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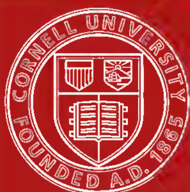

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THE NEW YORKERS
AND OTHER PEOPLE

BY

FRANCES AYMAR MATHEWS

AUTHOR OF "A MARRIED MAN," ETC.

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TROW DIRECTORY
PRINTING AND BOOKBINDING COMPANY
NEW YORK

THIS LITTLE BOOK

IS GRATEFULLY AND LOVINGLY

INSCRIBED TO AN OLD "NEW YORKER"

MARIA T. MOORE

ONE OF THE NOBLEST AND SWEETEST OF

WOMEN, ONE OF THE LOYALEST AND

BEST OF FRIENDS

F. A. M.

New York
August the twenty-fifth, 1899

AUTHOR'S PREFATORY NOTE

Appreciative acknowledgments are gratefully tendered to James Gordon Bennett, Esq., and THE NEW YORK HERALD, for permission to reprint "The Empress of an Hour"; to THE NEW YORK CRITERION for a like courtesy as to "The Lost Year"; and to S. S. McClure, Esq., for the same favor regarding "The Cat's Eye."

NEW YORK,
August the 22d, 1899.

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THE NEW YORKERS

THE NEW YORKERS

PART I

I WAS brought out at seventeen, for the reason that my mother, an abnormally ambitious and adaptive woman, regarding a daughter as merely a means to an end, could wait no longer for the essay which should test my worldly value. I had had a grandfather, a man of neither repute nor wealth, and who therefore was never resurrected save behind the backs of his descendants, and by their social enemies. I had had also a father, a man of no repute and great wealth, which latter sanctified him somewhat, and permitted my mother the leisures and pleasures of an almost unbounded *aplomb* and daring.

Having been brought out, after the processes of two fashionable schools had done their level worst for me (and in the way of

obtaining knowledge, principally undesirable and unsuspected, these establishments, judging at least by their young inmates, can be guaranteed to take the palm), I was launched at a very stunning tea, and chronicled as a "most interesting and accomplished girl."

Thereupon I fell flat.

Notwithstanding all the counsels of my mother, all her lavish expenditure, all her forcing and admonitions, I remained, at the end of my third season, a social failure of the deepest dye, and to her a grievous mortification.

I neither rode recklessly, flirted desperately, carried clothes imperially, turned men's heads, broke their hearts, sang divinely, athletized, literatized, antagonized, nor hypnotized. I neither became a *fiancée* nor a wife. Earls, a prince or two, counts, baronets, and marquises passed before me, or, rather, I passed before them, and with all my millions, they evinced no disposition to appropriate me and mine.

To say that my mother was chagrined is to draw the picture of her mind most mildly.

With the inverse rebound of revolutionary antecedents, she yearned, in her generation, for a return to first principles, and the yoke of the title was one to which she longed to harness her daughter. In point of fact, this craze for me to marry a nobleman was the ruling passion of my mother's life, and to it she was ready to sacrifice not only me—which is a common enough form of immolation—but herself as well.

It can be imagined, then, that when at rising twenty, no man of any noble, or ignoble birth either, had even breathed of love, setting aside marriage, to me; when I was pale, inert, big-eyed, dull-haired, nondescript, and handicapped with that awfulest of dowers, the "pass in a crowd" atmosphere; with no redemption visible anywhere about me to mortal eye (except the millions)—my mother—clever, ingenious, charming, world-wise—regarded her only offspring with horror.

The post-Easter season was drawing to a close. I stood in Mrs. Paulding's drawing-room; perhaps I was listening to the music, but more to the voice of the man who stood near me. I felt my mother's eyes scanning

me with hopeless discontent at the way I disgraced a toilette fit for an empress. Possibly I felt more keenly the glances of the man; his name was Jack Bingham, and he was saying:

"Yes, Miss Grey, I am going away on Saturday. It is useless for me to stop here and make a fool of myself any longer, you know, and if I put the pond between me and—temptation"—he hesitates a bit as he squares around and looks full into my stupid face—"I may man it in time. Hard work, they say, kills sometimes; but I take it, it's slow murder!"

Crash comes the music, cutting Jack Bingham's sigh in two. I don't look up. Why should I? I am not so idiotic but that I feel the pulse in his voice and know that it is beating for some other woman who has not favored him. Why should I, a failure myself, give greeting or sympathy to another's misfortunes, poured into my ears because I happened to be nearest at hand in time of stress?

"Well?" he says, interrogatively, as the instruments quiet down a bit into a *scherzo.*

"Well," I echo, shrugging my shoulders.

"Can't you say a single word to me?" he asks, impatiently.

"What shall I say?" I answer, vaguely surmising that if I were he, I should win the woman, or at least die trying.

"Oh, nothing but good-by. I sail on Saturday. After this our paths are not likely ever to cross. I am going to plunge into Bohemian London for capital for a new novel. You——" He puts out his hand.

I put out mine; he holds it in his; he is gone. What went with him? Surely you know.

I slipped back into a little room shrouded in portières and palms, with dim lights, and sank into a seat, my arms full of emptiness, worse than the dullard sloughs of all my yesterdays.

Presently I heard my mother's well-modulated voice. She said, off yonder in the lighter part of the room:

"Candidly, Mr. McAllister, what do you think of her? That she is hopeless, I suppose? Her third season over, and no country girl more irretrievably—oh! I don't

know!" A flutter of a fan, a tiny snap, a sigh. "Why should a daughter of mine be such a girl?"

"Christie's a nice girl," began Mr. McAllister, soothingly, "a very nice girl, I'm sure."

"Nice!" exclaimed my mother with a groan, "and I had hoped so much for her. I feel disgraced, humiliated, mortified!"

"Oh, come now, my dear Mrs. Grey, if Miss Christie were my daughter, I assure you, I should not feel like this; 'pon my soul I should not! I was observing her only a moment since with Bingham at her side, that clever, odd, writing fellow, don't you know?"

"Well, what did you observe about her? Is there anything that I can do with her that I have not done? Pray, pray advise me."

"Well, you see, Miss Christie's the sort of girl that needs the lash!"

"The what?" cried my mother, aghast.

"Yes, the lash, I said. If by any chance she could love someone and not be loved by him in return, don't you know, it would re-

veal her. As it is, she is a sealed book to herself even."

"Oh," gasps my mother, irritably. "Love and Christie are as far apart as the poles. I don't believe she could love. Tell me something practical, tell me something that I can do to further her, can't you?"

I suppose Mr. McAllister shrugs his shoulders; his voice sounds as if he did as he says: "Send her to Lady Heathcote."

"Who is Lady Heathcote?"

"She is the principal and founder of a school of applied art, in Warwickshire, England."

"'Applied art'!" exclaims my mother, almost hysterically. "You would have me make a painter of her, and she has not sense enough to rouge her cheeks when they are too pale!"

Mr. McAllister laughs.

"My dear Mrs. Grey, you mistake me entirely. I will send you Lady Heathcote's prospectus to-morrow and you can judge for yourself then; only, one thing must be pledged, the pamphlet must go no farther, and its contents must be regarded as sacred."

"Surely," assents my mother.

"It was merely loaned me as a social curio, and as an indication of the trend of the moment. It may be regarded as a dangerous experiment, but you may care to try it."

"Anything, anything to make Christie like other girls, or a little like me. You see, I have an instinct that she has the capacity somewhere dormant in her, but she lacks inclination; lacks the expressive power. I know," my mother's voice is firm, "that no child of mine could be, and not have such and such abilities, such and such ambitions, aspirations. All they need is to be brought out."

"That being the case," says Mr. McAllister, "you have everything to hope, I suspect, from Lady Heathcote. Her mission is to discover young women and exploit them to their own and their parents' ultimate satisfaction."

I have apathetically acquiesced in being placed with Lady Heathcote at Harrowden-Burleigh, a pretty seat not far from such well-known places as Warwick and Leamington. A big brick and stone house of the

seventeenth century, ivy-grown and turreted, with ideal rooms and emerald lawns, a delicious garden where the Avon winds, and altogether quite the atmosphere to inspire a liking for the British side of life and a certain fair ease which I have not yet found so well equalized anywhere else. Such were the outward forms of this solecism, which Mr. McAllister in a happy moment had christened, " A School of Applied Art ; " as for the inner workings and the people, they made a little world of a dozen souls (I suppose) in as many bodies.

Coming down from London to Leamington (which was the station for Harrowden-Burleigh) with my mother and my maid, I had vaguely recalled the mention of the " lash " which, *selon lui,* my mother's friend had thought I needed. I smiled as I, of course, remembered in this connection the face of Jack Bingham. I did not quite see the value of the remark in my especial case, for it is one of my creeds that to be sought is the seed of a woman's love, and speaking personally, not generally, I cannot fancy a girl caring for anyone minus the necessary

fact of his first caring for her. So, you see, I smile, pondering a little over the possibilities of my new *entourage.*

Lady Heathcote is large, suave, commanding, supple, for all her avoirdupois, with lidless lynx eyes and a tongue of honey; an infinitude of tact, an ocean of perceptiveness, any amount of brutality, and the *aplomb* of the skirt-dancer. *Du reste,* she is well born, well bred, excellently cultivated, up in all things, keen, with positive love for her strange *métier*—this last not surprising, since she had found it to the greatest degree profitable.

There were ten other guests (at twenty pounds a week) at Harrowden-Burleigh when I came, some of them hopeless, some of them brimming with expectation, a few vulgar, the remainder tolerably conventional.

Lady Heathcote began by dismissing my maid, and supplying me with a person perfectly qualified to touch up my brown hair and my complexion. I let her do both.

The humor of the whole situation, including my mother's almost feverish adjurations

when she parted from me to return to Nice for the winter, as to "obeying Lady Heathcote to the letter," struck me so forcibly and with such efficient novelty that I threw myself into it much as if it had been a bath of milk and roses. Whatever my own belief might be as to the outcome of these six months under Lady Heathcote's fostering care, I plunged into it without reservation, enjoying my own sensations with a certain peculiar relish.

The code was a rigid one; it left no corner unturned, no page unread, no depth unsounded, either physically, mentally, or—I had almost said morally, but with the third in the terrestrial equilibrium of the art of living Lady Heathcote did not occupy herself or her pupils too much.

I came out of my room tinted and improved with brushes and dyes, although there was no one specially to look at me, but it was urged that I must submit to this now, in order that my nature might become accustomed to it by the time, when, equipped *au bout des ongles,* I should emerge from Harrowden-Burleigh and secure my *parti.*

To secure a *parti* was the acme of Lady Heathcote's scheme: to this end all means subserved. It was her belief that the raw material mattered but little, and she frankly avowed that she argued from her own experience.

" I," said Lady Heathcote, " had neither beauty, distinction, an overplus of brains, nor fortuitous circumstances to insure my success, but I had that infallible instinct which urged me to make the most of myself; an instinct dormant in many women, which merely requires to be awakened in order to accomplish its ends."

Our weeks were weeks of routine, but to me the delicious, excruciating sarcasm of the whole affair rendered them periods of epicurean enjoyment. I abandoned myself to the *régime* much as, I dare say, the opium-smoker gives himself up to his pipe, with the added zest of holding the reins on my own intellect all the while, and revelling in the brilliant Satanic, sardonic end-of-the-century-ism of it all.

The day began, instructively speaking, with showing us how to walk, to enter a

room on different occasions, as for a ball, a reception, a tea, a funeral, a morning call; how to leave it under these same circumstances; how to get in a carriage, and to get out. This feat was performed in the solemn seclusion of the stable-yard with the attendant properties of coach and footman, Lady Heathcote standing surveying us, as each in turn merited her approbation or her frowns. How to behave under a series of circumstances of all kinds too numerous to mention; how to be dressed, and how not to be; how to treat inferiors, superiors, equals, friends, foes; how to dance, and how not to; how to approach the brink of risk, without tumbling over; how to attract the attention of men—never how not to!—how to pour tea, how to eat and to drink.

These were but a few of our daily phases of instruction, but the points upon which Lady Heathcote most insisted were Conversation, Pose, Balance, Reserve, and Love.

On these subjects she gave us little five-minute lectures of a most edifying nature, which were followed by as much discussion as our intellectual staff would permit.

"In Conversation," Lady Heathcote told us, "nothing is impossible, or unmentionable. A woman of to-day, to succeed, must be able to converse on politics, religion, atheism, occultism, temperance, suffrage, divorce, education, slums, social reform, the relations and equalities of the sexes, literature, especially fiction; plays, music-halls, characterless women, and topics of all kinds where reputation is an unknown quantity."

As for Pose, she would have had us believe that its results are enormous, telling us that while it was only necessary to appear interested at times, it was imperative that we should always be picturesque, with a suspicion of suggestiveness; that the pose should convey a tacit assentive admiration for the predilections of the nearest man, if he were eligible, and that with all its *espiéglerie*, there should always exist a certain deference to him, as man.

I remarked here one day that I called that sort of thing deceit, if not worse.

Lady Heathcote smiled. "My dear," she replied, "your language lacks varnish; it is

sexual conciliation," and blandly proceeded on her way.

"Balance," she explained, "is the equipoise born of experience," and this equipoise she revealed as "the result of a perfect acquaintance with all things, no matter what."

"But some things are unfit, indecent," I said, flushing and shame-faced.

Lady Heathcote again smiled. "My dear Miss Grey, the ethics of modern civilization have left nothing indecent. Everything must be known, handled, and criticised. In order to arrive at a correct valuation of one's self, one must dig up the earth as well as telescope the heavens. In order to battle with one's tendencies, one must discover them."

"Reserve" Lady Heathcote defined as "an assumption conceded to tradition, and useful in bringing down the game. Man is by nature a hunter, a pursuer; so much we must concede to what we cannot overcome, and in deference to this fact, woman, in dealing with him, employs the weapon of reserve, and a most useful one it is, too."

I turned off in disgust to a window.

"Has all your training but one goal, Lady Heathcote?" I cry; "a man to be captured?"

"Since Eve, who left Adam no choice, there being no other woman then in existence, my dear child, the aim of every well-ordered feminine mind, is that which you are pleased to designate so coarsely."

I laugh. The ironical sweetness of Lady Heathcote's application of "coarseness" strikes me as delightfully funny.

"I suppose, then," I say, "that reserve is the only recognition necessary of man's inherent nature; otherwise sex is an unconsidered distinction, minus even a difference?"

"Sex is not in it, Miss Grey. Literature, art, science, recognize no such thing; it is one of the happy eliminations of the nineteenth century, that squeamishness of gender has ceased to affect our modern life. True, we have not been able to eradicate it from the principles which tend to the population of the world, but that is neither here nor there."

"No—only everywhere," I murmur under my breath.

"Love—" Lady Heathcote turned her lorgnette upon us all as we lounged about the big hall in easy-chairs and sofas that morning—

"Love, *mes amies,* is usually either an unknown quantity, or it is taken too seriously. One-half the world will never learn its alphabet; one-quarter is submerged by its whelm; while the remaining quarter enjoys it from one end of its moody gamut to the other. It is my aim that you should, one and all, belong to this last class. In order to do so, two things must be eradicated; what is called naturalness and what is called unconsciousness. Both are foolish, well enough for peasants, and for poets to rhyme about, but for women of the world, useless. Self-consciousness is the open sesame to power over men and over occasions; the unconscious woman never arrives. Art, as differentiated from naturalness, is the key to getting there, especially in love. You must remember, too, that to love once is archaic and a positive negligence of one's

opportunities; it is the man or woman who loves often and with a self-conscious enjoyment of each successive phase, who derives the most from this possibility. Now, I want you all to leave me, knowing your own powers, your own capacities, equipped to obtain the greatest possible amount of success in your different paths. I have, therefore, decided to make an innovation; I had engaged the services of Mr. Claude Linton, of the Haymarket Theatre. Unfortunately, a despatch, received a few moments ago only, tells me he is too ill to fulfil his promise to me for to-day, but he is sending an adequate representative, he assures me, in the person of Mr. Beresford Clyde, of the Lyceum, I think, who will soon be with us."

"How delightful!" I exclaimed, ironically. "What does he come for?"

"To propose to you, Miss Grey, and to the others," adds her ladyship, with a smile.

"In short, I have prepared a little rôle or code, which I sent up to town to Mr. Linton to study; the rôle of a man in love and proposing. This part Mr. Clyde will enact

successively with each of you, beginning with Miss Grey."

"But my rôle?" I interrupted with heat and amusement.

"I leave that to your ingenuity. I will sit yonder. I wish to see what you will each do under the circumstances; afterward I will point out your errors."

"The quintessence of *fin-de-siècle-ism!*" cry I. "This is surely the last day, the last hour of the poor nineteenth century;" and thereupon carriage-wheels crunch the gravel, and we are warned of the arrival of Mr. Beresford Clyde.

It may be supposed that life at Harrowden-Burleigh was monotonous; it was far from it. We saw numbers of people of all sorts, in Lady Heathcote's circle of country acquaintance. She was known to have "classes," but in what, remained a mystery, masquerading under the convenient cognomen of "Literature;" and as her pupils, we moved about, hither and yon, with as much ease as each was mistress of. We went up to London for all the worst plays, for all the picture shows; we read all the worst books,

and we had no end of exercise on horses, 'mobes, and wheels. About the whole house there was an atmosphere of benignant insincerity, so to speak, and purposeless intention, which, while it awed some of us, yet soothed; and to me was a never-failing source of entertainment.

The announcement, then, of the "proposal" lesson could not fail to strike my sense of the ludicrous. I was filled with merriment as Lady Heathcote, after a preliminary chat with the anxious lover, ushered me into his presence, and introduced to me "Mr. Beresford Clyde."

Jack Bingham stood before me.

I stood before him.

The door-bell rang (the goddess of mercy must have guided the ringer's hand), and Lady Heathcote was called out of the room for a few moments.

"And you are here!" he says, a little wildly.

"And you also?" I answer, with calmness.

"As a matter of pure deviltry, I assure you. Linton is ill; had told me something

of this place as an actual and a remarkable spot, offered to have me come in his place, for the sport and the curiosity of the thing, and I accepted, under an assumed name and a pledge of secrecy. You know all."

I shrug my shoulders.

"And you," he says, aghast, "you are not here of your own free will?"

"Surely," I say, "why not?" I look at him, I laugh; it is a bewitching little laugh, and I know it.

What else do I know? I know that I am what Lady Heathcote would call "arriving;" that self-consciousness, thenceforth and forevermore, must dominate my being and bring to me what my preceptress says it will—or something else.

As I laugh, Jack Bingham gazes at me in blank amazement. I daresay he never supposed I should learn such syren notes—and Lady Heathcote returns. She pauses, listens, looks, says:

"My dear Miss Grey, you are arriving; pray proceed. See, I will sit here. How far had you gotten, Mr. Clyde?" picking up a MS. from the table.

Jack Bingham seemed dazed and there is a tiny pause—oh so tiny, because I answer airily for him.

" Lady Heathcote, dear, only so far as the third speech for Mr. Clyde; pray give him the cue for the fourth. You see he has had little or no time to prepare for the—er—lesson."

Lady Heathcote does as she is requested, the proposal proceeds, takes place, is refused. I so work out my rôle, and Lady Heathcote is simply wild over my success.

After Mr. Clyde has gone to meet his train, she confesses that he was a " very poor hand at the business in the beginning with Miss Grey, but worked into it better at the end with little Miss Callowby." I hope he did.

As I have said, we went up to London very often; and only a week after the visit of Mr. Beresford Clyde we found ourselves at Burlington House contemplating some examples of the nude, and discussing the same with all the *sangfroid* of genuine *Boulevardières*. I was close to the rail and unabashed, the crowd pressing me and our

chaperon. Someway, since I had discovered myself that day last week in the proposal lesson, I had become reckless, with what Lady Heathcote calls the "joyous recklessness of one who does a thing with all his wits primed and with knowledge of compunction and yet disdaining it."

She was pointing out the beauty of the woman's arms in the painting, when I turned. Jack Bingham's eyes and mine met, his just returning from their excursion to the nude picture, mine ditto; the man flushed; I don't know whether the girl did or not—under the pink powder it was hard to tell. Without a word he turned off as if he had been shot, linking his arm in that of the man who was his companion.

Lady Heathcote had not seen him. Presently, when we were all sitting on the divans discussing "The Second Mrs. Tanqueray" *con amore*, she espied him and his friend.

"There is Hardy!" she cries, "and that young actor who came down to Harrowden last week in Linton's stead, is with him."

Some of us craned our necks to see the artist-author, some of us did not.

"Apropos," continues Lady Heathcote. "What could be more charming than to speak of 'Tess' while watching her author. You have all read 'Tess,' I will not insult your intelligence by an interrogation point."

"I never have," I remarked, bluntly.

"My love!" Lady Heathcote and my fellow-pupils all turn startled eyes upon me. "Then you will listen while we chat about the delightful creature, and I will buy you a copy before we go home."

"I don't care to read it," I say, languidly. "I know enough of it to suffice me."

"If you know enough of 'Tess,' then, Miss Grey, give us your opinion of it," says her ladyship, sharply.

I answer, "I call the book (granting, too, the genius, power, worth, and beauty of it) —the canonization of the scarlet letter. It is that to me, and nothing else whatever."

The pupils look a little alarmed. Strange that persons who will rhapsodize over pictures of the nude and Mrs. Tanqueray plays feel it incumbent always to resent a plain Saxon statement of the same order of thing.

Lady Heathcote pauses. "My dear," she

finally says, "you forget that sin is merely undirected attempt at development, and that development is progress."

"Let us then stand still," I say, "and cease progressing. Painters and sculptors do not select three-legged colts, two-headed girls, bearded ladies, or hunchbacks, to immortalize and place before us for our criticism and admiration; composers do not hurl discord at our ears; why then should literature, under the alias of fidelity to life, hold up to us the sordid, the unclean, the scarred, the libertines, the prostitutes, and, decking them with all the roses and lilies of its splendid imagery, bid us come sup, and thank, and applaud, and call crime, innocence, and sin, art? Why, too, does the stage, which should be the best mouthpiece of literature, play out for us the lives of women and men from whose actual contact we would shrink as from a leper?"

"Because, my dear, we like it; because we are desirous of perfecting ourselves in the knowledge of all things, of sounding the depths of the most devious wanderings of the human being; because we all have hor-

rible possibilities, everyone of us, and it is the trend of the age that we should be past-masters in cognizance of every degree, of both innocence, and what you call sin."

And then we go somewhere and eat ices and presently take the train for Leamington.

"The season" at Harrowden-Burleigh came to an end: the eleven young women, who had been under the guidance of its facile mistress from October until April, fell apart all at once, and I doubt if any ever beheld each other again.

Lady Heathcote had written my mother, that of all her pupils, I was the one from whom she should expect the most; that my innate vein of originality might surely be relied upon to land me on a pinnacle—a position, looking at it dispassionately, which must be uncommonly easeless. However, I was quit of Harrowden; not sorry, nor yet glad; passive as yet, save that I sent the maid of her ladyship's choosing flying, and took one who suited me, and that I threw the pink powder in the fire, if I did retain the golden hair touch-up.

Mamma took a house near Queen's Gate for three months, and blandly informed me that she was going to "bring me out!"

She did, too. I had the inestimable privilege, accorded but few young women, of making my bud's bow twice. It was successful, too. My mother had the *aplomb* of a diplomat and at the same time the graciousness which a diplomat's wife should have—but has not always—and then, too (why do we shamefacedly name the greatest factor last?), she had unlimited money. The Americans, of course, elevated their brows and told one another that I had been launched years ago in New York; nevertheless, they came and bade me Godspeed in my new career. When the English people heard the tale, they laughed and held it a refreshing jest; both sets in reality, I think, looking upon my mother as a woman of positive genius. She was.

She had introduced me at home at seventeen; I amounted to worse than nothing. Four years later, after only eight months' seclusion, I am again a *débutante* abroad, and I am one of the most emphatic successes

a London season ever knew, greater than even my lady mother had dreamed.

I admired her triumph intensely. It made her almost girlish in her beauty, it irradiated and enriched her whole nature. She was a woman than whom none knew better how to bask in popularity, and in her supreme content I found a singular pleasure. *Du rest*, for myself? At first I could hardly take it all seriously. I would stand for half-hours in front of my mirror wondering at the face men raved over, artists painted, papers reproduced, women envied. And well I might; my beauty lay not there, but rather where adventure spoke in my eyes; and where, about the turn of my throat, or the bend of my arm, or the hint of my speech, or the arrow of my jest, lurked all the magnificent perhapses that I felt coursing at last through my blood and brain.

Decidedly, I had "discovered myself," and unhesitatingly I plunged into this new life for all it was worth, with now and then a strange backward stare at the listless dull girl who had once been I.

Nothing can well be more delightful, more

exhilarating, other matters being equal, than the London season. The very streets of Mayfair and Belgravia are, to my mind, redolent of the atmosphere of gayety; the glowing window gardens, the tint of lamp and candlelight through the filmy lace of the curtains, the dim mist lifting over far-off St. Stephens' towers, the bustle and din, the fresh pure air, the crush at Hyde Park Corner, the soft earth of the Row under my horses' hoofs, the kiss of the wind on my cheek, the dew on the turf, the man at my side—he chanced to be the Duke of Devonexe, and one of the haughtiest peers in Europe.

A week later, I think my mother's cup filled to the brim. We received our invitation for a four days' visit at Marlborough House. The second evening of our stay I am sure her cup ran over. I stood with His Royal Highness at my right, and Devonexe at my left, but I almost forgot myself in looking at mamma. She was in reality forty-one, but she appeared, with her slim figure, spirituelle features, regal little head, and perfect *savoir faire*, to be only half of it.

She seemed in her element, proud, a little imperious, beautiful, conquering—well, it was worth all of Harrowden-Burleigh to see any other human being so happy.

Devonexe offered himself to me that evening, which would hardly be worth chronicling, save for two facts: one was that I accepted him, the other that his proposal was utterly different from any of the dozens I had listened to.

I had had my dance with my Royal host and been seated, when the Duke came up and said, very quietly:

"Are you willing to sit a dance out with me in that little room yonder, Miss Grey?"

I assented, and when we reached the "little room yonder," His Grace merely placed me in a chair and stood before me with his arms folded, and said, very calmly:

"I want to offer you myself and all I have and am; I want to know if I am worthy your acceptance, if you will be my wife?"

He was very pale, and there was an odd pressure about his lips as he leaned a little for my answer. Not a word of love, not one seeking of my hand by his. I realized it

perfectly. It struck me as charming, unique, novel, combined with his paleness and that twitch of his mouth.

I got up and crossed the room to the window; he did not follow me, but his eyes did. I felt them keenly. I turned back to him and looked up in his face; he looked down at me, his arms still folded, and said, very low:

"It is so great, so marvellous, so unutterable that I dare not even say, 'I love you.' I shall show it you from this time forth forever, and, I know you do not, cannot, love me now. I am content, I will wait; it will, it must come!" and His Grace's arms are around me, and his lips are warm on mine.

It is only a month ago that my marriage took place, at the chapel Royal Savoy, in the presence of Royalty and with the Prince of Darmstadt-Deszberg for best man, ten bridesmaids and a list of notable guests much longer than the moral law.

We went down to Devonexe Court for a fortnight, and then we came on to America, and we are stopping at my mother's house on Fifth Avenue, before we go to Newport.

Eh Bien, decidedly the Duchess of Devonexe is a success. Christie, dull, spiritless, uncomfortable, hopeless Christie is the beauty of her day, however long or short it may be.

I sometimes smile as I remember what Mr. McAllister said about "the lash." I have never felt it yet, but I have certainly "arrived."

A knock.

"Yes, come in."

My maid with a man's card.

"Mr. John Berkeley Bingham, The Cumberland," I read.

"Say to Mr. Bingham that—I will see him in a few moments."

Yes, I have "arrived," but, tell me, where?

PART II

On the stage, the heroine of the moment cannot make a more effective entrance than through the parting of portières which shall disclose her (standing erect with one arm guilelessly uplifted against the hangings) to the gaze of the man who waits in the drawing-room.

It was after this fashion, and with a smile on my lips, that I revealed myself to Jack Bingham that June day.

I could not imagine what had brought him (aside from the usual means of locomotion), for, although my mother had included him in the list of people asked to my wedding, I making no objection, since I knew him then to be in Egypt, I still did not see his way clear to an afternoon call.

He soon explained it, however, by handing me a packet that mamma had intrusted to him for me, and which I perceived at once was regarded by him as a godsend.

It is extremely doubtful if an average woman often finds herself in a position to

want to ignore this state of things with the man in question; I did, however, and in order to bring Mr. Bingham into very proper form, I asked him if he remembered our charming little *rencontre* at Lady Heathcote's, deeming the mere mention of that episode would be enough to put to flight the eager ambitions of his tell-tale eyes.

I was therefore somewhat surprised when he distinctly told me that he had not the smallest recollection of the occasion to which I was pleased to refer; and, moreover, with a face of imperturbable interest, he inquired when it was, and begged me to particularize!

I did so with a frankness that ought to have been considered admirable, but which failed in either impressing my guest or endowing him with a better memory than he chose to have.

"I see," I said at last; "you will not recollect the day you proposed to me!" laughing. "Older men have wished to ignore their follies before this; but, tell me, don't you think Lady Heathcote a genius after her kind, now really?"

"I never knew Lady Heathcote," Bing-

ham replied, icily, "and I could not remember anything or anybody which had conspired to give you a false environment."

I forgave the grammar for the sake of the neatness of the sentiment.

There was nothing else now left for me to do. When a woman finds that a man has her at a disadvantage of this sort, she is bound to think better of him than if she holds the whip-hand to the end.

We meandered on about people and things glibly enough until Devonexe came in.

Of course I compared the two at once, to the infinite superiority of the one over the other. Jack was charmingly at ease, and although Devonexe opened his eyes, I did not mention my guest's coming again, or regret we were off for Newport in a week, or ask him to dine, or in any shape revert to the future possibilities of his existence.

We bade each other good-morning with elaborate courtesy; the men shook hands.

And Bingham left me, carrying off under his eyelids, I knew, the image of a woman in a blue gown, and with a wedding-ring on her finger.

I do not know of any combination more delicious than the piazza of the Billows at Newport at starlight time in early July, with a warm wind softly blowing in between the vines and bringing with it the tang of the sea-salt; a big bunch of heliotropes on the tiny table at my side, a taste of pineapple-ice between my lips, and, to be sure, Devonexe lounging on a low seat at my feet, with the odor of cashmere bouquet faintly on his dark handsome head, fresh from his after-plunge toilet.

My husband laid his head down on my lap, which caused me to put aside my ice-plate at once. He spoke and I answered a little, until we fell into that silence which is more eloquent than speech, and only possible, they say, to people who thoroughly understand each other.

I am not clear as to this last clause, because I am quite sure, by the light of later days, that Devonexe and I had not the remotest idea of one another then.

Being under the impression that I had been married, open-eyed, principally for the sake of my millions, I had matter-of-factly

so treated the least or greatest of his Grace's attempts at demonstration.

Lately it had struck me that it would not be unamusing, and, assuredly, it could not be wrong, were I to indulge Devonexe and coquette a little with him; indeed, the mood of being absolutely interested in so doing with one's own husband appealed to me as something uniquely worth while.

"This is paradise," Devonexe says presently, slipping his arms up over his head and around my waist in a curiously uncertain way.

"Newport has often been called so," I say, shrinking a little in my seat.

"Newport!" My liege lord sits erectly enough now, loosing his languid hold of me.

"You know very well I did not mean Newport. I meant being out here in the darkness with nothing but the beat of the sea yonder to disturb us, no human beings!"

The thrill in his voice was delicious, and it sounded surprisingly genuine. Decidedly, since Devonexe could play so pretty and lover-like a rôle so well, why should not his wife respond in kind?

Indeed, I almost felt what I should call a throb at my own heart as I answered him, he reaching out warm, clasping hands for mine.

" It is exquisite ; is it not ? "

I feel his fingers creep up my bared arms to my throat, my face, and draw it down that my lips may meet his.

Well, the bitter-sweetness of some things is indescribable.

It was as well that my husband remained in ignorance of my thoughts or sensations ; that he merely felt me shiver a bit. He sprang up and walked away, coming back in a moment.

" Christie," he said, standing before me, a very goodly, gracious figure against the framing of the vines.

" Well ? " I responded in, I dare say, a vague, far-off voice, for I was inopportunely thinking of Mr. McAllister's remark about me, made so long ago to my lady mother.

" Christie ! " Devonexe repeated, calling me back to the present.

" Yes, yes ! " I cry ; " what is it ? "

" Stand up here by me, won't you? "

I stand up, but not by him.

" Closer, nearer! "

I do not move.

" I wonder if it is possible that you will ever come to me of your own accord, or for the asking, or in any other way than by my taking physical hold of you? " he says, under his breath, and with really quite the ring of passion in his liquid, English voice.

It is a temptation to me; of that there is no doubt. It would be pleasure unalloyed to take a step and throw myself into his arms and rest my head on his heart, and listen to all the sweet words a man can say to a pretty woman under favoring circumstances; but I have heard that playing with even false fire is somewhat dangerous, so I reply as I move away and into the house, "Probably not."

The next day we met Cuthbert Champlin just as we were going into the Casino to register.

" So glad," he effervesces in his well-bred way, taking my hand in both his, after due presentation to Devonexe, " so awfully glad

you're here! We're getting up some living pictures—don't look frightened!—for the twenty-second of next month—benefit of the hospital, you know—and if you would?"—the young artist looks at me appealingly—"it would just double our receipts. I am to pose the people, and you shall have your pick of the subjects. Will you take it into consideration?"

While Cuthbert has been gazing intently at me, emphasizing his plea with all sorts of eyebrow excursions and pathetic signs, a woman has half-crossed the lobby to Devonexe, and Devonexe, courteously responsive, has half-crossed to her.

She is a small, rather plump woman, faultlessly gowned, not pretty nor even vainly attempting to be; she is, in truth, ugly, with an insignificant nose, full, big lips, little eyes like a pig's, dark hair that grows badly, and large hands and feet. Her face is familiar to me, I am sure, and her voice, too, as she says:

"I thought perhaps you might remember poor Jim Chater's widow. I assure you she can never forget your goodness to her

out there in India, when her great loss came." A whisk of linen and lace, and a sigh.

To be sure, she was my old schoolmate, my senior by five years, but still my schoolmate. I remember she married a Captain Chater, R.A., and went out to India.

Devonexe turns, and she turns to me also, with both hands held out and fond kisses on my cheeks, and all sorts of pretty things to say anent my marriage, and my fame, and that.

There are any number of otherwise well and reasonably conducted persons who, when they find themselves at a great height, feel an ungovernable impulse to jump down. There are as many otherwise rational women who, when they encounter another woman who makes them shiver as a snake might do, experience the unconquerable desire to handle it and find out for themselves if it be indeed poisonous or not.

"Your husband must have told you; I suppose he tells you everything"—raising her eyes to Devonexe, who seems exploring

her countenance, lost in a brown study, and does not glance responsive.

"Doesn't he?" to me.

"I hope not!"

"Well, I must then; at least," looking down coyly, "I must tell you of his goodness to me. My husband was in your husband's regiment, and after his death"—another little whisk of violet perfume—"no one could have done more for another than Graydon—you know he was only Lord Graydon then—did for me. I can never forget it. And to think that the man to whom I owe so much, and the girl whom I loved at school, should meet me here, now, man and wife! How small this world is, after all. Will you let me come and see you?"

Would I resist that soft little coo? Never.

Cuthbert resumed his pleadings about his pictures as I sat down in the court.

Lina Chater was showing Devonexe a miniature of her husband, an exquisite thing she had just had done by the famous Baronne de St. Mart. It was mounted as a

brooch with pearls and moonstones, and worn perpetually on her bosom. Devonexe's tall head was bent to examine it. I was watching them both.

Lina Chater was a woman of the world; but even women of the world cannot resist flying the triumph-flag when there is enough breeze to stir it; her manner was possessive, intimate, as of one to another, each all-comprehending.

Another tall man came up to me presently and bowed very low, tapping Cuthbert easily on the shoulder. It was Jack Bingham. I put out my hand. Both Mrs. Chater and Devonexe happened to look my way at the moment, and, certes, I let fly my pennon too.

"This is a happiness," he says in a low tone, looking wistfully at the seat near me.

Jack may take it; he, too, has seen Lina Chater's pretty little upturned absorptive way with Devonexe.

Cuthbert saw nothing; he was one of those extremely wide-awake, progressive young men who are surprised out of their

lives about once in each twenty-four hours by being told something that the town has known for a week.

Before we leave the Casino that morning I have asked Mrs. Chater for a week at the Billows; I have promised Cuthbert Champlin to pose for his living pictures, and I have invited Jack Bingham to dine with us at the Country Club next Wednesday after the yacht-race. Needless, perhaps, to say that both accepted.

Mrs. Chater came over from the Aquidneck, where she had been stopping, with a lot of luggage and no maid, in time for five o'clock tea, which I always had served on the terrace under a large pink and white marquee, and as I vowed myself to rose color that season, much as young French girls, enamoured of Mariolatry and fresh from convents, are *vouée au bleu,* I dare say I made a fairly picturesque effect with the vases of roses, the painted pink chairs and tables, pink tea-cloth, china, and glass, with dishes of frozen rose-leaves, and any and all sorts of rosy confectionery.

My guest seemed to know everyone who

came in, and in five minutes I saw that she was what is technically called "a popular woman," a distinction which commonly includes either nonentity, or, which was vastly true in this case, an almost alarming adaptability.

For myself, I should esteem it an insult to be called a popular woman. Who would be liked by everybody? Surely she who can whittle herself into a differently shaped peg every half hour, thus fitting into the moods and idiosyncrasies of everybody else, can have little good of herself, or else she exists only as clay does, to be impressed.

I had poured Jack Bingham a cup of tea, which he was holding over my head as he leaned on the back of my chair.

