banner³ sat here in judgment,—the people to this time remember those Swedish scourges and his minions. The duchess of Berry had had her gallant adventures in the park during moonlit nights,—and the patrician daughters up to this day like to visit those places, where they blush and sigh.

The park was thrown open to the town. The owner of the castle lived far away. His superintendent, a stolid German, dwelt

¹ Corruption of "Beghards"; thus the opponents of the Church were called in Bohemia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The lords of Krajek were the defenders of the Brotherhood.

² Tycho de Brahe, Danish astronomer.

³ Jan Gustavson Banner, or Banér, Swedish field-marshal under Gustavus Adolphus.

in the wing of the castle, where the thermometer appeared in the window. He was advanced in years, solemn and stern, and people avoided him; although the poor and the children, by an old custom, kissed his hand when they came near him. He was an important personage in the life of that town. He was not active in the townhall,— for that he had not time enough, having had the care of the estate and the office of district elder for twenty-five years; but, being an intimate friend of the burgomaster's, he was an adviser in all complicated affairs.

The Free Citizen often made profane allusions to this: the town's head, it said, was in the townhall, but the Holy Ghost was in the castle. In the feuilleton it hinted quite openly between the lines that the superintendent was even more intimate with the fat wife of the burgomaster,— however, the whole town saw nothing incriminating in that.

A new bridge runs over the Elbe.

Through a beautiful grove of lindens and oaks, whose branches meet above and form a fantastic, rustling vault, one passes to a neighboring town. Every pious soul in Bohemia is thrilled by its name: it is a holy place for pilgrims, and has a temple, the sacred image of which, they say, has wrought thousands of miracles. To this day a chapter of stout priests grows fat upon the visitors. Hundreds of these holy men sit the whole autumn and winter in low huts, like spiders in their hiding places; but when in summer the banners of the country people begin to be unfurled, and songs of the Virgin Mary fill the air, and pious women, sturdy lads, and buxom maidens hasten from all parts of our land to this place,— they come forth with their canvas booths, and catch the pious souls, and suck them dry.

Those are the places to which the old lady took Lucy the day after their arrival.

Reader, have you ever seen the life in an ant hill? These Philistine insects live in an

unvaried, provincial manner. Everybody knows everybody else, and everybody has his precise daily work to do. They go out in the morning, meet friends, their feelers touch, as if they were telling their last night's dreams, their trifling gossip, and the news of the day, and they move on, and again meet some one else, and again stand a while and talk, and then hurry on.

They know every motion of each other's bodies, every minutest shade of their souls, everything connected with their past,— and yet a sweet habit urges them in passing to talk again and again of the same thing, as yesterday, so to-day, and so to-morrow. They somehow finish their work, as though it were of secondary importance. In the evening they return to their ant hill, and again they gather by twos, threes or fours upon their sidewalks and at the doorsteps, where they stand conversing pleasantly until deep into the night.

What an uproar, if something from with-

out falls among them! They run around wildly and inquisitively, neglecting their daily toil; their feelers are in a convulsive tremor; they are curious; they congregate and discuss matters; the more courageous rush upon that object, and investigate it from all sides, touch it, and again run away to take counsel, their little heads shaking all the time.

The news ran like lightning through the town: Jiří had arrived with his aunt, and they had brought with them a strange young lady. Who was she? Who was she? She was not of the family, for in the town they knew well the genealogies of all its members; so there flew over the city fantastic stories, guesses, anecdotes, which those who concocted them could not themselves believe.

There was not a window in the whole town, where, if the ladies passed by, a head with its critical pair of eyes did not appear. Whoever met them in the street, on the common, or in the castle park, stopped and

looked around, and, finding a friend, stood long talking with him.

In the afternoon, about two o'clock, the fat wife of the burgomaster ventured out of the house. The peony-colored velvet of her gown, the light gloves that reached to her elbows, her hat full of nodding cherries, flowers, and many-colored feathers, announced to all good people some errand of great importance. It was a hot day. Pearls of perspiration, gathering in two streams under her eyes, ran down her plump cheeks. She walked under the dark-red shade of her parasol with a small, unwavering step, as though she were sailing, nodding her head to the right and to the left, thanking all polite people with a "*Guten Tag*" and a "How are you?"

Jiří's house bordered with its back wall upon the castle park, and fronted on the open country. The burgomaster's wife entered the spacious yard. She did not see any other creature but chickens, geese,

ducks, a flock of sparrows, and a few pigeons that were flying about a round dove-cot. In the sultry air was the odor of the stable and the aroma of hay. The burgomistress strutted by the steward's dwelling to the one-story building in the back of the yard. A woman came out of it and, seeing her, wiped her hands on her apron, and ran up to her to kiss her hand.

"The Lord protect you, never mind, never mind!" and the burgomistress graciously extended her hand. "Is the counciloress at home?"

"Yes, if you please, gracious lady" ("counciloress" was the title of Jiří's aunt).

"Mr. Jiří?"

"He is at home, too, gracious lady. He is busy with the steward, writing some accounts. The master wants to take the estate into his own hands. He wants to remain here. They are figuring up."

"And that young lady? Who is she?"

"I do not know, gracious lady. One

might think she would be the lady's daughter, but she is not. I really do not know. They are together there. . . ."

"Very well, very well, that will do. . . ."

It was a large whitewashed room. A few chairs, a table, a large safe of dark oak with carved ornaments, were its only furniture. On the wall were hung oil paintings of Hus and Žižka; between them, on a pedestal, stood a statue of Poděbrad,—Jiří's father had here passed the greater half of his life,—and those pictures and furniture were reminiscences of him.

The old lady was sitting with Lucy at the open window. Outside, in the shadow of the house, was a field of clover. Dandelions with their ducat hue burst everywhere through the dark verdure. Crickets were chirping merrily in the grass. Lucy was thoughtlessly holding a long, narrow book in old leather binding and gilt ornamentation. The old lady had found it for her. It was the faithful companion of her youth,—

“Novalis.” And the old lady sighed softly:

“Read it, child! Ah, that Heinrich of Ofterdingen! *Blaue Blume!* Just read it! I used to read them all night long.”

The burgomistress entered.

A loud exclamation: “Ah, Frau Rätthin!”

“Ah, Frau Bürgermeisterin!”

They embraced each other. There fell cataracts of indistinguishable words. Finally the burgomistress seated herself. With a rapid glance she measured the maiden two or three times, and the aunt caught her look.

“My Lucy,” she introduced her.

“Ah, I am happy, *'s freut mich, 's freut mich*, will she stay long with us?”

Lucy blushed.

“Forever, forever,” the aunt hastened to reply.

“The young lady used to live in Prague?”

“Yes, in Prague,” Lucy said hurriedly.

“I do not know how Miss Lucy will like this life of ours. It is a wearisome, small,

dead, uninteresting country, and we are plain people,— Miss Lucy, I suppose, has been used to a different sphere. . . .”

“No,” the old lady interrupted her, “my Lucy will be entirely happy here. This country will soothe her nerves which are somewhat shattered. . . .”

“In that case, Miss Lucy, you will find health here. In that case, indeed. We live an idyllic life here. We arrange picnics, games,— oh, dare I ask you? Are you not, perchance, betrothed, and ought I not to congratulate? I suppose, Mr. Jiří . . .”

Lucy was consumed with internal fire.

“The Lord protect her,” the old lady quickly interrupted her, “that would be a nice match for her! Sooner would I tie a stone about her neck with my own hands and drown her there in the Elbe. *Aber sagen Sie mir, liebe, werthe Bürgermeisterin,* what’s the news? How is the town? How are our acquaintances?”

“*Ach, Frau Rätthin,*” the burgomistress

drew a deep breath from the bottom of her heart, "a great deal of news, a great deal. Just think of it, the doctor's wife . . ." (that doctor, the head of the local opposition, the editor of the *Citizen*, was a sworn enemy of the burgomaster), "well, she is a woman without shame,— she was seen lately in the woods in a dreadfully intimate *tête à tête* with the adjunct! You know, she has had experience in such things, and God knows, how many times! However, at times I think that that is a family characteristic. *Denken Sie sich*, the doctor looks calmly at all that is going on,— of course, it's a case of bad conscience! Frau Rätthin, last week he had to send the chambermaid to Prague! Just think of it, it is he who is the town moralist! He wants to stain my honor! His paper wrote lately,— it is a shame to mention it,— about me, about me and our administrator! What meanness!"

The wife of the town's head blushed crimson from her forehead to her neck. Then

there followed disgusting and scandalous stories, and the whole local Opposition stood in half an hour in soiled negligee. "This one thing may, however, console us," ended the burgomistress, "our whole party is in this respect as pure as crystal. . . ."

She several times made attempts to penetrate the shell under which was hidden the mysterious kernel of the strange young lady, but all in vain,— so she betook herself once more to the turbid stream in which the local life flowed.

She remained two hours.

"So, Frau Rätthin, I bid you good-bye. Good-bye, Miss Lucy, we shall see each other at some picnic. We will drum up something soon."

Elated, as every person is, who has found a mote in his neighbor's eye, the burgomistress went out of the door like a peacock in noisy conceit.

"You see, Lucy, what she is," sighed the old lady. "Just watch: to-day or to-mor-

row will come her rival, the doctor's wife; and again you will hear precisely the same thing, only the names will be changed. But the saddest thing about all this is, that it will be the truth, just as what was told to-day was the truth. It is a terrible world! It was quite different in my day!"

Lucy awoke from her dreaming, for until then she was looking meditatively at the waving clover.

"But, Aunty, what is it all about? Whence comes all that hostility between the ladies?"

"Well, that is a fine story,—really, it is amusing. A few years ago the two, the doctor's and the burgomaster's wives, lived in great friendship, like two sisters. The third in their company was the wife of the judge, — she is dead now. These three were together everywhere, at parties, at outings, at games, and they made matches among themselves for their children, while they were

still in their cribs,— in short, their friendship became a byword. Then the judge was made a councillor in some district court. Their friendship continued. The doctor's wife and the burgomistress wrote daily letters to the wife of the councillor. So it went on for two or three years.

“The councillor's wife died. The councillor, who was a wag and a malicious old satyr, sent the two friends a large box in remembrance of his wife. They called together a few young women, and opened it, sighing and sobbing all the time. There were two packages within, with the inscriptions: ‘For the burgomistress,’ ‘For the doctress.’ The ladies were divided into two groups. The packages were carefully opened: within were letters, nothing but letters! Those which the burgomistress had written to the wife of the councillor were now given to the doctress, and *vice versa!* Do not ask me how that scene ended! It is

a wonder they did not fall to fighting! All the letters, from *a* to *z*, were nothing but calumny, gossip, dastardly stories,— in fact, each had told the worst about the other! The next day the town was full of it, and there was turmoil and agitation, as if a revolution had broken out! From that day the two hate each other as their sins. And the excitement kept on growing.

“Their husbands took part in it. The doctor and the burgomaster, who had been friends heretofore, transferred the quarrel to the townhall, and into the affairs of the town. The doctor began calling himself a ‘Young Bohemian,’ and the burgomaster — an ‘Old Bohemian.’¹ The doctor started a paper, and in it thundered every two weeks. Naturally the burgomaster, too, vaulted into the saddle, and founded his paper. They are fighting to the knife. . . . Speak of angels,— do you see that slender

¹ Two political parties of Bohemia; they are humorously described on pp. 204–205.

lady over there?" She pointed across the cloverpatch and the field to the road. "That is the doctress. She is coming to see us. So be prepared. . . ."

VI

BETWEEN the Elbe and the nearby forests lies an expanse of blooming meadows, and through the middle of these runs a narrow, sandy path. On that path there moved a slow and long procession of undulating parasols,— one, two, three, four, five, six,— you might have counted thirty of them. The bright toilets of the ladies gleamed in the sun, while to the right and left of them, and half turned towards them, skipped their gallants, balancing their canes.

The sun poured like fire from the blue-grey heavens upon that meadow. The earth was burning under foot. The dusky blades of grass hung down as though scorched. The flowers drooped, as though broken. Strong, heavy odors were wafted through the air. Crickets uttered their hellish din,

as though millions of drops of molten metal were beating against a glass pane.

The stouter ladies of the gathering were drawing their handkerchiefs over their faces, and kept on saying: "What weather! But it is hot to-day!"

The light-haired, blue-eyed patrician daughters walked about, overflowing with happiness. For them such a picnic was, indeed, a holiday. Each old joke and stupid anecdote of their gallant cavaliers was rewarded with a grateful smile. Their empty, trifling life was to have a new landmark with that day. They would say of future events: "That happened two weeks, a month, two months after the picnic. . . ."

Poor patrician daughters! Until they are fourteen they sit in their short dresses, their hair combed back, on the school-benches of their towns. Then, by an old custom, they are sent to the pious sisters at Zákupy. By Christmas their mothers, with tears of joy, are able to show their daugh-

ters' cleanly written congratulations in pure German. So pass two years, when they return in long, old-fashioned gowns, their hair combed over their foreheads, and two braids hanging behind, their eyes continually turned earthward, and their heads filled with information.

The happy mother now leads her daughter into society. They call on the administrator, the burgomaster, on all the aldermen, on all the local dignitaries. The daughter is as quiet and as modest as a violet. Her mother is beaming: her child expresses herself faultlessly. She has brought with her from the nuns a lot of holy pictures for diligence and good behavior. She is helpful to her in the house, with the washing, the cooking, and the ironing. She secretly makes a pair of colored slippers as a holiday gift for her father. At about five o'clock each afternoon, with her prayer-book in her hand, she crosses the bridge that leads to the other town, and there, after the blessing,

always kneels in the church, before the miracle-working image.

Three months, or half a year later, a change suddenly comes over her: the braids disappear, the hair over her forehead is clipped; her gown is made according to the latest fashion; she gives her holy pictures to her younger relatives; on Sunday she still goes to the church of the Virgin, but it is only from habit. She finds new friends to whom, after two weeks' acquaintance, she vows eternal friendship, though it only lasts a month.

She keeps a diary, in which she writes every occurrence. An itinerant dancing master initiates her in his art, and once a year, during carnival-time, she goes with her mother to Prague, to attend the Students' Ball. She is fond of reading, and her mother, who does not want her to forget her convent knowledge, subscribes for the *Gartenlaube*. She often weeps over her reading, and she devours Mrs. Werner

and Mrs. Heimbürg, as her mother, once upon a time, used to devour Marlitt.

Of our poets she values the poems of Jablonský¹ and Hálek.²

She borrows them somewhere, sighs over them, and in a clear hand-writing copies them into a gilt-edged album. Two hours daily she sews for her trousseau, doing this in good faith, filled with expectations.