"Is Mrs. — er — Chater your house-guest?" he asks, finally, after scanning the lady's animation in connection with Devonexe's bicycle costume, he having just spun up.

I nod. I am perfectly aware of the surprise included in Mr. Bingham's inquiry, but I have no mind for much of a *tête-à-tête* with him just now.

" Odd little person," I say in answer, as I turn my head away.

" Quite so," he responds; " but you will find that she generally gets even with everything and everyone in the end."

I knew it thoroughly. I was just as positive as I was of my own aliveness at that moment, that Lina Chater would in some way mar my life, or mar whatever there was left in my life to mar.

But I only laughed as I saw my husband, a magnificent specimen in his knickerbockers and blouse, explaining to her the mysteries of the latest attachment to his wheel.

We dined *à quatre* delightfully. The host and the lady occupied themselves, she leading, with most pungent reminiscences of life in India; the hostess and the gentleman were spasmodically sympathetic and principally acoustic, as we knew only so much of India as the other two chose to impart.

Mrs. Chater leaves us at the end of a week and two days, effusively, and, she vows, indebted to me and the Duke for inestimable blessings.

The Subscription Ball comes off the even-

ing after she goes. I am dressed and standing in the library, waiting for my maid to bring me my wrap, when Devonexe comes in with it instead.

I thank him courteously as I stand in the full blaze of the chain of globe-lights over the arch. I suppose I look surpassingly well in my pink chiffon spangled with moonstones over the shimmering white satin, with the first moonburst ever worn by any woman crowning my smooth turned-back hair, and with strings of pearls and opals on my neck, my waist, my back, shoulders, and arms.

Devonexe stood still a moment and surveyed me; I surveyed him. He was a superb-looking man at any time, and even more emphatically so in evening clothes.

"You look magnificently," he says, coming a little nearer me.

"Thanks," I answer with a smile; "any decent-looking woman could with such apparel," and I lightly touch the moonburst with my fan.

"The apparel is not what I am talking of!" exclaims my husband, impatiently. "I mean you, your eyes, your hair, your

mouth and throat, and neck, and arms, and shoulders!" He bends and lays his lips on one of them.

I start away.

"Please don't!" I cry.

"Why not?" following me.

"The carriage is waiting!" I exclaim, turning to the door.

"Let it wait," Devonexe remarks, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and taking a seat on the edge of the big table.

"As you please." I sit down in a chair very far from him.

"I say, Christie," he says in a commonplace tone, swinging his foot back and forth nonchalantly, but with an odd, wistful ring to his speech, "what do you suppose I married you for, anyway?"

It was brutal and unwomanly even, but you must not forget my father and my grandfather altogether, and also the minor fact that I was as cruel to myself as to him, as I answered succinctly, "Money, I presume."

"What!" Devonexe jumps from his seat as if he had been shot.

"Money!" he ejaculates, hoarsely, standing before me with his eyes on my face.

"You might have known if you had cared to, that I have a great deal more money even than you."

I elevate my eyebrows, and my face flushes with such a joy as he can never guess —joy and self-reproach and self-hatred that I had done him so contemptible an injustice.

"Can't you think of any other reason?" he asks, laying his hand on my hair.

I shake my head.

"Shall I tell you, now—may I?"

"No, no, no!" cry I, springing up as I suddenly recall that there are reasons sufficient why men, with titles like this man's to be perpetuated, may marry almost any woman.

"Why not?" he says. "Why can I not say it in words, even if you know it, as you surely must."

"Yes, yes," I whisper; "I know, of course; now let us go."

"Let us stop at home for once; can't we?" he asks, as a boy might, hovering over

me, and rolling down one of my long gloves from my arm.

I am terrified at I know not what—something strange and new in his manner. I start away from him and say, " I would not miss the Subscription Ball for anything! " and hook my wrap.

" Christie, one minute," catching at my ribbons.

I look back over my shoulder at him.

" Christie, before we go, would you mind telling me what you married me for? "

I pause; I laugh, that long brilliant laugh; once so much commended by the presiding genius of Harrowden-Burleigh.

" For the title? " he says, half-shamedly, under his breath, and looking down.

" No," I answer, " not for that, your Grace; because Prince Louis of Battenberg would have put me a few steps nearer a throne than you, and I spared him the honor."

I laugh on; I run like a girl, laughing, out on the piazza, across the terrace to the *porte cochère*, and jump in the carriage pell-mell. Devonexe follows statelily and gathers up

my skirts himself, and gets in and sits down opposite me. By the flare of the lights as we drive out I see that his face is very pale.

It does not regain color until late in the evening, when Lina Chater is talking to him as she fastens his *boutonnière* in his coat; I suppose it had been falling out.

The next afternoon she comes in for tea very late; indeed, five minutes after her arrival everyone else has left, and we are sitting there in the twilight by ourselves. She has on a white gown and a big hat; her horrible eyes slant around queerly under the waving white feathers and tulle, and her voice coos on ceaselessly as she sits down on a big cushion at my feet and makes pretence of sipping tea.

Devonexe crosses the terrace, smoking; he lifts his cap as he goes on down the path to the sea.

"How gone off the Duke is since the days when I knew him first!" she sighs, pensively.

"Indeed!" I respond, for the purpose of being audible, not being in the least interested in playing an active part in the "some-

thing" which I am positive is about to be said or done by this woman.

There are such states of being wherein we feel the rise of the tide, the swell of the turf beneath our very feet; we can retreat, we can run away, we can avert, but, instead, we sit still and let the thing come on.

Mrs. Chater cleared her throat just a wee bit (presumably of the sugary tea she hadn't been drinking) and then she spoke.

"I used to feel so sorry for him in those days—those dear, dead days under the shadow of the Himalayas, with the flowers as high as tree-tops, and the birds singing like lutes in the branches!"

I had quite sufficient sense to remember just then that Mrs. Chater was accounted, I had not been long in hearing, the best newspaper-writer in New York; also that she had given lectures on literary and kindred subjects. I ought, I realized too, to have asked why she pitied Devonexe at about that time, but I didn't; I knew she would tell me all in good season.

"You know all the sad story, I suppose?" she glides on, fixing her porcine eyes on my

face. " His Grace is not the man to keep *anything* from the woman he loves."

I look fixedly at the blue waves curdling on the beach, and incidentally at the top of my husband's head, from which he has lifted his hat to enjoy the cool off yonder.

I don't answer her. Why should I? She doesn't want answers; few women do; she wants, like the rest of her sex, to talk.

" I hardly dared to hope, then "—catching a glimpse of his figure also, as she speaks, and sighing prettily—" that any other love or hope would ever come into his life." Another sigh and a covert glance at my impassive face—a covert glance that at once blossoms into the frankest and most childlike stare as she sets down the tea-cup and seizes both my hands and buries her awful little fat face in them, and laughs.

" You dear, sweet child, you! What can it matter to you, the Duchess of Devonexe, if long, long ago, Lord Graydon loved a woman who was another man's wife to distraction, and thought he could not live without her! "

I scream if a caterpillar comes within a

foot of me, but had all Mrs. Chater's little wavy forehead-locks been merely masses of caterpillars (which they strongly resembled), I still should have caressed them at this moment, and should have smiled down at her upturned face in just the same innocuous way.

Not that either of us deceived the other or ourselves. Women seldom do at crises like these.

" Of course, he has never told you her name," she continues; " he is too thoroughly loyal as a man and gentleman to do that; I won't either. But only to think what whirligigs time makes of us all—pour me some more of your delicious tea, darling, won't you?—that woman, Christie, is free to-day, and he is your husband."

The last-named individual now comes slowly up the terrace and asks for tea, too, while Lina Chater rises and says she must go.

I say " No," as I ring the bell and order a trap.

" I could not think of allowing you to walk down alone at this hour; Devonexe

will drive you with pleasure, I am sure." I glance at him as he inclines his head, and presently I see them off together, Devonexe dismissing the man as needless for a ten minutes' drive.

" A ten minutes' drive! "

Well, I dare say my mind is a curious one, but I breathe more freely than I did. I know the worst—at least I think I do; and I am able, with a quiet smile on my mouth, to send them off together.

Bingham came in for dinner; he often did, and stopped the evening through, playing for me or helping to amuse my guests in his usual charming fashion. Each day after that Devonexe is sure to oppose any and all of my little plans for visitors, either for drive or sail.

He avoids Mrs. Chater distinctly and unmistakably, which, I take it, is manly and honorable in him, and which I offset to the best of my ability by being as distant as is possible to Bingham, who, in turn, contrives to be at my side nine-tenths of the time.

Nobody who was at Monty Everts' dinner

that third week in August can possibly have forgotten it. It was the crowning effort at entertaining of the most genial bachelor I know, and Nature, in one of her most benign moods, favored Monty with the perfectest night in her calendar for that feast under the pink pavilion on the terrace at Evertswood. It was the famous three-to-one dinner, every other little heart-shaped table serving three women and one man, or three men and one woman.

Lina Chater had three men, which, considering her well-known occupation, seemed strange at first glance; but when one really knew Mrs. Chater, the greater cause for astonishment was that she had not an extra fellow or two thrown in for her share.

It is quite true that a certain phase of society demands inherently the possession of money, more for its need's sake than for any special reverence in which gold is held; but it is quite as true that, given a woman like this one, armed at all points and fairly bristling with shot and shell—soft, unctuous, yet possessing her inalienable attractions and dowered with the flexibility of the

adder and the brain of a Machiavelli, and you alight upon an ethical anomaly against which you are powerless to combat, even if you were so impolitic as to wish to.

I sat at my host's right; Cuthbert Champlin and Count Castella were the other two men. Mrs. Chater was just behind us, and Devonexe, with three of the prettiest women in Newport, was very near.

Cuthbert spent his time in urging upon me most of the subjects so far chosen for the living pictures, but none of them struck my fancy.

"You will do none of all these?" he said at last.

I shook my head. Neither Marguerite de Valois, nor Madame Récamier, nor yet Marie Antoinette appealed to my imagination in connection with myself at all.

Essentially dramatic women such as I, need something other than beauty or sorrow to fire their picturesque possibilities.

"I'm so awfully glad!" outburst the young artist gleefully, proceeding in answer to the surprised inquiries of three pairs of eyes. "You see, I want you to do my Cleo-

patra. It was my Salon picture—you may remember, possibly?" he says very humbly considering that it put him *hors concours* —"and as the Duke has promised to pose for Antony, I shall die happy if you will be Cleopatra."

"What's that?" laughed Devonexe, good-humoredly. "Champlin, did I promise?" looking at me. "A man feels such a fool in such a get up."

"Consider the Cleopatra," observes the Count, recalling no doubt the appalling beauty and daring of the Egyptian in Cuthbert's great canvas.

"And who is to be the Cleopatra?" asks Devonexe, evidently not having heard the artist's proposition.

"The Duchess, I hope," cries Champlin, lifting his glass of Chablis to his lips.

"Impossible!" my husband exclaims, with the deepest frown I ever saw on his face. "I could not consent to it; at least, I would say, I trust that the Duchess will decline the honor."

Cuthbert flushes. I dare say at that particular moment he wishes he had painted his

"Sorceress of the Nile" with more spendthrift draperies.

"There are only two women in Newport who could pose for it," he says, quite low—"the Duchess, because, begging her pardon, she is the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, and Mrs. Chater, because she could be made up to look so!"

"Let it be Mrs. Chater, then, by all means!" Devonexe says, so emphatically that Lina, who has heard every word of it all, must now needs play the startled fawn and insist on knowing why her name is taken in vain.

I had had a mind to do the Cleopatra; the splendid, sumptuous creature with her grand, gorgeous, pitiful, broken-hearted pageant of a life, spoke straight to me. But since my husband elected so decidedly for the other woman, I withdrew as gracefully as I could and said I'd do whatever they liked.

Driving home that night he said, in a curious, strained voice, just breaking the silence before we reached the house:

"I didn't mean to be abrupt, Christie,

about those infernal tableaux of Champlin's, but I could not quite smile on a proposition for my wife to appear in that sort of a guise for people to stare at."

I make no reply; in fact, I scarcely hear what he says just now, for listening to the echo in my heart of some other words of his: they are, " Let it be Mrs. Chater, then, by all means ! "

Of course it was Mrs. Chater.

All through the heart-burnings and masking smiles, the innumerable jealousies, and the sufferings inquisitional of the hapless projector of the living pictures, one of his fair subjects wavered not in her unflinching good-nature—Mrs. Chater, tireless at rehearsals, indefatigable as right-hand woman; faithful in teaching Devonexe every flex of his eyelid even, as she studied the photograph of Champlin's famous painting; radiant, overweening in her supremacy and her joy, yet humble as the slave, to the call of Antony's eyes, the ugliest little woman of her day, reigned mirthfully enough for a week or so preceding the eventful night.

She contrived, I'm sure I don't know how,

to dine at the Billows the evening of the 22d; certainly, Jack Bingham was there too, and Cuthbert and three of the girls who were to take part.

"What's the matter with you, dearest?" she cooed to me as we sipped our coffee, and she lighted her cigarette in the palm court, the men lingering a little in the dining-room still, but their voices coming to us through the long, open windows.

"Nothing, I think," I answer. "Why?"

"Oh, I don't know; but lately you seem dispirited. Is not the Duchess pale these days?" pursues this arch-percher on the pinnacle of her pleasure, turning the knife in me, and her eyes to Bingham at the same moment, as he emerges from the dining-room.

Bingham is up to the second, and says he never saw her Grace in better form.

"Oh, you don't look at her with the eyes of love"—she gives us an infinitesimal pause, there occurring a silence inside at the same instant—"Mr. Bingham; and I do. I insist that Christie," flashing a glance at Jack's extremely red face and knocking the

ash from her cigarette, " is not well. You need to use a bicycle, dear," she says, assuming even patronizing airs in the craze of her success.

I let her. I smile and sit still as the other men follow Bingham to our midst.

" Or, you should golf, or go in for tennis, sail a yacht—anything to bring back the old splendid color to your cheeks, *n'est-ce pas, milor?* " tendering Devonexe a light, which he takes with unresponsive fingers.

" I don't go in for anything," I reply very slowly as Bingham fans my face, thereby cooling his own, I suppose, " for anything that will make me look untidy, frowsy, hot, tired, fagged—and as to a wheel—unwomanly! "

A chorus of sighs and groans from the women greets this simple utterance.

I nod my head. " Yes, unwomanly, I repeat. The mere assumption of the pose necessary to get on a bicycle does not belong to us. It is bifurcated, and we are supposed to be wearers of skirts, at least while visible to the eyes of men."

" There it is, the men—the men! always

the men!" cries Mrs. Chater, warm with wine.

"Always," I respond, calmly. "The worst man's standard for woman is usually identical with the best woman's standard for herself; therefore, it seems to me, we should be wise in our generation and keep men always in mind."

Devonexe is looking fixedly at me as Lina Chater laughs, much as she thinks Cleopatra laughed, I dare say.

"Not to be didactic," I continue, as coolly as if my blood were not surging to my stricken soul, "it is quite a strange fact that the reverse is not the case; the worst woman's standard for man is generally only commensurate with her own practice. Do," I say to Jack, "go in and play us the 'Tzigane' or anything, until the traps come around."

Mrs. Chater and Devonexe are sixth on the programme; Jack Bingham and I, in "*Les Amusements d'Hiver,*" are seventh.

Lina had asked me to stand at the wings and see how she "did," so nothing loath (being that way made) to spill poison in my own veins, I said I would. I did.

Cuthbert Champlin's Salon picture was a marvellous success of daring, but it did not approach the " Cleopatra " for the Newport Hospital Fund. She was regally beautiful, thanks to paints and dyes and powders. It is wonderful what a genius like Cuthbert can do with a face that is hideous, if he is allowed.

The draperies, star-spangled, gemmed at bosom, waist, and shoulders; the headdress glowing with jewels; the flesh gleaming through the gauze, more revealing in its film than any mere blank nudity; the pose indescribable in its appealing imperialism; the eyes telling their all to the eyes of Antony, as he stood drinking in the witchery of the Egyptian.

I saw it all, and then I drew back into the close shadow of the piled-up scenery and properties.

I leaned for a moment, catching my breath, against some boards. In the darkness I heard them coming, it seemed afar off, and their voices like the voices in one's dreams—hers last, articulate, saying as they came:

"Reginald, I have always loved you, always; you must have known it. Heaven help me to-night, I can keep it back no longer!"

And then they passed me by, Cleopatra's garments swishing on my feet, Antony's whisper lost to my ears.

Presently I heard someone calling me to come, as the stage was waiting.

You remember perhaps the picture we made, Jack Bingham and I, the entrancing, bewildering eyes I gave him as I glanced up from my furs, and how everybody praised the realism of his answering looks.

Devonexe, out of all his armor, was watching us from the wings, and then we went home together quietly and decently enough as usual.

I sat in a chair the rest of the night and made up my mind; sometimes not as easy a thing to do as to make up one's face.

Jack came over in the morning to see how I was.

He looked at me. I suppose he had never seen me appearing quite this way before, for he broke down utterly.

" Christie, Christie," he says, " I have always loved you, love you better now than ever. I know I'm a fool; there's no hope in my love; you're not the sort of woman to even let me see you again. I left America once before for your sake; I'm going again, but before I go I had to say it."

" Yes," I answer, slowly. " I knew it, but," laughing, as I rise and put out my hand, " the wrong people almost always love and marry here, and as there is to be no marrying at all, there, why, perhaps annihilation isn't so bad an idea after all."

He stares at me, but he is clever, and I suppose he sees that I am not thinking very much about him, or his love, or his going away.

I am thinking solely of myself and of my husband; how best to efface myself and set him at liberty to marry the woman he has loved, I suppose, for years.

I decided upon it all very quickly. I take my maid and go to New York, and engage my stateroom and sail the next day for Havre. I leave behind me a line or two, saying that I have decided to go, and hope he

will not delay in seeking happiness by th
door I have opened to him.

I am in my berth for the first three day
out, and when I do get up on deck the firs
person my eyes fall upon is Mr. Bingham.

Well, what does it matter? Very little
after all. It is not the things said that hur
the soul, but the things done.

Fate put us together there, and the world
looking on, wove its own story. The cabl
had already done its work well, for when w
landed at Havre the Paris edition of th
Herald told me how I had eloped with Jacl
Bingham, and how remarkably effective no
only "*Les Amusements d'Hiver*" had been
but also the marvellous fidelity of the "An
tony and Cleopatra."

I read it all line by line, and perhaps I an
an anomaly, perhaps I am commonplace–
I'm sure I don't know—but sitting there i
the dingy hotel room, in the seaport town i
France, there comes to my soul a curious
fierce joy as I read the words that make m
husband's path so much the easier for him
What matter if I know them to be false.

It is good—yea, altogether untellabl

sweet and precious—to know that he can be happy, will be happy, even if I cannot; it is even excellent and dear to me to know that there is such a state as happiness in this world, if I can but look at it through another's eyes.

"Where are you going?" Bingham ventures to ask me.

"To Monte Carlo," I reply.

"I am going, too," he says.

"Very well," I answer, noting, but not in the least weighing, the eagerness of his face. On some altars, such women as I, would unhesitatingly sacrifice whole hecatombs of hearts.

I reach Monte Carlo; he follows me in twenty-four hours. I have written my mother and begged her to possess her soul in patience, that all is perfectly well with me, and that she must stay in Norway and not think of coming.

Meantime, with nothing to divert me but the newspapers, and their daily accounts of me and of Devonexe—these last, meagre suspicions merely—and a long interview of a most ophidian, discreet, and clever charac-

ter with Mrs. Chater recorded in its columns, I naturally take to the gambling-table.

Why not? With Bingham in close attendance, what more could be desired in the interests of divorce? Nothing that I knew of.

By the second Wednesday night of my stay I had exhausted nearly all the money I had with me, but the demon had me in his toils; the blood was in my cheeks, doubtless "that old splendid color" Lina Chater was so anxious for me to recover. Jack leaned over my chair. I had been winning up to to-night, but now everything went against me; I had staked my last gold—and lost. I laughed as I unclasped the bracelets from my arms and laid them down.

I felt Bingham lean closer over me and slip his purse into my lap as he whispered:

"Take it, Christie; what's mine is yours always now—and as soon as you'll have me I'm yours too. Take it."

I shake my head and smile as I look up at him and push back the purse.

"You're losing your senses," I whisper, flinging down my brooch, for I have lost

the other trinkets with one whirl of the wheel.

And then a tall man comes into the room, a tall man with a haggard face; but men with haggard faces are common there, and no one heeds his entrance. I dare say, if they think anything, they surmise him to be some acquaintance of mine, for he crosses to me and takes my hand and shakes it, and says, "Christie!" in a matter-of-fact way, then turns to Jack and shakes hands with him.

"How are you, Bingham?"

The lights swim around before my eyes, the croupier's voice sounds like the drone of a tree-toad in my ears, the music of the band playing somewhere near lulls to a whisper, as Devonexe picks up my brooch and throws down money in its stead, some way taking Jack's place at my chair as he speaks to me.

"I took the next boat that sailed after yours, and got here as soon as I could. You are very weary. Come, let us go home," putting my wrap over my shoulders as I lose the gold he has just staked for me.

I rise, and Devonexe, and I, and Jack Bingham leave the gambling-room together.

There is the least little pause on the esplanade when the Duke says to Jack:

"You must dine with us at the Anglais to-morrow night, Mr. Bingham."

And Jack, as much a man as the other, answers:

"Thank you, I will," as he lifts his hat and stands bareheaded a moment in the gas-glare, while Devonexe leads me to a waiting carriage.

"Hotel des Anglais," he tells the coachman.

"I am not stopping there," I cry with the first breath I've taken since I beheld him.

"I know," he returns, quietly; "but I am."

We are there in five minutes. I tacitly follow him in and up to the room door; my maid awaits me there; all my belongings are set out in their places.

"Too bad I couldn't have come on with you," he says casually, while Thérèse takes my cloak. "I hope you were able to settle the matter of those bonds satisfactorily."

I incline my head, while I recall some of the lessons I learned at Lady Heathcote's.

Thérèse goes presently, as Devonexe tells her that I shall not need her any more to-night.

He tosses the cigar he has been feigning to light, away, and comes over to me and kneels down, taking the little note from his pocket which I had written the day I left him.

" My child," my husband says, with eyes blood-dimmed by passion, " don't you know I love you, only you, never anyone but you, ever? Don't you know, a fellow can't speak such a thing save at such a moment as this? But the Chater woman was fool enough to care for me years ago. Happiness!" he cries, crushing the scrap of paper in his hand. " You are my happiness; you are life, God, earth, heaven, all to me, Christie!" taking me in his arms.

I push him away.

" You are mad," I whisper; " see what I have done—at least what they say I've done. Bingham came over on the same ship with me."

Devonexe smiles as he holds my face between his palms.

" Christie," he says, " I wouldn't believe the Angel of the Lord if he told me you had done wrong. I *know* you have not, and had you, it would be all the same; I should still be a beggar at your lips asking for your love. Darling, cannot I ever hope to win my own?"

I shake my head. Some of us, of my sex, you see, must play even with their holy of holies.

" Never hope," I say, gathering myself to him close, " because there is no need. Reggie, I married you only because I loved you as much as I am capable of loving."

Jack Bingham did dine with us the next evening, and you'll think it odd, but there was friendship in those two men's eyes and hands, when they bade each other good-night and good-by.

IN CLINTON PLACE

IN CLINTON PLACE

A STORY OF LIFE IN MIDDLE NEW YORK.

A quaint corner, sir?
Aye, marry, and a bit of curious comedy.

On the north side of Clinton Place, not too far from Broadway, there is a row of balconied brick houses, the balconies hooded by slantwise roofs, and these cumbered with much ornamental iron-work.

Some of the houses in the row are dingy, dirty, forlorn, and thick-windowed; occasionally there is one distinguished from its neighbors by the absence of the iron-fangled veranda, with its darksome hood, which has been displaced for a modern vestibule, with all the paraphernalia of brass knobs, hinges, and escutcheons on its outer doors of swinging plate-glass—this the outcome of some

person of wealth taking up his abode here in deference to either family tradition or association.

Yet that which strikes the student of local color hereabouts is neither the smartness of the rich man's abode nor the supreme dinginess of the poor one's, but the cheerful, and, so to speak, breezy, gayety of the house next to the last, toward the west.

The old portico is intact, but brightened by blue and white striped awnings, with red scalloped orders, these also flapping in the June air at all the thirteen windows of its front. The stoop and sidewalk are clean; neat muslin curtains flutter in and out under the awnings; the front door stands open invitingly; but, as one enters, one may read the silver side-sign thus—

ITALIAN HOTEL,
BY GIOVANNI MAZZOLENI.
RESTAURANT.

In the marbled hallway there is a small desk, accommodating a glass case full of cigars, from the five-cent domestics up to the quarter-of-a-dollar Reinas; and behind the

desk sits, or usually stands, the excellent host himself, a plump, portentous personage, with a commendably ready smile and a positive genius for the superintendence of such dishes as *macaroni à la Napolitaine, poulet à la Marengo,* and *omelette soufflée à la fromage.*

Across the hall from the signor's desk, spread open the double doors of the dining-room, with its array of small tables, shining glass and silver, and its own small desk at the rear end, where the Signora Mazzoleni receives the equivalent for breakfasts and dinners, makes change, and with two sharp eyes, keeps the four waiters up to the proper pitch of civility and attention to, both the regular guests of the house and to such casual persons as, lured by the fame of her excellent husband's *menus,* seek the comfort of the same.

The season being now at June, and the Exposition having depleted the usual natural sources of Signor Mazzoleni's income at this time of the year, it had been with the most accentuated hospitality that, only a week ago, he and his ample spouse had welcomed

to their entire second floor a party of three.

The hotel register displayed these to be "the Professor von Bommelcamp, Madame von Bommelcamp, and Miss Brown, from Belgium."

They brought with them, presumably direct from Belgium, four very large trunks, a huge packing-box of immense weight, a canary, a sewing-machine, a piano, a hamper of books, a tall lamp, and a quantity of very striking oil paintings.

The cheer and warmth that this array of luggage carried to the unified hearts of the Signor and the Signora Mazzoleni, accustomed as they were to the hand-satchel, or, at most, the valise and the steamer-trunk, can be better fancied than figured; and not only did it convey a thrill of delight to the master and mistress, but this ecstasy descended thence to the four waiters, Bartolo, Niccolo, Errico, and Franco; to the chambermaid, Mary Flynn; to the *chef*, Master Cherubini; and to the dish-washer, little Anuccia, with the nut-brown eyes, that shone even in the grimy, smoky recesses of

the back kitchen, and shone, too, through the tears that welled up when gravied platters slipped smashing to the floor through her little, brown fingers, thus robbing her wages of a fine.

It may, too, be asserted with truth that if the arrival at the Hotel Mazzoleni of the Professor von Bommelcamp and his party did not produce a corresponding elation of spirits among their fellow-guests with that of the proprietor of this excellent little hostelry, it certainly caused the French dancer and his wife, on the third floor back, some moments of curiosity and a tremor of fear lest this unwonted amount of belongings portended a fresh rival in the terpsichorean field; and it cannot be denied that it evoked sighs of envy from the Italian banker's wife and daughter in the third floor front, albeit the husband and father of these, pooh-poohed the incursion with unflinching zeal, and early in the engagement pronounced the Professor von Bommelcamp nothing if not a puff of wind.

"To-day he is here, yes; but to-morrow— Eh, well; we shall see!"

The contortionist, who shared his apartment on the fourth floor with a gentleman of the orchestra, had no opinion to offer, until the professor nearly took his breath away one morning, by inviting him to a cigar, and thereafter he pronounced him " a gentleman right through."

The shop-girls, also *au quatrième,* voted the professor, " real elegant " from the start, a species of encomium superinduced, it is believed, by that gentleman's conciliatory habit of looking at them in a respectfully admiring " do-it-if-I-dared " way, as they passed him going in or out.

What the young man, the mysterious young man, also harbored on the top story, thought of Professor von Bommelcamp none of his fellow-boarders knew. He had scanned the trio in that unerring, and yet careless fashion which marked him a man of the world, as soon as they had appeared in the dining-room, and Bartolo, who had once been employed in the chorus of the opera at Turin, and whose ideals were quite morbidly romantic, had not failed to observe that the glances of Mr. North—enjoying the sobri-

quet of " The Mysterious One," because, resisting both the ingenious sallies of Signor Mazzoleni and the blandishments of the Signora, he had thus far preserved intact the sources of that income which permitted him to pay promptly for the hospitalities he enjoyed beneath (literally) their roof—that Mr. North's glances then, travelled often and interestedly to the face of Miss Brown.

Miss Brown was probably nineteen; she was tall, and white, except for her full, pretty lips, which were scarlet with young and abounding blood; she had deep gray eyes and dark-brown, pretty hair; she appeared nervous and constrained, and although never failing to laugh at the Professor's jests, she yet did not conceal (at least from the keen-eyed Mr. North) a certain faint curl of the upper lip, a certain curious quiver of the white eyelids, when the amiable Professor chanced to be looking into his well-filled plate.

It was evident, through one of those subtleties of nature, that Miss Brown was the younger sister of Madame von Bommelcamp; although perhaps no two women were

ever made more dissimilar, yet the same parentage stood revealed in each. It was something like this: in Madame von Bommelcamp one saw all the possibilities of the lower plane of both sisters in full play; while in Miss Brown it seemed as if the higher part stood triumphant, if perhaps temporarily hampered by circumstances, in the form—saving his plausible presence—of the excellent Professor, her brother-in-law.

This gentleman, after enduring for a week the scrutiny of the public dining-room, decided that a move in another direction must be taken, and for reasons of his own, held a conclave with the Signor, which resulted in a more aristocratic seclusion for the Professor's meals, an accession of income for the Signor, and an added sense of importance in the eyes of the onlookers, which tended not a little to the Professor's well-being and the success of his more intimate affairs.

The extension, hitherto relegated to the use of Bartolo, Niccolo, Franco, and Errico in seeking such repose as they could obtain amid a conglomeration of old furniture, old

clothes, pots, pans, kettles, papers, and general *débris,* was rescued from these purposes, cleansed, furbished, and its many windows made to shine, while the wistaria in the yard spread curtains of shadow, and sent dancing shiver of leaves and tendrils all over the snowy cloth upon the Professor's private table as it awaited, in great array of fancy folded napkins, piled-up oranges and bananas, cracked ice, and lettuce greenery, the appearance of the distinguished boarders.

The Banker's wife and daughter meantime caught the sound of arrested carriage wheels before the very door, and flew, the one with her mouth full of hairpins, the other clutching a shawl over the airy deshabille of a late June afternoon, to the window, to behold an open landau with two sleek horses and a liveried coachman, standing in front of the Hotel Mazzoleni.

Now carriages had been known to block this path ere to-day, but they had always been merely sad-looking one-horse cabs, stuffed with miscellaneous luggage and a traveller, shabby and dusty, struggling within the same, as he mastered, or was mastered

by, the combined and rather irresistible forces of the English language and the American cabman. But here stood a veritable pleasure carriage, and in it—nay, now descending—was the Professor, assisting Madame von Bommelcamp to alight, and also Miss Brown.

And what toilets!

The Banker's wife and daughter heaved sighs to heaven of commingled admiration and despair, as they watched the Professor's wife flitting airily up the steps. Madame von Bommelcamp was indeed admirable—lithe, svelt, of the age of twenty-eight, perhaps, and with all the advantages which foreign residence can confer.

The Banker's wife and daughter returned languidly to their hair-pins and curling-tongs. Not for them, alas! were such extravagances. The Banker, in his little office in Centre Street, it is true, was a miniature lordling of finance in the regards of his fellow-countrymen; but with eighteen thousand dollars of capital, even, one cannot drive out in style, dress as a princess, and indulge in the private dining-room.

When this estimable lady and her offspring had essayed to return the flattering notice of the Professor and his family, the Banker had sworn roundly that such proceedings must at once be discontinued, and too——

Hark! The footstep of Niccolo on the staircase along the corridor, a rap upon the door. The Banker's daughter, still immersed in the protective shawl, peeps out to receive from her compatriot a note, scented, crested, addressed to them all.

The Banker's wife tears it open just as the Banker himself comes in from his business. It is an invitation to dinner for this evening, for the Banker and "his honorable family," from the Professor and Madame von Bommelcamp.

"To dinner," and in the private dining-room! Now the Banker may hang his head in shame, and no longer say wicked things of these delightful people.

Which is true; the Banker confesses that a private dinner for three, at the Hotel Mazzoleni, even, is not a matter to trifle with the pocket of the host; and, after

all, it is the pocket that tells always the story. Yes.

"Go?" certainly.

But no. It cannot be. The Banker's family have no garments fit in the least for such a festival.

Notwithstanding some tears, and some of those domestic infelicitations not uncommon under similar circumstances in the families of all nations, the Banker is squeezed into his evening clothes, not worn since last September, at the national holiday picnic at Jones's Wood, his gold chain is stretched across his chest, his necktie adjusted, his gloves and hat pressed into his hand, and at the hour of six-twenty-five, watched by these proud and devoted ladies, he descends the flights of stairs in the darkness, to emerge at last into the radiant splendor of the private dining-room of Professor von Bommelcamp.

To make some reasonable excuse for his appearance without his wife and daughter is the occupation of but a moment, and although accepted by Madame von Bommelcamp with courtesy, is at once surmounted by her insistance that, so long as the ladies

are to be at home this evening, they must join the party later in her little sitting-room.

The Banker finds himself presently at the right hand of his hostess, while the only other guest is Mr. North.

It must be remembered that the Italian man of affairs discovers no difficulties of etiquette in thus dining with comparative strangers, or in accepting hospitality at such short notice. Eleven years ago the Banker had served with alacrity and good sense as a waiter, in the restaurant kept by his brother-in-law in Rome, whence, having accumulated two hundred dollars, and accompanied by his family, he emigrated to New York and presently was able, through a lucky adventure with fruits, to set up as a financial agent, and anon as a fully fledged banker, among his fellow-countrymen.

The Banker, it may be perceived, was not proud; on the contrary he was fond of recalling the days of his youth. Indeed, Franco, the waiter who resembled a bandit, had once been a *confrère* of his, and his place in the Hotel Mazzoleni had been secured for him on his arrival in America, by the good offices of the Banker.

Franco, in addition to his duties in the dining-room, performed the menial task of polishing boots; and in this capacity he had that very morning come in contact with the Professor. The Professor, always friendly with everyone, had entered into conversation with Franco, the result of which was described by Franco, a half hour later, to Nuccia, sweeping up the area, while he sifted the cinders, as follows:

That, as the Professor had indeed been accustomed to dine always last winter in Rome at the restaurant of the Banker's brother-in-law, who was a very dear friend of his; on account of this timely discovery, the Professor that very day would invite the Banker and his family to dine with him for the inauguration of the new *salle-à-manger.*

The Professor's version of these facts differed slightly from that of Franco; for, the door once tightly closed on the latter's burly figure, Professor von Bommelcamp had entered the sitting-room, and standing in a favorite and oratorical attitude between the folding-doors, had said, "Peggy, I've got it at last!"

At which remark Madame von Bommelcamp and her sister, Miss Brown, had both looked up, the one from picking out a prize-puzzle, the other from a book.

"Have you, John? Well," queried his wife, "what is it?"

"The bandit-waiter has just told me, although I'll wager a quarter he'd swear I'd told it to him, that our interesting acquaintance, the Banker, has a brother-in-law named Allegretti, who keeps a restaurant in Rome."

The Professor at this point executes what may be termed a *fandango de triomphe* in the middle of the floor, bringing up on one leg with a thump, and with a joyous wink of his left eye.

"Peggy!" cries he; "Mary, you too, my dear"—this to Miss Brown, who now lays down her book with an obedient, if resigned, air.

"Peggy, do not forget that we were in Rome last winter; we took our meals at the restaurant of Signor Allegretti; we were his firm friends; we owe him the return of many courtesies, which it will be our pleas-

ure to heap upon the Banker and his family; we will have them down to dine to-night and tell them of our dear excellent friend, Signor Allegretti, in Rome; they will exclaim at the name; explanations will follow; good-fellowship will succeed; confidence is begotten—and leave the rest to me. I shall work the old racket with possibly a few variations according to circumstances, and I think will be in for at least ten thousand!"

The Professor thrust his hands in his pockets and crossed to the mantel, where he struck a match and lighted a cigar.

Madame von Bommelcamp laid the prize-puzzle carefully one side, and surveyed her lord.

"John," she exclaimed, "how clever you are!"

The Professor laughed; he was used to the encomiums of his wife; in the line which he pursued he really deserved them, for the Professor was a genius, on the wrong track, but still a genius.

"But," added Madame von Bommelcamp, seriously, "I must confess that I am a little in doubt as to that Mr. North."

" Mary must clear up that doubt," replies her brother-in-law, decisively. " What have you done with him, Moll, anyhow? Who is he? What is he?" And the Professor turns an abrupt, hard face toward the crimsoning girl.

" I don't know," she falters.

" Time you did, then," the man says, sharply. " I hope I haven't brought you up in luxury, shown you the whole of Europe and South America, taken you when you were a child of nine, right out of the jaws of the poor-house up there in South Village, when your mother and father died, to have you turn out good for nothing to me now in my profession!"

Miss Brown picked up her volume again, and turned the cover open in a nervous way.

" I wish," she said, almost under her breath, " that you and sister Peggy had given me an education, John; and then I could have taken care of myself, and not been a burden to you like I am."

The Professor whistled a long, stiff measure. Madame von Bommelcamp stuck out her foot, and gazed admiringly at the point-

ed patent-leather toe of her shoe. The Professor crossed over to Miss Brown, stooped down, and looked at her.

"Mary," he said, "don't let me see your Puritan ancestors cropping out in you again. Science has abolished all those ridiculous prejudices which you unfortunately inherit. Society has taken a double backward somersault past the era of the Pilgrim fathers, my child; and 'might is right' is as true to-day as it was in the Middle Ages. Bah!" cries the man, pitching his half-smoked weed into the empty grate. "My forefathers were Puritans, too; my father tilled his own soil, and gave me a college education. I tried teaching, and starved; I tried clerking, and froze; I tried killing myself, and the mill-pond wasn't deep enough"—at which point the Professor was uttering a truism, the appositeness of which he scarcely dreamed. "Then I tried doing what I could, and with my knowledge of metals and chemicals—well——"

Professor von Bommelcamp now took an airy turn, with a whisk of his coat-skirts, up the room and down again.

"I manage to keep Peggy and you, and myself, in sealskin coats, velvet gowns, and dinners of six courses, eh, don't I?"

Mary Brown nodded her head slowly.

Very soon after they went to drive in the open landau, and the dinner presently followed.

During the progress of this meal it fell out as the Professor had planned, and by the time that the egg-plant stuffed with tomatoes, onions, macaroni, and cheese, fresh from the very hand of Signor Mazzoleni himself, was quivering on the forks of the company, the Banker was revelling in the delightful knowledge that he was partaking of the still more delightful hospitality of an old and valued friend of his estimable brother-in-law, the Signor Allegretti of Rome.

What reminiscences were indulged in, as the Banker, warm and rosy through his swarth, with copious draughts of the red wine of his native land, and the Professor, ruddy with that tense of excitement induced by the successful working out of a problem, talked over and over the excellencies of the

aforesaid Signor Allegretti of Rome, and the thoroughly appetizing quality of his restaurant! How deftly the Professor extracted information one minute to serve it up as personal recollection the next, was not even suspected by the Banker, but it is possible that Mr. North, being observant and reticent, had noticed this play of ingratiating acquaintanceship. In any event, he kept his ideas to himself, and devoted his eyes, and whatever conversation he had, to Miss Brown.

When at last, the board cleared, save for the strewings of nut-shells, the *demi-tasses,* the cheese, and the cordials; when the Signor, and even also the Signora Mazzoleni, stood obsequiously in the hall; when Bartolo, Niccolo, Errico, and Franco lingered a bit to see the exit, as Professor von Bommelcamp, with a tip to Franco, ushered out the honored guest, on whose arm now hung Madame von Bommelcamp, and Mr. North with Miss Brown; when all the gas-jets save one were put out in the new *salle à manger;* yet above, *au deuxième,* what gayety there was!

The ladies from the third floor—persuaded by their husband and father, overflowing with succulent viands and sweeter reminiscences as he was, into making it a matter of fortunate duty to don their best, whatever it was, and come down—had succumbed, nothing loath, to the prospect of this taste of the social Elysium.

What life! What mirth! The heart of the Banker's daughter throbbed with excitement as she heard the tinkle and clatter of the piano, the shrill shrieking of the canary-bird, the voices, the laughter; and in another second she and her mamma, all smiles, stood in the midst of this beautiful whirl, with the Professor bending low over their hands, with the pale young lady saying pleasant things to them, with the tall young gentleman looking at them with, alas! those lovely cold eyes of his that shone, thought the Banker's daughter, like the stars, and at much the same distance.

The Banker, having done praising the exquisite playing of madame, now proposed a game of cards—what so innocent, so delightful? What said the dear friends of his

brother-in-law, Signor Allegretti of Rome, to *vingt-et-un?*

Mr. North, sitting quietly near the two young ladies, without moving a muscle of his head, still contrived to place his eyes in proper focus for taking in the countenance of the host.

It was calm and a little deprecatory.

There was an infinitesimal pause, and then Madame von Bommelcamp spoke.

"Dear signor," she said to the Banker, "you must not be offended, but my husband —indeed, both of us are New Englanders. We were brought up very strictly, and you will forgive us I am sure, but we never play cards."

Mr. North's eyes fell, and the Banker was profuse in his apologies, and the gap was immediately filled by Madame von Bommelcamp with a lively waltz on the piano, attended by the canary-bird as a matter of course.

Why should the young people not enjoy a little dance?

The Banker's daughter flushed at the proposition, but Miss Brown, with a curi-

ously haughty manner, at once found the room both too warm and too small.

"I only wish I could dance, Signorina," said the Professor, gazing down into the rich-hued face; "but, unfortunately, my education was neglected in that particular. I was brought up in a plain way, sir," turning to the Banker.

"Yes," echoed Madame, "we are plain people, Signora," laying a jewelled hand on top of the Banker's wife's plump fingers. "I used to iron my husband's shirts while he studied and read in the long winter evenings, when he was preparing for his great discoveries. Ah! you do not know," continued the lady, "how very poor we were in those early days. I did all the work of our little household in Vermont, and I was proud to do it!"

And thus how easily the staircase leading from the second to the third floor was swept away; how even the pleasure-carriage and the private dining-room vanished beneath this magical stroke; and how at once there arose such accentuated friendliness in the hearts of the Banker and his fam-

ily toward the friends of the relation in Rome!

"I think, Madame, that all our New England women are proud of their housewifely talents; don't you?" This was said by Mr. North, who, to tell the truth, was not a little puzzled at this juncture, by the turn of the talk.

Madame von Bommelcamp opened her mouth to answer, but she was not allowed; the Professor strode across to Mr. North and, standing before him, put out his hand.

"Sir," said he, "I've always liked you from the start; now more than ever since you say 'our New England.' You are a New England man, sir, are you not?"

"I am," Mr. North says.

"So am I," cries the Professor, shaking the younger man's hand warmly, and thence turning to fairly beam upon the assembled company.

"It is so pleasant," continues he, while positive tears well in his small dark eyes, only to be brushed away with a remorseless handkerchief of the finest linen, "so pleasant to find one's self among friends."

The Banker and his family both applauded this remark in an audible, but unsyllabled, murmur, while Mr. North pulls down his cuffs and glances at Miss Brown.

"I dare say," continues the Professor, leaning against the mantel and surveying the group, "that you can hardly comprehend what it is to—us—to enjoy this taste of honest social life, away from the frivolities of the outer and greater world." The Professor says these last words modestly, yet in a manner calculated to impress, but not to wound the sensibilities of those of his hearers unfamiliar with more riotous scenes.

"You can hardly imagine what this evening is to me, when I recall the years of my early married life, the hardships, the trials, the privations—" At this point the Banker mops his brow, retrospecting sympathetically on his own Roman days, and the attic and macaroni he then divided with the eleven other waiters in the restaurant of his brother-in-law, Signor Allegretti—"shared by my devoted wife without one murmur. Ah!—" The Professor heaves a sigh, which he proceeds to smother with a shrug

and a wave of the hand. "I will not dwell on that painful time, but will rather recall its end, when at last, after months and years of toil, and study, and experiment, I finally realized the dream of my life, and thereafter was able to—pay my way as I went," and the Professor broke into the genial laugh of the successful man, standing on the hearth-stone which he himself has hewn out of the bosom of a perchance reluctant earth.

"Won't you tell us about your invention, Professor?" asked Mr. North, in which be-seechment he was joined in chorus by all, save, of course, Madame and Miss Brown.

The Professor dallied, hung back, looked down.

The Banker urged, pleaded.

Madame von Bommelcamp at last said,

"John, my dear, tell our friends; it may interest them. He is so modest," she adds, "and so fearful of boring people."

A second chorus of remonstrance and ad-miration, and then the Professor, with that conciseness and fluency which had many times stood him in precisely similar stead, spoke.

"I cannot claim to have made an invention," with a gentle inclination in the direction of Mr. North. "Mine is merely a discovery. I am only a very ordinary metallurgist; the tools of my trade are all in that big box yonder." Professor von Bommelcamp waves a white hand to the recess, where the packing-case stands deftly draped with a camel's-hair shawl.

"Worth three thousand dollars," murmurs Madame *sotto voce,* and yet sufficiently loud to be heard by the Banker's wife, who thereat pricks up her ears.

"My good fortune has been to discover by accident one of Nature's secrets, and that is, that ordinary slag-iron contains a very considerable proportion of silver, or a metal so closely resembling silver, as to have deceived the greatest experts in Europe, and to have stood the whole list of genuine silver tests. How? Ah, that is known to but three persons—myself, my wife, and my sister-in-law."

Open mouths and exclamations of wonder greet the revelation of the man of science.

"Permit me," continues the Professor, taking from the shelf behind him an exquisite goblet of chased silver and presenting it to the Banker's wife; "Madame, I beg of you to accept this little souvenir manufactured from my new metal, in memory of a most agreeable evening."

The Banker's wife, the Banker himself, and his pretty daughter all disclaim their worthiness of such a princely gift, but this reluctance is speedily put to flight by Professor and Madame von Bommelcamp.

The goblet was made of genuine silver; the Professor always travelled with one of the kind amid his belongings.

"You are so good as to seem interested," continued the host, "which emboldens me to pursue a theme of which I never tire. My dear, will you show our friends those photos which the King and Queen of Belgium gave me?"

Madame von Bommelcamp, nothing loath, displays the pictures of sovereignty to the admiring gaze of the three guests, and then turning them over she points to the inscription on the back of each.

It runs this way,

" À M. le Baron von Bommelcamp
de son ami Leopold, Roi des Belges.
Laeken, 17 janvier 1891"

with the substitution, on the Queen's portrait, of her name for that of her august husband.

They had been bought by the Professor for a franc a piece in Brussels, and duly inscribed, the one by himself, the other by Madame.

"'Baron' von Bommelcamp!" exclaims Mr. North, as he inspects these royal treasures, while the Banker and his family are so overcome as to be at the point of rising, and bowing and courtesying before their noble entertainers.

"Oh, yes, to be sure; I had almost forgotten that you were a Baron, John," cries Madame lightly to her spouse. "His Majesty, the King of Belgium, conferred the title on account of the merit of the discovery, but my husband never uses it."

"No, no, no!" The Professor shakes his head. "I am an American through and

through. Plain 'Mr.' will do well enough for us; won't it, signor?" laughs he, clapping the Banker heartily on the back.

At which exhibition of good feeling, the amiable man and his family experience a subsidence of awe and an increase of ease.

"Too modest, too modest by half!" says Mr. North. "But, pray tell me, Baron," with a playful little smile at Miss Brown, which, as she feigns not to see it, is caught in the eclipse by the Banker's daughter and treasured in her dreams that night, "tell me where are you developing this wonderful discovery? You have works, doubtless; a foundry, manufactory, something? Because, if they are hereabouts, I want permission to visit the place."

"At present," the Professor replies, "the only two—factories, I suppose I may call them—are one at the village of Laeken, just out of Brussels, you remember, and one at Hull, England."

"None here!" exclaims the Banker, excitedly.

"Er—not yet," returns the Professor.

"Ah, there will be, then?" queries Mr. North.

The Professor thrusts his hands in his pockets and crosses the room in silence, looking down as might some hero newly crowned with laurel, listening to the plaudits of the crowd.

"I'll tell you," says madame, softly, "for John never would. I think he stands in his own light, because he never will talk about his business in social circles. The truth is —yes, my dear, I'm going to have my way for once," this to the Professor, who waves a deprecatory, not to say forbidding, five fingers at his lady.

"The truth is that we are over here at the express invitation, request rather, of some of the most influential financiers in this city, for the purpose of establishing a stock company for the development of the new metal, and the manufacture of all sorts of articles from it."

"My dear," the Professor says, taking a seat, "give us some more music and stop talking shop."

"I won't! There!" At which sally the

company laugh, and eagerly beg the hostess to go on.

"I am proud of his success; I wouldn't be an American woman if I were not, or any woman at all for that matter! And only to-day almost the last of the stock was taken up by George G——"

"My love!" The Professor's cambric handkerchief descends upon the lips of Madame, just in time not to prevent the Banker and Mr. North from understanding precisely to whom she referred.

"Business is business, Peggy, and it is a breach of business to mention names yet awhile."

"Well," answers Madame a trifle abashed, "I didn't mean to do anything wrong, John."

"Is there any of that stock left?" inquires the Banker jocularly, and yet with the sincerity born of a keen eye to the main chance.

"Yes," chimes in Mr. North; "because if there is, Professor, I speak for a slice!"

"I take what you got!" cries the Banker, still mirthfully, but with decision. "I spoke first."

Miss Brown at this moment was observed by Mr. North to move uneasily on the sofa, which she shared with the Banker's daughter, to rise and go to the window, and, stooping, to lean far out under the awning.

With an irresistible impulse Mr. North followed her, so that when she drew in again to the full flare of the gas-lights, she found him beside her.

He said nothing—nor did she—but their young eyes embraced in that curious timid, meek, sweet, wonderful way in which the eyes of Adam and Eve, when they first met, must have done.

Meantime the Professor, not unmindful of the juvenile episode at the casement, but putting it down on the credit side of his own account, now spoke slowly and with weighty precision.

" No, sir; no, gentlemen," for Mr. North now turns toward the group again, as does Miss Brown with a faint rose flush on her cheeks.

" No friend of mine shall ever purchase through me one dollar's worth of this stock. I value my friends too much to permit them

to risk a cent in any enterprise of mine, the outcome of which might, by a ninety-ninth ill chance turn out adversely. No, no——"

The noble earnestness of these remarks is productive of just that state of mind in his hearers, to which the discoverer has aspired.

The Banker, being unhampered by any more absorbing passion, is indeed loud and vehement in his persuasions; while the younger man, first flushed with the liquid of Mary Brown's beautiful eyes, is less demonstrative and more willing to bide his time.

"But I insist," cries the excellent brother-in-law of Signor Allegretti, of Rome. "It is, I am sure, not too kind to deprive those whom you honor by calling friends, of the chances of making their fortune, eh? I appeal to Madame." The Banker rises and stands before his hostess.

He could not have appealed to a better person.

"I really don't see, John, why,"—Madame's sentences are liberally punctuated by impressive waves of the hand and shakes of the head from her lord, but disregarding his marital signals for silence, she goes on:

" why you will not let the Signor have a few of those remaining shares. The shares are a hundred dollars each only, of the preferred stock, and how many are there left, John ? "

" I take 'em all," says the Banker, throwing a glance of triumph over his shoulder to where Mr. North is surreptitiously gazing at Miss Brown.

The Professor shakes his head resolutely.

" Oh, pshaw ! " exclaims Madame, rising and opening the desk opposite her. " I can easily find out for myself if you want to be disagreeable ; and," she adds, mischievously, " if I make the sale I shall claim the commission."

" Certainly—of course !" cries the Banker, gleefully.

" Let me see." Madame von Bommelcamp runs her eye down the foolscap sheet, the while murmuring to herself in this wise :

" ' Russell Sage, fifty shares ; Washington Connor, one hundred ; C. P. Huntington, two hundred '—um." As her index finger glides the length of the page, the six Italian eyes watching her, the six Italian

ears listening to her, the three Italian mouths gaping at her, all afford a most amusing panorama for the Professor, who, with his ten finger-tips balanced against each other, gazes benevolently at the little woman who bears his name.

"Ah!" she ejaculates. "Here it is. I've found out! there are just fifty shares left, Signor," and Madame lays down the paper and closes the desk.

It is as well, for had quick, inquisitive eyes perused the page that hers had lately travelled, they might have found the list of the week's washing, a somewhat startling key to the array of prominent names so glibly reeled off by this most adequate lady.

"I take 'em," says the Banker. "What you say, Professor, eh?"

The Professor preserves the propinquity of his digits and slowly shakes his head.

The Banker draws up a chair and seats himself insinuatingly close to his host, while his family watch him with breathless interest.

To their excited vision pleasure carriages, rich gowns, and apartments *au deuxième*

now tremble in the balance of the great man's dictum.

" Come, I tell you," coaxes the Banker, " if you go on to be so obstinate I think you are a Dutchman."

" You think that on account of my name," the Professor blandly replies. " But really, von Bommelcamp isn't my name at all. No," responding to the now arrested gaze of Mr. North.

" No, my name is Camp, plain John Camp; but when King Leopold desired to confer a patent of nobility on me, he selected the name of von Bommelcamp, after having caused the clerks of the royal records to look up the ancestry of the Camps; as they found out that my Belgian forefathers were so called, and out of deference to his majesty (who is really a capital fellow) I have decided to retain the amended edition. My dear, a little music."

" Business first, pleasure afterward," urges the Banker, who absolutely sees a million slipping through his fingers. " I say, you let me have those shares. I give you a premium on 'em. Come."

Professor von Bommelcamp rises, and so does the Banker. He lays his two hands affectionately upon the Banker's shoulders and gazes into the Banker's pudgy countenance.

"My dear Signor," he says, "if you are determined—well——"

"Aha!" laughs the Banker.

"Aha! aha!" echo the Banker's family as they now behold the pleasure carriage driving up to the door.

"Wait a moment—wait a moment," continues the host. "I will not sell you a dollar's worth of the stock until you have seen the experiment, held in your hands the proof of my discovery. I will do for you what I did for King Leopold, no more, no less, and then if you feel satisfied, well and good."

At this juncture, while the Banker and his family are standing before the Professor, there runs, inaptly it would seem, through the brain of Mr. North something that he has heard about the "Doge of Venice wedding with the Adriatic," but repulsing this base mental intrusion with ardor, he springs up and says:

" Am not I too, Professor, to have a peep at these mysteries? I confess, before I put my money—the little I have—into the thing, I would like to see the charm work."

" I thought you would," replied the Professor, quietly. " I am glad to see that, although a young man"—He glances paternally at Miss Brown as he speaks—" You don't lose your head under any circumstances. Certainly, sir, it is my wish that you, and the Signora and the Signorina, should all be present. I will arrange the matter with Mazzoleni in some way, for a fire."

" In the furnace, John; you remember we had a fire in the furnace in the palace at Laeken, when you made the demonstration for his Majesty."

" In the furnace, if possible," assents the Professor.

" And now"—he speaks impressively—" there is one thing I want to say to both of you gentlemen: I am a stranger to you, a total stranger; I may be the greatest villain that walks. I beg that each of you will procure and bring his own specimen of slag-iron

with him and put it in the crucible himself. Upon this *I insist.*"

The Banker and his family are taking their enthusiastic leave. Mr. North turns to say good-night to Miss Brown; she has left the room; she left it when her esteemed brother-in-law was occupied in praising the mental equilibrium of Mr. North.

II

THE third floor once reached, the Banker and his wife rushed into each other's arms as they had not before, since the day when the letter from Rome had arrived containing Signor Allegretti's draft on Brown Brothers for ten thousand dollars, which he put in as special partner in the banking-house of his brother-in-law in New York.

Such humility! Such simplicity! One of the people like themselves, yet ennobled and disdaining the honor. Such learning and capacity! Such honorableness and uprightness! Ah! how happy were they to have been so favored by fortune as to meet

such people. And already in their slumbers arose visions of all the splendors to come.

The Banker, the next morning, albeit a most practical and shrewd person, was no whit emancipated from his last night's conviction.

Like many another clever man in this world, he had met one still cleverer.

And then, the experiment. Was he not to see with his own eyes the reality and probity of the Professor's discovery?

In the rooms underneath the worthy Banker's, meantime, the satisfaction of the inmates—at least two of them—was to the full as great.

Professor von Bommelcamp had, in the course of his somewhat eventful and most checkered career, contrived to bring himself into very successful contact, from his own peculiar point of view, with a baronet, a knight or two, a Spanish duke, and a Belgian count, whose hobby had been experiments in metallurgy; he had some years back, also had dealings of a similar character with half a dozen of the moneyed men of San Francisco, and as many more in Portland, Me.;

but the circle in which he now revolved was new ground to him, and his agreeable prospects therein caused him, as well as his untiring wife, that exultation of spirit natural to the approaching accomplishment of a cherished scheme.

It was now about half after five in the afternoon. Madame von Bommelcamp was very busy crocheting some little woollen shoes which she was going to send to a wee god-daughter she had in her native village, where, it is necessary to state, the erratic career of John Camp, the old miller's son, was not even—as the people there would have called it—" suspicioned."

Miss Brown sat listless and idle when the Professor sauntered out from the other room.

" I say, Moll," quoth he, seating himself by his young sister-in-law, " what about North, anyway? It seems to me you're not earning your salt these days."

The girl flushed painfully, but was silent.

" I tell you," continues the metallurgist succinctly, " before I make the experiment, I've got to know whether it's worth while to

risk having that chap present or not. I've got to know if he has any money to invest or if he hasn't, and it's your duty to find that out. North's hanging about the hall now; I saw him there smoking as I came in a moment ago. Suppose," he adds, rising, and yet looking attentively at the girl, "you put on your things and go out for a walk; the fresh air will do you good. North will join you, and when you come back I shall expect a good account of your tactics."

Professor von Bommelcamp lights his cigar, while Madame lays down her work and, going to the window, remarks:

"Yes, Moll, run along; there's a good girl. North is interested in you; anyone can see that with half an eye, and he'll tell you all we want to know in ten minutes. Oh!" exclaims this excellent woman, "I had almost forgotten my dear sparrows; there they are twittering away for crumbs," and Madame proceeded at once to spread out a liberal repast from her store of biscuits, for the flock of little gamins that flew sillward at her call.

Which goes to prove that obliquity of

moral vision does not totally destroy elemental kindliness of heart, yet renders the spectacle of the inconsistency all the more appalling.

Mary Brown had said nothing to these sallies. She went into her own room, put on her hat and gloves, and came back. She uttered a "good-by, Peggy," as she passed out, and Peggy called out blithely,

"Good luck!"

Thus cheered, she went slowly down the staircase. She caught, not only the odor of cigar-smoke as she went, for that was the natural atmosphere of the Hotel Mazzoleni, but the low, soft tones as well, of Mr. North's voice.

She could not, would not, go a step farther. She turned back, her whole virginal soul revolting, not only at the present instance, but at the entire measure and substance of her life.

But eleven years of such a servitude as hers had been, are apt to leave their stamp upon the disposition at least, and Mary Brown was afraid to turn and leave her errand unattempted.

So she went straight on, and out the open door, without looking to either right or left.

"If," she thought, "I can only get off and away without his seeing me, then I am safe, and still I shall have done as I was told, in so far as I could."

Which sentiment the Pharisee will pass by on the other side, while the Samaritan will pour upon it the balm of his oil and wine.

Nevertheless as Peggy and her lord, watchful from the casement, looked down upon the street, their chagrin at Miss Brown's solitude was swiftly changed to joy as they beheld Mr. North come out on the stoop, and after a leisurely survey east and west, hastily run down, throw away his weed, and anon overtake Miss Brown on her way toward Fifth Avenue.

"Miss Brown," he cried, lifting his hat, "will you let me join you, please?"

She smiled as she looked up at him, and with that smile for the nonce, flew off and away entirely all memory of John or Peggy, experiments, or anything else.

The August sun was flooding the dirty street with a yellow glare. The handsomer

houses were shuttered close, their tenants absent; while the poorer ones had emptied their human contents apparently, on the sidewalk. It was a noisy, screaming, running, creeping crowd of beings; a parrot shrieked out a collection of curses from his cage on a veranda; two rival venders of peaches rent the humid heavy air with their deafening shouts. The whiz and whir of the Elevated Road went on its ceaseless way; a belated ash-cart plodded along, picking up the miscellaneous boxes, tin cans, barrels, and coal-scuttles full of refuse on the block.

Yet, to both of these people the path seemed strewn with flowers, and the very atmosphere of Paradise itself enveloped them.

They sauntered on to Washington Square and through it, and a bit farther westward, neither heeding much where their footsteps tended; for was it not enough that they walked there side by side?

"I'm nobody in particular yet," he said, "but I hope to be someone some day. I am living at the Hotel Mazzoleni merely for the purpose of studying local color in the interest of a play I am writing. Whether the

play makes a success or not," adds Mr. North, " it has been a means to an end better than any I could have foretold, I can assure you."

And so on and on, relating to her all his history, his plans, possessions, projects; conscious, too, of exactly what he is doing, and realizing to the full that he has reached that loveliest of all a man's life's crises—the moment when he meets the woman whose " yes " or " no " is to make or mar the best of him.

They had reached St. Joseph's Church, and they both glanced up to the battered statue over the open door.

" Suppose we go in for a few minutes; shall we? " asks he. " I have brought you such a hot, nasty way," glancing about him in a kind of sudden surprise at not recognizing the precise elements of Elysium at hand.

" If you like," she answers, putting her foot on the lowest step, and adding with a rush of color and a shamed sense of honor and dishonor both, as the facts of her past and the courage that will not conceal it all, lays hold of her," I haven't been inside of a

church since I was a child of eight, and I'll be twenty next month."

"I haven't been inside of one, well," he laughs, "since the last wedding I attended, and that is months ago."

They pass out of the tawdry, hot street, with its rush and noisome bustle, into the coolness, the space, the peace of the old church.

It has been a saint's day, and the four o'clock vesper-service has left its fragrance of incense hovering still about the place.

The sexton is dozing by the door, which he rouses himself to close as they enter.

Six candles are burning on the altar, and the crimson light in the swinging lamp glows steadily.

They walk up the aisle.

"Let us go and sit down in one of those pews near the altar of the Virgin Mary," he whispers with the gentlest little pause and emphasis as he utters the name.

"If you like," she answers again.

And in a moment they are sitting side by side in the pew.

An old woman, past eighty, it is presuma-

ble, kneels before the statue; a few tiny candles twinkle in the little candlesticks; a wreath of sickly artificial roses lies at the Blessed Mother's feet, and a garland of false, unlovely lilies decks her gilded crown.

Mary Brown stares at all this, noting the old woman's moving lips and withered fingers tapping off her beads, and instinctively she slips down on her knees, while somewhere out of the lost part of her little childhood there comes back the memory of words like these: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding;" and great tears swell in her eyes, and her bowed head rests upon her close-clasped hands.

Eustace North is looking at her always.

When the girl fell to her knees he knelt also, and when he saw that beautiful light leap into her eyes, when he saw her head sink, his arm went around her, not drawing her to him, but merely telling her that he was hers.

They knelt there, alone now, for the old woman had finished her prayers and hobbled away, leaving the church-door ajar as she went; and so it fell out that there came to

these two, borne from afar, the popular jingle of the hour played on some hurdy-gurdy way down Sixth Avenue.

It reached them and smote them both as music wandered out of Heaven for awhile, and fit to match with this mood of theirs.

She moved a little to rise, and then his hand sought and drew over her two; and both risen, thus, the music sounding to them most perfectly sweet, they walked down the aisle together, speechless, and back again, like ordinary mortals, to the Hotel Mazzoleni.

"Well!" cried Madame jubilantly, throwing open the door for her returning sister, whom she had seen approaching with her companion.

"Well," echoed Miss Brown, coming in and sitting down, in that state of mind which acknowledges the supreme necessity of an immediate victory of the purely practical, over the perfectly incompatible.

"Has he got any money, Mary, or hasn't he? I know you know," remarks the Professor calmly. "For it is now half after seven; you have been gone two hours, and

I'm sure you have not wasted so much valuable time."

"He is an author," replies the girl, in a very low voice.

"Not a pecunious race!" exclaims Professor von Bommelcamp, with a disgusted expression. "Go on, though; perhaps he's that rare specimen, an author with a private fortune."

"He has fifteen hundred a year besides, and he owns two houses in Brookline, just out of Boston."

"Oh," sniffs Peggy, "John, my dear, we'd best let him off; he might spoil everything, and it can come to nothing useful, to have him present."

"I don't know about that," responds her lord ruminatingly.

"It seems to me perfect folly to have Mr. North at the experiment," says Miss Brown, still in a low tone and with downcast eyes. "He has no money to invest in anything, I am sure, from what he said."

"That may be, my pretty Moll; but you see he may come in handy to give me a few good letters of introduction to Boston men,

and if he sees the thing with his own eyes, why! he can say so to his friends. See?"

Peggy cries out:

"That's so, John; you are always the cleverest of us three."

Miss Brown flushes and rises, going into her own room.

So it comes about that on the eventful evening Mr. North is one of the favored group gathered in the cellar of the Hotel Mazzoleni.

The *mise en scène* was wonderfully and broadly picturesque; the more so from the fact that picturesqueness was about the last element that anyone there had in his mind.

The cellar of the Hotel Mazzoleni was much like other cellars; approached by a straight flight of railless wooden steps; dark, save now for the flood of white, pure light thrown for the space of ten feet around the furnace, by the electric lamp, which the Professor had obligingly provided with his small portable battery.

Bartolo, it is true, held a candle aloft in a bottle as he assisted the ladies to descend,

and the Signor himself stuck another in an old tin can and set it on the swinging shelf, where it threw into spasmodic relief an array of squashes, sweet potatoes, cauliflowers, beets, and tomatoes.

A row of barrels stood yonder near where the black hills of coal had come tumbling down the slide from the sidewalk; some old trunks and boxes were on the other side, and here, in the radiance, meeting the white wonder of the electric brilliancy, with its ruddy glow and blaze, stood the open furnace fire.

A small deal table, loaned by the cook, was littered with the Professor's implements; crucibles, pans, tongs, mortars, pestles, a tiny white packet; and the Professor himself stood there in his brown velveteen smoking-jacket, and with his smoking-cap set jauntily on his brow.

Madame bustled about, active and merry-tongued as usual, while the family of the Banker sat on two kitchen chairs, twisting their fingers in much awkwardness, both of flesh and spirit.

Mr. North stood near Miss Brown, and

Miss Brown stood in the shadow of the wooden stairs.

The Banker was close to the Professor, rubicund satisfaction blossoming in every line of his Latin countenance.

"There, you got it!" cried he, taking from his pocket a gay silken kerchief, tied up in a manner reminiscent of his arrival at Castle Garden.

"I got a friend over at Stirling, in New Jersey, who runs a furnace there, to send me a pound of his slag; you said a pound was enough?"

"Plenty," replies the Professor, whose manner is that of the sincere and absorbed scientist, intent only on the performance of a duty.

"Plenty; besides, I have here Mr. North's pound, which he sent up to Hudson for. Now, have you two gentlemen any objection to the two specimens of slag being mixed, and the experiment made in one crucible?"

Both gentlemen signified the utmost willingness that this should be done.

"Very well, then," continues the metal-

lurgist. "Signor, will you kindly take this iron mortar and pestle and pulverize your pound of slag? Mr. North, will you be so good as to do the same by yours?"

The two men go at their task with a will, and in a few moments it is accomplished.

The Professor now dismisses the Signor Mazzoleni with a graceful show of appreciation of his having provided the wherewithal of fire for the experiment, thereby causing those of the boarders (but a moiety it is true) who are in the house of an evening, to enjoy a foretaste of their possible purgatories, and to anathematize at the same perspiring moment both the Professor and his trade; but the Signor Mazzoleni, beckoning to Bartolo, retires in that good order which is the good-natured forerunner of being in a position to put it all in the bill.

"Now, my friends," said the man of science, turning an eye apiece upon the Banker and Mr. North, "will you do me the favor to select your crucible from these three upon the table; pray examine them thoroughly, inside as well as out."

The two gentlemen having inspected the

vessels and chosen one, it is indicated to the Professor.

"Very well; I will now explicitly beg that all of you, the ladies as well as the gentlemen," with a sweeping salutation of the utmost deference toward the Signora and the Signorina, "will give me your undivided attention; that you will, in short, watch my every movement," laughs the Professor genially, "much as if I were Herrmann, say, and you were an audience not to be taken in!"

This lively sally is met with an outburst of jovial and resounding merriment.

"Examine this powder," continues the metallurgist, now resuming a perfectly professional air, as he unfolds the packet and discloses a few grains of a rose-pink powder, handing the same in turn to the Banker and his family, and to Mr. North. "You perceive there can be no possible jugglery or hocus-pocus about this; no metallic substance in it; as harmless and guiltless of aught save vegetable matter as a lady's toilet-powder."

Which in point of fact is precisely what it

was, being a pinch from the box whence Madame, when pallid, evoked the rose of her cheeks.

" Signor, will you have the goodness to put your portion of slag into the crucible you have selected? Mr. North, I will ask a similar favor of you. Ah, so; now, Signor, will you drop the powder in also? Thank you; this remarkable powder contains my secret, my discovery; by its peculiar action it not only produces combustion, thoroughly extracts the silver, or whatever the new metal is, but so separates the particles that the residuum will lie by itself, a shinning mass at the bottom of the crucible when heat has done its work.

" Look for yourselves, gentlemen; assure yourselves that there is no nonsense here, only the result of years"—the Professor mops his moistened brow with his large silk handkerchief, the rich perfume from which assails the senses of the company agreeably —" of toil, research, and study. Signor, if you will place the crucible upon the fire, I think that in a very short time the demonstration will be accomplished."

The Banker, bearing the precious burden much as if it had been a newly born babe, set it on the living coals, and then with a sigh of satisfaction drew back in the neighborhood of his lady.

"How much silver you make it to the pound?" he asks.

"About twenty cents."

"What!" cries North. "Our fortunes are made then; why, that is enormous!"

"I tell you,"—the Banker quivers with excitement,—"we got it this time, my dear."

And the Signora responsively pats the plump be-ringed hand of her spouse.

Miss Brown, seeming to find the place chilly, for all the furnace fire, had by this time withdrawn to a seat on the grimy lower step of the stairs, and Eustace North had followed her naturally and as a matter of course. Her head was bent so that the play of the electric light, the furnace glow, and the dipping glimmer of the candles, all three shone about her, making a sort of curious aureole around the beautiful face.

He did not dare look at her always; so now and then watched the Professor, who

busily strode back and forth watching the crucible, time-piece in hand, and ever and anon, as he bent above the precious cauldron, wiping his brow with his fine handkerchief.

The Signora and the Signorina kept up a queer little dialogue in their native tongue; the Banker looked on; Madame, full of laughter, quips, jests, slipped in and out of shadow and radiance, doing the hostess prettily, even in this remarkable *entourage*, as was possible; for amid the Professor's hammers and tongs, and pots and whatever else besides, on the table, Bartolo, under her directions, had placed a couple of decanters, a bottle labelled Maraschino, glasses, and a dish of little cakes and biscuits.

Madame had said that if the experiment proved satisfactory they should not leave the cellar until they had drunk a toast to its making all their fortunes, and so she occupied herself in clinking glasses, taking out stoppers, and partly drawing the cork of the flask of cordial, which she remarked was all she herself dared to touch in the evening.

The Professor had just announced, after a survey of the crucible, that all was going

well, that even now the particles of slag were beginning to separate; in reality he still bent over the fire with his handkerchief shading his face from the fierce heat, when Madame shrieked and jumped, screaming out,

"A rat! a rat!"

The Signor and the Signorina shrieked also, leaping upon their chairs with much agility; the Banker, catching up a tongs, called,

"Where? where? I get him!"

Miss Brown sat still.

Mr. North,—never after could he explain why or wherefore,—did not, or could not remove his gaze from the Professor, where it had been riveted, and now froze as he beheld a dexterous twitch of the silk handkerchief, a slip of sheen in the glow, a twinkle in the bottom of the crucible, and he knew that a half dollar had gone in to join the slag and the pink powder.

Madame, for all her shrieks and jumps this way and that, while the Professor beat the air with his tongs, by this time, saw that Eustace North had seen.

She screamed the louder, running hither

and yon in pursuit of the rat, which, it is needless to chronicle, existed only in this lady's executive imagination.

"Well, we don't get him," cried the Banker, dropping into that portion of a chair not encumbered by the feet of his wife.

"My dear, you come down; he is more afraid than we!"

"There!" exclaims Peggy. "There he goes under the stairs; Mary, get up, for goodness sake!"

Mary gets up, although she trembles in every muscle.

"Well, my love," says the Professor, "now that you have roused us all up for nothing," a little reproachfully, "suppose," adjusting his tongs to the crucible, "you allow me to say that the experiment is completed and is—a success—I think."

Mr. North is a bold, brave fellow, honest as the sunshine; his impulses are all frank, outspoken, with keen hatred of the least deception or trifling with truth, or toying with honor; his lips part to speak, to denounce, to expose then and there, but he remembers Mary Brown, and is silent for to-night.

The Banker and his family crowd forward.

The crucible is lifted from the fire, the molten contents is slowly poured out into one of the Professor's pans, and there, clear, shining, and white, lies the spot of melted silver.

A cry of exultation, delight, amazement rises from the Banker's big throat.

"I say! you give me those fifty shares now, eh?" pulling out his long leather pocket-book. "I take 'em all," with a sharp glance over his shoulder at North. "See, I got my check here all made out; you give 'em to me to-night, and you take this to the bank of the Metropolis to-morrow at ten o'clock and get it cashed, eh?"

"Sure you're perfectly satisfied?" asks the Professor slowly as he prods the white bit with a pestle.

"Sure I live!" blusters the Italian. "Say, you not going to refuse 'em to me, are you?"

"No, no, no," laughs the other; "my dear friend," laying his disengaged hand on the Banker's arm, "before you sleep to-night

you shall have the stock in your possession."

"That's a bargain," and they shake hands with fervor.

"But how about our friend, Mr. North?" queries the Professor.

By some system of marital telegraphy known to themselves, as the Professor's eye meets Peggy's, on its way to Mr. North, he comprehends the situation.

"Oh," answers North, "I suppose I'm quite out of it, since Madame von Bommelcamp said there were but fifty shares left, and the Signor has taken them all!"

"Very sorry, young man, but business is business," returns the Latin.

"It's all right," responds Mr. North, and whatever else he is about to add is lost in the clatter of a glass, which the astute Madame now lets fall crashing to the floor.

The Professor runs to help her pick up the fragments, and as their bent heads approach under the table amid the talk of the others she whispers,

"North knows."

"He'll hold his tongue for Mary's sake,"

says the husband, laughing loudly at the Banker's last joke.

"Until morning maybe, no longer; he must have the drugged wine," convulsed with merriment over the Banker's wife's latest remark.

"Make Moll give it to him, then," and Professor von Bommelcamp emerges, riotous with smiles, from beneath the kitchen-table, his hands full of broken glass.