In the evening she takes a walk on the common with her girl friends, exchanging confidences with them, their anxieties, their dreams, but not all of them: in the depth of her little soul some hero is always hidden, a baron, a count, a dignitary, perhaps a doctor. She has two or three platonic love affairs with students; she is protected from the pitfalls and persecutions of the provincial Don Juans, not by the eye of her mother, though she keeps a sharp lookout on her,

¹ Boleslav Jablonský (pseud. of Karel Eugen Tupý) was born 1813.

² Vítězslav Hálek (1835-1874), a prolific poet and dramatist.

but by her inborn shrewdness. . . . Thus the years pass by.

In their twenty-fourth year, our patrician girls begin to fade. They realize it, and withdraw from publicity: with poisoned resignation they again attend the church; down to the bottom of their hearts they despise those younger companions who are still in full bloom. Their tongues are the terror of the whole town.

It is quite different, however, if the cautious mother finds a husband for her daughter: they come to terms, and the obedient daughter exchanges the hero of her dreams for a common, every-day bourgeois, and is happy that she has escaped the preposterous fate of an old maid.

She lives. . . . The silenced heart begins suddenly to rebel; she subdues it for a while, but immediately throws herself into the first open arms,— the voice of conscience does not chide her, for do not all the others live the same way? With all that, she remains a

decent, exemplary woman, properly managing her house, caring well for her husband, and bringing up her children as well as her mother had brought up hers; and she grows stout, and is honored by the whole town.

Old loves of the spring of my life, my faded reminiscences! You are wretched, patrician girls!

Young bureaucrats, sons of the townsmen, who were helping their fathers in their estates, or in their stores, and whose houses declared themselves for the ruling party, were busy amusing the young ladies. Jiří, with the composure of an older man, strolled by the side of the burgomistress. The burgomistress was retailing to him all her spicy stories about all the known and unknown people of the other party. Jiří laughed from time to time, like any civil person, or said something to her, but he was in the meantime thinking of his mill and estate.

He had departed from his life at Prague

in despair and with a heavy heart. When the coach drove into the yard of the home in which he was born, a great idea struck him: he would peacefully look after his father's estate, would watch the field work, would himself keep the accounts,—strangers were all the time cheating him,—he would work to fatigue during the day, and would lie down in peace at night,—a breath of Vergil's idyls was in all these dreams and plans. He fell in love with his new occupation, and he appeared to himself to be greater and better, which comforted him very much. He did not consider what would be later, except that he would take everything into his hands, and manage the estate. He managed,—while his servants looked in dismay at most of his orders, without daring to dissuade him. And Jiří kept on making new plans.

The burgomistress referred several times to Lucy, as if by chance, but Jiří answered her questions evasively.

He was tired of his relations to Lucy. In the depth of his soul he felt that, though he had acted foolishly, he had done the proper thing. Lucy was now living in retirement, unknown to any one; she was the whole life of his aunt, to whom he owed so much, and that was well. 'Tis true, the enchantment which had once blinded his eye had paled: he looked at her now with an entirely different eye,—with the eye of a man that surveys a maiden's attractive body.

When he saw her bending over a book or some sewing, her full bosom heaving in even measure, he felt a mad desire to embrace her, to clasp her in his arms,—but he only passed his hand over his brow, and chided himself with scornful irony. Otherwise, her whole presence annoyed him. When they were together, the weight of her soul fell upon him. He always felt something stronger and purer in her, and that annoyed him. Before his eyes hovered her past, but in vain; at last, in his vanity, he convinced

himself that it was he who had transformed and purified her, that it was he who had returned her to the world so peaceful and so strong,—and he proudly raised his head.

The vanguard of picnickers had already entered under the vault of the woods, and they were breathing more at ease.

Lucy, clinging to the aunt, walked close behind her. The judge's wife was entertaining her. She was a Prague lady whose husband's fate had brought her to this nest. She was longing to return, and she was talking of her Prague acquaintances and of familiar places. She spoke rapidly and in abrupt sentences. The aunt barely had a chance to get in a word or a short sentence. Lucy was silent. She was fatigued, partly from the heat, partly from the occurrences of the last few days. The feelers of the whole local ant hill had touched her all over,— Oh, those terrible moments! She felt like a thief hiding with his booty, while the steps

of his persecutors are heard all the time around his hiding place.

They had all come: the wives of the judge, of the tax collector, of the doctor, and of four aldermen, and three portly widows,— in short, all the somebodies. Their inquisitive, quick eyes and glib tongues kept prodding her, and the good old lady warded off their attacks with remarkable dexterity. Lucy trembled with terror at the thought that they might find all out.

How different this new life appeared to her now! She felt it, she lived it with the whole power of her soul; but she trembled with burning shame at the pictures from the past, which, unbidden, at times flashed before her soul's eye. She was pure, but something was lacking, she did not herself know what, or how to name it,— some goal towards which to aim, some purpose for which to live. The horror of this vacuum frightened her at night, when she looked from her bed through the open window at the stars, or

when she suddenly heard the mournful song of the chorus of frogs in the nearby pond.

She had come to the picnic only to please the old lady, whose dim old eyes were all the time turned watchfully upon her, with the suspicion that the country ennui was oppressing the dear young soul. The company met in front of the old castle. All the local gallants beset Lucy with clever speeches upon their lips. They were all so abominably funny! Lucy felt like a strange hen that had gotten into a flock of cocks, that abandoned their hens, their familiar, good old hens, and ran to her. They beat the earth oddly with their wings, strutted about proudly, drove away their rivals, and crowed their merriest. The icy coldness of her eyes repelled them. They returned to the good patrician daughters who looked at her with jealous eyes.

The picnickers reached the place agreed upon,— a slope in the shade of oaks. They seated themselves in the thick grass. Here

the air was even hotter than in the open. The mothers took pears and candy out of their bags. The gallants brought water from a nearby well. Brows and faces were shining with perspiration. Jiří, too, brought a glass of water. Lucy drank it. The old lady handed her children some cold pigeon. They ate. The elder ladies seated themselves also. Only the burgomistress was walking about among the young people, and she called out in a loud voice:

“Frau von Fischmeister, please, take these young people under your wing!”

The alderman’s wife, Frau von Fischmeister, arose,— she was a dried-up woman, with masculine features,— she called the young ladies and the gentlemen together into a circle, and gave them a short talk on the game of “secretary.” Then they began to play. They sat around in the grass, and each one wrote a statement on a small slip. Frau von Fischmeister led the game. Lucy could not be persuaded to take part in it, but sat

at one side with the aunt. The old lady followed the familiar game with interest, and she laughed, as she leaned on Lucy's arm. Jiří, who was sitting near the slender daughter of the tax collector, at first hesitated, but finally joined the game.

That charming blonde, with eyes as blue as cornflowers, and with beautiful sunburnt hands, took her hat off while she played. By accident Jiří leaned over her head and breathed in the intense perfume of the pomatum which her hair exhaled. He breathed it again, and a third time. She turned her eyes a little towards Jiří, and he saw something mysterious flash in them as though hundreds of tiny gnomes were dancing there in sparkling violet garments. A sweet feeling set all his nerves atremble. He said something to her. She smiled. The directress called her to order. They went on playing.

The directress again invited Lucy, and the aunt, too, urged her to play. Lucy arose,

looking almost out of sorts. The directress arranged a "Blind man's buff," the blind man's part falling to Jiří. He was blindfolded and the circle dispersed with loud laughter, but Jiří, with eager eyes, had none the less time to notice the direction which the slender blonde had taken. He ran after her through the thick grass. She stood still . . . she did not move . . . he was already near her . . . yet she did not move . . . he stretched out his hand . . . she quickly slapped it hard, and ran away. . . .

Then Lucy withdrew with slow step,—something drove her away from that strange merriment. She looked around her. She was standing in the midst of a pine wood. The white dresses of the picnickers flashed by behind her. She increased her steps, and hurried on: the strong odor of the balsam was soothing to her, and she inhaled it with a deep breath. At the same time she wiped the thin threads of cobwebs from her face and looked around her once more. . . .

Everything was silent. She saw only the red shining trunks of the old firs.

She wanted to walk on, but she suddenly stopped in terror,— it was strange, she did not cry out,— before her, on a large grey plaid under a tree, lay a man, looking calmly and steadily at her. His large dark-brown eyes looked askance, as those of a man in the habit of reading falsehoods. There seemed to be a fire in those dark, fallen sockets, and the green shade of the tree gave a ghost-like appearance to the lean, waxen face, which was covered with a beard of sparse brown hair. His pale lips were closed. Thus did that strange man look at her without a word, without a movement.

In terror, and spellbound by his glance, Lucy asked him (she could think of nothing else then): “Are you a picnicker, too?”

The stranger answered softly: “Yes.”

“Of our party?”

“Of yours? Which is that?”

“The burgomistress’ . . .”

“Ha, ha,” he hissed as he laughed, “a good guess! So there is some one who has a better opinion of me! Well, thanks! I, who am declared a fool by my own community, am taken to be at a picnic of the best society! No, I am here my own picnicker!” and he fell to coughing. “My good old mother thinks that these trees will restore my affected lung!” He cleared his throat, and stretched himself as though fatigued by that speech. “I am just doing so to please her . . .” and he coughed again.

“Take care of yourself, and do not talk,” Lucy said, imploringly, clenching her hands.

He laughed aloud: “Ah, a human being that has sympathy for me!”

“Do you not believe it?”

“Yes, I do. You pity me, but in your heart you whisper to yourself: Lord, I will give thanks to you to-day that I am not in the same fix as that fellow.”

“Do not believe that!” Lucy exclaimed,

provoked. "I will tell you what I think. I should wish to be . . ."

". . . in your place!" he added laughingly. For a while he could not proceed on account of coughing. "So does every girl say before her twenty-fourth year."

There was a moment of quiet. Lucy looked fixedly into his eyes, while a super-human and terrible power was working in her soul; then she asked him softly:

"Do you know who I am?"

"Lucy! Lucy!" the quavering voice of the old lady sounded through the woods. Lucy looked around her. A mist hung over her eyes. The old lady, the burgomistress, and the judge's wife were hastening in her direction.

"Good-bye, good-bye," whispered Lucy.

A look full of contempt reached the burgomistress from the dark eyes of the sick man.

"My child!" the old lady grasped both her hands.

"Some gentlemen have just come, Miss Lucy, and they are very anxious to make your acquaintance," said the judge's wife.

"Our administrator, and our judge, and my husband," the burgomistress hastened to add.

Lucy walked back silently, and with bowed head.

"That fellow there," the burgomistress pointed to him, "is a dangerous fool, a Jacobin, a runaway student, a good-for-nothing. Has he not done you any harm?"

Lucy only turned her head.

"What an unlucky woman his old mother is!" the burgomistress said, pityingly. "She wanted to have a doctor! His father was but a blacksmith's apprentice. Well, blood will out. What is mob, remains mob. His consumption, I always say, is her good fortune."

Excited, laughing, singing, the picnickers

returned home, as the last beam of the sun's reflection was paling in the sky.

In the meantime, a disgraceful old man was sitting in an inn amidst a circle of daily guests. His legs were crossed, his feet were encased in dilapidated, dusty shoes. He spoke in a loud voice, beating his fist upon the surface of the oak table. His attentive audience from time to time expressed its satisfaction, its approval. Here were owners of small cottages, shopkeepers, and one alderman; they treated the old man to beer, drank with him, and clinked glasses. The old man harangued about his rights, a father's rights to his daughter. He said he would not allow her to be carried off and taken away by any count; he had all the statutes at his fingertips, and the police were with him; he was a cultivated gentleman; he had been a teacher somewhere in a distant village; fate had struck him a grievous blow;

his daughter had been the support of his old age, his good Antigone; she had lived lately, it is true, in a bagnio, but whose affair was that? What did honor mean now anyway? Only a word! A foolish word! Though a prostitute, his daughter could for her inner worth be compared with any decent woman! He who had secretly carried her off, who had caught her in his net, should return her! He must, he must!

Nor would he escape his punishment! We are not in the East, where one may kidnap daughters! He talked, and drank, and became excited, and talked again. Every word of his fell like divine manna upon the souls of his hearers, and they continued treating him to beer, wine, and brandy, until at last his grey head fell upon the table. He began to snore loudly. . . .

VII

AT the corner of the common, there stood a low, clean, little brown house with latticed windows. The passers-by (provided they rallied about the banner of the ruling party) politely and, apparently without seeing anybody, bowed towards the corner window. *The Free Citizen* aimed its wit at it every two weeks, and its partisans grinned maliciously and provokingly at it, though it was quiet within and not a human face appeared there the whole day long, and two curved wings of lace curtains hung undisturbed to the very floor.

Hidden behind them, however, the lady of the house sat all day over a stocking. She seemed to have grown into her armchair, like a malicious old sphinx; she neither rose, nor bent, but her fat fingers moved the fleet

knitting needles. Over the broad nose of her ruddy face, thick eyeglasses were saddled, and under the glasses two grey eyes flitted about like two drops of mercury. She watched the common to the right and to the left, up and down, and nothing escaped her: no man, no beast, no sheet of paper carried by the wind, no window facing the common, no dormer window on the roofs. . . .

That aged widow, whose husband, a presiding alderman, had been killed in the autumn by an awkward hunter who emptied a full charge into his abdomen, had a daughter whom thirty summers were making as bitter as meadow-saffron. A modest income from the house and the fields barely permitted them to lead an existence proper for patrician women, and thus life enraged them against their own fate, and filled them with hatred for the whole human race. Like that Merlin of old, of whom the Romantacists sing, the widow passed her days at the window, where with her quick glance she

watched the rise and fall of life. In her head were deposited all the past and future events, all the most secret deeds of her weak town neighbors,— and all that was as balsam to her angry soul.

It was the day after the picnic. Early in the morning, about eight o'clock, when the children of the town were disporting themselves with their book bags on the common, the burgomistress walked out of her house, at an unusually fast gait. In a long coffee-colored cloak, which, as she walked, showed her white petticoat, without powder on her face, her hair evidently not combed and not curled, with trembling nostrils, she went straight to the little house in the corner of the common.

She entered the room. On the elevation near the window sat the dignified lady of the house, knitting her stocking. Frau von Fischmeister was sitting near her in a straight military pose. Further away, in a semicircle, sat the wife of the commissary, a

woman covered with freckles and cross-eyed, the wife of the postmaster, a thin woman with a waxen face, and Frau von Janík, a poor widow, the owner of four houses,— all of the women in cloaks, beneath which their white petticoats showed, and all with their hair done up in a hurry. Towards one side, resting her arm upon the piano, stood the thin, faded daughter of the lady of the house.

The burgomistress stopped in the middle of the room, without saying a word. Her eyes met in a twinkle the eyes of all the ladies, and she knowingly shook her head three times, as if to say: “There we have it! A nice affair!” and she silently placed her chair in the semicircle.