"Now!" exclaims Peggy, pouring out brimful glasses, which the Banker and his family all accept, nibbling, too, very pleasantly at the little cakes.

"Mary, dear, a glass of this sherry will do you good."

Mary Brown puts out her hand and takes the glass.

"Mr. North," archly, and removing the cork from the bottle of Maraschino and filling two glasses, while Miss Brown's large eyes dilate with terror watching her, "Mr. North, since you were so unlucky as not to secure any of the spoils, will it be any compensation at all to you to share my cordial with me? I never can take wine in the even-

ing without its going to my head," as she tenders a glass to him.

Mary's hand goes out a little, she shudders, quivers, draws back; the cellar and all it contains swim before her eyes as Eustace North answers gayly enough,

"More than a compensation, Madame; it is a pleasure," and drains the cordial to the dregs.

Peggy also raises her glass, but by that unique arbitration of Nature which dictates no catastrophe without two to follow, the third in the dame's list comes to hand as Madame von Bommelcamp strikes her elbow against the Professor's arm, her glass falls, spills, knocks over the cordial-flask, which in its turn empties its trickling contents on the floor of the cellar.

Exclamations follow, and in the midst of these Mary Brown does what she never did before in her life—she faints away; the strain has snapped her nerves asunder, and the Professor picks her up and carries her to her room, while Madame and the rest ascend in his wake, an exclaiming and pitying chorus of six.

Eustace North halts with the others *au deuxième* and then, with something like a sigh, he goes on, having tendered his formal hopes for Miss Brown's speedy recovery, and his good-nights to her relatives.

He is beset on his upward course by a thousand conflicting emotions, but by the time that his eyrie is reached, these slip off him like some soft and enervating garment; all dressed, he throws himself down on his bed, and even while he plans his to-morrow, his lids close and a stupor of sleep overpowers his mind and body most effectually.

Not so on the floor below; the excellent Banker hastens to his box of papers, fills out his check for five thousand dollars, and trips briskly downstairs with it to the Professor, receiving in return for the same not only the company's receipt by its secretary, Professor von Bommelcamp, but also the certificates of his fifty shares of stock in the American Slag-Iron Silverite Company, of Brussels and New York.

"Is the young lady better?" he inquires, politely.

"Yes, oh, yes; the young lady was merely

temporarily affected by the dampness of the cellar, and is now perfectly restored."

Which was not at all the case. Mary Brown lay on her bed in a stupor, far more serious in its present aspect than Mr. North's. While her body remained motionless, her mind was working and contorting with all the possibilities, and, as if they were not bad enough, all the impossibilities, too, of her situation.

Peggy, in common with all light-hearted mercurial persons, regarding this phase as but a passing cloud on the horizon she assumed to see always in a cerulean light, speeded the Professor as he took his cigar and went out for an ostensible smoke.

The Professor did smoke, but his errand was to the nearest district-messenger office, where he left a note in a telegram envelope addressed to himself, and to be delivered within half an hour.

Peggy meantime gave Mary a shake which roused the girl a little.

" See here, Moll," she says shortly, " you didn't, or you did, see, I don't know which, but North took it all in when John dropped

the half dollar in the crucible; but I settled him with the cordial; that'll close his mouth for twenty-four hours anyway. Meantime, we've got to get away; so the sooner you can rouse yourself and pack up your things the better. I can't stop here to talk with you. You know that well enough; it's the same game as it was in Hull. Be good now, and dry your eyes if you're crying; there are lots of handsomer men than North, and in Australia, where we're going, you'll pick up another twice as nice!"

With which sisterly comforting, Madame steps into the next room and goes to work.

Mary Brown lies still.

She does not think.

Her whole being simply resolves itself into the desperate godly exaltation of a soul that has reached the point where its tether will no longer tighten, and it must either break or burst the bonds.

She can formulate no plan.

She has no instinct toward her preservation and his, but to do that, which most women find the larger share of their inheritance, "be still and wait."

The Professor now returns.

"All right," he nods to Madame; "how's Moll?"

"All right, too," responds Madame von Bommelcamp, blithely; "or she will be in the morning. I'll put up her things myself, and after a night's sleep she'll be as bright as a dollar, never fear."

Presently, it now being eleven o'clock, and the doors of the Hotel Mazzoleni closed, the bell rings. Bartolo stumbles sleepily to answer the call, and a telegram is thrust in, "paid, for Professor von Bommelcamp."

Bartolo fetches it up, the Professor hastily and anxiously tears it open, Madame peeping eagerly, even fearfully, over his shoulder, as women will at telegrams.

The Professor utters an exclamation, Madame clutches a chair-back, the waiter stares.

"Send Signor Mazzoleni to me at once."

The Signor comes, to learn that the aged father of the Professor, living in North Village, Vermont, is at the point of death; that his guests must leave for their paternal homestead to-morrow morning at half-past nine; that they would not have disturbed

Signor Mazzoleni at this late hour, had they not been a little in arrears for board, owing to the stringency of the money-market, and the generally bad condition of the whole financial situation on account of the silver question.

Peggy winked playfully to her lord behind the Signor's broad back at this crisis of words.

They wished to assure him that they left everything they owned in his charge, save a couple of trunks for necessary change of clothes; that they retained their apartments, and would return within a week, unless matters were worse than they hoped (here a very proper pair of sighs went up from the admirable pair); that they had arranged to spend the coming winter at the Hotel Mazzoleni, where they had ever received all that guest could ask of home comfort, luxury, and quiet.

The Signor, deeply deploring the departure of his honored guests, more profoundly sympathizing with the cause of their going, spared no lingual endeavors to assure them of his unbounded confidence in their excel-

lencies, and his supreme delight at their august patronage, and so bowed himself down to compute with the Signora Mazzoleni the amount extra to be made, by the full payment for rooms and board during the absence of three persons from the Hotel Mazzoleni for the space of a possible fortnight.

III

The next morning was one of those that sometimes come in late August—happy, splendid harbingers of that glorious, full-fruitaged, ripe, glowing season, the American autumn. There was hint of hoar even in the early air, and when Mary awoke from a heavy, unresting sleep, the breeze blew fresh and cold in upon her under the awning from the north.

She got up and dressed when Peggy called her; she found her trunk mostly packed, and she finished it, locked it, and put the key in her pocket. She put on her hat as her sister did, took her coat over her arm, her umbrella and gloves in her hand.

They went down to breakfast together and sat in the private dining-room, where not only Bartolo, but the other three, skipped nimbly in and out waiting upon them. At this hour there chanced no one else in the outer room.

But Miss Brown could not eat; she rose and said to them,

"I will go out and stand on the stoop; it is so close in here."

They both nodded and she went.

When she reached the stoop she stood still a moment, and then, a force impelling her against which she did not wish to battle, she went down the steps, and with a little guilty-seeming glance around her, sped westward as fast as she could.

Reaching the square, Mary Brown fairly flew, and then presently stopped, panting, in front of St. Joseph's Church. The door was open and a stream of people came out; among them she slipped in, and in a moment more she was in the pew near the statue of the Blessed Virgin, where a fortnight ago Eustace North and she had knelt together.

She sank down.

Sanctuary had been sought and found.

To her it seemed now that harm could not reach her.

Two hundred years and more ago Miss Brown's ancestors had fallen on their knees on the bare, blear coldness of Plymouth Rock, with just the same thankful simplicity in their souls that now moved hers, in what they would have called this Popish place.

The spirit of those wonderful old God-fearers possessed her to-day; it was as if a naked sword cleft her in twain, and albeit the soul bled, and the bruise was bitter, yet the sharpness of it all and the terror of it all, and the wrench, brought balm and righteousness and amends in part, for the cruel sinning of her past.

Up from the gone gladness of her childhood at her mother's knees, rose the words of broken prayers; the memories of little days full of household life, and long nights full of rest, and mother hands to heal and bless; and, Puritan-bred though she was, she lifted her eyes and they met in speechless peace the figured eyes of Christ's mother holding Him there in her arms.

And the horror of all the past ten years seemed to roll away from her, leaving only terror for Eustace North in her heart of hearts, to be met as God willed.

Her lips parted and she murmured inarticulately, crouching in the pew.

Back in the Hotel Mazzoleni meanwhile there arose something of a commotion when the coach—a pleasure carriage to the last, as the Banker's wife and daughter, hieing them to the window, half-dressed, failed not to note—clattering up to the door, the two trunks haled down and strapped securely on beside the driver, the Signor and the Signora salaaming under the awning, Bartolo at the curb, handbags in arms, Niccolo, Errico, and Franco, expectantly modest, in line in the hallway, Miss Brown could not be found.

Search as all might, from garret to cellar, the girl was nowhere, nor had anyone seen her leave the house.

The Professor pulled out his watch and held a short whispered conversation with Madame.

"I'm afraid," he says, "that North's got the better of her."

"Pshaw! North's safe until to-night at least, if not to-morrow morning. What'll we do?" Madame's accustomed briskness is a bit blighted; between the two extremes of the situation, even her acute little visage droops.

"Hang the girl, Peggy! we've got to go; there isn't any use in talking about it. She's keeping out of the way because she wants to, for one reason or another, and I can't stay fooling here for her whims. I'll tell you," adds the Professor, noting Madame's really rueful expression, for she was fond of her sister in her way; "you can write her from Philadelphia to-night and tell her just what to do; she's got some money, and so now, don't worry any more about it."

Madame, it is as well to state here as anywhere, wrote the letter from Philadelphia that night, and gave it to her spouse to mail in the office of the hotel where they stopped; but the Professor saw fit to drop the missive in a waste-basket, after partially reducing it to an ash with his cigar.

Professor von Bommelcamp had long looked coyly about him for a means of ship-

ping Miss Brown, and the wherewithal being now in his power, he of course made use of it, tributing his remnant of a conscience with the soothing knowledge that he could cable for her if Peggy became violent, as she would probably cling to the Hotel Mazzoleni for a time at least.

With this perfectly coherent plan in his mind the Professor turns swiftly on his heel to bestow a plausible solution of the mystery on the bewildered Signor, commends the young lady to his fatherly care, hustles Madame into the coach, presses a bill into the hand of Bartolo, change into the palms of his confrères, jumps in himself, gives the order for the Grand Central Depot—and amid the waving of handkerchiefs, napkins, and in the delicious fresh breeze, off drive Professor von Bommelcamp and his most accomplished wife.

"Ah!" moans the Signora Mazzoleni, whisking her apron-corner across her eyes, and crossing herself fervently, "the excellent good gentleman; it is the bed of death that he hurries to, and it is indeed very thoughtless of the Signorina Brown to make

herself away on this occasion. Well, youth was always so, and she could follow her relatives, or remain safely with us, as she pleased," with which comfortable reflection the worthy woman set about her daily duties.

The "thoughtless Signorina" remained on her knees before the poor little statue of Mary for at least two hours.

No one noted her; great mother churches there are, scattered all about the city, in this street and that, some with crosses over door and some without, that stand open always with ready cradling arms and dim, unquestioning aisles for all the weak and weary who walk in.

When the girl arose the sun had southed and had drunk up all the freshness of the air; as she came out into the street she staggered a little, and her stiffened knees trembled as she descended the steps.

She did not know the time, so went into a shop and asked. It was half after twelve, and she knew very well that her sister and brother-in-law had not tarried of their flight for her.

By no means. As soon as they had turned

the corner of Clinton Place, Professor von Bommelcamp, putting his head out of the window, told the driver sharply to stop on the way up at the *Judge* building, which accordingly was done. The Professor alighted, ran in, and out again, nodded and smiled at Peggy, told the coachman to wait a minute, crossed Fifth Avenue, hurried through Sixteenth Street to Broadway, up a block, and into the Bank of the Metropolis.

He required no identification, for a few weeks previous, on learning that the Banker was a depositor in this institution, the Professor, such was his confidence in this excellent man's judgment, had transferred his own account thither from the Chase National, which was, after all, rather too far downtown for a man not in active business.

Professor von Bommelcamp had a few pleasant words with the paying teller (he always had pleasant words with everyone), did not draw out his own hundred dollars of balance, but obtained the cash in large and small bills for the Banker's check, and smilingly went out. He walked briskly, expanding his chest, down Broadway to Fif-

teenth Street, across to the Avenue again, and surprised the driver by appearing from below instead of where he had last had sight of him.

The Professor jumped in with a cheerful "All right!" to the man, and off they whirled to the Grand Central.

Arrived there, the two trunks taken in, the bill paid, and the porter tipped, the Professor halted an instant to watch the cab out of sight, when, mixing with the passengers of an incoming train, he soon made glad the heart of another cabman by engaging him.

Madame, on spy from the waiting-room, emerged, and was assisted in by her husband, the two trunks were put up, and the order given:

"Pennsylvania Railroad, foot of Desbrosses Street," whither they were promptly taken.

"A steamer sails to-morrow, Peg, from Philadelphia," observes her lord. "It's a circuitous route to Australia, but, my dear, it will be a safe one," and the Professor winks as he taps his breast-pocket.

"I know, John; but Mary?"

"Able to walk alone; and if she isn't she'll toddle over to us, never you fear."

Miss Brown did walk quite alone, back to the little gala-day-looking hostelry in Clinton Place.

Her eyes flew up to the top-floor hall-bedroom window, but the awning there told no different story than did its companions, and she went in the house, where all the exclamations, sighs, smiles, explanations, and counsellings imaginable were showered upon her.

The girl only answered,

"I will go upstairs and rest awhile. I don't know but it is better for me to stop quietly here, if I may?" and she turned two large wistful eyes upon the Signora and the Signor.

If she might! What idea! Was not the whole place at the disposition of Signorina Brown!

So Mary, knowing that she had money in her purse—the Professor had always been very liberal with her—dragged up the stairs, entered the sitting-room, and sat down.

The crisis was a singular one.

She knew that up above, in that small room, lay the man whom she loved and who loved her, sunken in a sleep from which he could not be awakened earlier than ten o'clock of the coming night; she knew that yearn, want, hunger as she might, she dared not go to him, for not only the conventional reasons, but many others; she knew that she had not only cut loose from the moorings of trickery and fraud, but that, single-handed, she stood alone on the shore of the world, with only God knowing what the awakening of Eustace North, and the awakening of the whole house would yet mean for her.

Would he outcast her from his heart?

If he did, could she blame him?

If he did, where should she turn?

And—blasting thought that sent the warm young blood shivering like rills of icy water through her veins—should he not awaken, or only awaken to sleep again that longest sleep? For Peggy might have given him too much of the drug. As this new horror scourged her, she swayed and her head swam and she grasped at the air with her empty arms, and fell a-praying the snatches

that came to her to say for him—incoherent, disjointed, but the language of one who wrestled with the Lord, and out of the night of a noisome yesterday, strove to pluck the promise of a blessed to-morrow.

It is meted out to women that they shall do nothing so much, or so well, as wait.

Mary Brown waited.

Until nightfall, when Bartolo came with her dinner on a smart little tray, the Signora thinking in the depths of her kindly soul that the lonely girl would like it best so.

Bartolo paused a moment at the door and tapped his forehead as if trying to remember something.

Ah! oh, yes; he was sure that the Signora had bidden him with a message of respect to the Signorina, to ask if perhaps she knew anything of Mr. North; he had not been seen in the *salle à manger* to-day; he had not even been seen to leave his room or the hotel; did the Signorina know if maybe he had gone out of town?

The Signorina shook her head; she did not speak, but, as Bartolo repeated it to Nuccia and the Signora, he added that she had

become as white as the large platter at that moment being wiped dry by Nuccia's little brown fingers.

The Signora grew grave; she sought the Signor, who, with Latin laughter of good humor, cried out to her,

"You exercise yourself too much! Figure to yourself: it is a young man; perhaps at a ball last night after the experiment, who knows? and resting himself all day after so much dancing."

With which the Signora Mazzoleni was obliged to quiet her excited nerves until ten o'clock, when she could quiet them no longer.

Mary Brown had walked the floor for two hours; she heard them all now as they came; the Signor trod heavily up, reaching the top of the house first; he peeped through the key-hole and gave a grunt of animated discovery.

"The gas burning still; guess I must wake up the young gentleman by this time; I cannot afford the gas burn all day and all night too!" with which the Signor began a vigorous pounding on the door.

No answer came save the resounding, across the square hall, of his own thumps.

Miss Brown stood shuddering against the wall, while the Signora, Bartolo, Niccolo, Errico, and Franco, followed by Nuccia, Mary Flynn, and the cook, cumbered the staircase with their bodies, and the still house with their groans of fear and apprehension.

The Signor kicked manfully, while the Italian's veritable dread of the great destroyer blanched his fat cheeks.

With one final output of all his strength the door gave way, bursting from its lock, and the Signor pushed it open wide.

The two jets flared full; the inmate lay dressed on his bed just as he had fallen, overcome with Madame von Bommelcamp's Maraschino.

Cold?

No; warm.

"Bartolo, run for the doctor across the way!"

The crowd of eager, vital faces press around the narrow bed.

The doctor comes.

Mary Brown creeps part way up, and stops, shivering, outside the door.

The medical man is puzzled, although, of course, he does not say so; he administers some restoratives, orders more, and leaves.

Mary Brown glides down after him; she pulls him into the sitting-room; on her knees she tells him that she knows what the sleeping man has taken, and whispers the name of the drug in his ear.

He looks grave, pledges her the silence she begs for, retraces his steps to the hall-room, gives new directions, and comes down to find her waiting with the awful query on her young lips that must pass every mouth's gate once or more, ere we quit this world:

"Will he get better?"

"I think so; yes."

And then the tears flood her eyes, and, risen up straight, with a firm, beautiful purpose in her face, she climbs the stairs and walks into the little room where he lies, and stands by the bed, and asks the Signora to give her the directions, and let her stop there with Nuccia, and not worry themselves, for she is strong and able, and they have their

duties to-morrow, and she will herself help Nuccia with the dishes the next day, and so on.

So gentle is she, yet so calm and matter-of-fact, that there is nothing to do but her bidding, and they leave, the three together, tip-toeing, human-wise, when him they are so careful for, is in reality the one they would wish to waken—only Bartolo; he crouches outside in the entry, content to watch Nuccia's shadow through the door-chinks.

The night wanes away into the open arms of the morning; the hush of the dawn falls over the night rumble and roar of the great city, and still the sleeper sleeps on, albeit the drops have been laid upon his lips and forced between his shut teeth by the two women.

Mary Brown begins to fear the worst; she has seen the drug administered before, but only dimly heard, and at a distance from the scene, of its workings; and the medical man had said these were different in different constitutions, and that, therefore, if no change came by six o'clock, he must be sent for without fail.

It was five now.

A little rift of sunlight sidled dancing in at the window, fell across the bed-quilt, and in a few moments had travelled quite up to the face of the sleeping man; as it reached his lips Mary Brown crossed over to shut it out, but with its warm kiss Eustace North awoke. She turned and saw his open eyes, and then with a gasp of great joy and sweet maid's shame, she fled away, leaving Nuccia to tell him all she could, and to answer the persistent questions about Miss Brown, whom he was sure he had seen standing at the foot of the bed when he awoke.

Nuccia, instructed by her own wise womanhood, defied and routed all these queries as preposterous dreams, and presently left Mr. North to Bartolo, as she ran downstairs to the kitchen.

When the doctor came over at seven he found a laughing fellow on the top floor, not as vigorous as two days ago, perhaps, but quite himself except for the dizziness that came so easily if he moved too quickly.

The two men had a long chat; it made them fast friends, and at nine they break-

fasted together down in the *salle â manger,* to the great and redundant enthusiasm of both the Signor and the Signora Mazzoleni.

This was Sunday.

By Tuesday even, Eustace North had not yet seen Miss Brown, although he had resorted to all the devices and artifices to which love is heir-at-law.

Mary Brown was suffering from a reaction; and as she sat there alone, comfortless, brooding, all realizations were resolved into the bald fact that she was a woman belonging in one sphere in life, Eustace a man belonging in quite another; that the dream had been sweet as paradise's own garden, but that it was at an end; that the reversal of the common lot, where man is the one to be forgiven and woman the saint who shrives, was not as it should be; that even were he ready to pardon all, she herself could never submit to the ordeal; that indeed no good or happy future could arrive from such a beginning, and so on and on, until her Wednesday's reveries and struggles were interrupted by a commotion.

The fact is, that at this juncture a man

appeared at the Hotel Mazzoleni with a bill for the rental of the Professor von Bommelcamp's piano, which, he declared, being now three months due, must be paid or the instrument removed.

The instrument was removed.

Anon the same thing happened in regard to the sewing-machine.

Thirdly, a picture-dealer bore off in sullen triumph his artistic treasures, not one of which, he averred, had been paid for. Presently the gentleman who dealt in pleasure-carriages put in his note of demand, but here redress was unhappily not forthcoming, for the Signor and the Signorina kept this from Miss Brown as they could not keep other matters.

Two weeks had passed and no word had come from the Professor, who at this present moment was in fact partaking of the genial hospitality of the Hotel Victoria in Geneva, whither his steps had wandered in obedience to the fascinations of a Swiss gentleman of wealth, a watch manufacturer, whose acquaintance, together with that of his family, Peggy had made aboard ship.

Nor had Mr. North yet contrived to see Miss Brown, although he had written her many such letters as brought tears to her poor eyes, and the desolation of a delayed and sadly realized individuality to her spirit. She did not answer them; she only sat still, until one day when the Signor and Signora signified to her, with all the warmth of kindly hearts, that if she would so far discommode herself, there was a room up-stairs, on the floor with the honorable Banker and his wife, where it might please her to be, thus permitting them the chance to rent the apartments, which perhaps the Professor might no longer require.

Thus, with the most perfect grace and goodness, did this worthy couple set their candle on the candle-stick, and not hide it under the bushel of that seductive jade, retaliation.

Miss Brown moved up, and sat down there while Nuccia set out her things and hung up her gowns in the closet, and dusted and chattered and sang, so that the Signorina might not hear what was going on below.

The Signor felt it now to be quite lawful and proper for him to break open the large packing-case, and if it were possible, since Miss Brown had not the address of the Professor, reimburse himself for the two months' board which was his due, by the sale of the Professor's no doubt valuable implements.

Alas! these proved to be but a small collection of paving-stones, packed with care between many newspapers.

The Signor now became wroth and forced the locks of the two large trunks; they were filled with paper-covered novels and aged magazines!

That night the Signor, hitherto discreet to the point of Quixotism, held consultation with the Banker, which resulted in the Banker's seeking Wall Street the next morning, bearing in his hand the fifty shares of the American Slag-Iron Silverite Company, of Brussels and New York, which up to this hour had securely reposed in his safe in Centre Street.

But the Banker never found the New York office of this company, and with fire

and sword in his soul rushed up to the Bank of the Metropolis to discover himself five thousand dollars out, and the man who was in, two weeks ahead of his vengeance.

Terrible was the rage of the Banker; deep were the groans and lamentations, and salt the tears, and wild the execrations of his family; morbid was the wrath and gloom of the Signor; profound the murmurings of the Signora; horrible the concerted threats of the Signor and the Banker, but no one of them all ever thought of such a thing for a moment, as an implication of the girl upstairs there by herself; they even forgot to speak of her at all in the first flush of their discoveries, which goes to show that purity is not dross, nor is even the lily growing solitary on its stalk, though its roots be stuck in mud, the less white; nor the less doth it lift its head upward toward the heavens, thereby lessoning all men that they should do likewise.

At evening of that woful day Eustace North was acquainted with all this, and then and there made up his mind that he could

wait no longer, but must see Miss Brown at once.

He told the Signora so, and she, good soul, arranged her own room in the basement with much folding of shut-up bed, tricking out of antimacassars, pinching of dimity curtains grown slazy, and cherking of paper flowers, so that it might be fit for Mary Brown when she lured her down into it, while Mary Flynn should go up to do the weekly sweeping.

He found her there, sitting staring blankly at the portrait of Pius the Ninth over the mantel.

She did not flush at sight of him, nor rise, nor put out a hand to meet his, but of all these absent civilities Eustace North made nothing, but simply knelt down beside her chair, and wildly hurried out confession of his love, asking for his wife, knowledge of her having been with him on the night of the drugged sleep, and a thousand other things, between kisses on her little cold hands.

She drew away much in the spirit that one buried for dead, released, might have

drawn back the coffin's lid upon the breast; drew away and walked to the window and shook her head.

But Mr. North was not of the calibre to be put off by anything on earth, or out of it either that he had heard of yet, so he crossed over after her, and taking her in his arms held her to his throbbing heart, and pressed such kisses on her little red mouth as she had not known belonged to man to give, or woman to receive.

She began presently to rehearse and recount her past, all of it.

He closed her lips with kisses, sweet as those first ones, and then quickly as men can in crises, summed up all the Professor's career in the Hotel Mazzoleni, and the discoveries made since his departure, in a few terse, final sentences.

"And you want me, the sister-in-law of this man, to be your wife?" falters she. Then, breaking from his protestations and entreaties, she stands up and says: "No; I—I cannot; I could not live under the shame of it, under the dread that others might point at the one who bore your name; under the

cloud of knowing that you knew, that would be worst of all, unbearable."

"Mary," he says, "listen to me. I would rather have you than any woman who breathes."

"Oh, but when a man marries," cries she, "it is not the woman only that he fetches home, it is her past; a man's past lies buried deep, and one expects men to have pasts blurred, maybe; but a woman, she should go to her husband's house with every page a blank, save those written over by his hand," and she turns away wearily.

"Mary," whispers he, shaken body and soul with the sob that a man's wrung heart emits in moments like these. "Mary, my Mary, if there is any fault in me, dear, I will cure it; if there is any wrong in me your hand will make it right, and both fault and wrong there must be if you send me from you for such reasons as you give. Were I the true man I believe myself, you would never think of those old days and ways when I was near you; you would only let me fold you in my arms" (they clasp her gently) "and shut out with them the whole bitter-

ness of it forever; you would find dear rest, so, my darling, and between us there never could arise a question again of past, or shame or sin. My child," as the tired girl sinks to him, "these things have only passed you by, and left you as pure as when you used to sit beside your mother."

Her eyes fill; better than any words can tell her, she knows that truth and honor, safety and sweetness, have found her out at last; that regretting is blotted out of her possible language; and with all that abandonment of which only a restrained nature like hers is capable, she clings to him and receives his caresses.

Two days after, accompanied by the Signor and the Signora, Eustace North and Mary Brown drove over to St. Joseph's Church and were married; they were, neither of them, Roman Catholics, but it seemed to each that nowhere else could they so perfectly plight their faith.

Nuccia and Bartolo were made man and wife directly after them. Mary Brown would have it so, remembering the night-watch they had held together.

There was a wedding-cake in the private dining-room, and the bride, whiter even than her wont, cut it with her own hand, albeit the sole wedding guests were the Signor and Signora, Nuccia, Bartolo, Errico, Nicolo, and Franco, with Mary Flynn and the cook peeping in at the glass door; but there were enough good wishes and good toasts drunk in clear red and white wines both, to have sailed ships in, did lifeboats sail on hopes alone.

There was there, about the small gayly-decked table, with its fruit and flasks, the perfect courtesy which marks the humblest Latin at his best; and Nuccia, in her native Bettola's gala-dress, and Bartolo, sombre as he used to behold the tenor of the opera on the festive occasions of the stage, modest, serene, laughing, urbane, unobtrusive with the rest, did as much honor to the other bride and groom as if they had been their vassals.

Amid some tears, for the Signora wept heartily, much rice, the waving of the American flag, and addios by the dozens, Eustace North and his wife drove away from the gay little Hotel Mazzoleni.

Before the marriage the Banker had accepted Mr. North's note for five thousand dollars, payable in three months, and the Signor Mazzoleni one for all that was due him, as did the gentleman who rented out the pleasure-carriage. Mr. North mortgaged his two little houses in Brookline to meet these liabilities.

The Banker's wife and daughter watched the happy pair get into the coach; the Signorina sighed as she caught the shining light in the bridegroom's eyes, and both ladies put up a prayer for the welfare of the Americans.

The striped awnings still flutter from the windows; the sparrows twitter about the sills; the canary now shrieks in the Signora's room, since it remains sole spoil of the raid of the von Bommelcamps.

Around the corner, in University Place, Nuccia and Bartolo preside over a fruit-stand, and on Sundays they take turns in going to mass.

Yesterday, when Nuccia knelt before the statue of the Blessed Virgin, she saw presently near her, kneeling also, Eustace North

and his bride, just back from their six-months' wedding-tour, and on their faces written a most perfect, sweet, and unutterable happiness and peace.

THE FOREIGNER

THE FOREIGNER

A MARRIED woman friend, with whom I am most intimate, did me the honor to read these reminiscences in manuscript.

"What shall you call it?" she inquired, after some pithy and critical remarks.

"Madam," I replied, "will you not do me the further favor to christen my unworthy sketch?"

"Call it 'The Foreigner,' she said, shaking her white forefinger at me, with, at the same time, a most charming smile. Through these means my manuscript was christened by a most thoroughly appreciative and fascinating woman.

In the early spring of the year 188– I was included, by governmental appointment, in a party sent out by the Emperor's instructions to inspect the prison system of the United States of America. I imagine that my nomination was partly due to my excel-

lent knowledge of the English language, partly to my father having been quite a favorite of his Majesty's (in a small way) in his youth. I had received my father's name, Tancred, in baptism, and thus, rather than by perseverance or pushing, had come under the Emperor's notice.

I am extremely confident that I had neither a natural nor yet an acquired aptitude for the inspection of prisons. But in an age like ours there is, not infrequently, I observe, a peculiar discrepancy between offices and officeholders. However, I recall quite distinctly viewing a great number of jails, with all their paraphernalia of cells, workshops, dining-halls, libraries, places of solitary confinement, etc., etc.; also drawing my not inconsiderable salary; also—this last with singular accuracy, it having been the only obvious reason for my presence as a member of the party—having been requested to sign my name to a certain long document, by a gentleman who was so obliging as to hand me a pen fresh from the ink, and who assured me there was not the remotest necessity for my wearying myself

with a perusal of the report. I thanked him cordially, and a day or so afterward I learned through the columns of a newspaper that "the official report of the committee of gentlemen sent out by special command of the Czar to report on the prison system of America, with a view to its possible adoption by the Russian Government, had gone out that morning by the steamship Bothnia." With this piece of news I was naturally well pleased, as I now was entirely free from the somewhat unpleasant task of visiting prisons, wherein I took no interest, and assuredly was not expected to, by the remaining members of the commission, so far as I could ascertain.

Finding myself thus wholly at leisure, and owing to my foreign name and birth, and the unmistakable evidences of the possession of large wealth, which hovered about me in the form of an efficient valet, some rather remarkable diamonds, and three or four horses of excellent birth; finding myself also considerably sought after by "society," I determined, notwithstanding the attractions of my native land, which

to me were not inconsiderable, to remain in America for at least six months longer. I say America, whereas I mean that focus of Americanisms, the city of New York. I took up my abode at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, although the Brevoort and the Windsor were both strongly recommended to me by Europeans. I instinctively felt that I should stand a much better chance of studying the people at the hotel I had chosen, and likewise I had already been in the country long enough to share with many of its natives, the mysterious influence which the words "Fifth Avenue" seem to carry with them. They give a prestige which appears to inoculate the vulgarian and the aristocrat alike, although the one class is possibly as unconscious of it as the other. I wrote the word "aristocrat" advisedly. In this land of assertive democratic intentions, I have heard more of the claims of the patrician than in any other which it has been my fortune to visit. I find, too, that the circle within the circle is quite as much an institution of American society as it is in that of a kingdom or an empire, and that the core, and pith

and heart of this social pinwheel, is supposed by each coterie to be its own particular property. In short, every woman is her own criterion in matters of etiquette, dress, manner and manners, and there is no such thing as deferring to a superior power, save *en route* to the pinnacle which each aspires to reach; which difference is, after all, perchance, but a form of that singular phase which the Americans call in their vernacular, " toadying."

So far as my limited observation went, it seemed to me that a greater or less degree of circumspection, or discretion was the outward and visible sign of the New York society in which I had the good chance to mingle, and that the inward and spiritual grace was identical.

Be all this as it may, I have to thank the Americans for much liberal hospitality, and certainly to persons of foreign extraction, who at the same time may be accidentally the possessors of large wealth, they are the most singularly obliging people that I have ever encountered.

While still engaged in my capacity of

member of the visiting commission, I had passed a few days at that summer Mecca of the unmarried, the Saratoga Springs, and had there, through the courtesy of one of the members of Congress sojourning at the place for his health, made the acquaintance of several charming ladies. These in turn presented me to a number of their friends, these to theirs, so that at the end of my week at the Grand Union Hotel I found myself in a position to salute some fifty or sixty gracious and cordial women, and with my pocket-book quite full of cards inscribed with the names and residences of these fair dames, the donation of which had been accompanied by pressing invitations to call upon them the ensuing winter in New York.

All this I thought most delightful. It might naturally have been so to any man. But I will confess that the women of a country which I visit for the first time are to me its most interesting features.

I was then at that age—thirty-three—which, from analysis, I conclude to be the most enjoyable to himself and the most

productive of agreeable impressions on the women a man meets. He has not as yet touched the positive of thirty-five—the half of his allotted number of years—and he has left behind him completely the thoughtless, and therefore pointless pleasures of his young youth. At thirty-three I contend that he is in a thoroughly perfect position—other things being equal—for the keenest mental and physical enjoyments, the one set of faculties playing into the hands of the other, and thus rendering him an agreeable companion to himself and one quite as much so to the women with whom he comes in contact.

So, discovering these bits of pasteboard in my portmanteau in October, I remembered the engaging and hospitable ladies I had met in July, and made up my mind to stay in New York during the season.

In an incredibly short space of time I found myself in as complete a vortex of gayety as any healthy man could well desire, and I must say that I enjoyed it most positively. The contrasts between the society I now frequented and those to which I had

hitherto been accustomed, were noted by me with relish, and especially the delicious *abandon* of the ladies: the young and unmarried as well as those of maturer years, and possessed of husbands. This peculiarity of American social life must ever form a theme in the minds of Europeans for amazement and personal admiration. I can assure my gentle reader, that the novelty and delight of such untrammelled intercourse with the young ladies of this nation, was to me a source of refreshing and unmeasured gratification.

At a theatre-party, given by my friend Mrs. Edwin Grantham, I had the pleasure of meeting for the first time a young woman in whose society I have passed, since that never-to-be-forgotten night, many delightful hours.

She was a Miss Bertha Remington, "granddaughter of old Peter Van Brodt," as my hostess kindly informed me, in a loud whisper, by way of prelude to my presentation to her young friend.

"I believe you have not been in this country very long, Mr. Troïtza?"

" No, indeed—that is to say, since April last only."

" And someone says that you are a Russian?"

"I have that honor, for such I consider it, Miss Remington, only second to that of being what you are—an American."

" You were bred in diplomatic circles, I perceive," my new friend says, with a smile, and then surveying me from head to foot with a coolness that instantly suggested to my mind some horrible defect in my toilet, she added, " Well, you are possibly interesting on your own account, but I find you so only through force of association with my school-days at a convent near Paris."

" Indeed," I cry, with more relief than intelligence, perhaps.

" Oh, not you actually, but I had a schoolmate, a Russian, whom I liked and patronized quite a little, and since or before, you are the only Russian whom I have ever met. By the bye, I believe I will write to the little woman. I left her last letter unanswered a year and more ago."

" Is that the way you treat your friends,

Miss Remington?" I exclaim, with a certain sentimental glance down into her blue eyes, which has done me a great deal of service as *avant courrier* in several little, flirtations shall I say?

There is a time, we say in Russia, when every servant, however faithful, proves defective. That unpleasant moment had arrived for me and my sentimental glance.

Miss Remington regards me with an astonished and supercilious disapproval, and then vouchsafes to speak.

"I am not aware that I said that your *compatriote* was a friend of mine."

"You said that you liked her, if I am not mistaken," I answer, being obliged to retreat through sheer amazement at the failure of my ally, the sentimental glance.

"I like a variety of people, but I am quite sure that they are not my friends."

"That, then, must be solely your own fault," I return, with a weak attempt at implied flattery.

"I agree with you, and shall not attempt to twist your words to my own disadvantage,

which might very easily be done, by the bye."

"You would not be so cruel, I am sure."

As I say this, for the first time since my arrival in this singular country, I think myself a consummate fool. And I judge from the expression of my new friend's face that she is occupied in thinking the same thing.

Miss Remington preserves silence during the next act, while I devote myself to the pretty young lady who was provided for me at the beginning of the evening. When the curtain once more descends, I find myself gravitating toward the corner where Miss Remington sits, having left my pretty young lady with two young gentleman visitors, one of whom twisted a curl around his finger surreptitiously, I presume, while the other fed her very nicely with sugar-plums.

I look at Miss Remington and Miss Remington looks at me. I think that she is very different from the American young ladies whom I have had the honor of associating with for the past two months. She appears to possess all their *sang-froid,* and yet there is a species of repression about her that is

unusual in cultivated circles in this country. In fact one might almost say that Miss Remington was a trifle " shy," without intending to be abusive, I assure you, my gentle reader. Suddenly I felt that it would be best for me to plunge *in medias res,* and that probably this young woman would not make that objection to an absence of sentiment that her sisters appeared to.

" Miss Remington, will you condescend to tell me what would constitute a passport to friendship in your estimation? "

" I hardly think I could reduce it to a neat sentence," she replies, with a grave smile.

" You are extremely clever," I say, with an honest impulse; " will you, then, deign to tell me if you think I could be a friend in your acceptation of the word? "

" Undoubtedly you could "—my face becomes radiant, I am certain—" to some one or other; " and I am conscious that my iridescence suffers a change that perchance is less jubilant in appearance.

" Can you tell me," I for the third time say, with a vague idea that I am degenerat-

ing into a catechist, "what my idea of a friend is?"

She smiles. "One, Mr. Troïtza, who will partake so far of the nature of your enemy that he will stoop to flatter you. Your idea of a friend is very much like that of the rest of my acquaintances." She speaks a little wearily.

"I protest!"

"Do not. I assure you I am utterly indifferent to your ideas upon almost any subject." I am so imbued with the spirit of the country as to mildly wonder if Miss Remington is acquainted with the figures of my income, but I compose my feelings and once more call to my aid an old ally.

"You classed me just now"—and I bend upon her a pair of eyes that I know are exceedingly handsome and caressing when they will so to be—"among your acquaintances. Ah, Miss Remington, will you not let me hope one day, not distant, to enroll myself among your friends?"

I expect that Miss Remington will draw from her pocket a dainty perfumed card and invite me to call, but she does nothing of that

kind. A laughing fairy leaps into each of her blue eyes, and she says instead, with a glance the feminine counterpart of my own:

"Would not you prefer to be one of my admirers, Mr. Troïtza?"

"That I am already," I reply; but at the same time I feel an unaccustomed and disheartening chill, which frequently assails a person who thinks himself laughed at.

"Will you permit me the honor to call upon you?" I enjoy and plunge into this new sensation without forethought; Miss Remington is the first lady who has been kind enough to accord me such an opportunity since my arrival in America.

"I will."

"Will you give me, then, your residence, Miss Remington?"

She does so verbally, having evidently forgotten to bring with her her card-case.

And then the curtain goes up once more and I return dutifully to my pretty young lady.

Mrs. Grantham's theatre-party had occurred on Tuesday evening. The following Monday I had called upon Miss Rem-

ington, but was informed that she was not at home.

Friday I had promised to Mrs. Van Blarcom, a very agreeable lady, whose husband, Mrs. Grantham told me, had begun life as a carpenter, thence a builder, and was now a large and successful real estate owner. Mrs. Grantham, I fancied, implied a suspicion of scorn in her tone. But then, this must have been imagined by me, because Mrs. Van Blarcom informed me that Mrs. Grantham, in early life, had, with the most praiseworthy tact, assisted her young husband in his bakeshop, although now that Mr. Van Blarcom was the head of a large sugar importing house, his wife, with a spirit of unusual and admirable modesty, would not permit her virtues in connection with the bakeshop to be mentioned in her presence.

So it is in this country; each person seems to be thoroughly conversant with the immediate pedigree of his neighbor, and to think it no trouble whatever to impart the same to the foreign traveller.

I have observed that a grandfather is con-

sidered a very great item in this country, and that, comparatively speaking, there are but few families possessing those agreeable relatives. I mean in this wise. That upon offering to introduce me to any ladies, my various hostesses have so frequently been in the habit of saying, " Miss So-and-so, her grandfather was so-and-so, you know! " that finally I became so interested with regard to this piece of information, that upon one of those occasions, when it was omitted, I ventured to inquire as to the grandfather in this particular case.

My hostess laughed and said, " Oh, Mr. Troïtza, it is not everybody in this country who has a grandfather—and when they have you are very sure to hear of it. If you really wish to know about this young lady's, I suppose I must tell you—he kept an eating-house."

My informant here indulged in laughter, but I was not able to join in her mirth. I was too seriously relieved by learning that my new acquaintance really had had an actual ancestor. It afterward occurred to me that it seemed to be those persons whose

grandfathers had been engaged in some vulgar or common business whose grandfathers were omitted in the pre-introductory code.

On Friday evening I found myself in Mrs. Van Blarcom's handsome drawing-rooms, and very soon after my entrance I was surrounded by seven or eight pretty young women, most richly and elegantly dressed. I wished myself seven or eight Tan Troïtzas for their sweet sakes. But it did not, after all, seem to make the slightest difference to them, for they were kind enough to appear to enjoy my society in a party quite as much as though I had been so fortunate as to have been *en tête-à-tête* with each. They used a peculiar nervous laugh, called " giggling," considerably, and indulged in a great many remarks, *sotto voce,* too, which I took, as I presume it was intended that I should, as a mark of their intimate feelings toward me. For, of course, except in cases of perfect familiarity, this tone is never used.

They also were so obliging in their compliments as to quite overpower me.

" Ah, Mr. Troïtza, you have such divine

eyes!" sighed one of these lovely young ladies; "the photo that you gave me hangs right over my lounge, and I keep violets under it always."

"I have the one you gave me in my watch-case," exclaimed another; "see!"

Covered with a certain kind of confusion, I looked at my counterfeit presentment.

What pleased me most in reflecting upon these little episodes was the charming frankness and ingenuousness of these lovely girls. To other tourists in this country these ebullitions of sentiment may have seemed to merit harsh language. To me they were so many evidences of the purity of the national school of manners, although my own prejudices—merely the result of education and habit—forbade my indulging in any dreams that my own young countrywomen might one day regulate themselves by a like standard.

While suffering from the embarrassment caused by these flattering syrens, I caught sight of Miss Remington at the other end of the room, and with one of those murmurs which says nothing and everything, and a

bow, I left my pleasant young friends. One can do thus in this delightful American society. The ladies are so conciliating and so far from exacting that it really seems to a man, after a sojourn among them, that he has conferred a favor by his presence, and need not apologize for his departure. But then this is, of course, far from being the fact—it is only a fascinating way they have—these fascinating ladies!—of making one feel what they call "at home." I do not, however, remember ever to have felt in this way at home. But then, my memory is probably not as retentive as it might be.

Miss Remington receives me affably, civilly regrets having been out at the time I called, and at once presents me to a lady who sits beside her, and whom I have noticed pulling convulsively at Miss Remington's sleeve once or twice pending our little colloquy.

"Mrs. Fisher," I exclaimed, bending low over the lady's hand, which she graciously extends to me, "I am happy in meeting you."

"Ah, Mr. Troïtza, 'tis I who am happy;

I came here expressly to-night because dear Mrs. Van Blarcom told me you would be among her guests. I have so longed to know you; I have heard so much of you!"

"Madame!"

I execute a salaam intended to convey the deepest sensibility of this lady's condescension.

"Of course, you've never heard of *me*."

There is a bewitchingly infantile intonation about this which instantly causes me to ransack my memory for a "grandfather." But do what I will, I can recall none in connection with my new acquaintance.

"Of course he has heard of you, Mrs. Fisher; how absurd!"

Miss Remington makes this assertion with calmness.

Again I bow; this time it is meant to express assured recollection, and I say:

"Madame's grandfather was—" I glance appealingly at Miss Remington; can it be that she smiles behind her fan? at Mrs. Fisher! Ah, it is evident that the lady's grandfather belongs to that class whose ashes are permitted to rest in peace.

"Is it possible, Mr. Troïtza, that you have never heard of Maud Madeline Fisher, the poetess?" inquires Miss Remington, in tones of amazement, although there is a very singular light in her eyes.

I have not; but what does that signify in a case of this kind.

"Is it possible! have I the honor of addressing one of the sweetest song-birds of this dear country?" I perform still one more bow, hoping it may convey sufficient homage to atone for all my shortcomings.

"Oh—h—h! you flatterer, flatterer, flatterer!" Mrs. Fisher shakes her fingers at me and taps my arm with her fan in the most playful manner.

"Now tell me," she adds, drawing her chair somewhat nearer to mine, and assuming a confidential attitude, "which of my poems, that you have seen, do you like the best? I always ask every new person that question, and then I can form some idea, judging from their preference, of their character and spirit—now tell me?" with more taps on my arm, and an arch glance into my eyes.

This is a climax which I had not foreseen, and I am, moreover, chagrined to observe that Miss Remington has turned from me and is smiling joyously at her own pleasant thoughts, doubtless.

"Madame," I reply, "where all is so beautiful how can you be so cruel as to ask me to express a choice?" I bend upon the poetess that devotional glance to which Miss Remington took silent exception. In this case I am happy to record it did its usual execution, and the lady bridled and sidled in a way that was most kittenish and becoming, although she was a trifle inclined to *embonpoint*.

"You naughty, naughty Russian! to try and make poor little me conceited! Ah, I knew the moment that I gazed into those eyes of yours that I had met a kindred spirit!"

"Who is the flatterer now?" I cry, relieved incredibly to find my companion has deserted the realm of actual poetry, although I momentarily wondered where lay the connection between the fact of my being a "naughty Russian" and a "kindred spirit."

"Now, did you like that 'Dreamland' that I had in last week best, or the 'Tangled Threads' in this, Mr. Troïtza?"

Alas! I was chained to the muse and could not escape.

"Shall I be candid?"

"Do—do be so; there is nothing I admire so much as candor."

"Well, I must say, then, that to me there was a peculiar charm in the measures of the 'Tangled Threads!'" How devotedly I wished that I knew what they were!

"How delicious! I like it best, too! Ah, Mr. Troïtza, I feel in the inmost recesses of my soul that in you I have met a being who can comprehend the far heights and the shady ravines of my spirit; we poets have not natures like other mortals; we are made of a finer clay—a clay that responds to the most aërial touch, and is molded even by the whispering wings of fairies as they flutter by us. Now to many I should hesitate to express myself in this manner. But to you I feel that I can pour out the treasures of my intellect and my heart; to you I can speak freely of the prisoned *ego* that beats

its pinions wildly against the bars of the vulgar and prosaic world, and that sings its softest notes to one like yourselves moulded in the true poetic vein!"

Can I resist the pleading of those Sappho-like orbs? No! I throw myself into the situation with utter abandonment.

"Ah, how blessed am I, Mrs. Fisher, in having met you! What words can describe to you the pleasure I experience in listening to you? If this be your prose, what must be your poetry!"

"Why, you know; you have seen it."

There is a—shall I say—sharpness in the poetess' tone which at once reveals to me that she is perhaps not altogether a dweller in the clouds.

"True, true," I exclaim, hurriedly, "that 'Tangled Threads'—exquisite—lovely!"

"Then you do not think me too enthusiastic? You will come and see me?" Mrs. Fisher produces the card.

"Can you doubt it?"

"Mr. Troïtza, will you tell me the time, please? Half-after ten? oh, I am so thoughtless! Ever since I lost my poor

dear lamb, I am not fit to take care of myself!"

"A pet lamb, I suppose?" I say, with the most ardent sympathy. "You must miss it sadly."

"I meant my husband, Mr. Troïtza—my dear departed darling, whose baby and pet I was—he was so much older than I."

"I beg ten thousand pardons; so young and already a widow!" I gaze in a sort of dazed incredulousness at the lady, finding this my only means of escape from my mistake. "You have my entire sympathy."

"I am sure of it, and yet"—there is a coy reluctance in the poetess' voice—"suppose I were to test you, now?"

"Test me, I entreat you!"

"Ah, well, then"—at this moment a lady whom I afterward learned also writes verses, and fashions sweeps by us—"you may take me home, Mr. Troïtza, if you insist."

I learn for the first time that a "test" is a convertible term into almost anything.

I express alacrity and delight, and drive the poetess to her door, where she fully com-

pensates me by a tender pressure of my hand. I then drive to the Manhattan Club House, where I have appointed to meet some friends.

Since my advent in America I have met a great many ladies, *ça va sans dire,* most beautiful, most winning, most fascinating and most wealthy, but there were only two who specially interested me—these were Miss Remington and Mrs. Fisher. I took them to be, whether erroneously or no can only be proven to me by a longer residence in this country, types of two distinct classes of women to be met with only in America. The classes are many, but from among them I elected these two for particular study; the younger a specimen of the clever and intellectual, the elder a representative of the emotional and literary; for I do not subscribe to that interpretation of the two words, intellectual and literary, which makes them interchangeable.

The literary lady permeates the society of New York thoroughly. And as it was a phase of development that I had never seen, I desired to cultivate a more intimate

acquaintance with it than casual meetings in drawing-rooms would permit.

Mrs. Fisher appeared to me to embody all the most salient features of the *genus* to which she belonged, and she, moreover, did me the honor to smile upon me and my researches into the American female heart.

It is a little remarkable, that between so large a body as the literary ladies of America —I mean literary-society ladies—constitute, there should be such a lack of good feeling. It is absolutely not uncommon to hear them designate each other's verses as "trash," while, however, they perhaps in part atone for this lack of praise for their neighbor's productions, by the lavish meed of admiration they bestow upon their own. So long as a balance of favorable criticism is maintained, I presume, after all, it matters not exactly in what way it is obtained.

They also are extraordinarily generous in describing their works to persons like myself, strangers to the country, and I have been, occasionally in the course of one evening, so fortunate as to receive the sources of inspiration for their latest poems from five

different ladies. Likewise, they frequently read their compositions at evening receptions. And I have noticed that at these times, although loud in their expressions of delight to the obliging inspired one, they invariably give vent to the contrary opinions not five minutes afterward.

I called upon Mrs. Fisher and found her in the midst of her labors. She was inditing a lullaby, of which she favored me with a few stanzas. That was my first visit. I called upon her subsequently very frequently, and each time became more and more interested in this engaging woman.

Miss Remington, the direct opposite of my poetic friend, I also contrived to see a good deal of, and became quite as much occupied with her as with my poetess. I remarked that Miss Remington was clever; she was; her mind was quite an original one, and there was a freshness about her which I appreciated all the more as it presented a marked contrast to the staleness of some other ladies whom I knew. I have also said that she was intellectual; she was; she had been endowed with a brain, and she

also had been gifted with those unusual qualifications which permitted her to use it. She was not in the least executive, but she was eminently suggestive. She neither played, sang, recited, wrote poems, painted, nor did embroideries, yet she presented to my mind the picture of a woman capable of suffering much, loving more, and worth a large amount of investigation.

I encountered in New York any number of Maud Madeline Fishers, but very few Miss Remingtons.

Another pair of causes which largely enlisted my attention in behalf of these two ladies, was this: while Mrs. Fisher conferred upon me the sensation of constantly desiring to elude her, Miss Remington bestowed upon me an equal assurance that she was continually escaping me. Thus, thanks to these two charming women, I experienced, in passing from the society of one to that of the other, all the pleasures of the chase, both those of the huntsman and those of the game.

I sent flowers, fruits, bonbons, books, to Miss Remington, and always found them

lying about the drawing-room when I next called. It would have pleased me far more had she adorned her own room with these slight tokens of my regard. Mrs. Fisher almost always suggested to me various little nothings that she would " so like to have," and with the most ingenuous grace would stop in our walks to exclaim over the beauty of this, that, or the other in the shop windows. I had persuaded Miss Remington to go with me to the Park a few times, and to the opera, and the poetess had experienced no difficulty whatever in presenting to my mind the delights of theatres, Delmonico's, etc., etc.

" You are a singularly undemonstrative woman!" I said to Miss Remington, one day, when she had said, " How do you do? " to me, in her customary fashion, with no cordial additions.

" Do you think so? "

" I most certainly do."

" And why? "

" I judge from my observations."

" Ah! " She uplifts her very handsome eyebrows. " It seems to me those may be called limited."

" Not at all. I have seen you very frequently, and "—such women as Miss Remington, do they or do they not know the peculiar temptations they present to a man of my temperament?—" this little hand "—I take it in mine—" never has deigned to greet me with a single welcoming pressure during all these six months that I have known you."

She raises her eyes to mine with that dangerous look in them that I have seen only once before, but her tone is very quiet as she inquires:

" Why should it? "

" Why should it? " I echo, in an irritated manner; " because I think I deserve a little more than all the other men whom you know."

" Why? "

" Because my powers of appreciation are very much keener," I respond, after something of a pause, as I raise her hand toward my lips.

She withdraws it, short of its goal, however, rapidly but gracefully.

" Why may I not kiss your hand? " I ask, petulantly.

" Because just now I am not in need of a new sensation."

" Would it be a new sensation? Has no man ever pressed his lips upon that little morsel of unmelted snow?" I point to her hand and ask the question for the reason that I hope that it will arouse her. I confess that I would like to see Miss Remington's feelings emerge from their retirement.

" No man."

" Is it possible! Why not?"

" Because I fancy that I should not like the contact."

" Fancy! then you do not know. You would like it! A woman with your eyes and mouth craves admiration and devotion, and must therefore necessarily like the outward expressions of these."

She flushes slightly.

" Granting your proposition, merely for the sake of argument, did you never find that the ecstacy of a mental emotion far exceeded its physical expression?"

" Never. I have tried it; but you," I say softly, " acknowledge that you have never tested my philosophy."

She remains silent and motionless, having that rare trait among American young ladies, the power of letting her hands lie quietly, without engaging them with chains or bracelets, or convenient ribbons and curls.

"Extraordinary woman!" I say at last, as I lean back in my chair opposite to her and survey her. "You are unlike any other of your countrywomen that I have met."

"I believe I will try your 'philosophy,' as you call it. Mr. Troïtza, you may kiss my hand, and I promise to describe at once to you any raptures that the operation may produce in me." She extends it toward me, and I press my lips down upon the bit of cool flesh, certainly with extremely different sensations from any similar case in my career.

"Well?" I bend my eyes fully upon her lovely face.

"Well," she returns, quickly, "I am waiting for the advent of bliss—Ah, Mr. Troïtza!" she laughs mirthfully, "you find my society interesting and agreeable principally because I am unlike most of the other

women you have met lately, and yet you have done your best to make me as much their counterpart as possible. Man, man, you sigh for a saint, and when you find one you make terrible haste to convert it into a sinner!"

"How is it possible," I cry, "that you are so totally diverse in character from Mrs. Fisher, we will say? The same surroundings, the same education, society; governing impulses and aims must be identical in a given age in the same land; the spirit of the time is upon you both, and yet you alone of all the women I have encountered here, are—what you should be! Why is it?"

"You forget that there is still left in the world individuality, and besides," Miss Remington says, with a slight retrospective smile, "my educational surroundings and advantages were wholly different from many others. Mr. Troïtza," she says, turning her full sweet eyes upon me, "do not imagine because you have been so unfortunate as to meet a few silly women in New York society, that the nation is lacking in a substratum of sound and earnest and culti-

vated ones; it is an idea that too many foreigners run home with; it has its foundation"—I agree with Miss Remington as Mrs. Fisher suddenly occurs to my mind—"beyond a doubt; but as you have done me the honor to say that I am unlike others you have known in my country, rest assured that I am not by any means the rarity you suppose."

She thus always withdraws me, by a subtle and beneficent spell, from the region of the sentiments and gives me something to think of, instead of something to feel, as most of her sex are too prone to do.

"Can you tell me," I cry, taking in the haughty and high-bred grace of her *tout ensemble*, "if there is such a thing as an aristocracy here? All the classes of your society ascribe its prerogatives and presence to themselves, but does the *ignis fatuus* absolutely exist in America?"

Miss Remington looks a little grave and pauses slightly before replying.

"In the broad and flagrant sense of a class who can trace back an honorable, moneyed, educated, and cultured lineage for some hun-

dreds of years, emphatically no. We have no such class in America, nor do I think we will ever have. The travelled and cultivated men of yesterday have not the means to confer like benefits upon their sons; the rich man of last year leaves the poor successor of this; ours is essentially a country of ups and downs, Mr. Troïtza. There is very little stability in our social or political system. This, no doubt, affords my coachman's child the possibility of a seat in the presidential chair. It, no doubt, makes all men equal, or indulges them in the fancy of supposing they are, which amounts to the same thing in the end; but it also deprives us of the barest prospect of ever attaining to the possession of a pure and perfect and intelligently cultured class, which should be worthy the name aristocracy."

"Thank you," I say, earnestly. "But, Miss Remington, you remarked 'in the broad and flagrant sense.' Now, you had some reservation there, may I not know it?"

"Well, yes, if you wish," with a smile. "But, Mr. Troïtza, you must remember that

I am no authority; I only look out on the world from my corner, and with not a very strong intellectual lens. Do not run back to Russia and quote me."

"Precisely what I shall do—but I wait."

"I think that we have an aristocracy, although it is a very narrow and almost an indefinable one. Its members are scattered over the entire country, perhaps seldom meet, but they know each other when they do; an aristocracy whose claim is based upon the foundation of cleanness of spirit, uprightness of action, innate refinement, natural intelligence and intelligent culture, gentle breeding, and gracious behavior."

"You are princess royal of that small kingdom," I say, rising and extending my hand. "Thank you very much, Miss Remington; I always leave you, I think, with the feeling that I experience after walking in green fields on a fresh spring day—that I have had good done me."

Last Tuesday Mrs. Fisher insinuated to me, in the most delicate manner possible, that she thought a moonlight sleigh-ride in the Park would be the most delightful thing

possible. As the fair poetess had several, not to say many times before, conveyed her ideas upon this subject to me, I felt that it would be unkind to delay the fulfilment of her wishes any longer than this Friday. Accordingly I drove up to her house at nine o'clock, and although she appeared to consider the hour somewhat late, I assured her that the moon was but just arisen, and that the heavenly beauty of the night was perfect.

We sped up the avenue and into the broad and beautiful drives of the Park, where the tall, bare branches of the trees, outlined against the dark March sky, glistened with their burden of newly fallen snows.

"This is delicious!" We were scudding along at a rapid pace over the broad Boulevard, and my spirits—I would humbly confess my "bad" spirits—rose with the inspiration of the keen and magnetic air.

"With a woman like you at his side, Mrs. Fisher, a man might be contented to go on thus forever."

"Oh, Mr. Troïtza, you make me think sometimes such strange, strange things."

The poetess glances shyly up into my face.

"Not unpleasant things, I trust?" I reply, without removing my steadfast gaze from her.

"No, no, happy things; your speech at times leads me into a region where the joy-bells ring out their sweetest, where my soul breathes its native atmosphere once more!"

"And what was its native atmosphere?" I inquire, tenderly.

"Ah, inquisitor!"—Mrs. Fisher beats my hand playfully with her sealskin muff. "An atmosphere of poesy, romance, ideality. Do you know I live in a realm of rhyme, Mr. Troïtza, where all is heavenly harmony and where but seldom the harsh voices of the outer world can penetrate! 'Tis true I go into society, but it is only to please my friends—while in the glare and glitter and false show, I am not of it; and when a tone like yours mixes its music with that of my reveries, it seems as if the Hebe-cup of bliss were full!"

"Ah, you are so kind to me," I murmur in a pathetic and unworthy tone. "See, the

moon is yonder, high in the heavens; but of all the mortals upon whom she shines to-night, none so happy as I!"

Maud looks at me as though perchance a dim wonder forced itself upon her, as to why I did not still further pursue the rosy path of pleasure. But she said:

"What time is it, Mr. Troïtza? I fear me, I am forgetting all earthly things in this sweet and beneficent communion; to think," she adds, with a little innocent laugh, "that a Russian! a denizen of that far, fascinating land, should—"

"It is a quarter to one o'clock only," I interrupt softly, tightening my reins.

"What! a quarter to one, and I out in the wide country with—with anyone!" gasps the poetess convulsively.

"With me," I murmur, in gentlest accents; "would not the beautiful winter's night pass quickly enough away for us, flying thus with the wind in our wake?"

"Take me home! take me home! Dear Mr. Troïtza, what will all my friends say? I entreat you to turn the horses!"

Strange that my demoralized lips frame

themselves into a smile of singular mirth as the poetess wrings her hands.

"Oh, why go home when this exquisite lady-moon invites us out? In what better or more delightful way could the entire night be spent than thus—and then to watch the sun rise over those pale, cold hills—and a turn down through the Park again, and breakfast at Delmonico's?"

"No, no, never! Ah, Tancred!" The plump arms of Mrs. Fisher are cast wildly about my throat. "Do not ask this of me—this wild, erratic performance! ask aught else—my love, my heart—they are already yours—but take me home!"

"I thought you would enjoy it so very much," I exclaim, sorrowfully, as I turn around. "It seems that I was mistaken; ah, well!"

"Not mistaken; oh, no, Tancred! no, no, I only dread the anger of my sister; you were only mistaken with regard to this staying out all night driving on the Boulevard, that is all."

"I imagined that your dreamy, poetic nature would have revelled in such an open de-

fiance of the fiats of the prosaic world. But I see too plainly my error, and can only crave forgiveness," I reply, dejectedly.

"Forgive you with all my heart! Have I not, in a moment of unguarded weakness," the poetess says, regarding me anxiously, "told you the secret of my heart?"

"'Twas but your sweet magnanimity, Mrs. Fisher; let me learn in exile the hard fate I have brought upon myself."

"Never!" cries Maud Madeline, with more firmness than I had ever given her credit for.

"Yes, I am unworthy; I will prove it to you."

"Impossible!" clasping my arm with both fat hands.

"Nay, but too true. Listen. In the Etruria, which is to arrive next week, I expect a friend. I ask you, as an especial favor, to accompany me to welcome that friend. And then, if, after that meeting—if after you have once seen that other Russian you still preserve these tender sentiments for this one, why, then—"

"Ah, tyrant, you desire to test me," she

exclaims, gayly and coyly. "But what an absurd test! the mere sight of a man! You realize the ridiculousness of it so well yourself that that is the very—"

"Reason why I am so willing to stand it," I finish, with a genuine laugh. "But here we are; you have a night-key? No! But your maid awaits you—ah, so fortunate! Good-night, fair poetess, and sweetest dreams!"

"Of thee!" Mrs. Fisher's maid is evidently sleepy and takes an uncommonly long time to unlock the door, thereby causing an awkward pause between her mistress and myself. I fancy, no doubt without the slightest foundation, however, that Maud Madeline is filled with a variety of conflicting emotions—such as triumph, dread of her friend's anger, gentle wonder at the non-demonstrativeness of her attendant. I dare not call myself her lover; it would be such a vast stretch of the truth—and tremulous hope that at least one kiss may be left upon her chaste poetic brow; and then the door opens, and I consign Mrs. Fisher to the care of the drowsy servant.

The heart of man is very perverse. I remember laughing so immoderately while driving my horses down to their stable as to cause a policeman to stare and question me. And through all my other thoughts crept the hope that Mrs. Fisher would encounter at no time in her career a more playful native of Russia than myself. I also fancied that perchance, even should she, she would studiously avoid what are commonly called "hints." However, there was a warm corner in my memory for her—of course there was! Must not it ever be so with any man for the woman who guilelessly tells him that she loves him, even although a demon—it must be a demon!—whispers to him that she loved him to that degree that all his possessions, money, lands, jewels, and horses were almost as dear, if not a little dearer, to her than he.

The heart of man is most perverse. I spent the greater part of the following Sunday morning in reflecting upon Miss Remington, who had been so gracious as to go to Wallack's with me the night previous, and in endeavoring to find out why I was so dis-

satisfied with her. I admired her immensely, but at the same time could it be possible that I would have been better pleased had Miss Remington felt and acted toward me as had done her friend, Mrs. Fisher?

Now, not only is the heart of man perverse, but it is froward and above all things loving unto itself. It wounded my pride to think that Miss Remington had never betrayed a spark of feeling in my presence—and although I worshipped her integrity and her ladyhood, I was very much dissatisfied with my ill-success. Which facts go to prove, my gentle reader, that I was a mediocre man; one of that enormous class who help to make silly women more silly, who are not worthy to associate with women of Miss Remington's calibre. They, no matter how long the intercourse, are still, at its close as much on the alert for the woman's defection as they were at its beginning; fit only to flutter about drawing-rooms and pass away unheeded. And yet, Miss Remington could always find her way to my intellect, and therefore I must have had one. She carried me out of my self-consciousness

and lifted me into a realm of light; but I could not live there as a continuance any more than I could have comfortably subsisted on Mrs. Fisher's adoration of my bank-notes.

There was another atmosphere still in which I breathed with completer pleasure.

I sent Mrs. Fisher a handsome watch and chain on Monday, thinking that under the circumstances it was no more than that lady's due. It was but a meagre return for all the entertainment she had been generous enough to bestow upon me during my acquaintance with her; all the insight she had afforded me of the workings of the feminine heart in this dear country. I found it and its workings—a very singular thing to relate—almost identical in America with its condition in other civilized lands.

Miss Remington also was so kind as to go to the Fifth Avenue Theatre with me on Tuesday evening, and I had, perhaps, never seen her more animated or more charming.

On Wednesday I received a dispatch from my friend on board the Etruria, and accordingly, post haste, drove for Mrs. Fisher.

Very soon we were approaching the crowded wharf where the steamship lay. In a few moments we were on deck, Mrs. Fisher clinging tenderly to my arm, and looking up into my face with an expression which I felt to be indicative of possessive interest, while I scanned the crowds for the countenance of my friend.

I could not seem to become fortunate in my search, but, lo! instead, I beheld the graceful and elegant figure of Miss Remington. She bowed charmingly, advanced toward us, and with that odd, dangerous glint in her blue eyes, she spoke:

"Good-morning, Mrs. Fisher! good-morning, Mr. Troïtza. Ah, you see I have been before you; I have been here, or rather there," pointing to the saloon, "for half an hour. You remember my mentioning my Russian schoolmate to you, Mr. Troïtza?" —I bow and smile, or try to—at that particular moment I begin to grow impatient of seeing my *compatriote,* from whom I have now been separated for almost one year— "Well, she has arrived. Mr. Troïtza, shall I not take you to your wife?" Miss Rem-

ington is spared the trouble. My darling little " friend " comes toward me with both her arms extended.

" His wife ! " shrieks Mrs. Fisher, and fortunately, at the same moment, a steam-whistle performs the same feat. The poetess shrinks from my side, and then recovers herself sufficiently to be presented to Madame Troïtza, and also, to partake of a most substantial luncheon, a little later.

" You would not rob that charming little woman of her husband ? " I say tenderly to Maud, when a fitting opportunity occurs.

She laughs as she tastes her partridge, and taps my arm once more so playfully with her muff.

Beyond any doubt, when I told Miss Remington that she was an " extraordinary woman," I spoke the profoundest truth.

The Russians are an almost proverbially diplomatic, secretive, and deceptive race, but this young American had exceeded by far my wildest conceptions of the *savoir faire* of her country. When I reflect upon her chances of losing her secret, I am wrapt in amazement that any well-regulated

woman should have failed to make use of them. When I recall her exquisite tact and delicate honorableness in dealing with me, I am ready to prostrate myself before her, and to divide the society of my wife with her, which I am obliged to do, for Zchica is extremely fond of Miss Remington—Zchica, who has so condescendingly baptized these records of my only disloyalties to her white standard.

TWO OF A KIND AND THE JOKER

TWO OF A KIND AND THE JOKER

SMITH and Ferradaile met at the corner of Thirty-fourth Street and the Avenue; Smith was coming down, Ferradaile was going up; both looked radiant, each after his kind. Smith being a half-score years the older, bore an air of added repression, while a new light shone in the depths of his eyes. Ferradaile, who was barely twenty-seven, walked an inch taller than commonly, and squared his shoulders more than usually; he had an enormous bunch of violets in his buttonhole, he swung his cane with a gentle swagger, and his smile was so very obvious that each woman he met felt positive he was seeking her acquaintance.

"How are you, old chappie!" he cried, seizing Smith's hand and wringing it with

that warmth which would seem to include the whole world-full of men in its heartiness.

"Famously, my boy; and you?" returned the older man, whose grasp, strange to say, whether from force of infection or no, savored very much, too, of the wholesale cordiality which is usually born of that ephemeral spiritual essence called "happiness."

"I say," exclaimed Ferradaile, "turn around and walk up to the Windsor and dine with me. I haven't seen you for a good bit; where have you been? Come!" linking his arm in Smith's.

"No," replied the older, "you come down with me and take potluck; it will be a deuced deal cozier. I haven't seen you for an age. Come!" turning Ferradaile southward.

In a few minutes they reached the Cumberland.

Smith's man, a treasure, nominally valet, but one of those occasional jewels who could do almost anything and who in reality was the very efficient major-domo of Phil Smith's studio bachelor ménage—Smith's

man then opened the door of the apartment for them and drew aside the tiger skins which did duty as portières to the most luxurious painting-room in town.

"Mr. Ferradaile dines with me, Bingham," Smith said, carelessly. "Give us something uncommonly nice; and by the way serve it in here, and with candle-light."

As Bingham bowed, his master added:

"It's too infernally warm for the electric flare—or I say, Bobby, do you want it?"

"Anything suits me, my dear fellow; I—'pon my soul! if it were a rush-light or the sun, it's all the same to me!"

Ferradaile, as he relinquished his hat and cane to the amiable Bingham, glanced around the incomparable room with its exquisite moresque ceiling, its marvellous hangings, and its incalculable treasures from all the four, and the other unnumbered, quarters of the globe.

Conglomerate as it was, there was a perfection about the details which insured a harmony in the whole, lulling to the senses and sympathetic to a surprising degree with the young man's present mood.

As the twilight waned into a rose-blue mist, thrilling in at the southern windows, with the wind from the bay all sweet with the carnations and heliotropes growing blithely in their pots on the sills; as Bingham lighted the candles in their silver sconces bracketed about the walls, silently, too, laying his cloth and silver and glass and that, Ferradaile's eyes followed Smith as the master walked lazily up and down the long room, smoking. The younger man had refused a cigar, with a smile that argued a secret superiority to the weed and its allurements.

Smith, however, smoked and blew the greater clouds of incense as he passed and repassed in his saunterings, the big easel in a certain corner. It had a picture on it, that was clear, for the square of the canvas showed through the draperies of some Eastern stuff that shimmered over it.

"What's up?" Smith asked, stopping short before his guest. "Bobby, I never knew you to decline a regalia before in my life."

"It's before dinner, Phil," laughed the boyish fellow, lazily. "I'll spoil your menu

if I put such a cigar as that between my lips now."

"I've seen you ruin many a better meal than this will be, before to-day—don't be unsocial and stupid"—holding out to him weed and match.

"'Tisn't that, Smith." Bobby rose out of his depth of cushions and tufts and took a quick turn up the room.

"Hang it!" he said, with a laugh, "I've given up smoking, that's all there is to it." He sat down again, this time before the piano, and rattled off a few bars from the *Tzigane.*

"Not really?" Smith went over and laid his hand lightly on the other's head.

"Not really?" he repeated, as Ferradaile took up the low pedal instead of the high one. "Well, Bobby, tell me all about her."

There was a wonderful depth of sweetness and brotherly love, and almost of compassion, in Smith's voice; the tone of a man who could well remember the curious immature rapture of first love, and over-match it by a heaven's height with something better.

Ferradaile swung around on the music-stool; then he jumped up and dug his hands into his pockets and stood with back to the fire-place.

"Phil!" cried he softly, in a queer little hushed way, "she's just an angel, don't you know; and what she ever can see in a fool like me, God only knows, I don't."

Smith stretched out his hands and locked Ferradaile's in them.

"My boy, you can't guess how glad I am," and the look in his eyes told what his words could not pretend to.

"I know it, Phil. Hang it all, there isn't a man alive I look to as I do to you, and you know it. You're the first person, the only person, who knows it yet. She's gone abroad; some trumpery notion of her mother's to buy her clothes in Paris, I believe; and the thing isn't to be announced until she returns."

"Gone abroad, eh?" Smith said, with a lift of the brows which was singularly sympathetic. "That's rather hard lines, isn't it now, when a fellow's just won his prize?"

" Should say it was ! " Bobby groaned as he glanced at the other man.

" I say, Phil ! " cried he enthusiastically, bestriding a reception-chair. " I wish to the Lord you were as happy as I am this night ! "

There was a little pause, which Mr. Philip Smith occupied in a very brief estimate of the definition of his happiness, as compared with that of his guest. Then, with a slow smile, tossing his cigar into the grate, he remarked, not, as he deemed with truth, but with complaisance toward the other's youth :

" Well, Bob, I am ! "

Ferradaile bounded from his chair.

" No ? " he cried, under his breath, putting his two hands on Smith's shoulders.

" Yes," Smith laughed, nodding his head slowly at the other's incredulity.

" By Jove ! " Bobby fell back a pace or two. " I didn't believe the woman lived that could make you look as you look this minute."

" How do I look ? " inquired Philip quietly enough, his hand resting easily amid the folds of the Eastern stuff over the picture on the easel

"Sort of—sort of—Jupiter! I don't know! transfigured, I suppose a poet would call it."

Smith laughed; he was one of those men incapable of eloquence on emotional occasions. Besides, just then Bingham entered the room with his tray.

Presently the two sat down; Ferradaile with his back to the easel, Smith facing it.

They ate and drank, if not with gusto, at least with relish, chatting of this and that as Bingham served.

When they were alone again, Ferradaile was the first to speak.

"You wonder where I have kept myself, old man, for the past month? I'll tell you—down at Lenox."

"Ah?" Smith glanced up interestedly as he set his glass of chablis on the table.

"Yes, her people have a place there and they went out in April; when I couldn't stand it any longer, I went down myself, and put up at Curtis'. Three days after I arrived she made me the happiest man that breathes. Phil, I've worshipped her ever

since I first laid my eyes on her in February at Old Point; only saw her for three days then; if you remember, I left the night you arrived."

"I remember perfectly," Philip said, smiling, with a far-off look in his gray eyes.

"She's a blonde—blonder than I am!" he ran on, threading his white fingers through his yellow locks.

"And her eyes!" Bob looked up at the Moorish ceiling, helpless of words to describe his lady's orbs.

"A figure, prettier than forty thousand Venuses!" remarked Mr. Ferradaile, casting a disrespectful glance, and waving a dismissing arm toward the Milo that played hide-and-seek with the palms, at the far end of the studio.

"And better than all, Smith," rising and walking up and down, "she's true and pure, and womanly and loyal."

"And very much in love with you," laughed the older, good-naturedly.

Ferradaile stood still, and there was a newly born reverence on his bright face as he answered solemnly:

"As there is a heaven above us, Phil, I believe she cares for me!"

Smith, with his cigar, took a turn or two across the room and paused near the easel.

"But pshaw! old fellow, I'm too egotistical by far. Tell me—" he hesitated a trifle; "tell me about your happiness." He stood facing his host, in gentle and friendly inquiry.

"I—don't think I could, Bob," said the other in a low tone, while his dark face bore upon it the "transfigured" look which Ferradaile had noted a while back. "I think, and believe, and know God never made a sweeter, nobler, lovelier woman than the one who has promised to be my wife. This doesn't begin to do her face any justice, but there is a hint of her beauty in it—it is not quite finished—I show it to you first of all—no one else has seen it."