“A scandal!” suddenly exclaimed Frau von Fischmeister, and all shook their heads. The full bosom of the burgomistress heaved high: “I said so! I am always right,— I have a good nose! Now we are all disgraced! The whole town is disgraced!

Only the doctor will be rubbing his hands in glee! His yellow paper will have something to chew on for half a year! Scandal! Scandal!"

"One of Jiří's escapades!" said Frau von Janík. "Well, Prague! That is life at Prague!"

The lady of the house motioned to her daughter: "Clotild, you had better go to the kitchen. This is not for your ears."

"But, Mamma!"

"Clotild!"

And Clotild went out, slamming the door.

"The whole family is like that," dryly and solemnly began the lady of the house. "His father . . ." and from the treasury of her recollections she drew immoral, shameless stories about Jiří's father. The ladies interrupted now and then with: "*Schrecklich!*" "Scandal!" The burgomistress: "I declare! That's what I always say!" The lady of the house happened to recall another incident about his grandfather. Again those

exclamations, again wonderment. She finished. A small pause.

“The poor counCILloress!” now sighed the burgomistress. “I wonder with what sly pretext he deceived her?”

“The counCILloress is a little off,” the commissary’s wife moved the fingers of her right hand about her forehead, “that’s what I mean.”

“And that father of hers,— Kavka has reported to me early this morning about him,” explained the burgomistress (Kavka, the town watchman, was in the habit of calling early in the morning at the burgomaster’s kitchen, and the burgomistress would listen at breakfast to his report, when any one had gone home in the night, in what condition, from what inn, and so forth), “went at seven o’clock to their house, and returned again in a few minutes. Kavka, I tell you, is a shrewd fellow. He started a conversation with him, and that old man began to praise his daughter, the old lady, Jiří, and our town,

— thanks! Kavka soon found out that Jiří had lined his pockets with money,— you see, pleasure is expensive. The old fellow has gone back to Prague. He told Kavka that he would be back, that there were good people here, that nothing would please him better than to settle here,— a pleasant outlook!”

Again a pause. The commissary’s wife, seeing now a favorable moment for an effective speech, coughed, her eyes looking more cross-eyed than ever, and with a subdued voice she began to speak of that category of girls to which Lucy belonged, and she told of those houses where, they say, they are to be found, in tens and twenties, of those small rooms, of how they are furnished, of those orgies which are celebrated there in the hours of the night. The burgomistress looked all the time with a side glance at her: the commissary’s wife seemed to her, as she spoke, like a starved person that pictures to himself savory dishes; the other ladies lis-

tened attentively, as one listens to old, long familiar speeches, which, however, one likes to hear again,— the commissary's wife continued speaking, choosing full, pregnant words, now elaborating the story with jests, and now winking.

The subject was more universally discussed, and Frau von Janík could add many a beautiful detail.

Then Frau von Fischmeister arose: "Did you notice yesterday how persistently Jiří clung to Anda, the tax collector's daughter? Anda is a clever girl, but it would be well to give the tax collector's wife a hint. Such a bird as he ought to be kept away from her."

"If one only knew what the councilloress thinks of it," said the postmaster's wife, returning to the old theme.

The lady of the house allowed the stocking to fall into her lap: "We know her foolish affection for her nephew. In the end she will give in, and will be glad that Mr. Jiří has his fair magnet at home."

“Scandalous! Scandalous!” confirmed Frau von Janik.

“Did you notice yesterday how this our pure dove kept on refusing to play?” started again the burgomistress, “and how she ran away? She had bites of conscience in decent society. She found the Jacobin somewhere in the woods. Birds of a feather . . .”

Just then the clock began to whirr, like a sick man who is about to cough, and then it struck eleven.

“Oh, it is already eleven!” The burgomistress jumped up. “Dinner time!” The ladies all jumped up. The burgomistress opened the door. Clotild, with burning face and sparkling eyes wide open, almost fell into the room. The burgomistress smiled.

“Adieu!” the ladies bid good-bye and went out.

“Clotild, that is not proper. You must not listen behind the door,” began the lady of the house.

Lucy stepped out of the gate about two o'clock in the afternoon, with a book in her hand. The old lady was taking a nap after dinner. The room was hot and oppressive, and the troublesome flies were everywhere, — they seemed to be most annoying at just that time of the day.

At dinner Jiří ironically gave her her father's regards. Oh, that father! She shook in disgust, and did not ask any farther, when or how he had come, or whether he had left again. She had that moment a feeling as if a bony hand had stretched out from somewhere in her past, as if it drew her back and down by the hem of her garment. She ate little, and did not speak.

She was walking slowly, in a bright striped gown and with her parasol open, towards the castle park. She walked in the sun, for in the street there was no shade. She happened to look at the sunlit wall from which the heat was reflected in a burning stream. A feeling of inexplicable anxiety was upon her, and

she was not thinking of anything. She watched the swarms of flies that were warming themselves upon the wall; frightened by her steps, they rose in a semicircle, flashed their metal-colored bodies, and fell like arrows further away.

Suddenly she looked up. Frau von Fischmeister and the commissary's wife were coming from the opposite direction. Lucy stepped more firmly, but the two ladies crossed on the other side . . . they came nearer . . . they were in one line . . . Lucy bowed politely . . . they did not answer the greeting . . . they were looking sidewise, deep in a lively conversation . . . they passed. . . .

Again, as before, Lucy walked more leisurely; she felt a stinging sensation, as if some one were looking at her from behind. She turned around: both the ladies were standing and looking at her. Lucy bowed once more, rather timidly and undecidedly, — they did not answer, but sharply turned

around, and walked on. Lucy at once blushed; hosts of instinctive fears surrounded her. . . . She allayed them with this and that, but the sting had entered deep into her heart.

She walked into the park. A mixture of different odors reached her. On the left were many-colored pinks: somewhere nearby she scented bird cherries, and the first roses. The smell of walnut leaves was stronger than all, as she entered into a gigantic avenue. A footpath to the left led to the old rococo part. Near the road an ousel softly hopped from time to time in the rank grass, and looked queerly at her with its blinking eyes. . . . A finch called loudly over her very head. The bees buzzed about her ears,—otherwise everything was quiet, solemnly quiet.

She walked down some stone steps where the posts of the former banister rails were still standing, into the old park. Here ash-

trees, planes, and old birches cast impenetrable shadows upon the ground. The air was fresher and moister. In an old fountain, where a moss-covered, armless nymph had long ago ceased to pour forth water, lay a heap of rotting leaves. Here and there a broken bench clung in the shade of the foliage. The tree-tops trembled with a melancholy noise.

Lucy walked softly, warily, as if afraid to disturb the dreams of that dead past.

“Walk more softly!” she suddenly heard some one say.

She stopped, frightened. The branch of a hornbeam was moved aside, and there, on a bench, sat the consumptive man, that strange acquaintance of hers of the previous day. He looked peacefully at her, his right eye was turned away,— the green shade lay upon his sunken cheeks. Lucy stood still, something kept her back,— and she looked at his bony hand. Pity took possession of

her, and she wished to say something pleasant to him, so she asked him gently: "Are you feeling better to-day?"

He smiled: "No, but I shall some time."

She shook her head.

"What are you reading?" he asked softly.

She gave him her book.

"Poetry!" and he burst out with a contemptuous laugh. He looked interrogatively at her.

"From the bottom of my soul I despise our modern rhyming," he said excitedly. "The poet is now-a-days a disreputable fellow! If he has to write a line, he becomes swollen with conceit, begins to model words, sentences, and rhymes,—the devil knows what he is about,—if only he said something sensible! And what does he write about? About love and troth, about the moon and stars; he glorifies the good, curses rascals, kisses the boots of old kings, and knights, and their fair maidens, prophesies good times to his country and to humanity in general

— Oh, those ossified conceptions that have long lost their significance!

“And again, for whom does he write? For our bourgeois! And they are every inch of them practical people! If they are going to give six kreuzers for that book, they want to have something for it! The praise of ancient, good days, prophecies that better times are coming,—such things the bourgeois like to read. Then hymns of humanity, justice, sympathy, light, virtue, and goodness,—only sing these ideals to them,—it is like scratching their backs,—that pleases them, and they like it so much, that they are willing to stretch out their hands for a small volume of these verses from time to time! Do you suppose all that finds an echo in their souls, their hearts, and their blood? No, no, no! They have only been inoculated at school with the idea that this is beautiful, that this is good, that it will not hurt them, their sons, or their daughters, as long as it is all quiet! Only no militant

spirit! That unnerves them! They are afraid of catastrophes and revolutions. And thus our whole poetry flows in a conservative stream!" He threw the book down on the bench.

"What good is it to us?" he said more quietly, measuring Lucy with his eyes. Her expression evidently told him that there was much she did not understand.

But her eyes were sparkling with delight. That voice sounded pleasant to her, and it seemed to her to be true and convincing, and so she was absolutely sure that all this was the truth. . . .

"Hide yourself," he suddenly whispered to her, pointing to the bench on which he was sitting. Lucy looked around her and at once sat down. The steps of two persons were heard upon the sand,—the heads were already visible: one belonged to the slender blonde, the daughter of the tax collector, the other to Jiří. He was looking into her face, and she was glancing sideways,—a girl's

scheming pose: "I will never fall in love; my ideal would be to live somewhere within the walls of a cloister," she said, sentimentally.

They passed by,—their steps and voices died away.

"Jiří, Jiří, silly carp," the sick man laughed loud.

"Do you know him?"

"My schoolmate,—formerly my friend. It is comical," he suddenly burst out laughing, "how he, a connoisseur of female hearts (so he deemed himself to be), he, who was tired of all those joys and pleasures, who regarded himself as a blasé, a sly fellow, a diplomat of love, is deceived by the first toad that has crossed his way! It is too funny! Well, there will soon be a wedding. The young lady has a good instinct: a little country jollity, some remarkable restraint, and yet is a little provoking,—add to this a veneer of romantic sentimentality,—and behold that is the creature which our blasé

carp, 'god of fortune' my mother calls him, has caught. In two years they will begin to get stout, to be tired of each other, to quarrel, and again to make up,—ugh, it's an insipid life! Of course, our whole life is something incidental and temporary, and it does not make much difference, how we go through it. . . ."

Lucy displayed true feminine curiosity,—curiosity, and nothing else,—for she was interested only in this new park. As they passed by, a peculiar peace fell upon her soul. It occurred to her that a tree must feel that way, when a lifeless branch is cut from it. Her relation to Jiří now became clear to her,—it was a pure, sisterly relation. With her whole heart, she wished the two happiness, and Jiří suddenly appeared to her as something better, and she felt that she would from now on be more lenient with him, that she would make peace with him, and would press his hand at home. Then she felt that

something brought her nearer to that stranger by her side.

“My appointed time, too, will soon come,” he added, firmly, but more to himself.

“But you have not coughed yet,” she consoled him.

“What is not, that may . . .” his hand suddenly grasped hers. She drew back in surprise, and looked at him, but immediately caught him up with her other hand. A sudden weakness overcame him, a pale mist lay over his eyes, his face looked ghastly white in the green shade, and he breathed heavily and with effort. She looked at him in fright: all of a sudden an infinite pity took possession of her,—pity? . . . She took his head in her hands, kissed his brow, held it, and tenderly passed her fingers through his hair. . . . At that moment there was a din in her breast, as if a broad torrent were pouring through it; an intoxicating weakness fell upon her head, her eyes, and her

ears. . . . Everything around them disappeared,—only they remained; that emptiness grew broader and broader, it grew above them and below them, and they were in the midst. . . .

He slowly opened his eyelids.

He did not speak a word; he only looked somewhere into the distance, between the branches. Then he gently dropped her hands, and sat a little longer:

“Not yet to-day, but, perhaps, in ten or fourteen days,” he coughed, “it will all be over.”

Tears sparkled in Lucy’s eyes.

He looked a long time at them, as if they were a relief to him. . . . “Well, it is a fine sundown,” he whispered softly.

“Is it true,” he suddenly asked in a strong voice, “that you are . . . his mistress?”

“I am not, I am not!”

“Of course,” he again spoke quietly, in apathetic peace, “what difference does it make? To-day the whole town knows your

history; your life is as open as a book, and all will cast mud upon it. . . .”

Lucy wrung her hands: “I swear to you: I am not, I am not! Mire . . . yes, I have walked through the mire, but I want to live a new life, another, a pure life. . . .” Tears gushed from her eyes.

“The bourgeois will not permit that; they will crush you,” he said sadly. “The new life!” he repeated. “What is that for? That people should look differently at you? That they should consider you their equal?” He shook his head: “In vain,—never! The bourgeois will not permit anything, they will not forget. Oh, I should like to live to the moment when this rotten world of theirs, with all its lying wisdom, deception, untruth, stupidity, and malice, will go to ruin!”

He shook with internal anger, and looked into space, while the green reflection of the leaves swayed like needles in his pupils. Then, as if seeing the absurdity of his anger, he spoke more softly:

“I should like to hasten the stream of time by some twenty years! In twenty years it will be different. In twenty years from now you would be happy; in twenty years I myself would not be so willing to die. To-day we are both judged, both lost. In short; this life . . . it does not make any difference how we live it . . . it is something temporary . . . maybe later it will be something, and maybe not . . . who knows?”

Lucy was not listening. Her meeting with the ladies at once became clear to her. The feeling of a coming storm overcame her. The whole park seemed to her to be hostile. She thought of the room at the estate and of the old lady, of her good, pale eyes, and she longed for them, as a child longs for its mother. She arose. With face turned away, she quietly gave him her hand. He pressed it, without saying a word. She went away, faster, faster, until she found herself almost at a run, where the walnut leaves smelled more strongly. Then she walked

more slowly, with downcast head, in dull resignation, like an animal scenting the blood of the slaughterhouse. . . .

VIII

THE FREE CITIZEN gave in its newest number a fine surprise to its readers. They turned the two sheets over and over again, but there was not a word of it in it! It kept stubborn silence on everything,—on the picnic, the young lady, the disgrace of the ruling party,—bah, the burgomistress got off with her usual share of abuse, but otherwise not a word! That caused the heads of the town, of the Opposition itself, to shake knowingly: “Evidently the doctor is losing his teeth. . . .”

The sly doctor had put the hand of a diplomat upon that muddled situation.

The town was all in a flutter. *Cupidi novarum rerum* they now were in the ant hill. They wanted to know more and still

more. Matters were discussed on the common, in the inns, in the offices, and at home. Men of the world retailed all their experiences to a wondering crowd, and married women listened to them with blushes. The patrician daughters, while out for a walk in the evening, went as far as the house, and there stealthily looked into the row of windows, hoping to find "her" sitting there.

After taking council in a full meeting, the burgomistress and Frau von Janík went as delegated to Jiří's aunt. They went full of praiseworthy purposes: to open the eyes of that good old lady who had been tricked in a shameless manner; to point out to her Jiří's contemptible action; to place that reptile, "her," with her fine past, in the right light; to say everything politely, yet openly,—in short, to purify the atmosphere in the poor old lady's own house.