Smith drew the Eastern stuff softly and slowly off the picture on the easel, looking at it himself with wistful eyes, so full of adoration that he had no instant remembrance of his young friend, and might not

have turned for a minute longer had not the jingle of glasses from the table, against which Ferradaile suddenly fell back, caused him to start.

Bob's blue eyes were distended, his red lips had blanched, and the pink of his cheeks ashened; his hand grasped a chair-back tensely.

"That!" he gasped hoarsely, "that is Margaret Howard!"

Smith inclined his head slowly, looking at Ferradaile in wonderment.

"Yes," he said, "you have met her I dare say, or seen her at least, at Lenox? They were there for a while before they went abroad. I follow on Saturday," he added with unaccustomed communicativeness, principally because he was lost in amazement at the attitude of his guest.

Bob straightened himself, still with that grip on the chair-back.

"And you say that you are engaged to this woman," looking at the portrait, "Margaret Howard?"

"Yes, Bob, I am, and—"

"Then you lie!" cried the other wildly,

letting go the chair and staring savagely into Smith's face.

"Ferradaile, you are beside yourself! What the devil!" catching the other man's arm and holding him still, as he really believed him to have gone suddenly mad.

"What the devil is the matter with you, anyway? Sit down!" He seated him with a thud. "Take a drink," tendering the glass.

Ferradaile took it, sprang up and threw it in Smith's face.

"You are a liar!" Bob whispered under his breath. "Margaret Howard is my promised wife. Here is her picture in my watch-case; look at it; this is her ring on my finger; these are her letters next my heart. We became engaged just one month ago to-day, the night before she sailed for Europe!"

His voice was thick and shaken with the passion of his words, as he showed his proofs.

Smith, the chablis dripping from his thick hair and beard, stared dully at his friend during the fifteen seconds' time occupied by his speech.

"Then," he said, crossing to a carved cup-

board, opening it, and taking out a case of pistols, which he laid on the table, "take your choice, sir—these, or rapiers," glancing at the other weapons against the wall.

"No man can call me a liar without apologizing." He took off his coat and vest very quietly and threw them down on the sofa.

"No man can impeach the honor of the woman I love without either his blood or mine being spilled on the spot."

"Apologize!" echoed Bob, scornfully, tearing off his raiment and picking up a pistol. "I'll be damned first. You lie! I'd stake my soul on the good faith of the girl you insult."

Smith bit in his lip to the quick as he took up the other pistol.

"If you will kindly pace off the distance," he said in a perfunctory way, as he scratched off a line on a scrap of paper. "And if you want to leave any word for your people, there's a pen, in case you are luckier than I and lose your life."

Philip remembered afterward the strange, hollow sound of his own voice, the cool feel-

ing of the chablis on his head, the sputter of a spent candle, and the whistle of the last postman coming up shrilly through the windows from the blurred sound of the mirth of Broadway.

"Thanks; I've nothing to write about," returned the younger, measuring off the room and taking his position.

Smith stood by the easel.

"What is the word?" he asked.

"Whatever you like," Ferradaile answered.

"Name it," returned the older, still in that quiet, dull, dazed fashion of voice.

"Let it be one, two, three, and fire, then!" Bob said hotly.

Smith nodded.

Another candle sputtered to its end.

"One—two—three—and—" Ferradaile was prevented from finishing by the entrance of Bingham.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Smith," said the perfectly trained servant in his well-modulated tones, and without so much as a curl of an eyelash betokening surprise at the scene. "But your orders were positive, sir, to

bring you any foreign letters the instant they came, sir, and this one has this moment been left."

He tendered his salver with its freight of the square big envelope, the slant, large handwriting and the British stamp.

Bingham retired.

Before he had quitted the room, his master had torn off the smooth outer envelope, and the satiny inner one, and held between his fingers an engraved sheet of superfine paper.

It read something like this: "Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Bayard Howard request the honor of your presence at the marriage of their daughter, Margaret, to Colonel Sir Lionel Manning Derringford, at St. George's Church, Hanover Square, on Wednesday, June 1st—"

He read no more.

To-day was "Wednesday, June 1st."

He staggered a bit, and sat down, laying his pistol back in its case.

"What do you mean!" exclaimed Ferradaile angrily, nearing his host.

Smith looked up at him and laughed, a

curious laugh like the echo of the mirthless gurgling of a lost soul. He pointed to the smooth sheet of engraved paper lying on the table.

"Read it," he said, laconically. And, while Bob picked it up in amazed wonderment, Philip's head sank down between his hands and a sob rived his heart and brain almost in twain.

A groan, the horrible sound of a curse on a man's lips for the woman who has tricked him, made Smith raise his head.

Ferradaile was staggering like a drunkard in the middle of the room, and turning his weapon on himself.

A swift plunge and Philip had wrenched it from him.

"Don't be a fool, Bob; think of your mother and your sisters."

With death beckoning him and pulling at his own sleeve, and showing him a short cut out of his own wretchedness, he still could plead in life's cause with this younger man who had been his friend.

"Don't want to think!" cried the other. "Phil! Phil! what in God's name can I ever

think about again?" and the boyish head fell willingly on the shoulder of the host.

"Pull yourself together my boy. Take a drink." He poured out the brandy with a somewhat unsteady hand.

"Drink!" repeated Bob. "Old man, can I ever drink under your roof again as long as I live?" pushing the glass aside. "You ought to have knocked me down."

"We're both knocked down now!" Smith laughed the same sorrowful laugh as before, as he took up the marriage invitation and stared at it.

"How can you laugh?" Ferradaile loosened his cravat and collar, and, keeping his eye on Philip, reached over slyly for the pistol.

"God!" he whispered, having got it, "and she was so sweet, so sweet! There isn't any God—why do I name Him? or any heaven, or any truth."

Smith leaned over and laid his hand on that of the younger man.

"Yes there is, Bob. You are young, with years and the world before you, and fair women, too, and true ones," taking the pis-

tol a second time from Ferradaile's hand. "You will live to a happier ending—while I —well Bobby, here goes!"

He knocked an ugly hole in the portrait, ripping the canvas whereon the lovely face was painted, into ribbons.

"May the Almighty never forgive me if I trust a woman again!"

He drained the brandy Ferradaile had refused, unloaded the pistols, and struck a light for a fresh cigar.

"Come, Bob, my boy, it's only nine; get into your togs and let's go up to Koster & Bials."

THE EMPRESS OF AN HOUR

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I

It was but little after dawn. It was early in the month of June. It was Paris.

The needle of Notre Dame pricked the pallor of the dawn into a flush of rose.

And the great, gold dome of the Invalides shone splendidly beneath the first sweet, warm kiss of the sun.

Just then a man emerged from the Rue Bayard into the Cours la Reine; a man of medium height, in the dress of an ordinary soldier. His cap was pulled observably low over his brow and his coat-collar was turned up—perhaps the chill of the morning was disagreeable to him.

He walked hurriedly, casting an oblique glance at the house of Francis the First on the corner, and then pursuing his way in haste down to the Place.

He crossed it diagonally, obviously having in mind the Rue de Rivoli for his objective point.

At this moment there came tripping out from a small side street in the direction of the Madeleine, a young girl.

She was bareheaded. She had on shoes, but no stockings; she carried upon her arm a little satchel full of vegetables and papers, and what besides, Heaven knows.

She was munching a carrot contentedly enough, her small, sharp, white teeth biting at the yellow root with evident relish.

Yet perchance it was hunger and not relish after all.

If the soldier saw her, which is unlikely, as his eyes were bent upon his path, he may have wished to avoid her, for he now struck off in an opposite direction, crossed the street and made for the Tuileries.

Not so fast!

The girl had seen him.

She gazed at him for an instant in hesitation; then, with a little decisive movement of her head, she, with the half eaten carrot in her hand, flew across also, and

by a dexterous turn in another moment brought herself face to face with the soldier.

He glanced up.

If there was the least vexation in his face, it was immediately lost in infinite amusement.

She was now looking down, blushing also, and with a curious second thought about to turn and flee, when he spoke.

"*Bon jour,* Reine Carotte!" said the soldier, now regarding the girl near him for the first time with attention, and as he did so his lips contracted somewhat in surprise.

This young woman bore a striking resemblance—which had been, however, frequently enough remarked before by other soldiers—to their Empress, the peerless Eugénie de Teba.

"*Non pas reine, mais princesse, tout simplement princesse!*" returned she rapidly, waving the green-topped carrot before her with a not altogether ungraceful motion.

"And of what?" inquired the soldier, now apparently thoroughly amused.

The girl leaned near to her companion, so near that her coarse sleeve touched the cape of his coat, and whispered two or three words in his ear.

It was curious to observe that with the instincts of his birth and station, this French soldier, starting back a little at her communication, at the same moment brushed with his handkerchief the place where this beggarly maid's gown had chanced to rub his garment.

"*Tiens!*" he exclaimed, and with this monosyllable they continued their walk, reaching the Pont Neuf in a few moments.

"Yes, Monsieur Louis, *c'est la vérité,*" quoth she, nibbling again at her carrot.

The soldier at this point, notwithstanding the increasing heat of the sun, pulled up the collar of his coat a bit higher even, and his eyes bent upon the ground, inquired, in a low voice:

"And for whom does *Mademoiselle la princesse* mistake me that she calls me 'Louis?'"

"For no one," she replies. "I know who you are, Ami Louis!"

"I am a soldier of France," he returns haughtily and impatiently, quickening his pace a trifle.

"Oh, Cæsar," whispers she, stopping short and leaning a little over the rail and glancing down at the quiet waters, "do you suppose that a few metres of blue cloth and a bit of black pomade"—she here touches lightly with her finger-tip her eyebrows and upper lip, and chin—"could transform you into a soldier of France?"

There is a dangerously derisive emphasis put upon the pronoun.

He now stops short in his turn, and after a moment's hesitation, joins her at the parapet, an amused and perhaps an anxious smile playing about the corners of his inscrutable mouth.

"Mademoiselle has, then, but little respect for the Emperor?"

"Oh, when one remembers Ham, a little house in London that we know of, and several other details, one has little respect left amid a chaos of, shall we say astonishment, Monsieur Louis?"

Evidently piqued, he coldly says:

"I see that you are acquainted with history, Mademoiselle."

"'History!'" laughs the girl, half it seems in raillery, half at some secret of her own soul, "You surely do not call yourself 'History,' Ami Louis? Why, you are only a contemporaneous episode!" cries she, throwing her carrot-top down into the river, where it swirls away under the shadow of the arch.

"History will sum you up as the second empire, *rien de plus!*"

He shrugs his shoulders.

II

This soldier of France had started out at eleven o'clock last night in quest of adventures—in quest of a glimpse of Parisians among themselves. He had doubtless encountered some surprises, but none so interesting as this one which now stood beside him on the Pont Neuf.

"And being a soldier of France, what better could you ask than to be absorbed in her history—lost perhaps, eh?"

She laughs again.

He turns toward her.

"Where are your parents?" brusquely.

"What time may it be?" she asks.

"Perhaps four o'clock."

"Four o'clock. Well, my father I think now wakens, and presently goes to take his coffee with his majesty the Tzar, my mother—"

There leaps into each of this girl's eyes a Muscovite demon—a flash like the lightning—vivid and terrible.

"Go travel thither and ask of your imperial brother's minister where he left her. But when I feel the sunshine so upon my head, I believe that it is she. When I hear kind words, she utters them. When I see a beautiful object, she has guided me to it."

"And you alone in Paris—who?"—

He hesitates.

"I do," she says, smiting her breast lightly and proudly. "Oh, I was provided for; put in a convent. But I ran away. Monsieur Louis, I begged, and stole, and walked, and earned my journey from Petersburg to

Mecca—Paris? That is two years ago, and see how happy I am."

"That is saying much, to say that one is happy," he remarks carelessly.

"Perhaps, but there is more to come. Happiness is one thing; fame, that is the other."

"Aha, you think so?"

"Oh, yes. I shall know how to climb, too. Already I step on the second round of the ladder. Why, Monsieur Louis, already I write for one of the great papers; they believe me a man, and so, I live."

Her face is flushed with the royal rose of youth's first splendid enthusiasm.

"Where do you live?" he inquires.

"So high, *ami* Louis, that I look down upon your palace chimneys!"

"And what is it that you write about?"

"Politics," she answers succinctly, with the conclusive audacity of twenty.

He smiles grimly.

"The very subject of which you know the least."

"Precisely—and that is the reason that I can say what occurs to me. If I knew as

much of politics as *par example,* you do, Monsieur Louis, perhaps I should tremble and say nothing."

She laughs.

"Why tremble?" queries her companion, readily seizing the handle of suspicion that has been thoughtlessly extended to his grasp.

"*Parceque—.*"

These two have by this time crossed the bridge and have already turned, by a common instinct, up one of the narrow streets of the quarter. It is, however, the young woman who leads the way. She has, having her home in view, come as far as Notre Dame itself, and here she stops with a decisive air.

"*Parceque, parceque?*" her companion repeats questioningly.

"Because your Parisians, Ami Louis, carry always in their pockets a clay pipe labelled 'the people.' When they are weary or distrait, which happens often in a century, they take it out and blow from it the bubble which is called a 'republic.' After a little its rainbows burst into spray, which strikes

them in the face, and behold they are ready for a *coup d'état*, shall we say? Now you know why I said 'tremble.'"

The girl turns her head away, hesitatingly, and would perhaps like to end this colloquy.

Her companion is not of the same mind, and as he speaks she seats herself on the church-step within the portico where, on Sundays and holidays, the old man who vends rosaries and the like is wont to take up his position.

"Nevertheless," pursues our soldier of France, leaning well in the shadow against the wall opposite to her, "nevertheless, the Emperor is the third of his line!"

"Pardon, *ami!* The head of the Duc de Reichstadt never felt the weight of an imperial crown, and two is a most unlucky number!"

"You predict the ruin of the Emperor?" He leans toward her eagerly.

What shall be said of the superstitions of men in high places? Nothing, save that they remain inconsistent facts in their histories.

"I could only venture to predict, Monsieur, with pen and ink!"

"But, of this morning, at your peril!"

"Not a word." She finishes his sentence for him. "*Noblesse oblige.*"

"And you will call His Majesty—in pen and ink—what?" smiles the questioner, as he regards his *vis-à-vis* with his cold, critical and beauty-loving eyes.

"I shall say that you are a magnificent usurper, Monsieur Louis."

"You must be thanked in His Majesty's name."

He takes from his pocket a handful of twenty-franc pieces, and tenders them to her with a matter-of-fact air.

"Oh, no, Monsieur Louis."

The girl rises with an air of instinctive dignity, which, however, either is unobserved or unheeded by her companion.

He does not attempt to move his arm an inch, either in insistance or surprise.

"No, I say," she exclaims imperatively, and rising.

"But it is money," he replies, with a puzzled elevation of his eyebrows.

"For that very reason," cries the girl, shaking her head.

"It means food, clothes, stockings," continues he imperturbably and not stirring his outstretched hand, as he regards her bare ankles.

"Take it away!" she now says firmly. "I have not earned it, and I accept no money that I do not earn. Don't you understand?"

"If your Mecca has not taught you to draw silken stockings on such pretty feet when you can, *parbleu!* it is no affair of mine!"

He shrugs his shoulders, and with the awkwardness of doing a thing for the first time, returns the money to his pocket.

"I have stockings," she returns, sullenly, "but they are for a later hour of the day, and I am sure I have shoes. Look!"

She shakes her small foot free of one of these as she speaks—a monstrous affair in which such a snowflake might easily lose itself.

"Mère Barbotte gave me these; they belonged to her daughter who is dead!" She crossed herself in speaking.

" Dead men's shoes," the soldier of France says, observing her with an air of increased attention.

A looker-on might possibly translate his expression as admiration—but perhaps a more correct estimate to put on it would be —a mental note for the Chief of Police.

" Who is Mme. Barbotte? " he inquires, his mind seeking her acquaintance via her daughter's old slipper.

" She is the concierge."

" Aha!—and doubtless you live in this neighborhood? "

She remains silent.

" And I may do nothing for you? "

She looked steadily at him.

" You may do something for me, Ami Louis."

" And that is? "

Reassured by a timidity that was new in her attitude, he leaned toward her.

" I do not wish gold portraits of you. It seems," she says, shyly, " that I know you at sight better than some others."

He bows his head assentingly.

" But I want—your autograph! "

" Aha! " replies our soldier of France, reflectively, instantly resuming an attitude of suspicion.

" And what will you do with it? Keep it to light a little fire in the clay pipe which, peradventure, you carry in your pocket also, *mon enfant?* "

" I am not one of your Parisians," she exclaims, hastily.

" No, no—oh, no! by no means; but you are, perhaps, one of the Tzar's nihilists, eh? " The soldier flecks from his collar some imaginary dust.

" If you like, Ami Louis. It will give Ducrat something to do. Tell him to find out. But the autograph? "

He shrugs his shoulders.

" If you give it to me I shall not keep it five hours."

" Ah, you will sell it! " cries he, regarding her lazily with his light eyes.

" Bah, what a huckster you are! How much, *par example,* did you pay for your crown, Ami Louis? I sell your autograph! I! I will show you."

The girl takes from her satchel a small

reporter's pad of coarse paper; she also draws forth a pencil, and resting the pad on her knee she writes:

"There! Read, and then go and look after your Parisians and nihilists and the rest."

She extends to him the piece of paper which she has torn off, but he makes no motion toward taking it. He merely permits her to hold it while he reads:

"To M. REGNIER:—

"Investigate the abilities of the bearer of this, a young Russian girl, Mademoiselle Zalka. If she have talent, instruct her."

"That is why I desire your signature, Monsieur Louis!"

"Ah, the theatre—that dream of all the pretty women who have no husbands! So you wish to be an actress?"

"Yes, that is the fact."

"Why?"

"When I become one, you will be answered."

"You are very independent!"

"*Pourquoi non!* Do you envy me that freedom?"

"Hold the paper. I will sign it."

"You will?" Her large, fine eyes dilate with excitement.

She hands him her pencil with the grace of a court lady.

"There!" He returns it to her with a *soupçon* of her own grand air.

"Now, Mademoiselle, I will say *bon jour* to you."

The soldier of France turns on his heel, setting his face toward the street.

"I cannot thank you," murmurs the girl brokenly, gazing in a dazed fashion at the fluttering bit of yellow paper that she holds tightly between her fingers.

"Perhaps Paris will thank me, when it is *à vos pieds!*"

With a barely perceptible inclination, and the touch of his white finger-tips on the brim of his cap, the soldier is presently lost to view on the place.

III.

ONCE out of sight, however, he is soon joined by a comrade, who salutes him courteously and receives in response but the recognition of the eyes.

This meeting appeared the result of chance, but if one had been less absorbed in the movements of Zalka, it might easily have been remarked that this second soldier of France had not once lost track of the man at whose side he now stood.

"I have a cab in waiting," he remarks.

"It is as well," returns the other, laconically.

Another turn and the two men find the cab standing in the angle.

The second soldier starts forward, opens the door, and his companion enters.

"*Au Louvre!*" he says distinctly, and therewith seats himself beside his comrade.

"Sorry to have kept you out of bed an hour longer, De Morny," remarks our soldier, leaning back and pulling his cap well over his eyes.

"*Pas de quoi*," returns the other.

"It was a very pretty hour," and the gentleman addressed as De Morny smiled pleasantly.

"Did you think so? And very like?"

"Her Imperial Majesty."

"You thought that, too?"

"I have eyes."

"True."

"A little younger?"

"Oh—only a very little; twenty years or so. Apropos, I have a contribution for Ducrat's note-book. You must turn to the last leaf, however, and the last letter—Z."

De Morny takes out a note-book of his own, and a pencil also.

He glances up.

"Zalka," says the soldier of France, laconically.

"Aha! Russian?"

"Precisely. Quartier Latin. A resemblance to Her Majesty. A journalist. Has in her possession my signature attached to a note to Regnier, of the Français."

M. de Morny, having presumably written what has been dictated to him, closes his

little book with a snap and replaces it in his pocket.

IV.

Four or five years are as many wonder-workers.

It is extremely probable that when our "Soldier of France," on a certain morning a long time ago now, ironically remarked that Paris might render the thanks to him, which at the moment Zalka found herself incapable of offering—when Paris should be "*à ses pieds*"—he had little, if any, idea of the fulfilment of his words.

But so it was.

Paris was at the feet of the extraordinary young Russian.

Her beauty was the reigning toast.

But of this beauty but little was said in detail.

Zalka's resemblance to the Empress was not remarked—in print. It was no doubt spoken of twenty times a day on the boulevards, at the clubs, in the foyers, and elsewhere.

Perchance these whispers had reached the ears of the lady of the Tuileries, even if they had not travelled around the world on the electric wings of the telegraphic wires.

Her Majesty had been seen twice only in the royal loge, upon occasions when the reigning favorite appeared.

Perchance also some other rumors, as distasteful, had made their insidious way within the palace walls. This, however, is not to the point.

Zalka had lifted to her lips the goblet that was brimming over with that " other thing," —fame.

Had she, perhaps, found that the old crystal draught of mere " happiness " mixed not well with this new rich wine that she quaffed?

Who can say?

To-night we find her after the theatre at her hotel in the Rue de Villiers, presiding at one of those little midnight suppers for which her dining-room was already famous.

It was the spring-time of the year, and

therefore the long windows being wide open gave delicious glimpses of the garden.

It was a noticeably elegant room.

"*Tiens!*" Zalka had cried on her return from the theatre that night—of all her trophies, a small wreath of fresh laurel, hanging on her round arm. "*Tiens!* laurel wreaths for the master; they have almost buried me in flowers, my public, and that was kind of them, but this was a mistake; it never was intended for the actress or for Marguerite Gautier but for her creator!"

And, with a movement of gracious ease she laid the wreath upon the brow of Monsieur Alexandre, who, by this time, with several others, was already seated at the board.

His strong brown face, with its long blond mustache, light eyebrows and hair, presented an oddly picturesque appearance.

Shrugging his broad shoulders with an air of deprecation, he raised Zalka's hand to his lips.

"I will let it stay, Mademoiselle. I will not spoil the prologue to your idyl of the supper-table. But will you permit me to

say that until to-night I had never met or known my 'dame aux Camélias?'"

Loud and heartfelt applause followed the little speech of Monsieur Alexandre.

"A remarkable performance, most remarkable!" murmured the little, nervous gentleman, who at this moment raised to his lips a glass of Burgundy, and also nearly twisted his head off in his vain effort to discover whence came the draught which he imagined he felt.

Hélas! Monsieur Victoire had a familiar demon—a draught—of whom he dwelt in perpetual awe.

"Remarkable, indeed!" echoed Louis Napoleon, as, with his slow smile, he filled the glass of the young actress beside whom he sat.

"But wasted, wasted!" continues M. Victoire, with an involuntary shudder, as he rises and closes the window at his back.

"Wasted, wasted?" A chorus questions him with one voice.

"How, how?"

"Bah! bah!" returns he, helping himself to a bit of fowl.

" You do not care to know. Why do you ask? All you care for is that the drama, which the Republic prohibited, has been set before you through the instrumentality of a gentleman who is to-night my *vis-à-vis*—the Duc de Morny."

The little group grew enthusiastic over this.

" And wasted?" queried His Grace, acknowledging the compliment with a simultaneous side glance at the Emperor.

" Because Marguerite Gautier is an exceptional product of an Imperial era, she and women of her type are prey, prey for such pens as my friend M. Alexandre's to prick into pungency for the palates of Paris. Hold, hold!" cries the little nervous man, rising with his fork full of chicken in one hand, while with the other he turns down the collar of his chestnut colored coat.

" That woman there," he nods toward Zalka, who, having both her elbows on the table, regards him steadfastly. " She is not born to represent chimeras and excrescences; she is a Cleopatra, and my friend M. Alexandre would make of her a grisette.

I tell you," cries the little gentleman, undaunted by Imperial frowns or the ironical smiles of the laurel-crowned author, " Zalka is an era in herself. One must write up to Zalka, and not ask Zalka to descend the staircase to pick up the spent rags of a worn-out and reckless nature."

Zalka's eyes have not moved; neither do they now when M. Alexandre says, suavely:

" Ah, it is most likely M. Victoire is in the right. I am no critic; M. Victoire is merciless."

With an ingenuous smile he lifts the laurel wreath from his blond head.

" Mademoiselle," he continues, turning to the actress, " permit me to return to you your prologue."

" Ah, Monsieur!" she says. " See! We will give it to Molière!" She runs lightly across the room and places it upon a bust of the poet.

" Now that my prologue has proved a failure, who will write for me the lyric of my *petit soupêr?* Ah, I am very unfortunate!"

" It should be M. Victoire," the Emperor remarks.

" Assuredly. He seems to think that he knows what would best fit you," murmurs De Morny, carelessly.

" Monsieur le Duc is right," says the little man. " I do know."

" And it is? " queries His Majesty, lifting a decanter with leisurely examination as he turns it to the glow of the candelabra nearest him.

" It is life—love—loss."

" 'La Dame aux Camelias' in three acts and three words! " interrupts a clever young journalist, then in high vogue.

" Surely! " exclaims Monsieur Alexandre, with a sarcastic smile.

" We have a new perfume. Publish it on the boulevards, Messieurs, without delay. It is the concentrated essence of camelias." The young journalist laughs, as do the rest.

Except Zalka.

Her eyes wander restlessly from the face of Monsieur Victoire to the clock in the corner.

V

Already the hands point to the half hour after midnight.

"Monsieur has, perhaps, concluded his illustration in chemistry?" queries M. Victoire, with a grim, sardonic little smile, which is not altogether nectar to the soul of the popular young journalist.

This witty person bows profoundly.

"Life, love, loss," repeats the little man in a voice of intense pathos. "Life which is not an existence of disease, but a blissful period when every pulse throbs to the double measure of youth and health, when hope holds the helm and honor sits at the prow."

His Majesty glances up as he puts down the decanter of golden cordial.

Zalka turns again her restless eyes to the clock.

"Love," continues M. Victoire, growing more eloquent as he notes about him that applause dearest to a speaker's heart—silence most profound.

"Love, which is not an unwholesome

fever—an epoch of sense versus soul—but a little piece of the purity of heaven wooed down to earth by the aspiration, exaltation, and impassionment of two of God's creatures. Love," murmurs M. Victoire, in a low and tremulous tone—" Love, which is not a moral and spiritual wreck——" He turns pitilessly toward Monsieur Alexandre. " But a fire——!"

The enthusiastic and popular young journalist swore next day that he involuntarily started, expecting to see a burning bush spring into flame at the terrible emphasis of the nervous little man's voice.

" Fire which scorches and singes the soul to ashes the agony whose only solace is that long rest upon the bosom of Nature; earth to earth, that brown bed, full of comfort, which we call the grave, and above which we place a stone and write upon it ' Resurrection.' "

There was a moment's hush.

And then wild applause.

Be it remembered that Monsieur Alexandre, with much grace of manner, made also the most noise.

"That is the drama I will one day write for Zalka—for Zalka," cries the little man, interrupting himself. "Pshaw! It will be Zalka."

And Zalka caught the thin hand on its way to the coat collar, and laid her young lips lightly on it in token of her appreciation.

It may be imagined that all the tongues about the table were by this time untied.

"You lay your lips upon that little man's hand," the Emperor says, his voice lost to all ears but Zalka's in the general talk and laughter.

"*Pourquoi non?*" she answers gayly. "Monsieur Victoire is a genius; one must pay tribute to genius."

"And to Cæsar?" whispers he.

"His due."

"Which is, *par example?*"

"Taxes," laughs she, leaning back in her chair.

"Bah! What a fool I am!"

"Oh, no, *Ami* Louis. Indeed, I think you very wise."

"Why so?"

"Because you have known how to manage

your French people for—how long is it? twenty years and over."

"Is that all?"

"It is enough."

The Emperor for a moment leaned back in his chair also; for a brief time his curious eyes seemed to have turned inward and away from the scene before him.

With a possibly unconscious movement the hand which hung listlessly over the arm of his seat touched the folds of Zalka's robe, and the fingers caught eagerly at the soft white stuffs.

VI

WITHOUT doubt the admiration of His Majesty for the young Russian was known throughout Paris and beyond. But equally without question it was known that Zalka evinced no preference for the ruler of France above any other.

She had baffled him.

He whose pleasurable game it had been to baffle Europe found himself completely mystified by this young woman.

She treated him only with the old air of *camaraderie* and raillery which had arrested the attention of the " Soldier of France " on the morning of their first meeting.

Was she laughing at him?

He did not know.

Perhaps Ducrat did. He could afford to rely on Ducrat. Meantime it is sufficient that to himself he said that he loved her.

And suspected her?

Ah! But he was the man of '48; the man of many vicissitudes. Suspicion's own darling child. Therefore it is possible that he did love the Russian, as he was capable of loving.

" Well, well!" he at last ejaculated, " time is, after all, man's best tool and best assistant."

" Monsieur Louis thinks that in time, what?" questions Zalka, rising and folding her hands behind her as she paces nervously up and down the room once or twice.

" In time I shall attain what I crave."

" Which is ——?" She stops short, with her eyes involuntarily fixed upon Buhl's great timepiece.

"That which time alone can give me!" the Emperor mutters under his breath as he also rises.

"Believe me, *ami* Louis," she replies, shaking her head, "man craves only the unattainable!"

He smiles dreamily as he looks at her. He shrugs his shoulders.

"Mademoiselle, I take my leave of you." His Majesty steps toward the vestibule.

De Morny rises, as do the other guests who may chance to have been seated.

Ceremony of a certain kind was dispensed with at these reunions, and the Emperor was here treated as incognito by his own command.

"Not yet," Zalka exclaims, following him with eagerness. "Not so soon?"

"It is the first time that you ever desired my visit prolonged," he responds, half in pleasure, half in suspicion.

"It may be," she says, "there must come a first time for anything; is it not so?"

"But I am to be at the palace to open the ball at half-past one—it is now almost the quarter."

"Give us the other quarter."

"Impossible."

"Let them wait," Zalka says, with pleading eyes, laying her finger-tips lightly on the hat which he holds.

"It is impossible. The affair is one of state. Already it is cabled round the world, Zalka!" His Majesty takes a few further steps—as they both stand in the blaze of the candles, amid the hum of many voices.

He has uttered but her name with his lips.

With his cold, strange, suspicious eyes, what other language has His Imperial Majesty spoken?

"Ami Louis, you will give us this quarter of an hour—*ce mauvais quart d'heure*—as a favor."

Her voice is clear and high, and innocent as a child's.

He starts back.

"*Non,*" Napoleon says, curtly. "*Non, impossible.*"

He turns on his heel.

At the same instant Zalka makes a false step, perchance, and, with a crash, the great

gilded candelabra falls to the ground behind her.

Its hundred candles are scattered far and wide, setting fire to rugs and napkins, and dashing fruits and ices, épergnes and goblets in all directions.

In a moment all is confusion, and while De Morny is assisting the others in stamping out the little blazes here and there, His Majesty has caught Zalka in her fall and supported her to a sofa.

No one thinks of anything for the next fifteen minutes save the accident.

The ladies scream prettily and rehearse their sensations.

Servants run hither and thither removing the débris, and the men laugh and chat, and console their companions for the holes in their gowns, or the wine-stains and wax upon their laces.

The "*mauvais quart d'heure*" has slipped away.

By the tall clock in the corner His Majesty should now have been at the Tuileries, bowing low over the hand of Mme. de Metternich.

A servant enters.

"Madame," whispers he, in a frightened tone, " someone is without who insists upon seeing you. I am unable to——"

A *gendarme* also enters, cutting short the footman's rambling announcement.

VII

THERE is now a profound silence in the apartment.

" Madame Zalka Orloff," reads he from a slip of paper in his hand.

Zalka rises and inclines her head.

" What can I do for you, Monsieur?"

" Come with me at once," replies the man succinctly.

Several of the men start forward, and again these ladies begin their pretty screams.

" Thanks, Messieurs," she says, waving them back with dignity.

" You have doubtless a warrant for my arrest, Monsieur?"

" Yes, Madame, it is here" (the officer presents her with the paper).

Zalka eagerly scans it.

"Aha—very well! Monsieur, there is your warrant. I refuse to go!" She folds her arms and looks upon the ground.

"Then, Madame, it becomes necessary to force you."

"Stop!"

The Emperor steps from the shadow of the curtains, where he has been standing, and utters the word in a voice that is not to be misunderstood.

"From whom do you come? By whose order?"

"By the order of M. Ducrat himself, Your Majesty."

"And the charge?"

"Conspiracy against the life of the Emperor of France!" answers the officer, pompously reading from his paper.

There is an instant of terrible silence.

The face of Louis Napoleon is at this moment such a chaos of conflicting emotions, as would have astounded those who accused it of immobility.

His eyes glowed like coals of fire, as they flashed under his contracting brows upon

the young Russian. His lips quivered with rage, and perchance with that species of terror which is the familiar of men who pin their faith upon the *ignis fatuus* they christen a "destiny." His hand grasped the back of a chair with the tenure of a vise.

"And Monsieur Ducrat, where is he?"

"Without, Your Majesty, Monsieur Ducrat waits in his carriage at the entrance."

"Request him to come in."

There is by this time sufficient noise.

Little nervous Monsieur Victoire alone is quiet, scribbling hurriedly in his note-book in a corner.

"Well, Madame?" the Emperor says, in a low, sharp voice, as he sits and turns his face to the woman who stands near him. "What! No tears? No prayers?"

"*Ami Louis!*" cries she, bending her lips to his ear and whispering a few hurried sentences, while the noise of hurried steps echoes from the vestibule and across the pavements of the little flowery garden.

The Emperor springs to his feet as Ducrat enters the room attended by several gens-

d'armes and two or three men in civilian's dress.

" Your Majesty has sent for me," Monsieur Ducrat says respectfully.

" Precisely."

" And Your Majesty's pleasure is?"

" To hear the history of this "—he extends his hand for the warrant, which is at once presented to him—" this piece of paper."

" To be brief, Your Majesty, I have discovered, by dint of the greatest pertinacity——"

The Emperor smiles cynically, it would seem.

" ——that a plot against the life of the Emperor of France has been for some time germinating in the very heart of Paris itself. Yes, this very night—nay, this very hour, as Your Majesty should have been *en route* to the Tuileries, the ruler of the French people was to have been shot like a dog in his carriage!"

A murmur of horror ran round the room.

M. Ducrat paused to enjoy the effect of his oratory.

" And Madame Orloff?" the Emperor inquires, as he caresses his mustache.

" Ah, Your Majesty, the arrest of Mme. Orloff becomes the last painful duty I have this night to see carried out. The others are under irons already. By means of papers found on the persons of the chief conspirators—now—within the hour!" Monsieur Ducrat glances picturesquely at the clock in the corner—" it is discovered that Mme. Orloff was in daily communication with these wretches; that it was she who furnished them with the exact hour at which Your Majesty might be expected to leave her house on your way to the State ball at the palace." Monsieur Ducrat pauses for breath and to indulge in the pardonable gratification which the amazement of his auditors affords him.

" That it was she—even she!—Your Majesty, who suggested to her abominable accomplices the exact spot on the corner of the Rue de Rivoli, at which they should lie in wait to assassinate the Emperor of France!"

" This is all, Monsieur Ducrat?" His

Majesty inquires, still stroking his mustache.

"All, Your Majesty? Surely it is sufficient!"

"You are quite sure, M. Ducrat, that there is no incident which you have omitted in the rehearsal of this plot?"

"I am positive, Your Majesty!"

"Ah, very well!"

Louis Napoleon approaches the table, and holding the warrant lightly, he sets it on fire at the flame of one of the tall candles.

"But, Your Majesty, this woman?"

"This woman—well?" His Majesty repeats, coldly, watching the bit of paper wither into a flimsy ash.

"This woman is dangerous, criminal!"

Monsieur Ducrat is becoming very much excited. "Surely Your Majesty will not endanger a life that is dear to millions of Frenchmen for the sake of ——?" Monsieur Ducrat pauses.

In his position and with the present surroundings, Monsieur Ducrat's command over language may go no farther.

" For the sake of ——? " repeats the Emperor icily, turning from the table.

" Pardon! Your Majesty, but I have your Majesty's own recommendation regarding Madame Orloff. It is here! The date, almost four years since." Monsieur Ducrat hastily takes a note-book from his inner pocket and reads: " Zalka—Russian —Quartier Latin, a resemblance—ahem! A journalist; has in her possession, etc., etc."

M. de Morny takes a step forward and ventures to whisper a word or two to the Emperor.

It is as if he had not spoken.

" Thank you, Monsieur Ducrat," the Emperor says. " You have nothing more to tell me of this affair, I presume? "

" No, Your Majesty," is the reply.

" There is time if you have, for I shall not go to the ball to-night."

" No, Your Majesty." Monsieur Ducrat's eyes are greedily fixed upon Zalka.

What a morsel to escape the hand of justice!

" Very well, Monsieur. I then have some-

thing to say to you. Appreciating to the full the extraordinary exertions which you have made on my behalf, I am disposed to lay at the door of fatigue the defect in your memory which has caused you to omit any mention in your recital, of a letter which you received only this afternoon!" His Majesty emphasizes these last three words in so singular a manner, that M. Ducrat fairly starts.

"For the benefit of these, the friends of Madame Orloff, I must be at the trouble of repairing your deficiencies. It is this then. At three o'clock this afternoon, our good friend Monsieur Ducrat, being in his office immersed in affairs, receives an anonymous note, signed 'Ami Louis.' It runs thus: 'To-night at the corner of the Rue de Rivoli and the Place de la Concorde, four men; one in a blouse, two shabby, one as a cab-driver. They have for their object the assassination of the Emperor as he is *en route* to the Tuileries, after visiting a certain house in the Avenue de Villers. The plot has been months in preparation. The time and

place are decided upon only within the last twelve hours!' "

A hum of intense excited interest quivers through the apartment.