The aunt received them as usual. They seated themselves, and spoke for a long, long time of this and that; at last the burgo-

mistress hemmed. She spoke softly, impressively, with dignity, as behooves the worthy spouse of a town's head. Frau von Janík now and then uttered a word or two, or put in a whole sentence. The old lady listened with surprise, then told them that she had known all the time what the girl had been before, that she had taken her into her house in order to return her to the world and decent society, that now the girl was as pure as a child. She praised her, and she said that she could hardly have been more satisfied with her if she had been her own daughter. The burgomistress and Frau von Janík only exchanged cold glances: how that Jiří had deceived her, how he had put a cobweb before her eyes! Terrible, terrible!

Now Frau von Janík began to speak. She turned her attention to Jiří. It was evident, she said, that he was the fabricator of that whole story about her new innocence, that he wanted only to throw a mantle over his passion before the town and before her,

his aunt; that the whole town was deeply agitated by that trickery, and that everybody pitied the councilloress for having so much shame cast upon her white hair.

The old lady replied emphatically, but curtly, that that was not true. The two ladies arose in undisguised indignation and went away.

The town was once more in a turmoil. The old lady was in the foreground of the situation. People wrung their hands in disgust over the blind love for that worldly man, and over her credulity.

Just then the doctor, the head of the Opposition, called upon Jiří. A great plan had ripened in his head. Jiří had been a neutral spectator of that war of the town mice, and only occasionally leaned towards the ruling party, as was proper for a rich man and a patrician. In the depth of his soul, the opposition of the democracy was distasteful to him. In Prague he had, in political discussions, often quoted with conviction Horace's

Odi profanum, and as long as his breast was beset by longings, he dreamed of some day attaching a "von" to his name, or of some well-sounding baronetcy.

The doctor did not find him at home. He was told that he was in the field.

He went down to see him there. The two walked among acres of beets, where a crowd of perspiring peasants were swarming in the heat of the sun, amidst the singing of larks, and in the blue smoke of cigarettes; and they talked for a long time.

At once the news flew through the town that Jiří had gone over to the Opposition, that he had become co-proprietor of *The Free Citizen*, that he would be a candidate for representative at the Diet, that he would speak on Sunday, when the banner of the white veterans would be consecrated upon the island; that *The Free Citizen* would from now on appear with an illustrated satirical addition,—and many more things flew through the town like lightning.

The burgomaster was very angry at his dinner: "It is your talking that has done it all!" he accused his spouse. "You have attacked that girl like hornets! Besides, the whole lot of you are no better! There will be now an end of Mr. Burgomaster!"

Then the burgomistress arose, returned ten words for every word of his, and splendidly defended her honor and that of her followers; then a few tears trickled down her cheeks, she wept out loud, and the burgomaster turned his eyes to the ceiling, and began peacefully his defence: "*Aber, Kätzchen*, I did not say all that. . . ."

It was now twenty years since Corporal Václav Benda had come home from the war. On his breast gleamed a cross (he had earned it at Solferino) and a silver medal (at Sadowa). He returned to his native home with the idea of forming a society of brave veterans, according to the custom of other towns. Some fifty good men joined it. It

bore the name of Radecký.¹ On holidays, such as Corpus Christi, the eighteenth of August, Easter Sunday, and at funerals, the society came out in all its glory. At the consecration of the banner, the princess herself had been godmother.

Each member was covered with gold,— the lace, the stripes of the trousers, and the lapels,— everything was of gold, while upon their hats waved majestically black panaches. Their president was Václav Benda. It was a pleasure to look at those stately men and to see the military spirit revive in them during such parades! Just as though an old warhorse, drawing a plough, suddenly heard the march of Prince Eugene! He struts along proudly, keeping measure, neighs, and raises his head,— just so our veterans filed by with sure steps before the local dignitaries!

But two years before another society of veterans had been formed, at the instigation

¹ Field-marshal Count Radecký (Radetzky).

of the doctor. There were quite a number of men who were anxious for decorations, but whom proud Benda had turned away, on the ground that they had never worn the emperor's uniform. The doctor called together these rejected men, and wrote them out some by-laws. A new society came into life. Everybody, without exception, could be its member. The society had about one hundred men. Their uniforms were even more expensive than those of the others. There was still more gold upon them, but from their hats waved white panaches. The society bore the name of even a greater person than the grey marshal himself,— in short, it was a dangerous rival. It grew and grew. Many black ones left Benda soon, and went over to the white panaches. Now these white ones were also to get a banner, and the doctor's wife was to be godmother. (There was no princess present, therefore the doctor made a mighty democratic speech at one of the meetings:

“We no longer have any aristocracy, the people is everything,” etc.)

Sunday came. At a high mass about noon the banner was consecrated, and then it was carried to the island. Here, in the shade of oaks and amidst restaurant tables, rose a platform adorned with bunting, flags, and pine boughs. The island was filling up. The dignitaries had their table near the platform. The doctor was there with his wife, the aunt with Lucy, the tax collector's wife with her blonde daughter (being a wise mother, she had gone over to this camp, for she had well noticed the fire for her daughter in Jiří's breast). She had heard, it is true, of Jiří's relations with Lucy, but her daughter's existence was more to her than everything else. She had made up her mind to tell him at the first favorable moment that there was but one *conditio sine qua non*: To send that girl away from his house. The tax collector was there, a speechless bureaucrat, two adjuncts, the merchant Jiskra with his wife, Captain

Knotek, Alderman Vrzal, the apotnecary, the flour-dealer Vrba, Doctor medicinae universæ Řehák, and the wives and daughters of the celebrating veterans, who now stood in a circle around the platform. All was quiet, and only the branches of the oaks rustled to the ripple of the nearby water.

Jiří was the speaker. At first he spoke calmly, cleared his throat in places, looked into his notes, and at times passed his fingers through his thin hair. The farther he proceeded, the more excited he became: he emphasized, thundered, now and then made effective pauses and proper gestures, and shook his head.

He began with the White Mountain,¹ and the two centuries' deep sleep of our lion, then spoke of the marvellous awakening, and here he quoted Kollár² (about the shepherd's

¹ The battle at the White Mountain took place in 1620; here the independence of Bohemia and many of its liberties were forever lost.

² Jan Kollár (1793-1852), famous poet who was one of the chief promoters of the literary regeneration of Bohemia.

hut); then he related the effects of the constitution, and Bach's¹ despotism, analyzed the February *Patent*,² discussed with fire the *Diplomas*,³ spoke long of the passive Opposition, of entering the Austrian Parliament, of the sad, grovelling politics, of the rotten opportunistic party, of the venal government, of that new, approaching era that demanded new men, new organizations. (Here he again quoted Kollár: "Let all men work," etc.)

Then, by a nice turn, he passed over to our white veterans: he called them a national legion, to whom the realm might appeal indeed at any moment; and that banner, which was to be a holy symbol to them, should be borne to the honor and glory of their society and their country.

The standard bearer raised the banner to a

¹ Alexander Bach, famous Austrian minister after 1848.

² A charter granted to Bohemia on February 26, 1861.

³ The most important *Diploma* is the one granted by Emperor Frank Josef in 1860, by which the absolutism was abolished in favor of an equality of all the lands of the realm.

dizzy height, and the music fell in with: "Where is our home?" The island shook to its foundation from the storm of applause and the cries of "Glory!" Kutzendorfer, the concert master, followed with: "Hej, Slavs, you ask, Moravian maid,"—and again there was a deafening noise and applause. Jiří, his face red, stepped down. The doctor embraced him and kissed him. Then came congratulations from all sides, drinking, and cries of: "Glory! Glory!" The blonde wife of the tax collector, congratulating him half comically, half seriously, patted his open hand with hers. Jiří seated himself near her.

Then the doctor arose. "Silence, silence!" was the cry. The doctor swung his glass and drank to Jiří. Again: "Glory!" The glasses clinked, and the music thundered a flourish. Jiří drank to the godmother of the banner.

Then a terrible *furor rhetoricus* (a specific Bohemian ailment) took possession of the

crowd. Speeches followed upon speeches, and then two or three speakers were talking at the same time. Kutzendorfer gave the company a full force of marches in breathless succession. The beer poured down the throats. The white panaches shook slowly on the veterans' heads, though somewhat to one side.

The red glow of the setting sun, reflected on the surface of the Elbe, flooded the island. The golden air was filled with grey tobacco smoke, which rose, snakelike, through the branches of the oaks to the sky. Here and there a swarm of gnats flew by in a whirling mass. Tiny waiters placed candles in glass globes upon the tables. There was a noise and din.

Lucy sat like a lifeless statue. That merriment was strange to her; she did not understand it, and she looked at it as if from some far distance. No one spoke to her, except the old aunt. Not a word. She felt that all were shielding themselves from contact

with her. If she looked anywhere, she saw somebody's eyes turning aside, though they had but just been fixed upon her. She heard within her the well-known old song:

“Only once we live down here:
Beauty, youth soon disappear;
Age runs riot with our face,
Of our youth leaves not a trace.”

That song kept on returning to her all the time, and she hummed it inwardly. On that day it sounded so melancholy, so despairing, as if she were to bury with it her young, empty life. For a moment the face with the dark glance would flash in her mind, the right eye looking sideways,—again she was gazing at it. That stung her. . . . Where was he now? How much more gladly would she have been sitting there in the park, by his side . . . his cough dinned distinctly in her ear, and she trembled.

“Only once we live down here.”

If she could only redeem his life by her lost,

worthless life! Her room of former days stood before her. There, in that house, she saw herself clearly before the mirror,— she was combing her hair. . . .

“Only once we live down here.”

She almost felt that in the bagnio she was happier. . . . What would be next? She shuddered. The presentiment of some dark, terrible catastrophe chilled her.

It was evening. The tables were lighted. The colored lamps that were strung on poles between them were swinging to and fro. The people were surging up and down on the island. Confectioner Curček, a clever local pyrotechnist, sent up a swarm of colored rockets.

The doctor leaned for a moment down to Lucy, pinched her cheek, and, looking provokingly into her eyes, asked her: “Well, what do you say, deary?” That tone reminded her again of that house, of that life. She looked scornfully at him, but did not say a word.

The doctor stepped aside abashed. Just then Jiří came by, and took him away; but Lucy saw him patting him on the shoulder and saying: "Friend, you have a fine lassie! I must say, you show good taste!"

Jiří drew him aside, and explained something to him; the doctor smiled, and shook his head.

The old lady was fatigued by all the sights, and soon fell asleep. Then suddenly the doctor's wife seated herself by Lucy's side. Her silk garment rustled at every motion; her little head was redolent with powder; in her pale-blue eye was reflected an eternal longing for luxury; her every turn, glance, and smile was graceful and charming. She spoke two or three sentences, and lightly vaulted over to the burgomistress and to those ladies who gathered every morning for gossip in the house at the common. She called them very humorously the holy inquisition of the town, then sarcastically, but in a half-whisper, told her the salacious stories

of their lives; she at times put such questions to Lucy or cast such a glance upon her, that the blood rushed to Lucy's face. Then she began to flash confidences upon her, and to hint and indicate this and that,—and bidding with all that for Lucy's confidence, she asked in veiled terms, and with the naïveté of a young girl, for the secrets of free love.

Lucy opened her eyes wide in shame, terror, and surprise.

The doctor's wife made her questions clearer.

Lucy, fixing her eyes upon the white tablecloth, whispered: "Madam, spare me. I cannot speak of these things. . . ."

"You do not need to act the virtuous person before me," whispered the doctor's wife with biting irony, and walked gracefully away.

"My dear aunt," Lucy gently shook the old lady's hand; "Aunty dear, let us go away from here, I beg you. My head is in a whirl."

“Where is Jiří?”

“He will probably stay here.”

“Come, child!”

When they had passed the narrow path and seated themselves in the coach, Lucy threw her head in the aunt's lap, and sobbed out as loudly and pitifully, as if she wished to unburden all the bitterness of the day, all the bitterness of her life. . . .

IX

JIRÍ fixed up a room in the corner of the house for a study.

The heavy portières of the windows admitted but little light. There was an evident attempt at emulating the imposing duskiness of the studies of great men. The furniture, — it had been bought somewhere in Vienna, — heightened the sublime impression: it was of massive ebony, covered with shining plush of a moss color.

He hung excellent woodcuts of Havlíček and Sladkovský upon the large wall, by the side of Brožík's Hus. The seven famous Young Čechs, who were the first to defend their holy rights at the Austrian Diet, he had hung above his table, in expensive gilt frames. Long bookshelves ran along the walls, and these were filled with fat, learned

pamphlets on political economy, with books of the great philosophers, histories, and some hundreds of booklets, and all the political speeches from Demosthenes up to Bismarck. Then there were anthologies of quotations, which industrious Germans collect and classify according to subjects, and which are of great use for oratorical ornamentations. The minutes of the Diet were bound in leather. The statutes and laws of Bohemia and Austria lay in a big heap, from which he sometimes took out a volume to read a page and, yawning, put it back.

His large writing-desk was covered with papers and a mass of documents, and there, from day to day, he carefully deposited his campaign speeches, speeches full of fire, full of promises to the voters of all the classes, full of sulphury flashes and thunder against unyielding Vienna,—the great and famous July elections were not far off!

The doctor called on him often. He smoked, while Jiří read to him his weighty

philippics. The doctor corrected him in places, smiled, and predicted great success for him and a seat in the Diet. He said that the committee of the party would send him a trusty man from Prague, whose glib tongue would advance his cause in the district. Now and then he advised him in a fatherly way to finish that affair with Lucy. He told him he was convinced that he was acting in an honorable manner, but the voters were in that respect a dull lot of people, and would not understand such a rehabilitation of a girl's virtue. He also advised him to be wise and get married: the tax collector's Anda, he said, was a girl full of life, full of fire, whose embrace promised many happy moments to her husband. Jiří always warded him off with a motion of his hand, and promised that he would consider it, but he never gave it any thought. He had no time and no inclination for that.

While smoking his cigar, he dreamed enticing dreams of the future. He was sure he

would soon take unto himself the tax collector's Anda. A sweet sensation thrilled him, whenever he thought of her embrace,— but he drove away these pictures like golden flies. His soul was divided, its greater half was tending elsewhere. He would be called to the Diet, he would speak there, and would be a great man. His name would be known to the whole country, the whole nation would read his speeches in the party's press and in the foreign papers, and then they would be reprinted in pamphlet form. At times deputations would come, and they would ask him this and that; he would receive them here, in his study (he proudly looked around him, passing his fingers through his sparse hair), he would answer them this way or that, would shake hands with them, would see them to the door. . . . The mandate to the Bohemian Diet would only be a step to higher honors. He would be chosen to the Austrian Diet,— he would speak, storm, and thunder in Vienna,— beyond that he could

not think, his dream passed away in a whirl, he inclined his head, closed his eyes, and drifted off in a pleasant and blissful sea of the mysterious future days.

Then the ———*ýs Gazette* began the fight in earnest. In its editorials and in the news of the day, it shot off its arrows at Jiří, his candidacy, his principles, thoughts, and plans. The speech which he delivered on the island was called the babbling of a political baby; his life at Prague was laid bare, and they asked the question, whether that was a preparation for the serious, heavy struggle for the holy national rights. The feuilleton, which bore the title "Behind the Curtain," was interlarded with a series of spicy gossip which, as everybody in town knew, was composed at the feminine sessions in the house near the common, and which the editor of the ruling party (a runaway student whose light hair of the color of straw hung down to his shoulders) put into literary form; this feu-

illeton told of penitent Magdalens, of Magdalene of Egypt and of Palestine, one with the skull, the other with the lion, and still of a third, a more modern Magdalen, who, following the example of the earlier ones, was travelling on the thorny road of virtue, whither the future leader of the nation had brought her, accompanied by the wise old aunt, who was giving them her blessing,—quotation marks played a great rôle in these attacks.

The Free Citizen was not behindhand, and repaid every thrust with full measure. It had the scoffers of the town upon its side, and in its illustrated supplement it trampled upon its adversaries: the burgomaster was there represented with big horns, which ornament the burgomistress and the councillor were laughingly attaching to his temples; Frau von Janík, the commissary's wife, Frau von Fischmeister, and the whole house at the corner of the common were artistically represented,—their heads were scaly, and from

their mouths issued long, thin tongues, forked like those of serpents, or they appeared as a crowd of witches flying at night on broomsticks. Every two weeks five or six such cartoons hovered above the greedy eyes of the town. And the texts! . . .

The passion of fighting took possession of the whole town like a contagious disease. Suddenly the Guelphs and Ghibellines were revived in the once simple-minded people. The courts had much to do: to return to some their lost honor, and to punish the slanderers; but after the summons the witnesses fell to again in the hallowed corridors of the courthouse, whence arose new trials, new punishments, and higher and higher appeals. The Hussite blood was throbbing in the veins of the good citizens; in the evenings the children of God's fighters proved their opinions in the inns with their fists and glasses. Sons parted from fathers in anger, brothers from brothers,—old men sternly shook their grey heads and wrung their hands.

Lucy's life flowed listlessly along, like a long autumn day. No pain, no bitterness disturbed her, for her soul no longer had any strength for eruptive ebullitions. A dull resignation, like a November cloud from which no storm issues, veiled her thoughts. She sat at the window, mechanically knitting, while her eyes roamed over the waving clover field, without seeing it. Only common, every-day thoughts passed through her mind.

Frequently a word occurred to her, and it kept on repeating itself inwardly; she heard it, she understood it, until she said: "Lo, this word,—how foolish it is!" Or there occurred to her a novel which she had read some time before: a scene which then had in no way impressed itself upon her, now stood out vividly; she saw its characters walking, speaking, and smiling,—but it all lasted so long, and those people seemed unable to get through. Lucy impatiently moved her hand, as if to hurry them up, but immediately she thought: "How foolish I am!"

She saw the picture of a man,— it was a poor woodcutter,— who was pushing a wheelbarrow full of wood up Vysočany Hill. She plainly saw his strength slowly leaving him, the dark veins in his swarthy temples were filling up and beating fast, and she saw his knees tremble,— and that hill was still towering above, and the summit was not to be seen. Warm drops of perspiration trickled down Lucy's forehead and cheeks, she breathed heavily, as if she herself were pushing that load. She opened her eyes again, and drew a deep breath,— the picture disappeared.

There occurred to her a few bars from familiar songs, and a few words that went with them, strange, incoherent words, and it all sounded in her soul endless and monotonous, like the telegraph wires in some deserted garden on a murky November day.

Only rarely a sharp, nameless feeling, like the prick of a fine needle, stung her,— but

only for a moment,—her soul at once fell again into its heavy semi-sleep.

The old lady frequently looked into her eyes: something yellow quivered in them now, and blue rings around them made them appear deeper in their sockets. The light breath of playful merriment and mobility had vanished, and there remained only a long, apathetic, retired, quiet glance. Her face was emaciated and of the color of yellowish alabaster. Her thin, light red lips had somehow become immovable. Her every motion had grown heavier and more feeble. For the remarks and jests of the old lady, for books and reminiscences, for everything, she had but a weak, melancholy smile.

“She is like a caterpillar,” often thought the old lady, “but she will change to a chrysalis.” Only rarely and but for a moment, she saw Lucy’s whole suppressed life, but with the childish optimism of her soul she thought that everything would soon be different.

People would change, and would look upon Lucy with other eyes; all would be well. The old lady had managed through her long life to preserve a firm faith in some higher, unfailing justice.

One holiday forenoon she took Lucy to church. They seated themselves upon one of those old benches that gleam with a dark, red-brown sheen. The church was empty: Lucy happened to be looking at the altar,—an old altar. An indistinguishable black picture in a gold frame was hanging between two windows whose variegated panes colored the light from without. Four saints, sculptured by the inexperienced hand of a country artist, were standing at the sides. They were gleaming in new, bright colors. Lucy looked at them. Their smooth faces seemed comical to her, for the renovating painter had indicated with a bluish-grey paint the traces of their shaven hair and beard upon their sunken cheeks. She looked at the pillar of dust that rose obliquely from the chequered

floor to the colored windows. . . . It was blue, wavy, and light, like the smoke of the censer, and reminded her of the little church in her native village in the distant mountains.

The church then began to fill rapidly. The flower of the local dignitaries, in costly garments, bedecked with jewels, stepped, rustling noisily, to the front.

The burgomistress, in her peony-colored dress, wearing heavy gold circles in her ears, sailed in; the doctor's wife balanced herself to the bench like a pale-rose fairy. Lucy saw her neck and the cunning coiffure of her mobile head right in front of her.

Then in came Frau von Fischmeister, straight and stiff, her black dress fitting her like a uniform.

Frau von Janík arrived in an odd, but expensive yellow garment. Clotild, and the wives of the commissary, the postmaster, Mr. Jiskra, and the worthy veterans came and seated themselves. The ruling party was in the right row, the ladies of the Opposition on

the left. Nobody else stepped into their pews. The ladies who came later turned back and stood in the rear.

That bench was the goal towards which the eyes of the curious and the sedate of both parties were turned. Nay, excitement was in the faces of the pious people, as if their glances said: "How did *she* dare come to the temple of the Lord?"

An old deacon, in white, gold-covered vestments, served high mass, with the assistance of chaplains and ministrants. From the choir thundered the organ and the violins, accompanying the voices of the patrician daughters,—they were playing Führer's Mass.

Sad memories stirred Lucy's soul during that playing; she thought of those Sundays and those masses when, as a young child, she used to sing at mass. Her father then played the organ. The sunlight used to fall through one window upon a gilt angel,—her first love. The old parish priest used to give

her a bright silver coin after every mass. Meanwhile the mother was waiting at home in the kitchen where they used to eat. In that whitewashed kitchen golden-green flies flew over the windowpanes.

Lucy folded her hands in her lap,— she prayed. Her lips were closed, but she prayed inwardly, mechanically, from memory, without aim or purpose,— that music, those memories, that air heavily-laden with incense, that lonesome emptiness that lay like a black shroud over her once bright life, evoked in her an ebullition of repining piety.

They remained alone in the pew after the service.

Even in the open, the heat of the July sun and the noisy stream of the townspeople left her in a stupor. She drew the old lady along with her faster, faster. . . .

There was a big dinner. The promised trusty man had arrived from Prague. Upon his lips were jests and sweet words (these he showered upon Jiří); he wore a

light suit, and his trousers were most properly creased (Jiří frequently cast an envious glance at them, thinking to himself: "What a fine fashion! He is a nice fellow!") He knew everything and spoke of everything. He was all things imaginable, a politician, a critic, and a literary man; he was a soldier of the press in Prague, and he supplied five country sheets with weighty discussions on our situation; in the columns which were at his disposal, he now and then vented his spleen upon this and that man, sullyng his name, his honor, and all his labors (referring to these articles, he used to say: "I have this day written some social news from Prague"). He knew all about French, Russian, Croatian, and Polish affairs. He was a phenomenon, a pillar of social purity, a secret messenger of embassies, a man of strength who knew how to make excellent use of every bit of gossip,—in short, a man worth his weight in gold.

At dinner he treated the two ladies with

exquisite civility, but he looked at Lucy now and then, as if to say: "We know a thing or two, but we keep quiet, as becomes a gentleman."

His conversation was exclusively with Jiří, that is, he spoke, and Jiří listened. He knew all the political wires behind the curtain, all about representatives, journalists, and ministers,— he knew some spicy gossip or anecdote about each, and at every opportune moment he flattered Jiří with: "Such and such a fellow, well! But you are all right!"

Jiří was charmed with him. After dinner he took him to his study, where the gentleman remarked that he here found all the familiar signs of the Bohemian land, which he promised to take a look at. Jiří read his speeches to him. In the meanwhile the trusty man drank wine (good wine!), smoked, now and then praised, and now again burst forth into full, enthusiastic agreement.

Thereupon Jiří brought out from the corner a big bundle containing one thousand copies of *The Free Citizen*, which were just ready to be distributed. The paper was headed by a fine poem (the local young assistant teacher had written it secretly upon order), which apostrophized the elections, the famous elections, the July elections! Then there were references to the knights of Blaník,¹ to the White Mountain, to the Hussites, the older and the more recent ones, to the new era in the history of the Bohemian land, and so forth,—two long, closely written columns.

Dexterously evolving his speech from that poem at the head of the paper, the trusty man fell to talking about poems and poets, about himself and about criticism. He said he was stern and unbending, and therefore he had enemies among the poets. But what was our poetry for anyway? Had any one

¹ A legend tells that there are enchanted knights on mount Blaník, who will awaken only when Bohemia is hardest pressed, in order to free it from its foes.

among us ever written an "Orlando Fuioso"? or a "Paradise Lost"? "Lusiads"? a "Faust"? a "Divine Comedy"? Vain conceit! What then have we? Only a few thin booklets of verses, "Morning songs," "New songs," then "Songs of Zavis." (It was he who had discovered and properly valued them.) What was there else? Vrchlický?¹ Hem! He at once subjected them to his venomous criticism, though he admitted that he had talent, that it was possible that he would soon write a great work, that his forty books so far were nothing but flimsy toys. And the others? Shame, shame! We have versifying artisans, but no poets. What about Sládek? Nothing. He does not write like Homer, Krásnohorská² does not write like Zola, and Zola himself ought to write not as he does, but as Tolstoy. He was not striking at them now for the first

¹ Emil Bohuš Frida (pseudonym Jaroslav Vrchlický), 1853-, greatest poet of the older generation.

² Eliška Krásnohorská, one of the more prominent women novelists, born 1857.

time, nor calumniating them,—he had written publicly about this matter.

Our younger generation? A barren wilderness. Machar had lately published some political poems,—he had given them a fine raking over! What impudence! A poet to meddle with politics! He wants to overthrow public orators, state rights, and Pan-slavism with the work of a journalist! He wants to be the nation's physician! As if he did not have stars, the moon, spring, flowers, the rustle of the forest, brooks! Our poesy has been so long growing fat on such subjects,—why should it all of a sudden be different? And he proceeded not only to berate him for this, but also for his whole activity, and not only the activity of the self-confident rebel, but his honor and name as well.

Jiří, who listened to him only with half an ear, and did not quite understand what he did hear, showed him the further contents of the spicy news: his own life, written in a

very elaborate style; the platform on which he was to stand before the voters; a sharp review of the whole labors of the man who had represented that district for ten years; some terrible statistics of the tribute that flows from our country to Vienna; a few paltry figures of what returns to us from there,— and many more bombs, every one of which was sufficient to blow up the safest stronghold of the adherents of the ruling party. The trusty man promised future glory and future greatness for him. They continued drinking, and talked enthusiastically until late in the evening.

After dinner Lucy went into the castle park. It was quiet. On the horizon rose gloomy, ill-boding clouds. Not a leaf was stirring. Grey dust was lying everywhere, on the trees, the bushes, and the grass. The heavy odor of acacias was mixed with that of the walnut leaves, sage, and yellow roses. Hundreds of shrill-voiced swallows circled

up in the air, around the many-colored tower.

Lucy walked over the old steps, over the path which looked as though covered with snow,— the white petals of the bird-cherry blossoms lay there.

All around was quiet. Lucy looked inquisitively into all the side-paths. It was quiet everywhere. A small woodpecker was pecking somewhere at the trunk of a tree. The chatter of the swallows reached her from the tower, now lightly, now more distinctly.

Lucy walked faster.

There was the bench,— how strongly her heart beat then! The blood rushed to her face like fire. . . . The bench was empty. . . . The stifling air around her was oppressive, as with some old perfume. . . . Threads of cobwebs stuck to her cheeks, and pestering gnats beat into her face.

Lucy said to herself that she was out for a walk only, that she did not expect anything,— but she walked on more rapidly, and

she kept on looking into every corner, at every bench,— all was deserted.

Twice she crossed the whole park. The sunlight grew more yellow. A heavy mist was thickening for rain. The leaves began to stir gently, as if from fear of the coming moment.

Suddenly the bell in the tower of the town church tolled the knell of death. Those groaning, penetrating sounds spread with their full force, and, reflected by the wall and the trees, re-echoed here a second time.

A certain terror suddenly took possession of Lucy. She inclined her head and hurried on, and it seemed to her as if some one was looking at her from somewhere, some one for whom she had to-day been searching in vain. The last few days she had not succeeded in bringing his picture before her eyes, but now she saw him clearly outlined: he was looking so peacefully at her, and yet there was so much terror in his pale features.

The funereal bell continued ringing. She walked rapidly over the steps and through the avenue of trees, and out of the park.

The aunt was standing in the yard and speaking with the stewardess.

“They think, Lucy, the poor fellow has died,” she called out to her.

That short sentence stirred every nerve of hers. And yet, it seemed to her, she had known it before, that somebody had told her so in the park. She did not ask who it was, she did not ask anything,—she knew it all. . . .

X

THE Bohemian crown was gleaming on the façade in its golden splendor, and below it hung the familiar wreath of dry, pine twigs. Through a passage-way, permeated with greasy smells which issued from the open door of the kitchen, one crossed the yard, mounted seven steps, and entered a garden. Here chestnut trees spread their thick foliage over white tables. In the middle of every one of these stood large lamps, against which gnats and moths were beating blindly. Around these tables, in careless positions and at ease, sat the citizens of the town,— only those, of course, who had joined the banner of the Opposition,— for the foot of the ruling party would never, never stumble against the “crown.” They sat there conversing, talking politics and judging this

or that man, as the case might be, drinking three or four glasses of liquor, smoking, submitting to the enticement of cards,— and then they went home.