"Monsieur Ducrat, who wrote that letter?"

"I do not know, Your Majesty."

The voice of Monsieur Ducrat is subdued.

"You have it?"

"Yes, Your Majesty."

"I would thank you to permit me to see it."

It was curious to note that at this crisis the Emperor's face for the first time betrayed a faint emotion.

It was perhaps possible that he feared that this letter might not be forthcoming.

Nevertheless, in a second it was in his possession.

And turning with a smile of rare courtesy to Zalka he said:

"Perhaps Monsieur Ducrat would care to know the name of the person who wrote this letter?"

"Oh, Your Majesty!"

"Zalka Orloff," the Emperor ejaculates

sharply. "You see, Ducrat, there is a loyalty which is not to be counted by so many francs a year, and which risks life itself, and calls it by no such title as the 'greatest pertinacity.' Good-evening, Monsieur!"

The Emperor turns away, and amid the joyful exclamations of the assembled group Zalka sinks into a seat.

"What can I do for you? one thing, and that is lay my commands upon you, Mademoiselle? I will permit no more risks, even," he whispers, "for my sake." And aloud,

"Can I create you on the spot Comtesse de ——?"

"St. Sauveur!" murmurs the witty young journalist.

Zalka shakes her head.

"No, *ami* Louis. You gave me the *mauvais quart d'heure* in advance; it is all that I ask!"

"Nothing? Am I so poor, then, that I have nothing that is worthy of your acceptance?"

"Ah, it is not that. Stay! Yes, one thing. I will ask for your portrait."

The guests are now amusing themselves with the fragments of their late supper, and some fresh bottles of wine, which Monsieur Alexandre has seen fit to order.

"You refused it once." Napoleon smiles.

"Ah, that was gold. I do not like gold—it is what we pay our debts with. Monsieur Louis owes me nothing."

"But his life! You shall have the portrait."

"Thank you." She raises her lovely eyes to his face.

"Why did you do it?"

"What?"

"Risk so much for me."

"I have risked 'so much' for you, for five years and more."

Zalka looks down.

"But why?" His Majesty's clear, piercing eyes are intent upon her face.

"Because," she murmurs inarticulately, "because I—I am Your Majesty's most loyal subject!"

Never before had she so addressed him.

With one long pressure of her two hands

Napoleon, with De Morny, shortly afterward quitted the house.

Not many weeks later Zalka received and accepted a small and exquisite cameo likeness of the Emperor.

It was set with diamonds in a frame of chased gold.

And it now lies neglected, half hidden by a little portrait of the Maintenon, in the dusty case of one of the most noted collections of miniatures in Paris.

One of the diamonds is missing, and it is likewise true that the golden frame is slightly battered.

VIII

It is toward three o'clock of a beautiful day in the early summer.

Paris wears her holiday aspect, and it is evident that something unusual is transpiring.

Quite true.

The Court is about to set out for St. Cloud, and all about the Tuileries there is the har-

monious confusion of soldiers, equerries dashing to and fro, officers reining in their restive horses, sabres flashing in the sunshine, low murmurs of curiosity and impatience, strains of music, the crush of an expectant and eager crowd, and the bewildering, surging sway and play of Paris bent on witnessing one of the sights dear to her heart.

The open carriage awaits their Majesties at the entrance.

Within the palace, grooms and gentlemen are rushing about hither and thither.

But in the private apartments of the Empress everything is quiet almost to a sense of oppression.

Eugénie is alone.

She sits, true daughter of the universal mother, before the long mirror, which reflects her graceful figure and its graceful pose.

She listens, for her head is bent and her hand is pressed against her heart, while the lovely, languid eyes are fixed upon one of the portières that lead into the adjoining room of the suite.

Presently the curtains part, and in an instant fold together again behind the favorite actress of Paris.

Zalka stands in the presence of the Empress, in the presence of the woman to whom she bears so strange and subtle a resemblance.

Contrary to etiquette—but, perchance, etiquette had after all but small affair in this meeting—the subject spoke first.

"Your Majesty," she said, in a low tone, "has done me the honor to send for me. Can I serve Your Majesty in any way?"

Eugénie rises involuntarily; there was a sweet imperiousness in Zalka's voice that compelled a deference from anyone. But also at once Her Majesty reseated herself, with half a smile and half a frown.

"Yes, Madame, I have sent for you to see you—alas! not that I have not seen you many times, studied your every motion and expression."

Zalka bows.

"But," Her Majesty with an impetuous sigh, rises and crosses the room.

"But, *mon Dieu!* Madame, I wished to see you face to face!"

Zalka again inclines her head.

"Not there," continues Eugénie, passionately, "with the flare of the footlights lighting up the beauty they say is so like my own, but to see you as he sees you, in the sunshine, in the daylight, as he sees you, do you hear?"

"Yes, Your Majesty. But of whom does Your Majesty speak?"

The Empress turned toward the window and as hastily withdrew her gaze.

Can it be that the blaze of light and glitter on the casement is offensive to her beautiful eyes?

She takes a few steps nearer to the actress, and then, sinking upon a chair, she exclaims, in a broken voice:

"Of my husband, Madame."

Zalka starts.

"Of my husband," cries the woman madly. "I wanted to see the face that has robbed me of his smiles, his lips, his looks. Oh, Madame, you have Paris at your feet; the world is ready to do you homage, go where you will. Can you not leave to

Eugénie the heart of Louis Napoleon? I plead with you! I beg of you!"

Her Majesty's slight, long hands are locked tightly together, and the tears are dimming the soft lustre of the wonderful eyes.

"Your Majesty!" cries the actress passionately; "Your Majesty labors under a mistake. I have robbed Your Majesty of nothing—nothing! What do you think that Zalka could do with the heart of another woman's husband? Your Majesty, we have a little proverb in my country; it is this: 'She who meddles with fire burns her body—she who meddles with the husband of a loyal wife burns her soul.' Will Your Majesty graciously permit me to retire?"

The young Russian is drawn up in an attitude of strange hauteur. One looking might say that she was the Empress, and that the woman who gazed upon her with an expression of mingled admiration and amazement, was the inferior in rank.

For an instant Eugénie made no movement nor any response.

Then she spoke slowly:

"You mean to tell me that you do not love the Emperor?"

"Your Majesty, I mean to tell you nothing whatever about my love. I am the keeper of my own heart," Zalka says, with a sad and bitter emphasis. "I believe the Emperor will tell you as much."

"And what of him?" cries the reckless and unhappy wife of Napoleon III. "What of his love, his heart? What can you say to me of that? I implore you, I implore you!" she cries, sinking among the cushions of the lounge, while sobs shake the slender frame.

"Ah! Your Majesty must surely be the keeper of the Emperor's heart. Why do you come to me for information of such a nature? Your Majesty will pardon me if I remind you that actresses are the toys"—the splendid Northern eyes dilate with pride and passion as she speaks—"the toys of monarchs, the playthings of a public that, through us, can take pleasure in sitting by and watching the dissection of their own choicest emotions. Your Majesty should

know that with hearts and love, and homes and firesides, people of my trade have little to do. We toil, Madame, and sweat that you may be amused, and that we may be fed. The Emperor's flowers are no sweeter, to my thinking, Your Majesty, than any others, and as to his admiration, surely the ruler of France could not quarrel with the verdict of his own Paris." Zalka laughs lightly, showing her white teeth very prettily, courtesies, and takes a step toward the portière, but a motion of the Empress's hand arrests her.

IX

"You are very clever, Mademoiselle Zalka," Eugénie says, "but the Empress is as clever as you are. Metternich and Bismarck are clever too, but they have not been, so far, able to deceive me."

The tone is brave, haughty, even defiant, and the Empress raises her lovely golden head proudly.

But then in an instant all is changed.

With a sob of agony she staggers across the room and falls almost fainting at the actress's feet.

"Oh!" cries she, through fastly falling tears, "why then, since you say he does not love you, do you wear upon your bosom his portrait?"

The cameo has fallen from between the sheltering folds of Zalka's robe.

"Your Majesty," returns the Russian, with inimitable sangfroid, "that was the Emperor's gift to me, who saved his life."

"And if you care nothing for him why does his image hang about your heart?"

"Your Majesty, listen. I am a loyal subject. France has none too many such in these days." The Russian speaks hurriedly and low, perchance she suffers, for she presses her hand to her heart, and the cough that is such a natural feature with her Marguerite Gautier, for a moment convulses her.

"Your Majesty, the Rhine is rising; it will overflow its banks and rush into France. Mark my words, there is disaster

in the air. I feel it! In Berlin they are already prating of a new empire, and in Alsace-Lorraine, children tremble as they hear the distant hum and roar of an army. I am a loyal servant and subject of the Buonaparte dynasty—surely Your Majesty cannot find fault if I wear the Emperor's image as my badge of fidelity."

The Empress regards the woman before her with incredulous eyes.

Is she, then, some splendid prophetess, this golden-haired girl, with her clear eyes and quivering lips? Can it be that these rumors she has heard are only rumors?

No; Eugénie is a woman and reasons from the feelings.

No; Zalka is a woman, therefore her fidelity is to her heart and not to her head.

She turns like one demented, wringing her hands, sobbing, pacing up and down the room.

"You are a sorceress!" cries the Empress madly.

"*Bien,* Madame. You are an Empress; command me to be burned at the stake. I

do not know," she adds gloomily, "that I should not thank you for it."

"You love him?" whispers Eugénie with concentrated anguish.

"And what then?" cries the other, goaded to desperation.

"He must then have first loved you, for you are not the woman to have given unsought."

"What then?" murmurs the Russian, in a voice of imperious impatience.

Suddenly without is heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

Zalka shrinks within the shadow of the curtains.

It is impossible to intrude upon the privacy of the Empress whose commands have been strict, but it is quite possible for an equerry to boldly impart the information to the ladies in waiting, and for them to as loudly echo it, that the Emperor impatiently awaits the appearance of the Empress.

"What shall I do? What can I do? What is to become of me?" exclaims the Empress, frantically, as with a gesture of despair, she catches sight in one of the great

mirrors, of her tear-stained face, her dishevelled hair, her disordered mien.

It would take at least an hour to restore her appearance to its usual calm.

And to appear before Paris in this guise is among the positive impossibilities.

" A sudden illness," cries she, after a moment's pause, falling back amid the cushions of a luxurious couch, and catching up a silver smelling-bottle.

" The Parisians are in no mood, permit me to remind Your Majesty," Zalka says timidly, emerging from her retirement, " for a sudden illness. They will not fall in love with a disappointment to their fête-loving senses. It were more wise for Your Majesty to devise some plan for their better amusement, than to cheat them of their expected pageant. The Empire wins a victory by every royal progress that it makes."

The girl's voice fairly trembles as she speaks, and in her eagerness she has approached Eugénie very closely.

The latter glances up, and as she does so her eyes fall upon the reflections in the looking glass, of her own and the actress's face.

"It is impossible for me, Mademoiselle," cries she, rising, "but you are used to playing parts. We are alike, do you not see? You can, if you will, save me from the Emperor's displeasure and the odium of the people—do you not see and understand, Madame? I will make it worth your while. See! We are of the same height! This robe!" The Empress picks up a dress of pale mauve satin which lies ready for her use in the adjoining dressing-room.

"Your Majesty is very good, but I require no reward. As Your Majesty is pleased to say, I am 'used to playing parts'; and to serve the Empire." (Zalka speaks with a grand enthusiasm.) "I am willing to appear in a new rôle at even so short a notice. Your Majesty will direct me?"

X

In a few moments, and with fewer words the Russian is invested with the splendid costume that had been designed for the Empress's wear on the drive to St. Cloud.

The faultless robe, the lace mantle, the bonnet with its delicate plumes, the amethyst jewels, the fan of long violet feathers, the boots.

With a dexterous hand she arranges her golden hair in the mode affected by Eugénie. She pencils her brows and dashes her lips and cheeks with the rouge that Her Majesty was of late seldom seen without.

She pins the thin, small *masque* veil across her face and then turns toward her counterpart.

" Is Your Majesty pleased—suited? "

" Ah! " cries the impetuous woman, " it is perfect! "

" Now, Your Majesty, what is my cue? "

By this the noise and confusion without has grown greater.

The stir and hum of impatience were in the air.

" I rely upon you," whispers the Empress, " although Heaven knows why! and you are to be with him—ah, what have I done! I am crazed! You must not go."

" Your Majesty may rely upon me. Be at the theatre at eight o'clock. You will

find Zalka there. I save you mortification, disgrace, perhaps something even more serious. Your Majesty has more to hope from me than to fear."

There is a splendid light in the Northern eyes, a light of enthusiasm and purity, of devotion and loyalty that the Southern born woman who listens, cannot understand, but still instinctively relies upon.

Between mingled prayers, entreaties, and sobs, the Empress shrinks back into the inner boudoir; and the actress, with her beautiful head erect, steps out into the auditorium, amid the ladies and people in waiting.

Once visible the great throat of Paris cheers itself hoarse over her.

"Never," they say, "has the Empress been so exquisite, so animated, so condescending."

It is remarked that even the Emperor half turns his haughty head to look at her, as they pass up the Champs Elysées.

It is even remarked by a casual onlooker that as he speaks to her he seems almost moved, and that a deep flush overspreads his face.

But this may be but the outcome of a vivid imagination on the part of the casual onlooker.

However, once well past Boulogne, it is quite true that His Majesty spoke with some animation to the lady at his side.

"Zalka," whispers Louis Napoleon, "I have dreamed of this hour, and it has come. Tell me that my star is not a faithful one! I have desired nothing that has not been mine, sooner or later."

"Your Majesty is fortunate," murmurs she.

Already he has listened to the story of the hour just passed, and thus, side by side, these two make their progress to the palace of St. Cloud.

"Zalka, why did you consent to this?" he asks, regarding her attentively.

"For the good of your Empire, *ami* Louis."

"You love my Empire, then?"

"As my life," she answers in a low tone.

"And—*l'empire c'est moi*—eh, Zalka, Zalka?"

His hand, for a wayward instant, closes

over that one of hers which lies almost hidden in the folds of her mantle.

For an instant, while sweet music plays, while men and women and little children shout them a welcome—while flowers arch above their heads, and while the twilight breeze, fresh off the perfuming fields, blows upon them, Louis Napoleon is a weak and loving man, as other men. Zalka, a woman, moved to a sad uplifting of her blue eyes, as other women.

The cortège has reached the palace.

Lights flit hither and thither about the gardens. The fountains are playing and so is the band.

All is bustle and confusion as the Emperor and Empress alight, and are presently conducted to their apartments.

Ere long they are alone, and with a subtle spring Louis Napoleon is at her side.

" Zalka, you love me as I love you? "

She gazes out of the window by which she stands, upon the darkening woods of Ville d'Avray, she sees the thin curl of smoke ascending from some cottage far away. She

hears the twitter of some sleepy little birds, and feels the dewy air upon her face.

There is a curious innate power in the woman that makes the man silent, breathless, motionless, enthralled, with idle hands and quivering lips.

What passes through her mind?

A morning long ago in June. A soldier turning the corner of the Rue Bayard—a girl bareheaded and with no stockings on her feet.

Well, well, for one hour she had been the Empress of France.

For one hour she had sat at the side of the man who had been the hero of her life.

With a sharp, fleet sigh, an upward glance that took in all the sweet, soft beauty of the time and place, Zalka bent her head above the man who now knelt by her.

She bent her head and touched his brow with her lips, and then she was gone.

Gone—with but that icy touch for him to remember all the years through to the end.

XI

A cab hurried toward Paris.

The curtains were pulled down and the man drove like one possessed; a large *pourboire* must have awaited him at his destination.

A coupé followed in hot pursuit.

The silken curtains of this were also drawn down, and the coachman did not once lose sight of the carriage that he followed.

Down through the Elysées, across the Place, through the Rivoli, these two dashed, and finally they attained their goal almost simultaneously, the stage door of the theatre where, as chance would have it, a third carriage, with blinds as closely drawn, appeared to await their arrival.

Zalka alighted from the cab, her mauve garments hastily concealed by a great cloak, and with a simple kerchief tied over her head.

Two gentlemen alighted from the coupé.

Two gentlemen in surtouts, and with

opera hats discreetly held close by their faces.

From the third a lady emerged clad heavily in black lace; there were roses at her breast, while roses and a Spanish mantilla wound about her head almost entirely concealed her countenance.

On beholding Zalka she gave a sigh of relief.

She had no eyes for the two gentlemen who stood aside, to permit her and her attendant to enter the theatre from the front.

But shortly, they also followed her example.

And what would Paris have said had it known that both the Emperor and Empress that night, were present at the performance of " La Dame aux Camelias " at the theatre?

Never, they say, had the Russian played her favorite rôle as well.

Certainly never had the applause been so emphatic, or an audience so madly enthusiastic.

Again and again, after each act was Zalka recalled to receive the homage of her public.

And this display of adoration reached its climax at the close of the last act.

Twice was she recalled, and a third time —amid the tumultuous bravos of a house that greeted her on its feet, with waving of hats and handkerchiefs, with flowers and gems thrown recklessly at her feet—was the curtain raised.

Was Zalka weary?

Or had she overtaxed her strength?

On the small garret bed of Marguerite Gautier, the actress lay as if asleep.

Nor did she stir to their plaudits or lift her lids to meet their gaze. Nor give any sign that she knew that the eyes of the man she had loved were upon her. Nor did the light lace upon her bosom quiver with exaltation and pride in her triumph.

It was like the curious phase of some veritable melodrama, or perchance tragedy?

The curtain fell suddenly. Its dull thud, as the weights struck the floor sounding ominously through the remarkable hush of the house.

In a moment more the manager-in-chief

—a courteous, phlegmatic person—stepped out before the footlights. He said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to be compelled to inform you that Mademoiselle Zalka is dead."

When they raised her from the spot where she had fallen, something sparkled upon the stage at their feet, a cameo miniature of the Emperor, its golden frame battered and one of the brilliants lost from the circle, while upon her white neck there reddened a scar, and the missing diamond was pressed into the flesh.

WHEN THE TZAR IS CROWNED

WHEN THE TZAR IS CROWNED

THE room was a large and magnificently appointed one in the palace of Gatschina, an immense fire burned in the elegant porcelain stove: it was almost red hot; a table littered with pamphlets and papers, also a couple of arm-chairs were drawn up before it; two men stood there; one old, but alert, stern, uncompromising, General Sergius Kalitzin, chief of the Imperial Military Police of Russia. The other, young, handsome, bearded, resolute, gallant, Alexander the Tzar.

The Ruler held in his hand a pen, and presently he sat down and dipped it in the ink: he wrote rapidly some twenty lines and handed them to the General; this is an Imperial method not uncommon of replying to communications of a certain nature.

Kalitzin took it and read, his face dark-

ening with excited blood as he did so, his brows contracting, his lips quivering, his powerful hand shaking.

"Your Majesty!" cried he under his breath, "I implore of you, for the sake of the Empire, your father's sacred memory, your oath, your religion, do not venture on such enterprises!"

Alexander remained silent, merely shaking his head with a smile, and pointing to the slip of paper containing his autocratic instructions.

"But, Sire, I implore pardon!" The old man bent his knee to the young one. "If you persist in these investigations yourself, death is positive. I tell you, as I have just rehearsed to you, the Nihilists are a power we must dread, we must crush, stamp out, burn, torture, strangle, for it is strong, and these of whom I have told you, are keen as daggers. They have sworn; they are sharp; they have taken the oath, and if Your Majesty persists in the course here outlined. I, the chief of the Military Police of the Empire, confess to you that I may prove of no avail."

The Tzar again smiled as he extended his hand to raise the General, at the same moment taking from him the slip of paper, lighting it at the fire, and holding it until it crumbled into a feathery nothing.

Kalitzin rose and bowed; he knew that the secret orders—so secret as not even to be spoken lest the very walls should possess ears, and always burned lest trace of them might fall into treacherous fingers—must be obeyed, yet there was trouble, and even sorrow on his countenance as he quitted the presence of his Imperial Master, and hastened to give directions in connection with the Sovereign's proposed visit to Paris, for which place he set out on the following morning; Kalitzin went also; in these days he was never more than three feet distant from the Tzar, with eyes watchful as the hungry tiger's, and a scent for danger as acute.

Once arrived in the French capital, it would seem that the precautions for the Russian Ruler's safety were redoubled, and amid all that hubbub of fêtes, shows, pageants, balls, exhibitions and reviews, there stalked

grimly the living, breathing, palpitating purpose of the followers of Prince Krapotkin, the determination to kill the Tzar.

Who was to do it?

General Kalitzin knew, he and three others; one, the person who was to do it; another, the accomplice; the third, the victim himself; these were all, and yet Alexander smiled on and went about apparently in unconcern.

When a man is guarded as he was, it is not hard to smile with unconcern.

To-night he sat in the superbly decorated loge, prepared for him at the opera. Calvé was singing *Carmen,* but with a motion of weariness he leaned back, and concealing a yawn withdrew behind the shadow of the silken curtains.

With a languid hand he picked up his lorgnette and surveyed the house; glancing to the right, around the circle of boxes, his gaze was suddenly arrested as the gaze of a man is arrested but once in the course of his life.

By the sight of a woman's face.

This woman was dressed like a Spanish

woman in a Velasquez portrait, in clinging robes of dull browns and fawns, a little cap of the same hues sat on top of her head; her hair was dull yellow, and it was worn in a curious tangled mass with wing-like loops over her ears; her arms, in their tightly puffed sleeves, were very long and slender, and she held them crossed innocence-fashion on her breast: between them, on the glint of bare ivory-flesh, shining pallid next the velvet of her bodice, hung, on a magnificent golden chain bestudded with topazes, an aggressively large and exquisitely painted miniature of the Tzar of Russia. The woman's face was far from beautiful; far more than beautiful; it possessed that divinity of difference from all the other women's faces Alexander had ever seen, which made it for him the most extraordinarily bewitching and alluring face in the world. She was pale with a radiant pallor, features a bit Tartaric, straight yet flat, full lips, pink as coral, eyes under thick light eyebrows, shining like the topazes that blinked on her bosom.

She looked like a moth, a strange note of wildness subdued her and held her prisoner,

fluttering may be in irked enforcement amid this sea of other tame women in their blue and green, and red and yellow and white, and multitudinous rainbow fallals.

Her companion, she had but one, was a man, or a boy? it was difficult to determine which, a being at any rate of the liveliest temperament with jet black curls worn clustering around his bright vermilion-painted cheeks, on top of the curls a yellow velvet berét; evening clothes it is true, but with much savagery in the way of a scarlet satin cravat, jeweled pins, chains, rings, while a bracelet of wrought iron, delicate as a girl's bauble, with a pigmy watch, set in diamonds between its links, encircled his wrist.

This fat, white braceletted hand was raised most of the time holding an opera-glass, which, at the moment that the Tzar had levelled his, and caught glimpse of the moth-like girl, the painted boy handed to her, whispering:

"Take the glass and look at him well."

She took it, and the rays of light from the electric globes above them in the centre of the ceiling, became entangled in these two

glasses, held by the Tzar of Russia, and the moth-like girl; a spark as of lightning's fire was emitted by the contact, and both, the man and the woman, dropped their arms as if struck by some power stronger than either of them.

Alexander of Russia sat bolt upright now with no more languidness in look or mien; without removing his eyes from the woman's face he motioned with his hand that Kalitzin should approach him.

"Who is that, Kalitzin?" asked the young man in a bewildered voice—"that girl yonder in the third box to the right, all ivory and yellow and brown, with something like tiger's eyes shining around a picture on her breast. Find out for me, if you please."

General Kalitzin paused a second before he either bowed or replied to his Sovereign; a strange hesitancy was in his manner, something between fear and irresolution.

But an instant, however, and then he inclined profoundly, and ventured to glance at the Tzar with an expression of interrogative curiosity on his wrinkled face.

Alexander felt it, and without turning his

head he deigned to answer the unasked question with a sigh and an imperious inflection, briefly thus:

"She attracts me."

"God forbid!" exclaimed the old soldier under his breath, and with such terrible fervor, that the Ruler half turned in his seat with something like a frown.

"Your Majesty," whispers Kalitzin with a shudder. "That is *she*."

"Yes; *that is she*," murmurs Alexander half to himself, as once again his gaze is riveted on the face of the moth-like girl.

"*That is she*."

It is what every man, however humble or mighty, says to himself one time in his career.

Kalitzin looked at his master, his face betraying, as he looked, a sense of horror, anxiety, and consternation.

"Your Majesty," he continues, "that woman is the woman I told you of before we quitted Russia, to whose lot it fell, when lots were drawn, to be the assassin of Your Majesty; she glories in the fate; she is here in Paris masquerading as a Russian patriotic

aristocrat, so as to watch you and strike her blow at the most convenient moment; she wears ostentatiously on her bosom a miniature of Your Majesty; the watchword between her and her accomplice, that red-cheeked boy who poses as her brother, is, 'When the Tzar is Crowned.' Your Majesty, now, now, that I am able this night to reveal to you the details of the dangers which encompass your sacred person, I implore of you, cut short your stay in this accursed Paris. Let us begone to-morrow, nay, this very night! for nowhere and it is I who say it, is Your Majesty safe except in St. Petersburg." Kalitzin's voice trembles with suppressed emotion as he speaks.

The Tzar turned again half-way toward him, his countenance, notwithstanding the thick beard and mustache, was ashy pale, his eyes widened and stared.

"Her brother?" was what he said.

"God knows! most likely her lover, if such women have hearts," returns the amazed soldier impatiently. "Petro Petrovitch, one of my most trusted men, came to me this morning with the information I have

just imparted to Your Majesty; at three this afternoon his dead body was found in the Seine, at St. Cloud!" Kalitzin stares at his Royal Master in blank astonishment, for, on the Tzar's face there is not a trace of even interest as to the fate of Petro Petrovitch, and his eyes are again fastened on the moth-like girl.

"They are like snakes, these Nihilists; their holes are invisible to mortal vision, their fangs are deadly; the poison they use is undiscoverable; the devil himself is their aid-de-camp. Oh, Your Majesty, permit me, and forgive me for the persistency, permit me to issue your command to the suite for a secret departure from Paris this night? a diplomatic reason is easily arranged for your going; one has not too much to dread from the displeasure of a Republic?" Kalitzin's large hand grasps the arms of the Ruler's chair as he speaks.

"What is her name?" asks Alexander, in a curious hushed voice.

"She goes by the name of Princess Kara Chreptovitch," is the response.

"And she lives?"

"At number twenty-eight, Cours la Reine."

"And you know nothing more than you have said?"

Kalitzin shakes his hoary head.

"Nothing as yet; we shall have to spill a man's blood each day in sacrifice to their diabolical methods, in order to find out."

"She has baffled you, then?" remarks the Ruler.

"I confess it," returns the old man. "All I know I have told Your Majesty; those two devils yonder laugh in derision when the words: 'When the Tzar is Crowned' reach their accursed ears; and they, and everyone of the three millions—yes, Your Majesty, three millions of Nihilists scattered over your dominions and over the world, laugh in scorn, when they read those words, when they hear those words now burning on the lips of the civilized globe; they swear that the coronation shall never take place; they swear that yonder fiend, with your image blazing on her breast, will strike you dead."

"Ah—h!"

It is something between a gasp and a sigh that parts the Tzar's lips as at last, his eyes still fixed, as were hers on him, on the moth-like girl where she sat, he says:

"Kalitzin, you may issue orders for a secret departure from Paris to-night, immediately on our reaching the hotel after the opera."

"Your Majesty, thank God!" The tears almost glisten in the old soldier's eyes.

"Once in Russia, once in St. Petersburg, far from that devil's den, Geneva, and I am master of the situation, safe, sure. But not here, within range of that ivory looking woman."

Alexander gives a dismissing nod.

During the last act he sits, still watching the moth-like girl, and now, too, the painted boy.

. . . .

By two o'clock, that is about three hours after the last notes of *Carmen* had died out in the opera-house of Paris, five carriages and several horsemen, twelve soldiers of the Russian Imperial Guard, twenty gens-d'armes and a miscellaneous following of

grooms, servants, and luggage quitted the Hotel Continental for the Gare du Nord.

By the time the cavalcade, which aroused not the slightest interest in the few revellers, street-sweepers, and early market-men whom it encountered, had reached the railway station, the dim film of violet iridescence, humid harbinger of the dawn, stole up the horizon, crept across the rim, curled in the tops of the chestnut flowers, wakened the birds, drew the scent from the earth and grass on the Cours la Reine, that matchless avenue, and at last, violet melting into golden arms of risen sun, night marrying with day, the hymen-torch of their nuptials struck the gilded cupola of the Invalides, and kissed the sky into rosy joy at birth of yesterday's to-morrow.

At one of the windows of number twenty-eight, a white hand opened the lattice, disclosing the moth-like girl standing in her night-dress breathing in the pungent air of the unsullied morning, the lace at her bosom fluttered back with the breeze, revealing on its golden chain another miniature of the Tzar; her dull locks were pushed behind her

little ears and fell forlornly in two rough braids to her knees; she put her hand up and shaded her eyes from the glint of fierce coppery light which struck them from the dome of the Invalides; she bent listening, for a sharp sound as of the click of a cane on the pavement, attracted her; she leaned to look out and beheld the painted boy coming glibly in the *porte-cochére.* Then she withdrew and pulled a dressing-gown of red cloth over her white one, pinned up her braids and glided to the door of the room, opened it, and meeting him on the landing, drew him in with anxious gestures.

"Well, my princess!" cried he, with a fawn's grin on his fat face, as he ran his plump fingers through his well-oiled curls and cast the yellow berét on the sofa.

"Hast no word for me after my absence, no welcome?"

"Liof Mouravief, I have told thee a million times. I will have no words or thoughts for thee or any other man, until this human vampire," the moth-girl holds up the Tzar's miniature as she speaks, "lies dead by this hand. What hast thou found out since I

parted from thee at the opera-house? I am in a fever of impatience, time hangs heavy on my hands until I can set the trap and catch the Imperial ermine. Oh, now that I have seen him, gazed upon his flesh and bone, my nerve is steadier for the deed, my heart happier, my whole being the more intensely, irrevocably absorbed in the fulfilment of my oath."

The moth-like girl is pacing up and down the room, her hand is so clenched on the Tzar's miniature as to cause the gems encrusting the frame to cut into her tender fingers. She pauses under the chandelier, the candles are still lighted but sputtering to their end; she raises her arms above her head, her eyes uplifted as she goes on:

"Oh, my Russia, my frozen, bitten, whipped, oppressed country; bleeding and sweating at every pore with the thin blood of starved, tortured men, women, and children; howling with the million cracked, parched throats that choke in the mines of Siberia; with the million backs breaking back into mother earth under the sting of the lash that goads you, because you have dared raise

voice against the despot who sits upon a throne of gold. My people, shrieking with your more than million tongues to me, to all of us, to rescue, to avenge you, I would stick spurs of steel red hot into my very heart did I not quiver with impatience for the moment when I may enmesh, crush, kill, the tyrant whose hand is against, and never for you!"

She has dropped upon her knees, still holding the Tzar's portrait up before her.

The painted boy looks at her, shrugs his shoulders, sighs, and then crossing to the open window he closes it sharply, blows out the dying candles, lights fresh ones, picks up a sponge, wets it with cologne and water and washes the rouge off his face; he also removes his black curls, leaving himself thereafter a man, pale, golden-haired, sombre, with eyes of blue fire, devouring in speechless greediness the beauty of the moth-like girl.

He approaches her now, and lays his hand upon her head:

She shakes off his touch and in a harsh voice she cries out,

"Liof Mouravief, I tell thee, no man shall

touch me until I have accomplished my mission. What news have you? Where sups he to-night? How soon wilt thou snap the pretty bracelet on my wrist, how soon may I set the watch in motion and throw it away? Tell me."

Liof Mouravief turns moodily off.

"Alexander and his suite quitted Paris two hours ago."

"What! and the deed not yet done!"

"Their destination St. Petersburg. The information brought them by that wretch Petro Petrovitch—by the way, he is dead—has set them agog. Kalitzin's eyes were upon us."

"*Us!* and has he found ways to discover that I am aught save the Princess Chreptovitch?"

"He has. While you were staring at the Tzar last night, the Tzar was staring at you, and no doubt Kalitzin, at his elbow was identifying you for his accursed master's benefit."

The girl pauses.

"Well, what of it? We will never come in contact. If he has returned to Russia we

can do the same; our passports are unimpeachable: our credentials perfect: and—by the living God—" she again holds up the miniature. "I swear that if these eyes once again behold the tyrant, they shall not quit their gaze till his are sightless in death.

"Liof!" she whispers, "we have wasted too much time already; do you make the preparations for our departuure on to-morrow night, and before I live another hour without it, give me the bracelet; here, clasp it on my arm, let me eat, sleep, move, knowing that the little dainty bomb, light as a diamond, easily thrown as a flower, is where I can reach and use it at a second's warning."

Liof shook his head angrily: he loved this woman and was biding his time to make her his wife.

"I will keep it until the time comes," he says sternly; "that is part of my duty."

"You will give it to me now," she says, gritting her white fox teeth together, and adding, with that celestial smile up into his face which such women have, "if you love me, as I'm sure you do."

He transferred the devilish bauble to her wrist, blessing fate for the chance to finger that adorable white arm.

That evening the Princess Kara Chreptovitch received, as usual, on Thursdays. A great crowd of clever people were always to be found in her salon last winter, you will easily remember, if you chanced to have been then in Paris; personages, many of them, in the social, literary, art, and dramatic worlds; others to fill in; clever men and women too, but indistinctive, each glad to be in the house of the original Princess, who was so enthusiastic in her patriotic devotion to her Tzar.

She stood there now, her yellow hair once more looped in those strange little wings, and sprayed and woven into meshy masses at the back, a little coronet of topazes glimmered on top of it, and she was dressed in the national sarafan, the loose, square-necked, sleeveless gown of yellow satin, worn over a full-sleeved yellow calico chemise, thin woven yellow sandals on her feet, and long yellow gloves on her hands; the miniature of the Tzar shone on her bosom,

and the painted boy, posing cheerily as her brother, flitted near her.

There was music, something half barbaric, sensuous, sweet, sounding out from the rear of the ante-room; everyone was chattering with much laughter and gayety, when the servant entered, and approached Kara Chreptovitch with a card and a great heavy heap of purple sweetness on his salver.

She took the card, and the scent of the violets greeted her, as if one with the lusciousness of the music.

She read the name.

" Alexis Tzof," and beneath was written: " A fellow-countryman, a stranger, a sympathizer, begs the honor of permission to pay his respects to the Princess Kara Chreptovitch."

In an instant the painted boy was beside her; he had read the card, thrown it in the fire, the flame of suspicion, which is the familiar of such people, leaping to his face, and the violets went after the card, he standing between Kara and the fire, not to be surprised if an explosion should follow.

But none did.

Nothing worse occurred than that the stranger, possibly tired of waiting in the ante-room, now entered the salon, and made his way directly to the hostess.

Alexis Tzof was a young man noticeable above all others, not on account of his height which was great or the splendor of his physique, or the perfection of his toilette, or his beauty, but for his atmosphere which was unique, commanding, demanding, and obtaining pre-eminence wherever he was. He was fair, with a face as smooth as a girl's and as strong as a lion's whelp, beautiful white teeth and eyes of tourmaline; they rested with an expression most caressing upon Kara's face, and instantly she felt a shiver pass over her; he bent his head, took her hand in his large strong white one; raised it to his lips; as he did so, the rays from a cat's eye, which he wore upon his finger, met those of the diamonds surrounding the Princess's portrait of the Tzar; the flash seemed electric, it smote Kara and half blinded her; she stood nerveless, passive, resistless while the newcomer, well watched by Liof Mouravief, spoke:

What did he say?

Such things as all women love to hear. That unseen, he had gazed upon her, followed her, shadowed her; unable to obtain presentation, he had at last, in desperation, resorted to this means of gaining her acquaintance; that he was amply prepared to satisfy her and her brother, as to his identity and qualifications, and so forth and so on.

Kara Chreptovitch listened as one listens in dreams that are sweet, dreading the awakening; thereafter all the evening her guests float before her as misty creatures, films dwarfed into nonentities by this surpassing being so full of strength, possessiveness, power, newness.

The painted boy was uneasy and alert; he thought he detected beneath all this paraphernalia a secret emissary of Kalitzin's, and he was very wary.

As one by one, finally almost the last of the company were leaving, he contrived to convey as much to Kara.

She started, rubbing her eyes as a child disturbed in its refreshing sleep.

The last person had now quitted the salon,

except Tzof; he too was at the door, but he turned with a quick and gallant motion and was beside Kara; the painted boy, keen for mischief, had his hand on his pistol in his little pocket, while the stranger spoke.

"Excellent sir," Tzof said quietly, while a faint smile of amusement played upon his full red lips, "delay a little; I assure you, with me you will have no use for your weapon."

The painted boy still held it fast however; conspirators are firm believers in the universality of conspiracies.

"Madame," with a profound inclination before the Princess; "I have noted both here and everywhere, that I have had the honor to behold you, that you wear the portrait of the man they call the Tzar of Russia," an inflection a trifle sad, a trifle supercilious strikes the ears of his two listeners.

"Madame, I have of late been in Geneva;" his voice lowers to a mere whisper as he glanced around cautiously, for at the mention of that Swiss city, both Kara and Liof could not forbear a start of bewilderment and apprehension.

"There," continued Tzof, "where you frequented not long since, I too have been familiar. I mean in the small shop of Serge Prost in the Rue Sturm."

The eyes of Kara and Liof dart against each other like the play of criss-cross lightning.

"The words you have heard I too have listened to." Now his tones sink even lower, and articulation is scarcely more than mere breathing.

"When the Tzar is Crowned," murmurs Alexis Tzof, fixing his peculiar orbs on the face of Kara Chreptovitch.

The painted boy takes his hand from his pocket.