Under the veranda, whose walls were covered with a whole mass of pictures cut out of our leading periodicals, the dignitaries sat at a round table. Here they discussed politics in the higher style: local, national, Austrian, and European affairs were rummaged through in all seriousness. Here the strategical doctor placed his men on the town-hall chessboard, ready for any attack. Here the initiated ones learned from still wet manuscripts of the little scandals and inventives that *The Free Citizen* would contain in its next number. In her anxiety, the burgo-mistress frequently saw that veranda, at about half past eight in the evening, blown up by the dynamite of anarchists,— an enchanting picture,— what a pity that it was only a picture!

Nine o'clock. The garden was merged in

a yellow light. It was filled. A small rain-storm had in the afternoon cooled off the stifling heat, and the air felt fresh and pleasant.

A long table was placed upon the veranda. The cream of the Opposition was in full attendance. The doctor, Jiří, with the trusty partisan from Prague, Captain Knotek, merchant Jiskra, the tax collector, the apothecary and both the adjuncts, Alderman Vrzal, Doctor *medicinæ universæ* Řehák, grocer Vrba, the president of the citizen's club, the veteran worthies (only the white), — all were there, and all were elated, for they had with them, as the guest of Jiří, a good friend of the doctor's, the gentleman from Prague, who was a part of the centre of politics, and who brought them a light from there, together with a variety of spicy stories. They listened with apparent attention to what was being said at the table, but at the same time they were racking their brains to think of something to say them-

selves, and when to say it, in order to pass for very brilliant fellows, and to attract the attention of all around the table.

They were debating in a lively manner.

Grocer Vrba was praising the latest article in the *National Gazette*, entitled: "Well, Bohemian people, judge for yourselves!" (Our people,— reader, pardon your author's precision in reporting,— have to be the superior stern judges of all the steps of their representatives. Our people are an enlightened nation, who, with their sound instinct, will find out what is for their good, and what will harm them. Our people have long ago seen through the cowardly, degenerate politics of the impoverished ruling party. Our people will drive the party before the judge's seat, and will judge it. They will find determined, energetic men for an extreme opposition, and they will thunder at the Bohemian Diet in quite a different voice. Our people will also send different people to Vienna. There they will speak in quite a

different manner. Our two-tailed lion must show himself in all his power. For twelve years has the venal ruling party been leading him in chains around in the circus, to be laughed at by rascals, to the country's shame. That carnal sin must be stopped at once. Our people support the whole Empire by their labors, and so they are asking only for their sacred rights, and they will get them. To those who knock, it shall be opened. New people will be knocking with their mighty fists,—and so forth. In all, there were some three columns of that matter.)

The trusty man smiled significantly and mysteriously, as one who always and in everything looks behind the curtain.

The apothecary had been hemming for a while, and he seated himself in another chair and wrung his hands. Something was trying to issue from his throat but would not come, until the gentleman from Prague cast a kindly glance at him, which gave him courage.

It was no wonder, he said, that in the country, away from the main stream, everything was not quite clear. The patriots were always fighting shoulder to shoulder, and all present belonged to the Opposition,— he, the apothecary, too,— yet he was not quite clear about some things,— for example, what was the difference between the Old-Čechs and the Young-Čechs?

Having said that, he drew a deep breath. The doctor jumped up, flushing.

“It is a joke, just a little joke of our friend, the apothecary,” and he turned to the trusty man, as if burning with shame.

The latter laughed, apparently accepting the challenge.

“It would not be strange, however,” he began in a dignified manner, “if the gentleman meant it in all seriousness. That question has been put hundreds of times in Bohemia. The distinction can easily be demonstrated by the following metaphor: Here is a corner,” and he turned up the white

table cloth from the edge of the table,—“the Old-Čech comes,— tries it, pulls it, twists it, but the corner does not budge. That corner, notice, is Vienna’s good will. The Old-Čech sits down peacefully, and with his nails scratches off a few splinters, and is quiet. The Young-Čech comes, takes a look at it,— the corner is immovable,— so he bangs at it with his fist, until the corner falls into his lap. That is the distinction.”

Saying this, the trusty man banged upon the corner of the table.

As if overhearing the sigh of relief which alderman Vrzal breathed, the trusty man continued with importance to discuss the opposition of the Croats and that of the Irish. He colored his speech with much humor and many witticisms, which Bismarck and Napoleon had used before him. In places he wove in a whole anecdote, which was very entertaining, though it had nothing to do with the purpose at hand. After an effective sentence (the trusty man wanted

to pass once more to our affairs), captain Knotek swiftly rose to his feet and took the floor.

He was a pensioner who had joined the Opposition for no other reason than because it was an opposition. He passed in the town for a tactful and many-sided man, who always knew what to do, and who always spoke interestingly upon any subject. His opinion carried weight. He had entered the military career from pique. He was one of those old sons of Mars, who everywhere impress people by their rounded culture,—they attentively read Weber's "Democritos" five or six times,—the only book they ever read through.

He spoke solemnly and deliberately of the Armada, by two or three leaps passed over to Temesvár, where, he said, he had stayed ten years, then led up to Hungary, to their sharp political contest, to their nobility who were always in the van of every action. He made comparisons and similes, and finished,

measuring with his eyes the sympathy of his hearers.

So time flowed on. A tiny waiter kept bringing the dark-brown fluid in glasses with colored lids. There was a subdued murmur around the table, and the tobacco smoke hovered in bluish circles about the lights.

The conversation became more trifling. Now Jiří, now the doctor, or the apothecary, dropped a few remarks. Our nobility was condemned by all. Our strength and our salvation lay only in a pure democracy. In half a century there would be no such thing as aristocracy, just as America no longer had any.

Merchant Jiskra spoke in elegiac tones of that real aristocracy of our blood which went down on the Old-Town Square,¹ or was drowned in a far-off, foreign sea.

A weak smile appeared on the doctor's

¹ On June 21, 1621, twenty-seven of the leaders of the insurrection were executed there.

dry face, as much as to say: "Merchant Jiskra spoke in the same elegiac tones of the aristocracy a week ago, and in the same words,"— but he kept silent.

"Maybe," added Jiskra, this time going beyond his usual custom, "things would have been different with us, if that aristocracy still existed."

The collector shook his head, but continued smoking. The adjuncts drew a deep sigh.

The trusty man again unbent himself for another speech. No other European nation, he said, was in such a position as we. The blood of slaves runs in our veins. Who was left after the battle at the White Mountain? Cowardly people, renegades, traitors of their faith. Their thin blood had mingled with the blood of a mob of foreign intruders. It is true, there was once such a crowd in ancient Rome,— outlaws, thieves, and rough soldiers,— the town of Romulus had grown up and flourished with them; but

with us it was different. The accursed blood is even now coursing through our veins. Our people are wretched, without principle! Here is an example: in his journeys through Austria he had found countrymen in the most distant places, but always in the employ of the police! Shame, shame!

These words produced a strong impression. Captain Knotek shook his head; Vrzal in despair ran his fingers through his hair, which was parted in the middle; merchant Jiskra looked in dismay at the *National Gazette*, and at the words "Well, Bohemian people, judge for yourselves!" but he was afraid to say anything. The tax collector took long and rapid puffs at his cigar; a sad expression shone in the eyes of the adjuncts. Only Jiří and the doctor were unmoved: they had heard those flourishes at least twenty times before; there was a time when they had been powerfully affected by them, but now they were impervious to them.

Doctor medicinæ universæ Řehák cleaned

his glasses, blinking his grey eyes at the trusty man in a provoking manner:

“You, sir, I judge,” said he, in a rasping voice, “are a follower of the theory of heredity. I will tell you straight that it is nonsense. . . . It is just so with diseases. Somebody, somewhere, sits down to-day, scowls, then opens his eyes wide, takes up his pen, and begins to scribble: I have found a new disease,—*morbis* ——*icus*,— and so forth. He writes a book about it, or sends an article to some magazine, and three months later three hundred people really are affected with *morbis* ——*icus*, and they go to the dogs. So it is with everything. People do not know what to do, so they concoct theories and systems, and put them into print. Suddenly the thought comes to somebody: theory of heredity! Good! Drive everybody into this straight-jacket, here a family, there a family,— or a whole nation,— what difference does it make? These stories are exceedingly clever, they

are striking. And when hatched out, they all have a philosophical shell. Keep on driving! *Reim' dich oder ich fress' dich. . . .*"

"Hold on!" cried the apothecary in a loud voice. "Put six kreuzers in the box! That's the fine for talking German," he said, turning to the trusty man.

Řehák threw a ten kreuzer piece into a tin box. "I assert," he continued even more earnestly, "that the people are good. They are of better stuff than you will find anywhere else. How many are there of us? Count them up! And yet think of the taxes we have to pay! We do it all without a murmur, bah, what do I say? Our nation pays them with a sense of pride. It submits to discipline, and what discipline! I beg you, think of the elections in the seventies! That was a time of trial and of strength! How those hard skulls stood out like a wall against Vienna! You call this degenerated blood? The devil! Go to! The people are

all right,—may the lightning strike only their leaders! . . .

“Again I ask you to consider the stacks of books which the printing-press distributes every year in the country! What a mass of printed sheets!—I mean your newspapers! Do you know, gentlemen, what gigantic tribute the nation pays for its enlightenment? If you only gave the nation enlightenment! Bah, here you place it on the throne as your sovereign,—just look here, I beg you,” he pointed to the *National Gazette*,—“and if the people do not elect you, they are a lot of blind dullards. You excite their enthusiasm, which you ought to guard like gold, to a wild passion. A hundred times a year you strain their strength to shoot at an ephemeral target. . . . You throw them like a ball somewhere into the skies, and then let them drop again to the ground. You promise them paradise, and when they, when the people, come like spoiled children and begin to cry,

you say: 'Hem, our nation has inherited accursed, degenerate blood,—it's all in vain. Shame, shame. . . .'

"I could go on endlessly. . . ."

"But I will only say: Our people are a stream of a great and mighty river, and he who wants to be in the lead, ought to make it his aim to find out their strength and to utilize it intelligently for the great work, and he ought not to seat himself in a boat and, raising a little banner, let himself be carried God knows whither."

Doctor *medicinæ universæ* Řehák was red in the face, and he took a mighty draught.

(Reader, the author in no way identifies himself with Řehák: it is the latter who said these things,—let the inquisitorial sentence fall upon him. The author washes his hands of the affair. It was imprudent of Řehák to contradict that gentleman from Prague, that gentleman with influence and a sharp pen, who, when the proper time comes, will

pay Řehák back for it in his customary manner.)

The speech had very little effect at the table. Everybody felt the painfulness of the situation: Řehák had too sharply criticised the gentleman from Prague. Indeed, Řehák had gotten into the ranks of the Opposition by mistake. He was not liked there, but he remained imperturbed, like a blind man. He opposed every speech. He had but one good point: he did not get into discussions,—he said what he had to say, then he remained silent.

The trusty man began once more to speak tactfully. He smoothly deduced from the speech just made that in its main points it exactly agreed with what he himself would have said in regard to the social question. He then sketched conditions abroad and at home. He proclaimed that our nation never dared show its color, or it would cease to exist. The townspeople and the peasantry, — in them was the strength of the real Bo-

hemian people, the laboring class was our Hecuba. The problem must be solved, but not by us. Our nation had solved European questions twice, in the case of the Hussites and at the White Mountain,— he came very near getting excited (Doctor Řehák again moved impatiently and softly mumbled in his beard: “Eternally that one theory; gentlemen, it will some day spoil your reputation!”) That may be the task of other great nations, but we will simply take the shelled kernel,— thus the trusty man proceeded, and again he became humorous, and wove in anecdotes, and won applause, awakening a whole swarm of ideas, opinions, dreams, and wishes.

After that the conversation threw off its high buskin.

Hostinský (a fat, portly man, who had in his youth served for ten years in the infantry as trumpeter, and who was the second in command of the veterans,— the white ones, — a rich man whose yearning was all

directed towards one goal,— an alderman's seat in the townhall) placed his chair at the table and addressed himself to Jiří, saying that he, Jiří, ought, as a representative, to see to it that their native town was properly recognized. He showed vividly how the whole district would be abloom, how the town would be flowing with gold. He further urged that Jiří ought to persuade the government to give the town a garrison, say, of dragoons (he adorned his whole speech with conjunctions: "howbeit," "whereas," "therefore," "if"), and he thought Jiří should take a local deputation to the ministers, should talk to them, and intercede for his people, just as is usually done.

Jiří promised that he would do so.

So time passed, and they drank and smoked. The peaceful conversation centred about the town, its hopes, its people. The ruling party came in for their share, first the men, then the women, and spicy

gossip touched now this one, now that one. All were laughing.

The apothecary told about Clotild, the faded beauty of the house in the corner of the common, and he told of that meeting and of the racy conversation of the town ladies, which Miss Clotild had overheard behind the door. Then he suddenly stopped,— he had to mention Lucy, but he did not know how.

Here the doctor helped him. “We all know that . . .” and he proceeded to tell the story himself. There was a burst of laughter.

Then he turned excitedly to Jiří. “Tell us yourself, what are the real facts concerning the girl? All the women are so down on her. Of course, I understand, she is a fine-looking girl. My wife is quite liberal, but she will not hear of her. Is it true, what they say of you and her? You are among friends here!”

Jiří slowly lighted a cigarette. Some-

thing was agitating his breast, as if the next moment he were to vault into the saddle of a tall horse, and, when up there, to catch the look of admiration which the people would cast at him.

He told the whole incident: the meeting in that house, the first pure impression, her father, her soul, his desire to bring her back to decent society (he mentioned himself only in a superficial, off-hand way). He spoke of the reserved manner which had since fallen upon her, and of the pleasure which his aunt had in her; excitedly he denied all the contemptible tales which were told of her in the town, and he said that he did not understand it, but that he knew the people well enough to realize that they were only judging her by themselves, just as every judgment in general was only a sentence of the judger's faults.

He stopped. The doctor arose, lifted his glass, and gave a solemn address in praise of pure humanity, and in praise of Jiří.

There were cries of "Glory!", and they drank, and clinked their glasses. Jiří bowed.

Subjects of conversation were running low. Only a word fell here and there. Old gentlemen began to look at their watches: it was eleven. The garden was getting empty. Only in a few places were cards being played. The surfaces of the empty tables reflected the lamplight. The tiny waiter was falling asleep in a dark corner. The gentlemen arose, paid their accounts, and went away.

It was a beautiful night. Thousands of gleaming stars were twinkling in the dark heavens. A moist, fresh breeze was wafting fragrance from the nearby gardens.

The doctor, the trusty man, and Jiří were walking together. Their steps re-echoed at the other end of the street. They walked in silence. A night watchman was somewhere singing off the eleventh hour. The mournful barking of a dog was heard somewhere

in the distance. Below was the roar of the water falling from a dam of the Elbe.

The doctor stopped: "But do tell me, Jiří, how can a man do so? Is your relation to that girl really so pure, let us say, platonic?"

"Yes," said Jiří, sharply and confidently.

The doctor burst out: "Do you know, my dear fellow, forgive me for saying it, but I think you're an ass!"

"A-ass, a-ass!" he added, accentuating the words with a tune from the "Troubadours," sung in a dry, rasping bass.

XI

IN black clothes, just as Jiří had brought her away that night, and in a black hat, from which a long veil fell over her face, with her sunshade tilted more to guard against the eyes of the people than against the sun, Lucy walked at about two o'clock in the afternoon over the common to the cemetery.

The day was clear. Again there had been a rainstorm in the night, and the walls of the houses were still wet in places. Something blue and shining was tremulously falling through the air to the ground, as if the pure azure were descending from the immeasurable, smiling heavens.

Chattering swallows, flying low, shot through the streets, and their little, metal-blue bodies sparkled in the sunlight. Full-blown, many-colored heads of roses, azaleas,

violets, fuchsias, and geraniums, were bending out of the open windows, and slender oleander trees with their bunches of rose-colored flowers were standing at the doors of houses. School children, walking up the street towards the common, stopped now and then. A merchant, a candy seller, a toy-shop, an unreadable advertisement on the wall,—everything interested and fascinated them. People stood in the doors of their shops, looked out of windows, or gathered in groups in the street,—everybody seemed to enjoy living that day. From their eyes, their movements, and their carriage, from their smiles and conversations, breathed the elasticity of energy.

Lucy's soft, passive soul took in all that splendor with delight. She was like a prisoner who, while taking the air, feels the heat of the sun: she drew herself together, half closed her eyes, and dreamed, and warmed herself. While she watched the swallows, the flowers in the windows, the crystal air, the

azure of the sky, the school children, the people who walked by, she thought of the deceased man. She thought of him so peacefully, so simply, without pain, without pity, that she was frightened at herself.

“I am going to his funeral,” she thought, “and yet I am walking as if I were out for pleasure,—unfeeling, dull. He is dead!” and there was a rumbling within her, “The only man who did not run away from poor me!”

In vain. The words resounded in her soul, but only distantly.

“How wretched I am, how dull I am!” she accused herself. “Who could forget so soon? And how can one forget at all?” But her soul could not enter into the circle of pain, from which she had escaped. With blinking eyes she looked about her in the heat of the sun, breathing freely, and she went on dreaming, God only knows what. . . .

Lucy reached the small bridge that

spanned the clear, noisy stream. Beyond it the road branched in three directions. Lucy stood undecided, and looked around her.

A sacristan and a young priest and ministrants with lamps passed by. They crossed the bridge, and turned to walk along the stream.

She followed them.

It was in the quarter of low houses, covered with shingles or straw, the small windows frequently pasted up with paper. On the threshold stood slatternly, wizened women gossiping about their husbands, their sorrows, their hopes. Half-naked, dirty children were wallowing in the dust of the road. White geese, a dirty pig, and a flock of chickens were running about noisily. There was an intense odor of farm-yards and filth. This village quarter is part of the town, yet separated from it. It has its own life, its own elders, its distinct interests, and does not busy itself concerning the town, just as the town pays no attention to it.

Only before the elections, all kinds of people come with all kinds of speeches, act neighborly to them, harangue them, urge them, and bribe them,— then there is the election, and everything is quiet again.

The ministrants, with the priest, went inside one of those houses. Lucy stopped. A crowd of women in simple holiday attire were waiting outside. They were conversing in an undertone. A few of them measured Lucy with an eye of mere curiosity.

The priest's voice was heard within . . . then the clear voices of the ministrants . . . a short song . . . loud sobbing . . . the women piously crossed themselves . . . a mass of people issued from the door . . . musicians, the choir, the sacristan, the priest, the ministrants . . . then the coffin, a black-shining coffin. . . .

A small bell began to ring in the cemetery chapel. The musicians played a funeral march.

Behind the coffin walked a small, decrepit

old woman. Her eyes were red, but dry. She scanned the crowd. For a moment a sad happiness flashed over her face, and then she turned her head away.

Lucy mechanically joined the procession, and kept looking in one direction, where behind the coffin a bent head in a black kerchief was trembling. Slowly a gloomy sadness stole into her melancholy soul. The funeral march sounded so full of lament and chiding. All the bowed heads in front of her were nodding in even measure. It looked as though the black coffin were swimming over them. The golden, burning sun was reflected on two of its surfaces.

“So there he lies,” a painful inner voice whispered to her; “his eyes are now forever closed . . . his hands are crossed on his breast. . . . The end . . . the end. . . . It is only two weeks ago that you kissed that head in the park. . . . Now it is cold . . . as if of wax . . .” (a light chill passed over her back) . . . “So you are alone,” the

voice continued to whisper, "alone . . . alone. . . ."

The funeral march pierced her heart with its lamenting tones. Her own sorrow lay as a weight on her drooping head, and she softly sobbed at those tones.

"What will you do with your life? Why live at all? . . . Why? . . . Why? . . ."

As if her soul were secretly reviewing all the impressions of the past days, as if it had now placed before her eyes their crushing result, Lucy whispered aloud: "The end!"

The old aunt with her white head and those kindly eyes now rose before her mind. Lucy sighed, and felt as though she were once more grasping the trembling, sere fingers. But hundreds of strange, furious hands drew her back,—the picture of the aunt became more indistinct, and disappeared. . . . Again she was alone . . . strange hands were stirring . . . they were tearing her garments . . . they were drawing her down-

wards, and a stern voice kept repeating stubbornly: "The end, the end! . . ."

The procession turned into the cemetery gate. The melancholy, sobbing bell rang in the chapel, as if in greeting. . . . The musicians continued playing, and with their music mingled the funeral singing.

The coffin entered the cemetery . . . the singing, and the music stopped. . . .

The procession slowly ascended a narrow path between the graves.

Lucy saw the tombstones, the gilt inscriptions, and the crosses, the palings, the flowers, and the lamps, here and there a dry grey wreath,—her veil threw a network of small black lines,—but inwardly she did not understand anything of what was going on.

The funereal odor of cemetery flowers blended with the penetrating aroma of the incense and loam,—it seemed to Lucy that it was the breath of her soul. . . .

The procession stopped.

The black coffin was put on the ground. The priest mechanically read over it the Latin prayer. "My child! My child!" a hoarse, heart-rending woman's voice bitterly lamented, ending in pitiful sobs.

"The end, the end!" whispered Lucy.

The thud of the clod against the boards of the coffin fell heavily upon her soul. A feverish longing to see him once more took possession of her, and she pushed her way to the grave, and looked down: the dark clay was striking against his coffin . . . he disappeared forever, forever, forever. . . .

On the other side a few women were supporting his old mother. She did not stop sobbing. . . . The shovel went from hand to hand . . . each lifted with it a little clay and threw it down into the grave. . . . It resounded against the coffin. Others threw in some clay with their hands. A woman handed the shovel to Lucy: "Do you want it?" she asked her timidly.

Lucy shuddered, and filled the shovel, but the clay fell from it, and only a stone rattled down. She stepped aside.

Then there was a rattling in the grave,—the old grave-digger was peacefully finishing the work. The people went away, some home, some to visit other graves. Only the old mother remained, looking with glassy eyes at the growing heap. She no longer sobbed. Her drooping hands were clasped, and her head bent low.

The grave was filled: Lucy heard the grave-digger say: “To-morrow, Mother, I will put the sod over it, and we will surround the grave with stones, and you may bring some flowers.”

The old woman unconsciously and gently nodded her head.

Lucy watched the expression of her face. Her brow, her temples, her cheekbones reminded her of the dead man.

As if feeling that glance of hers, the old woman lifted her eyes. Wonderment

flashed in them, but, as if reminded of something, she walked up to her,—and then she stopped, timid and undecided. It occurred to Lucy that she had something to tell her . . . perhaps to thank her, or perhaps to give some message from the dead man, but the woman only turned back to the grave, where she knelt down and made the sign of the cross . . . then she arose again. . . . She looked at Lucy once more,—again her eyes flashed and something hovered upon her lips,—but, as before, she turned timidly away, and slowly walked out of the cemetery.

Lucy knelt down at the head of the grave. Then, at last, a sea of tears coursed down from her feverish eyes . . . they kept on flowing as if her whole soul had been changed into tears.

Then all within her became quiet again,—the swollen black waves slowly subsided,—they only mourned like a melancholy tune for something forever lost. . . .

She arose, dried her tears, shook out her dress, opened her black sunshade, and walked towards the gate between a row of flowery graves. She went back by the dusty road over which she had come, and then across the bridge and by the street that led to the common. She protected herself with the parasol, more against the eyes of the people than against the burning sun. She passed the common and walked along the streets. . . . Everywhere was life, and everywhere warmth and joy, but Lucy saw it all through a mist, as though from a distance. . . .

In the yard of the estate stood a dusty coach. The driver was leading away his sweating, glistening horses.

Lucy entered the house.

Jiří was walking up and down with long, heavy steps. He was rubbing his hands. He was excited, and his dark eyes were sparkling. He looked at Lucy, as if taking special notice of her black dress, that fa-

miliar black garment of hers, and he stepped close to her, and snapped his fingers:

"I shall be elected, I shall be elected," he said proudly. "A tremendous success all around, the voters were intoxicated with my speech," and he looked strangely into her eyes that were still moist with tears.

"I congratulate you," she said, giving him her hand. Jiří pressed it hard.

"But where is aunty?" she asked, freeing her hand.

"She is still asleep, I suppose."

"Excuse me, I will change my dress." And she went out hurriedly.

"How strange he is!" she thought to herself, as she was standing in her room, taking off her hat.

The door creaked behind her. Strong arms were thrown around her waist. O Lord, it was Jiří. He was red in the face and said softly: "Darling, you are mine, mine, mine!"

His burning lips kissed her, his trembling hand began to unfasten her waist.

Her head whirled as if some one had struck her. A feeling of shame seized her, as if her own brother had laid his hands upon her. She pushed him away with all her strength, so that he tottered. She sobbed aloud, as she stood before him, and for a moment closed her eyes, while to her lips rushed torrents of accusations and bitter words, not only against him, but against everybody, against all those virtuous and decent people,—but she did not speak, for fear of bursting into tears at her very first word.

She dropped her hands, and looked up at him.

He stood there, angry and stubborn, fixing his eyes upon the ground.

“The end,” Lucy whispered, more to herself than to him. “It is the end.”

“A stagey, virtuous scene! It is rather too old, too insipid,—one would not have ex-

pected it from you," he said angrily, with teeth clenched.

"You see, Jiří, there . . . in that house," she spoke with difficulty, "then . . . you know . . . that night when you went away . . . you only gave me your hand . . . then I was thankful to you . . . with all my heart. . . ."

Lucy stopped. Something told her that she had intended to tell him something else, — what it was, she did not know herself, — she only motioned with her hand:

"I do not blame you for anything . . . fate has decided otherwise . . ." and again she was silent.

"God be with you," she said half aloud, as she quickly took up her hat.

Jiří saw the situation in a flash: she would actually go away, he had driven her away. . . . A touch of pity passed through his soul, and again there flashed through his mind: the elections . . . the future career . . . the — *ýs Gazette* . . . the tax collector's

wife . . . her blonde daughter,— let her go . . . just as well . . . it will at least untie the knot, and henceforth all that foolishness must stop . . . he turned around, and walked out of the room without a word.

Lucy hurriedly put on her hat, and went out, walking on tiptoe. She ran down the steps like an arrow, then through the yard, and out, beyond the gate. . . .

XII

OVER a long and narrow ridge, between two fields of grain, her foot slipping at every step, Lucy hurried, timidly, like a hunted deer. The waving ears beat against her breast, the monotonous chirping of the crickets sounded about her like the ticking of a hundred clocks. In the azure height unseen larks poured forth their clear tones; the air was astir with those dry odors which rise from the fields in July.

Around her were fields, broad fields. Their surfaces rippled in light waves, like a pale-yellow sea.

Lucy was hastening on in a dull, whirling stupor. It seemed to her as though there were an endless, swollen, terrible expanse in her soul. Somebody within it called out again: "The end!" That word hovered

about like a bird gone astray. "The end . . . the end. . . ." Her lips now and then whispered it aloud like an empty echo. She sped on mechanically, without thinking, always onward, onward, onward. . . .

The narrow ridge soon came to an end. Lucy entered the highway,— she recognized it,—it was the broad swath of dust that ran between fields, cut through a few villages, now went down, now again rose; here it turned, there it went straight, like an endless strip of cloth, and ran on and on, until at last it appeared on the horizon as a narrow, grey ribbon. The telegraph posts hummed their monotonous song. The rattle of wagons as they passed over it with slow, measured motion, resounded afar.—It was only a few weeks before that she had travelled over that road, full of happiness, to a new life. . . .

There below, behind her, lay that town. . . . The curved roofs and the walls of the houses were plainly outlined against the

azure of the heavens. Here and there a window glistened like a square of steel. From the chimneys a bluish smoke arose in a light cloud. The black cupola of the church-tower with its golden spire stood out against the sky. The surface of the Elbe glittered like a stream of mercury. She saw the cemetery, its cypresses and crosses, its white walls, and the fields which ran straight to the right and left of it. Long roads, with avenues of trees, wound through them. Towards one side of the town lay the castle, with its brown roof and colored tower, and the old trees in the park. Beyond the Elbe were the grove, the church of the pilgrims, the roofs of houses, and farther off, the blue forest and the villages that looked like a handful of bright dots; and still farther away was a grey streak, where the sky met the undulating earth.

Everything was merged in the full splendor of the sun. The air was astir with the burning heat. That town appeared to Lucy

like a hostile being: immovable, firm, haughty, shut against her, and driving her into the distance.

She looked once more into the castle park. It seemed to her that she could see the bench that was hidden behind the branches. She saw the whirling points around that tower,— a swarm of swallows. She glanced at the cemetery: there . . . in that place it was . . . that black grave, covered but an hour ago. . . . An hour ago? No, it was long, long ago, a month ago, and maybe even more. . . .

She recognized the slate roof of the manor. It seemed to her that she could see through it. . . . The old lady in her white cap was walking through the rooms, calling: “Lucy, Lucy!” The plaint strongly clutched at her heart. . . . And did she know already? . . . She had probably run out to the gate, and looked into the fields, shading her eyes with her hand: “Lucy, Lucy!” That familiar voice penetrated her soul, and suddenly she

was filled with anxiety and fear, that they would find her, would take her back to that hell.— She walked more firmly, more swiftly upon that road towards Prague, towards Prague. . . .

A firm, clear intention suddenly, flashed through her soul: there, under the chain bridge, the greenish stream of the Moldau billowed invitingly . . . there it was quiet . . . hardly ever did any one pass by. . . . The abrupt side of the Summer Mountain rose to the right. . . . There the din of the water falling from the dam sounded hollow and melancholy. One leap from the railing,—and there below, there would be peace. . . .

She walked and walked. . . . Then she looked at herself with sudden calm: “Behold, such is life. . . . Thus it will end,” she said to herself.

The telegraph poles, the young trees that cast their oblique shadows upon the road, the heaps of gravel that lay there in gravelike

mounds, the oblong fields,— the whole horizon began slowly to recede.

Lucy continued thinking of the end. She went to it without remorse, without complaining, without resistance. Nay, a certain weak contentment awoke in her: she calmly considered that she would live as purified in the memory of the people that knew her, that the old lady and all the people who had wronged her so much would think of her, and that Jiří would be torn by remorse for to-day's happenings. . . . She forgave him, forgave all. . . . In a few hours her lot would be: peace, peace!

Proudly she surveyed the landscape: a new scene. The country stretched out before her as though laid on a table. The oblong fields, the meadows, the villages,— everything was clad in colors, and breathed softly in the sunshine. . . . The crickets chirped all around her, and in the height above trilled the skylarks, and the swelling

cloudlets hung lightly in the azure heavens. . . .

She walked, and walked. . . . Her shadow fell obliquely before her over the dusty road, and the telegraph poles, the young trees, the heaps of gravel, the fields,— the whole broad country slowly receded behind her and melted away. . . .

She stopped but once. It was where the old lady had grasped her hand and had said: "We are at home now."

She looked about her: two round red towers rose above the horizon. Their gilt cupolas glittered in the blue sky like two stars. . . .

And again she walked. . . . There lay everything. . . . There life would flow on steadily, as to-day, so to-morrow. . . . Jiří would soon marry, and the old lady would find some reparation. . . . The dead man would decay in the peace of the black earth . . . to-morrow his mother would go to the

cemetery with flowers . . . an unspeakable pang thrilled her for a moment, only for a moment,— and she looked again proudly at the landscape.

She passed through a small village of low houses, straw-thatched, with tiny windows, and small yards with heaps of manure, flocks of chickens, and little children playing before the doors. Here and there an old man was warming his parched body in the heat of the sun. A dog lying upon the threshold peacefully fixed his calm, black eyes upon her,— everything, everything seemed so happy, so contented to her. She did not in the least begrudge them their happiness,— what was the little sun in which a man warmed himself for a moment, in comparison with what was in store for her?

She walked on and on. . . . Beside the road ran an avenue of shady cherry trees. Their bark glistened with a brownish violet sheen, and upon their branches gleamed an abundance of black fruit.

“Where will my body be, when they are picking these cherries?” Lucy thought calmly.

At the left was a small pond. The heat of the sun beat upon it in a stream of light. Nearby was a mill . . . its monotonous click re-echoed in the distance.

And again all was quiet about her. The telegraph posts, the young trees, the heaps of gravel, the meadows, and the fields,— the whole landscape faded away behind her. . . . Half an hour later she again passed through a village. Near the road lay a cemetery. Crosses and trees towered above the white wall.

“These cemeteries,” it occurred to her, “are all alike . . . everywhere they take away that which is dearest to us. . . .”

And she walked and walked and thought: even thus, somewhere in the mountains, in a distant village, her mother’s dust was decaying; and there, behind her, they had this day covered up in the cemetery that head with its

strange, black eyes. . . . In what clay would her body soon be lying? . . .

Now and then she met a solitary passer-by . . . or a wagon . . . or a coach. . . . Here and there, in the ditch, a traveller slept soundly upon his wallet. . . . Otherwise all was quiet. . . .

In the meantime the sun was slowly setting behind her and to one side. Her shadow grew and stretched out, with long head and shaking arms,—like a monster it moved on before her. Fatigue began to overcome her. Her thoughts weighed heavily upon her. Faintness made her close her eyes, but she walked on with a surer step.

The country was changing.

Lucy no longer looked about her. Her eyes were fixed upon the road, which ran on farther and farther, grey and uninteresting. Upon it were parallel wheel tracks that seemed to touch in the distance. And the trees along the road seemed to disappear in monotonous succession from behind, and the

wires above her head buzzed in their melancholy strain. . . .

And again she passed through a village.

She no longer looked about her. Her fatigue and faintness were increasing. In her head, her back, her limbs, she felt a leaden weight. Her legs bent unconsciously forward. She heard a heavy, hollow sound in her head, and the blood beating loudly in her temples. The circle of her thoughts was becoming narrower, and hovered about one constant point: there, at the bridge, all would be over. . . .

And she walked and walked, until she entered a long, seemingly endless avenue of old chestnut trees. They were in bloom when she had seen them first. Now it was all past. The green burrs stood out in cone-shaped clusters.

The black, cracked trunks of the trees dragged by her.

As though in a dream Lucy remembered how the old lady, looking there into the dis-

tance through her black lorgnette, pointed out to her the villages, the roads, and the summits.

She looked about her with dim eyes. There they were, Ještěd, Řip, and Milešovka. They stood out a dull blue against the ruddy sky.

And the trees, black and monotonous, passed by and disappeared, one by one.

A thin layer of dust from the road lay upon her cheeks, and she felt it on her eyelashes. "I will wash it off in a few hours," she thought.

Then a light opening appeared in the distance. She walked and walked, and the opening kept growing.

Finally the avenue was behind her. A broad plain stretched out before her. "There is that valley,—Vysočany, Libeň, Prague," she thought.

The red glow from the sky quivered on the yellow waves of the grain fields. Here were the acres of rape, in which late blooms

shone like a shower of ducats. The straight-rowed acres of beets displayed their bright green hue by the side of dark patches of potatoes. The figures of men who were hastening home from their work were sharply outlined against the greyish-blue heavens.

She walked and walked. The road descended into the valley.

On the right lay Prague, shrouded in grey smoke,— like some phantom in a weird story. Hradčany threateningly towered to the sky, and against it the glow of the setting sun looked like pools of fresh blood.

Accidentally she glanced down at the grey sea. "There, in that place must be the bridge," the thought flashed through her numbed brain.

She began to descend.

She paid no heed to anything. Her exhausted body moved onward like a machine. The noise in her head sounded more hollow . . . at times she thought it was the rush of the water. As if in a dream she passed

by a sugar refinery, crossed the glistening railway track, and walked through Vysočany.

The road was now filled with life,—men and women were hastening home from their work.

Bits of low conversation about every-day cares and interests reached her ear, but she did not hear them. . . . She crossed Libeň, and went through the row of acacias past the Home of the Invalids. The tinkling of the tramway bells, the clatter of the city was already audible. . . .

She entered Karlín. She felt the pavement under her feet. The air was heavier here, and, full of heat and stifling exhalations, it breathed upon her. Her faintness suddenly disappeared. She took a deep breath, and looked around her. The street was noisy with men and vehicles. . . . From the shops streamed a yellow light that gleamed at a distance, as though it were still in vain struggling with the daylight.

The nearness of the whirling life buoyed her. She hastened on.

“Here, these people are walking about, laughing and talking,” she thought; “each has his little world, and in it his joys, his cares, his sorrows. . . . This their world will disappear with them. No one else will inherit it,—they will all live their . . . what was it he said that time in the park?” That sentence had never before occurred to her,—indeed, she had not heard it that time,—the words only fell accidentally upon her soul, and that soul had found them this day: “‘And that life! It is something temporary, and it does not make much difference how we go through it.’ Thus we all continue to live our temporary lives. . . .”

She walked and walked. . . . The streets dinned and clattered. . . . She crossed Karlín and Poříč.

She was thinking how it would all be in a few minutes: the greenish water would enter her mouth, her ears, her nose . . . the whirl-

ing waters would carry her down, and then far away, somewhere near the dam.

Fright and terror chilled her bones.

“This is something temporary, something temporary, and it does not make much difference how I end it,” she thought, strengthening herself.

“Oh, that terrible, terrible water!” And again she was frightened.

The streets crossed each other, and everywhere, everywhere that life. . . .

“See their faces, forms, voices, motions, and dresses, their cares and their joys,— and they live, they live, they live. . . .”

Then she entered the tangle of narrow streets.

Moisture is borne through the air; ill odors, growing more intense, are wafted through the short, narrow, crooked streets. The pulse of life is beating here in more boisterous measure. A variegated crowd of people surges past the old, grey houses, talking, laughing, jesting; laborers who come in their

grimy clothes after having received their pay; soldiers and loiterers; factory girls with yellow faces, their hair combed over their brows; prattling domestics vociferate around the water basin; women, with their pale babes in their arms, are standing at the doors of the houses, conversing in shrill voices; in the basement taverns the gaslight, subdued through the red curtains, already flickers, and here and there are heard the sounds of the accordion. The pulse of life is beating strong.

Lucy stopped. . . . At a corner rose a freshly whitewashed house; it towered by a whole story above the red roofs of its neighbors. The blinds were drawn in all the windows; a dead silence pervaded the place,—she recognized it. . . .

She had only a few hundred steps more to go before she would reach the water. . . . Her legs were powerless and began to tremble, and her blood boiled furiously. Red circles flitted before her eyes and swam up-

wards. She summoned all her strength, and walked the few hundred steps. She stopped again.

What quiet reigned all around her! Only the water down there spoke mysteriously.

The bright walls of the Concert Hall stood at the right. Before her the bridge stretched out its grey arm. Beyond, the river Hradčany towered mightily against the pure, golden sky.

The water below roared and roared.

She went as far as the railing. . . . Toward the left, in the park, were a few people, — lovers, tenderly embracing each other, — perhaps they would not notice her. . . .

How ghastly and weird the water of the dam roared there at one side!

How the greenish monster rushed against the pier of the bridge! How cold was the air that watery mass exhaled!

A terror, such as she had never before felt, clutched at her throat. Her legs refused to

obey . . . she was about to fall . . . red circles flew before her eyes. . . .

Her soul was suddenly cut in two: and yet both halves were living, and discussing with each other. The one seemed to be wringing its white hands: "To live, oh, to live! After all, this life is beautiful! After all, we live but once! After all, it is life!"

And the other spoke in a hollow voice: "Down, down! You must die!"

And again the first: "To live, oh, to live! You cannot die, you have not the strength, and you have no cause to die!"

And the second: "Down, down!" but it whispered it so sadly, and in so trembling a voice, that it was painful to hear it.

Cold perspiration in small pearls dropped down her brow. Her knees grew weak from fear. Terror clutched her white throat still tighter. Her glassy eyes bulged out as she looked down into the ghastly green,—and the two halves of her soul continued struggling with each other. . . .

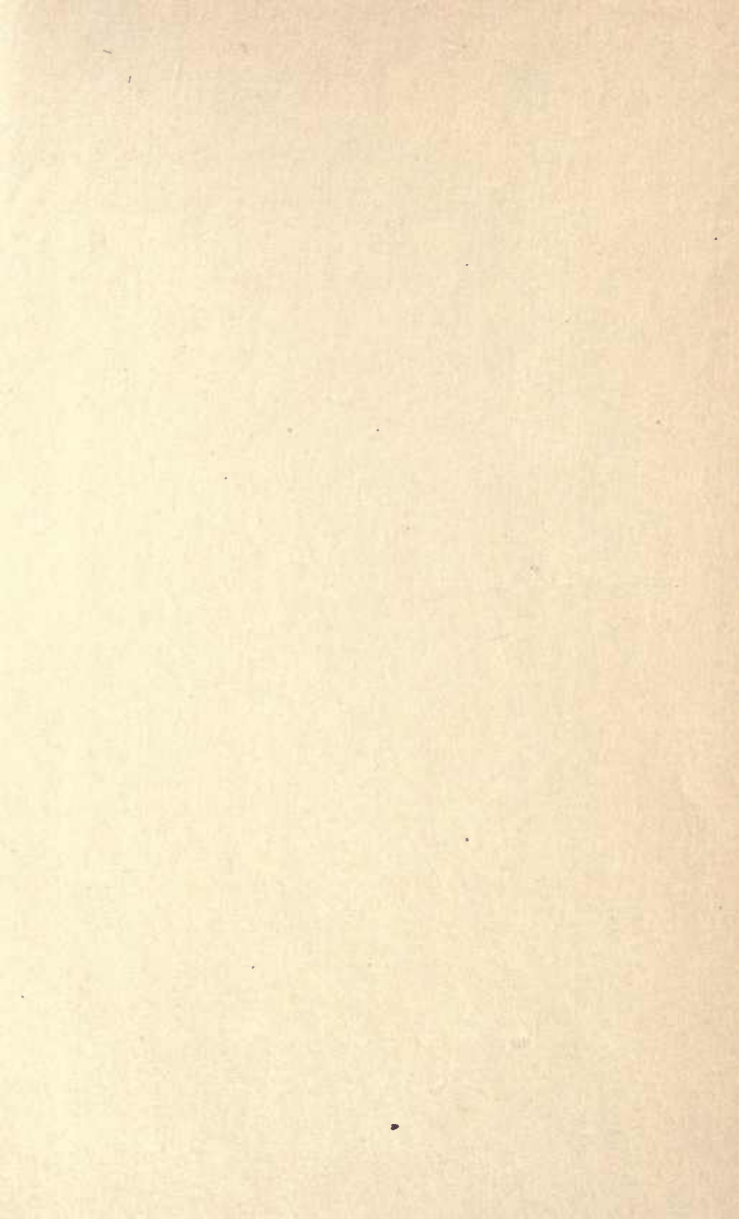
Lucy suddenly motioned with her hand, and faintly whispered: "Perhaps to-morrow. . . ."

And she turned back . . . she dragged herself hurriedly away, as if crushed. Her head drooped to one side, like a flower half plucked. Her hands hung down as though dead. Her sunshade struck the stones of the pavement with its point. She walked along in her black dress which daintily veiled her breast, and walked back into the gay whirlpool of men. She walked slowly, as though going to the gallows. She went only a few hundred steps . . . to the house where the blinds were drawn in all the windows . . . she raised her hand . . . she pressed the handle of the door . . . she opened it. . . .

Eight o'clock. The bells are tolling over Prague. The proud harmonious tones fall upon this scene of animation. A sacred moment. Over this extinct sultry day, over this sea of red roofs, over this varied mass of

spires, over this grey that is flooding the tangle of sweltering streets,— over all that is there in motion, over its empty pleasure, its sorrow, pride, misery, passion, hypocrisy, and love, over this weak, puny, ephemeral human “ego,” the hollow brass sends forth into the vault of heaven its *Ave Maria!*

THE END



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