The Princess shudders as her glance is dissolved in his, absorbed by his, shudders with the perfect, heretofore unknown bliss of actual vital divine loving.

And they three sit there with close-drawn curtains late into the night, even until once more the dawn pricks all the East with rose, and quenches the stars, and re-awakens the world to its new round of labor and sweat.

It had been planned by the Princess and Liof Mouravief to quit Paris for St. Petersburg the night following the Tzar's sudden departure; it has been told how anxious was Kara Chreptovitch to go, to place herself at once within reach of her intended victim.

Very well; but they did not quit Paris. So often does it happen that the desire of yesterday burns out in the teeth of to-day's bite.

The painted boy was for departure.

The Princess made excuse of not being well; he stared; she was unresponsive, languid, indolent, lying at length on her lounge, full of absent-mindedness, with lowered lids.

Alexis Tzof came again that evening, and while she should have been journeying post-haste to the frontier, she languished amid warmth, downy cushions at her feet and head, listening to the music of his voice.

The painted boy played the piano until he was tired, and then he went out in the little garden and smoked, peeping in at the windows in jealous rage at these two, complacent, quiet, content, if, for no other reasons than that they had at last met, when it now

appeared to them that they must have been waiting to meet since the world began.

What did they speak of?

Naught but themselves; naught but that supreme theme which Adam and Eve, making primal awakening in one another's arms, found sweeter than any other ever to be mentioned again.

This went on for a fortnight.

Always the St. Petersburg journey put off; always Alexis Tzof each day, and evening too. Always the painted boy a little dull, but watchful and patient, till now.

He raged up and down in front of her, his light eyes swimming in tears of anger and passion.

"I tell you it must stop. I will not have it; you are betrothed to me; you are bound by a sacred vow to end the tyrant. You! once most eager to plunge the knife, to throw the little bomb there on your wrist, You! forsooth must linger on fêting and pleasuring here in Paris. Why? Because a tall man is become your hero, your slave and your master, both in one. Kara, if you do not come at once to Peterburg I will

kill your lover and denounce you to the leaders at Geneva."

Lashed into a fine fury, the painted boy in his little yellow béret and his evening clothes —for it was now nine o'clock, and guests, as usual, were expected in the Princess's salon —dashed up and down, smashing a few cups and saucers en route.

Kara looked at him; how impotent, how silly he was; she shrugged her shoulders and twisted the iron bracelet around on her arm with a smile.

"My friend, cease upbraiding me. I promise you," Kara rose and shook herself, much as one does on rising from slumber that has been long-sought fruitlessly. "I promise you as to the tyrant, within forty hours from to-morrow, either he or I will be no more." She sighs, for Alexis Tzof has stolen all the tang, and smart, and bitter, out of her oath. Yet she knows it must be kept.

"And me! me! What of me?" almost shrieks the painted boy at her ear.

"You!" the Princess stares at him. "You can do nothing, be nothing, say noth-

ing, until this bracelet has done its work. Run away," she says lightly, " and play the piano, and compose yourself; I hear footsteps."

The guests came; they ate and drank, and made merry.

The guests went, all save Alexis Tzof.

Mouravief also had gone to see to the luggage, for they were to start in a few hours for Russia.

Kara Chreptovitch stood leaning against the marble statue of Aphrodite, her hands were clasped in front of her, her arms so encircling the portrait of the Tzar. She was looking down; she trembled; she knew that the wonderful divine moment of life had come; she knew that unspeakable joy stepped across her threshold, entering in, and giving her new birth, as Tzof drew near to her.

He came half as conqueror, half as suppliant, with outstretched, pleading hands, with beseeching eyes, with a victorious soul quivering in every fibre of his great body.

" Kara," he whispered, " Kara, beloved one, it is something with you as it is with

me, is it not? Speak, sweet love, and say to me that thou lovest me one tithe as well as I love thee? Oh, 'tis not love, my worshipped lady," cries he, falling on his knees before her and reaching up to clasp her slender waist. "It is idolatry; for thee I would throw away a world; for thee I would resign all that men crave; for thee honor, life, Empires, principalities, all weigh as nothing. Speak to me, my dove, one word!"

"I love thee," Kara Chreptovitch whispers, bending, drawn by his strong arms, to meet the craving of his lips on hers.

"I love thee, but my oath, my mission, too long have tarried; this night must see me on the way to St. Petersburgh to fulfil my destiny."

"And thou canst talk of destinies when this moment makes our destinies one! Beloved, dost think I will allow thee to separate from me, risk thyself, who dost now belong to me?" Tzof holds the moth-like girl close to his breast with both arms about her, his eyes fixed upon her face in unutterable tenderness.

"To me," he repeats rapturously, pushing

back the small winglike loops of her dull hair.

"No, thou art mine, and never shalt thou endanger one hair of thy head for any cause or people, or tyrant, or oath, on God's earth!"

A sound comes up through the silent house; it is the creak of the painted boy's boots; the Princess breaks her bonds, she stands like some hunted wild thing, beaten by cruel dogs into a last unavailing court; the boots of the painted boy creak nearer.

"Oh!" cries she. "Away from me; tempt me no more, or I cannot withstand. My oath must be kept. Alexis Tzof, if I accomplish my mission and live, then I am thine own; if not, farewell."

Tzof approaches her.

"Then," he says, simply, standing there in the flicker of the firelight, his hand on her shoulder.

"Keep your oath, now, this moment, for I am Alexander the Tzar."

Smitten, blinded, stunned, she cowers at the base of the statue of Aphrodite, which is no whiter than she.

" Thou," she murmurs, creeping slowly to him. " Thou! " And the music in her voice is of heaven, so touching, so tender, as she draws down his beardless face to her arms and strokes and caresses it with cold, trembling little fingers.

" I, even I," he says, holding her to his heart.

" And I have now thy image on my heart for eighteen long months, and not to know thee when I saw thee bare of beard." All these few moments she is caressing his face, his throat, his hands.

The boots of Liof Mouravief now creak on the staircase.

The moth-like girl rises.

She drags herself the whole length of the very long room, while Alexis Tzof crosses down to the other end to meet the painted boy.

He meets him.

Neither sees the woman.

She wrests the iron bracelet from her wrist, and, snatching the bomb, light as a blossom from its jeweled socket, she raises her arm and drops it, snapping, at her own feet.

A sharp report; a dull thud, two weak woman's hands clasped on the portrait of the Tzar on her bosom.

Death lay between the two men who knelt at either side of Kara Chreptovitch.

"When the Tzar is Crowned," mutters Liof Mouravief, turning over the miniature and reading the five words so engraved on it, and then beginning to weep and to pray.

But Alexander the Tzar said nothing, only raised her, and laid her on the sofa, and kissed her on the mouth, and went out of her house, and back to his own country to his own family and people.

THE SPIRIT TRAVELLER

THE SPIRIT TRAVELLER

LATE one August, while I was looking forward to shooting on the moors, breezy walks and breezier rides, a certain visit at a certain box belonging to an old friend of my father, and to the meeting of this worthy's lovely little daughter, I was suddenly called back to Cheshire on important family business. I took the 8.20 P.M. train from the North British, and discovered, when it was too late to rectify the mistake, that I had been given a second instead of a first-class ticket for L——, where I hoped to spend the night comfortably at the Grosvenor, an old stopping-place of mine, *en route* between England and Scotland.

However, I gave a decent tip to the guard, and found myself tolerably well off; alone, and with a locked door, a package of good cigars, my rug, and a note in a dainty hand,

which I read and re-read with strange satisfaction. Presently my meditations were interrupted by a trial at the door; it was a quick, decisive touch and go, unlike the usual rattle of disappointed rage, that attacks a barred entrance to a railway coach.

In a moment more, the opposite door was quietly opened and a large man, with a small travelling portmanteau, got in before my astonished eyes, and seated himself composedly on the opposite seat. I smiled to myself at the *savoir faire* and the agility of the man whose determination and spirit, in creeping beneath the coach at the risk of his life, to attain the quiet and comfort of travel with one fellow-passenger, instead of the allowed and allotted ten, struck me as most amusing.

No lamp had as yet been placed in the coach. It was a luxury I momentarily hoped for, so as to read once more the little letter I held. But even by the dimming twilight, I could see that my companion was a man of uncommon size, and the possessor of a face of unusual power, if of sparse refinement; his eyes were like a falcon's, and in less than two minutes, their rapid inclusive

flash, seemed to have measured me by some intuitive standard of their own.

"Smoke, sir?" I inquired, laconically, extending my case to him, desiring, I know not why, to be on good terms with this person, who might after all be going to alight at the next station, and whose society, at longest, I should quit at midnight.

"Thank ye, na," he replied, in an unmistakable Scotch accent. "I've no small vices," he added, with a hearty, healthy laugh. "Plenty o' the big uns, though, to make up for the wee deficiencies!" I laughingly shrugged my shoulders, in reply. "You're no' a Scotsman?" he asked, presently.

"No; the next best thing," I answered, half-ironically, "an Englishman!"

"Yes, yes; they're a fair people—a fair people—but it's no' a fair country. Give me auld Scotia wi' her braes and her moors, her hielands and lowlands, her lochs and her burns. Hark!" he exclaimed, as the train slowed in approaching a little manufacturing town by a riverside, "heard ye ever a music like that frae any English brook, as ye

call them?" I bent my attentive ear to the window at my side.

"Bide a wee, bide a wee. There, noo; ye can hear the laugh o' the Galla water." Truly, it was like a girl's rippling laugh, full of mischief and mirth; and, by the light of the stars I could see it hurrying along over the stones, and between the long, green grasses, and under the bending beech-boughs. It was only one of those burns so common in Scotland, and so dear to her sons.

"D'ye hear it, mon; d'ye hear it!" cried my companion, excitedly, rising and leaning out of the open sash, gazing with a peculiar wistfulness across the meadow, where the sheep slept, to the laughing, murmuring Galla water.

"Yes," I responded, "there is an odd sound to its rush, certainly: a sort of wild merriment, as it dances on, winding in and out of the moors and fields, slipping under bridges, playing hide-and-seek with itself as it travels southward."

"Yes, yes," he whispered dreamily; "she had ever a yearning after the south; she's hurrying thither the night, I'm thinking."

I looked up at him in undisguised consternation. Was my travelling companion mad, or merely poetical? The latter phase seemed almost impossible with his exterior.

" Ye're wondering about me? " he queried sharply, drawing his head in with a jerk and seating himself, as the train rolled slowly out of the small station. " Ah," with a deep and almost a heart-rending sigh, " mon, mon, that same Galla water brought me an angel —and took an angel away frae me again! " He passed his large hand over his face as if to smooth away some sign of poignant trouble, and for a time was silent, as we sped on through the darkness.

After the lapse of perhaps half an hour the train came to a dead stop; apparently, from the scattered lights we saw shining dimly by the way, in the suburbs of some town; presently, the guard coming along, we learned that the cause of our detention was the centenary of the Trade Guilds which had been celebrated at Preston that day—that the roads were lined with extra trains, so loaded as to cause alarm, and so ingeniously started as to preclude the possibility

of anyone of them getting to its destination anything under three hours behind time! The man assured us that the rush and crowd we might expect at the next station would be quite appalling. Finally we crept onward, the lights grew thicker, and I mentally prepared myself for a dozen or more smoking, and probably half-intoxicated roughs as future sharers of the carriage with me and my erratic companion.

The roar of thousands of angry voices broke upon my ear, as we rolled into the great station: in another instant a dozen hardy fists were battering at our locked door, and curious eyes were glaring wrathfully in at our roomy comfort. As to their language, the slangy jeers and voluble indignation of the British mob is as well left to the imagination.

My fellow-traveller was serene under the fire: he even smiled as the door-handle rattled, and the door shook beneath the heavy artillery, momently growing more impatient without, as they yelled for the guard to open for them.

"We will have to succumb!"

"De'il a bit!" replied my Scotch friend. "Be quiet, mon, and I'll show ye the tune that always plays for success!" There was a curious fire in his cool eyes as he spoke, that made me rather incline to the company of the great unwashed. To speak the truth, there was a something "uncanny" about the man, and I made up my mind that I would as lief share his society for the remainder of the night with a few other people.

The guard finally arrived, the door was unlocked, my companion sprang out with a bound, merely answering the new guard's "Good-evening, sir," with a curt nod; the crowd entered, not the allotted nine, but twenty at the least, all men; while women, struggling with babies in their arms were pushed and buffeted aside without mercy on the platform.

"Who is that person?" I queried of the guard, while the people about me were taking possession with jeers of the carriage, the racks, and every available inch of space on the floor unoccupied by my two feet.

"Yon?" said the man, jerking his thumb

over his shoulder in the direction in which my Scotchman had gone.

"Yes," I answered, while a burly individual seated himself literally upon me, and I rebelled.

"Yon's a spirit traveller, sir."

"A what?" I cried; receiving an invader on my other knee, with almost a feeling of joy.

But ere the guard could reply, the "spirit traveller" himself appeared at the carriage-door, and was greeted with hoots and cries of contemptuous triumph by my twenty companions.

"Noo, then, gentlemen!" he cried. "Are ye all mad? Jimmy!" turning to the guard, "are ye no afraid o' losing ye're place"—jeers and screams—"wi' letting decent folks in wi' a mon that holds their lives in his hand, like yon?" pointing to me. "Oot wi' ye, oot wi' ye, all!" cried he, in a voice of mingled alarm and command, "yon's a lunatic, and a dangerous one, I be taking to Hanwell!" Almost before the last words had escaped his lips the carriage was emptied of its passengers—every one of them

save myself. The " spirit traveller " leaped in, closed the door with a bang, and as we steamed slowly off, fell back in a corner convulsed with laughter.

I cannot say, with any degree of accuracy, that I shared either his mirth or his triumph. In the almost total darkness, for we had no lamp as yet, with hours of slow travel before me, shut up with this person, whose sanity I now questioned more than ever, I felt that a crowd of London roughs was preferable. There was, however, nothing to be done but endure the situation.

" There be ways and ways i' this weary world," he finally exclaimed, with a concluding peal of merriment. I smiled a feeble assent, and wondered if it would not be better to recall his attention to the braes and burns of his native land.

" Where are we now? " I inquired.

" Blankshire. Going southward always, following the course o' the streams. Yon's Galla water again." He peered out into the darkness. " Ye cannot see the silvery thread winding in and out there, maybe, but I can. I have a pair o' eyes within here," he tapped

his forehead significantly as he spoke, "as makes me see what ithers canna."

I instinctively ruminated vaguely and not pleasurably upon mediums, mesmerizers, charlatans," and I know not what other spiritual agents.

"Their names are memory and love!" he adds, in a voice low, soft, well-nigh thrilling in its tenderness.

I glance over at him with renewed interest. He must feel rather than see it, for we are in absolute darkness; rain has set in, and the drops beat fast upon the panes, as we speed onward.

"I told ye the Galla water brought me an angel," he says presently, "so it did—so it did! It was a morning in June. I was a young lad then, no more than twenty or so, and a home lad. I knew naught of foreign parts or ways, had never been outside of my own shire. Well, a morning in June, early four, or thereabouts; I was up and off down to the river-meadows to look after my sheep, when my mother called me. 'Sandy,' says she, 'I hear summat below, yon, at the water-side. Whisht! do ye no

hear till it? it be's like the wailing—nay, nay! — like the laughing o' a bairn!' 'Pshaw, mither!' says I; 'ye're no' fairly out o' your sleep yet. I only hear Galla water, laughing away over the pebbles.' I went, my way; and she stood, shading her eyes wi' her hand, watching me out o' sight. Well, sir, what d'ye think? When I got down to the burnside, where the sheep stood drinking and waiting for me to come with their bit o' salt, I found something else waiting for me there, too. It was a bairn! a wee, smiling thing of four years, maybe, with its little bare feet dabbling in the water, and its twa wee hands clappit together, and its blue eyes dancing in the sunshine, and its red lips laughing—laughing up at me! The flock was not afraid of her, they cropped close to her bonny gold head, and the words she spoke, perhaps they understood them, I could not. Folks said it was French, sir; but I knew better. It was some language of the burn, the bonny burn, that brought her to me that morning, long agone!" The "spirit traveller" sighed heavily, as he leaned forward and rested his forehead in his palms.

I was, by this time, fully impressed with the belief that my new acquaintance was what is popularly called a medium, and doubtless the local dialect translated this into "spirit traveller." I was, too, vastly interested in his story, and no doubt by my attentive attitude, dimly discernible in the gloom, testified as much.

"There was a bit boat found away down the river, by Melrose, and folks said that a young woman, speaking a foreign tongue, had been seen lurking about the shire for some days past, with a child in her arms, and that later on, she was seen without the bairn. Be that as it may, I believe, sir, the Galla water brought my wee Jeannie to me, and no living soul could persuade me that a young mither would set a puir wee body like that afloat, wi' naught to guide nor steer it for life and death, save the tide and the winds o' heaven. I took her home in my arms to my mither. She was ever a good, homesome body—God bless her—and she loved the child frae the first. It learned to speak like us after a bit, and it would clap its hands for me when I came home on mar-

ket days, and the bright eyes, even then, would shine the brighter for the bit of ribbon I carried back to snood her bonny hair. Oh, sir, she loved all that was brilliant and beautiful; 'twas her nature to love the sunshine and flowers, and the gay colors and the fine things. What had wee, winsome Jeannie to do wi' dark skies and barren moorlands, wi' clouds and ugly clothes? Naught, naught! She came frae the South, sir, and she yearned after her happier, bluer heavens always—only I did not understand it exactly, *then*." Again he heaves a deep and piteous sigh, and passes his hand across his brow; there was not only pathos, but tragedy in the man's voice and movement.

"She grew, sir, like the finest lily, and her head was like the lily's bell—now leaning this way, now that, with such pretty, witching ways as would woo the bees from gaudiest flowers, to suck the sweetness from her soft young mouth. Before I knew it, although I was watching for it all the time, Jeannie was a woman; the burn's bairn was a lassie wi' all a lassie's airs and shyness. I had it in my mind for months, but I never

dared to ask her to be mine, in a dearer, nearer sense than she was. My mother's death hastened my lips. How I remember the day! She looked up, wi' the same clear laughing eyes that had shone into mine fourteen years before, wet wi' the lapping of the waves then; twa salter drops stood 'atween their smiles that morning. 'Will you take me to the South?' she asked of me, and I promised her I would; and then, very quietly, she laid her hand in mine. I could na' even press it, sir; there was such a tumult in my veins as made even this hand powerless"—he raised his powerful right hand as he spoke—"beneath the light touch of hers. In six months we were married"—he pauses abruptly—"that, sir, is one of the sacred times we dream over with shut lips; we've no language coined yet to convey their meaning. Jeannie was *my wife.* Hoping to better myself, and the sooner take her off for the bit trip to the South, I let the pasture lands to a neighbor, and took to this spirit-travelling; there was more money in it, I thought, but somehow, it didna' come fast enough. Every journey I made, I brought

home the wee woman summat pretty and gay, and she would laugh and be pleased a bit, and then after awhile she would creep into my arms and lay her head upon my breast, and say to me, wi' her coaxing fingers on my face, 'Will it be soon, Sandy, that you'll be taking me to the South? It is so cold here—so cold! It seems to me, sometimes as if I could remember a beautiful land where flowers grew always, where bright birds sang in the branches, and where people danced and sang, and were merry—not like here—oh, not like here!' And the puir bairn shuddered in my clasp, as she glanced out the cottage window to the bare moors and the dull gray sky." Again he paused, as though lost in the mazes of a too retentive memory.

"I did na' prosper, sir; that is the sum o' it all. It was my fault—all mine; he who says other speaks falsely." His tone is almost fierce, as he brings down his clenched hand upon the window-ledge, with a force that causes the glass to rattle. "I got up one morning; I had slept heavily, having but just got home frae a long and tiresome jour-

ney—and she was gone!" One great sob, almost the pitifullest I ever heard, seemed as if it would rend him body and soul; then:

"I knew where to look, sir; I rushed straight down to the water's edge, and my instincts had na' misled me. The bit boat I kept there for her pleasuring was slipped its moorings; the water rippled in the early glint of the sunshine, the sheep nibbled close to the brink, and there were her footprints in the soft, wet clay; the blue ribbon from her head lay draggled half in the water, half out. I caught it to my heart with a wild cry; I carry it there to-day, and that is near fourteen years ago, sir! They said there were other footsteps besides my Jeannie's—longer and broader ones—they said that a dark-haired, foreign man, handsome as Southern men are sometimes, had been oft at the cottage when I was off, they said"—he fairly gnashes his strong teeth together, as he stops short—"but *they lied.* The burn flowed toward the South—the warm, sweet South she loved so and yearned after—and poor lamb, she thought its luring

babble could float her down in safety to the land where the birds are ever singing. My bairn, my puir wee Jeannie; Galla water gave you to me, and Galla water took you away from me! I am travelling still, sir; always up and down, and I'm always looking out, especially on dark nights like this, to see her floating down wi' the stream; and always, when I go home, I'm in haste to get to the burnside o' mornings, so sure am I that the tide will bring her back to me some time, some way, some day. I hear her laugh in every wave that chases its brother; I *know* she could na' help leaving me; she was not like ither folk—my sweet, wee, winsome Jeannie!"

When I arrived in L—— I took occasion to inquire about the "spirit traveller." I learned that the term was used in Scotland and in some of the Northern shires of England, to designate a clerk travelling in the interest of some large, or small, wine merchant; and that this particular spirit traveller, although the pay he received was very small, and tempting offers had been made to him by other houses, steadily refused to quit

the track he had gone in for upward of sixteen years—a stretch of country, not many miles in extent, that never lost sight of his beloved "Galla water."

THE LOST YEAR

THE LOST YEAR

"There is a year in the Poet's life which remains wholly unaccounted for, the year 1828."—*Life of Poe.*

I WAS in Geneva, sauntering along the Corraterie, when the attraction of an old book-shop arrested my eager eyes. I stood for some time peering into musty tomes and turning over mildewed leaves; I was going, when a little volume fell to the ground at my feet; I picked it up, to restore it to the counter, when a faint perfume like the prisoned soul of some forgotten flower assailed me from its faded silken cover. I sat down on the wooden stool and opened the book. It was Baudelaire's poems. The silken case in which some dainty and fanciful hand had secured it was embroidered with the initials "E. A. P." Anxious to see the original

binding, I slipped off the silken cover, when from its shield there came into my hands a cluster of crumbling hyacinths pinned to a thick packet of papers.

The flowers, whose aroma still bore hint of sweetness, scattered in the breeze, but the now loosened sheets of paper, I at once perceived, were closely written over in an elegant and most legible hand.

I bought the book for a couple of francs, went quickly back to my hotel, and, sitting down on my balcony, I did not stir until I had devoured the last one of those marvellously fine and neat pages.

The MS. ran thus:

"There is a lost year in my life; I wish it to remain lost forever, yet nevertheless I risk my desire somewhat by here setting down its history; the force of its mystery and its melody, its strange, unutterable passion and tragedy are such as compel me to record them, whether I will or no: perchance when once I behold the written word my uneasy spirit will rest, and I can consign these pages to the flames. The year was 1828. Exalted and imbued with the ardor of youth

and high ideals, I embarked from New York on a stormy September morning, with the avowed purpose of going to Greece and there offering my strength and services in aid of that struggling and unfortunate country.

"We sailed down the Bay, through the Narrows, around the Hook, in a cloud of empurpling mist; the sun's ghost glimmered athwart the gloom, and the plaint of the sobbing and untiring sea surged all about me. No more the ragged shore could be seen, no more the faint odor of the soil assailed the sense; all sky, ocean, atmosphere, seemed united in one molten pressure of dull and mournful gray. The ship slid on as on a sea of glass, hastened by a breeze that hurried mystically through her sails, and yet scarcely ruffled the hair upon my forehead. For days it continued thus, one unbroken impulse through a nebulosity, which the occasional phosphorescent flashes seen afar, only served to render the more strange and profound.

"At the close of the tenth day I sat huddled up on deck, my eyes seeking to pene-

trate the film; they could not, but suddenly, from out the awful space, I saw a black head cleaving the murk asunder; I heard black wings flapping against the dusk and conquering it; I beheld a bird, livid in its swarth, alight upon the ship's topmost mast, and with its eyes of yellow flecked with green, it pierced my eyes and riveted my gaze to it. It was a raven, and from where I crouched I could perceive that it opened its beak slowly and uttered sounds so mournful, so melancholy, as made my heart-strings stretch and the cold drops stand out on my face. I prayed it to go away; I begged it to leave me, but even though I knelt in supplication the ominous bird perched there upon the mast-top, and with its solemn and damnable croak would seem to have cast a spell upon my soul.

"I called the captain and pointed the eyrie creature out to him, but he assured me he saw nothing there, and in this assertion the officers, passengers, and crew stood by him to a man, adding their laughter to his.

"But on the eleventh, the twelfth, and all the days until we sighted the land of France,

the bird sat yonder in his monkish state, sometimes flapping his broad wings, but never taking flight, and always moaning out his strange, dissyllabled miserere; always striking the venomous glint of his parti-colored eyes down into mine with the precision of an arrow—until, one day, the last on board, when pleasant pasture lands and flowery meadows greeted us, he spread his trim and ebon sails and struck out skyward toward the South.

" After I went ashore I was taken ill, so mortally ill that, had it not been for the exquisite kindness of total strangers, I had perished. Recovering somewhat, the good priest, whom the housefolk had quickly summoned to my side, urged me to seek a warmer climate, dissuading me utterly from my original purpose of going to Greece and entering the army—for which service I was now indeed wholly unfit—and recommending to me an asylum at once healthful, beautiful, peaceful, and retired. This was the Convent of St. Onofrio, near the city of Padua. The brothers, he said, would receive me gladly, and a few months spent

among them would put me once more in good condition.

"Too weak to dissent, too indolent to care, I followed the priest's advice, and, journeying into Italy by slow stages, I finally found myself installed as a guest beneath the hospitable, if half-ruined roof, of St. Onofrio.

"For some days after my arrival I remained within doors, either in my cell, in the refectory, the chapter-house, or the chapel. It was sufficient to have recovered life itself; to be able, once more, to think with avidity, to breathe without pain; for the rest, I was well content to let it go, or come, as it might.

"So that, thus having sailed from home in September, it was already April when I went out into the convent garden and walked about under the shade of green trees, inhaling the voluptuous odor of hyacinths, listening to the music of the silence; that undiscovered source of some of the heavenliest harmonies the ear has ever heard.

"I lay at rest—grant that it was the essence of physical repose, and that an over-

taxed spirit too gladly lost itself in the bodily, and for once forgot its struggle—in the convent garden; the low-sweeping branches of some fringing shrubbery swept above my head; the hyacinths breathed against my tired cheek; my eyes took in the sad beauty of a ruined arch overhung with vines, through which there peeped the bluest sky, and just above the arch was built a stone chamber, whose one narrow window leaned a little, and was walled up, shutting out forever the light, shutting in some monkish mystery doubtless, of perchance the middle ages. I heard the brothers chanting litanies at their work in the fields; humanity was near, but not in touch; my eyelids closed, the hyacinths crushed against my mouth, when I heard again, as before, the dreary, dolorous flapping of a bird's nearing wings. I sprang to my feet. I beheld once more the raven clinging to the branch above my head; felt once again the awful rivet of his gaze on mine; heard now, as at first, the excruciating, corroding cry from his bitter throat.

"He swayed upon his perch and seemed to mock me with his reiterated moan. I

leaned against the tree-bole, palpitating with an unexplainable expectancy, and as I leaned and waited, the monkish litanies lulled, and in all the place there sounded nothing save the crackle of the raven's claws, for he hopped from the branch, and statelily passed up the gravelled path that leads to the ruined arch. I followed him, I cannot say against my will, but unreflecting, unquestioning, until, spreading his wings again, he flew to the top of the arch amid the tangle of the vines, and croaked and croaked again.

"I tried to follow him even there, but my strength was not enough; besides, the sound of music, ravishing, unearthly sweet and luring, came creeping over to me then and there from the organ in the chapel. It was such melody as those forever lost, may dream of as daily bread of all the heavenly host.

"The bird, silenced as myself, turned aside his witch-like head and listened, too, and then he laughed and whistled, and spoke out as if he had been human being like myself—and 'Nevermore' was all the word he uttered, many times, over and over again, while I, cursing him and his ill-omened

tongue, fell at the arch's base, and lay fainting till the brothers came at night to find me.

"I pointed to the bird, but he had flown; I told them of the music of despair; they nodded tritely as they led me into the cloisters, and one, more spokesman than the rest, rehearsed to me the Legend of St. Onofrio's. —How, centuries ago, a nun more beautiful than pen or pencil paint, and named Lenore, had lost her heart to one of St. Onofrio's brethren; from far off in her convent she had travelled at much peril, to venture here and see him; how she had announced her coming to him, in the dim hours of the night, when all the household slept, by such playing on the organ as wrested him from his cot and drew him to her side. That morning came, and with it all the story of her love; of how the Abbot, being a stern and godly man, had forthwith condemned the delinquent monk to a solitary cell for life, and had ordered the beautiful Lenore to be stood upright in the stone chamber over the arch, and to be walled up therein, alive. That fanciful guests who slept at the convent had often affirmed that they heard the lost Le-

nore playing on the chapel organ when the nights were long in summer, and that the legend ran, that one day the soul that was the mate of that nun's soul, would travel this way, and then 'twould ill-betide the traveller.

"Even as the Prior ceased speaking I heard the seductive melody sweep in at the open window of my room, but they all said that they heard nothing, and so I let them go in peace.

"Night after night I could not sleep for listening to that marvellous music. Day after day did the raven, now my accursed familiar, swinging upon the branch above my head, lead me with his mincing, mocking footsteps yonder to the ruined arch, and, perching there above the walled-up window, whisper sullenly in the sunshine, 'Nevermore;' or, if it stormed, then louder charmed the organ in the chapel, and fiercelier shrieked the imp-bird in my ear.

"As now, a twilight in July, when all day long the thunderous air had vibrated with pulsing heat; when the vault above seemed stooping, steeped in languorous snares, to crush the heart-beats of the denizens of

earth, and frequent lightnings flashed across the hush, I sat upon the garden bench, lulled in the lap of unemotional calm, the bird swayed near me: anon the music, softly swelling, swept the very inmost recess of my soul, and seemed to call my spirit out to join with it.

"The hyacinths, all crushed beneath my feet, incensed the air with fragrance. The raven, flapping from his bough, stepped up the path; I followed, staggering, as the melody from the chapel seemed to whip my tardy spirit to a fever heat of hurry. The bird hopped on, climbed up the crumbling arch, and, lighting on the lintel of the walled-up window, began to peck, with his strong and vicious beak, at the mason-work between the stones. And the swooning clouds swung closer to the parched and thirsty earth; the breath of the hyacinths smelled deadly sweet; the lure of the music swayed stronger, as I, too, with one awful cry, sprang up the arch, slipping, crawling, yet at last gaining the top. With my tense fingers I tore at the cement and stone; with all my force I braced myself, and clawed and

clutched the keystone and the lintel, until a great flash came out of the darkling east; the raven shrieked his 'Nevermore,' the brethren, rushing from the fields; and, down, with a crash that matched the bolts of Jove, came hurtling, as I leaped aside, the cruel stones that had sealed up forever the young life of the lost Lenore.

"She stood there in the revealed niche, a being beautiful beyond compare, and all my inarticulate soul went out to her, enraptured, as the monks fled, crying, from the spot into the chapel, and as the bird flew flapping after them.

"Her eyes, so soft as Love's eyes, looked down into mine; her lips, so red as pomegranate blossoms, smiled at me; her bosom, white as moonlight, rose and fell; she raised her arms, and then, dissolving like the dew at dawn, the wondrous vision crumbled into dust—down—down—lessening to a mere small handful that I gathered in my palms and pressed against my lips, as I, too, dashed across the court and into the chapel among the brethren.

"As I entered, again the music sounded

out, joyfuller than of old, but mystically sweet and solemn with its monotone of pain.

"The raven was hopping statelywise straight up the altar steps; the Prior and the monks, aghast, stood staring at the organ, whereat no player sat; the dust within the hollow of my hands burned into my flesh; with glaring orbs I watched the wretched, impious bird as it paced calmly on, whispering hoarsely as it went, 'Nevermore,' 'Nevermore.'

"The Abbot, roused from his trance-like inaction, now ran up the aisle, his crozier in his grasp uplifted, and, reaching the raven, struck it a blow as rang up to the rafters. And once again the black wings flapped and fluttered, once again the parti-colored eyes met mine, then, blinded with the holy lamp, the devilish bird dashed itself against the glass and fell, all streaked across his suit of black with blood, dead at the pulpit stairs.

"And the witch-like music stilled, sloping off into the corner of the chapel, as the music of a dream, weird, wondrous, at an end.

"And the pinch of dust within my palm melted away into a vapor thinner than the

air and rosy as the morn, while all that lingered was the burn and blister in my flesh; all that loitered was the echo of the raven's 'Nevermore;' all the refluent memory that remains is of the once-seen lost Lenore, and the year I count all my other years without."

THE
PRISONER OF THE STEEN

THE PRISONER OF THE STEEN

I WAS in Antwerp, sight-seeing, in lazy, dilettante fashion. I was stopping at the Hôtel de la Paix, in the Marché aux Souliers and the Rue des Menuisiers, and sauntered out one morning down the Place de Mier. I stopped as I passed the Cathedral, for just then Carolus and all his fifty-nine lesser brethren, rang out a joyous jubilee of bell melody from one end of the city to the other.

Then I walked on in the glory of the sunshine, and presently out of it into that region of narrow *gassen*, where the tall old houses lean, nodding, gossip-wise, toward each other, and where at every corner there is sure to be a Madonna and Child perched aloft in a tawdry little shrine, decked out with paper roses, and perfumed by the sweet flavor of many voiceless prayers.

Hither and yon my idling footsteps wan-

dered, until I came to the Street of the Steen, and presently to the Steen itself.

The Steen, so far as I could discover, was once the palace of some great noble, and surely dates back to the tenth century, if not farther. Later it became one of the prisons of the Inquisition, and now it is a museum. Considering its antiquity, its associations, and its situation, the Steen is one of the most interesting buildings in Flanders.

The Scheldt River flows noiselessly and smoothly beneath a part of the stronghold, and on the water side there is a deep, silent, closed portico where a boat might be moored, and no one the wiser save the boatman and his passengers.

I stepped within the entrance court. It is surrounded and guarded on all sides by the grim stone walls that tower up to touch the blue, with their sharp, peaked roofs, and hooding windows, no wider than my hand, yet barred and spiked with iron.

The court is stone-paved, of course, and strewn about with all manner of things fit to drive the artist frantic; old carved wooden figures, warriors, Marys, a Hercu-

les, carved chests, pieces of armor, empty helmets—visors up—grinning at one another; and in the midst of it all, in a narrow slip of sunshine, sat a young painter at work, while a frolicsome kitten scampered away after an inconsequent but elusive fly.

There are any quantity of objects of interest in the rooms devoted to the museum collection, but with these, that morning, I had nothing in common. Having escaped from the thraldom of a chaperon, and evaded the guardianship of anyone, I was bent upon that which all my people told me a person "with nerves" must not even dream of attempting. I was going through the prison of the Inquisition, which is situated in the dungeons of the Steen.

Others there were, a half-dozen, unlike myself, cheery, hearty people without nerves, and merely anxious to do something, so as to have material for conversation.

We were met by a precise and particular dame, whose withered visage relaxed not beneath the shade of her ruffled cap-border. She showed us into a small office on the right, where, on a table, were set out a dozen

or more brass candlesticks and a tray of matches. A few words in *patois* sufficed to summon the old dame's son, a strapping young fellow, who took the big bunch of rusty keys from its peg on the wall, politely requested the six sight-seers to light their candles, and, touching the match to his own long torch, motioned us to follow him.

As we stepped along the gloomy passage he discoursed volubly. Few visitors came to the Steen, he informed us; there had been none before, this week; it was a spot full of interest, worthy the attention of all ladies and gentlemen of wealth and condition.

At this juncture, the end of the passage reached, we came to a stout oaken door, hewn rough, and knobbed with nails. The guide unlocked it, we crossed the threshold and he followed, swinging to the lumbering portal behind him and locking it carefully from the inside. Thus shut out from even a glint of natural light, we stood at the head of as grewsome a flight of stairs as can well be imagined.

The flare of the torch and the candles shone fitfully as we went down the steep,

slimy, stone steps, our feet fitting in the grooves worn there by long centuries full of plodders mournfuller than we.

I was last, and the guide's voice sounded back eerily to me as I went.

"Messieurs and Mesdames, you now descend the staircase of the condemned; you now reach the bottom; do not fear, this round stone with its ring of iron is the *oubliette;* it is firmly secured at present; it was not always so; centuries ago, he who was bidden to walk down this stair found death at the end; with his last step he fell into the Scheldt and was not heard about any more, ever."

Ay, down unwittingly, into the yawning arms of the river they must have plunged; the river that sidles and gurgles—I can hear it now—against the stone walls, waiting for prey of tortured human bodies to be carried out to sea.

"The last step!" cried out the guide's harsh voice.

I put out my hand and clutched at the dripping wall, damp, it seemed to me, with the dews of death. My candle flickered. I

shuddered, and in a moment more, the *oubliette* passed, I followed the others as they went.

A brief glance at the *modus operandi* of practical martyrdom may perhaps serve to acquit our own day and fate of any such intention toward us.

"Here is the cell," sung out the young Fleming, "where murder by suffocation was perpetrated."

The rude fireplace remains intact, the stone charred and bitten by the flames that stole away human life as they burned, whose tongues flared as high up the choked chimneys as they could, struggling to gain light and so proclaim to men the infernal fires that were fed so often in the dungeons of the Steen, in the days of Philip of Spain.

"Messieurs and Mesdames, this is the apartment where the hangings took place."

The rings and chains, rusty with saints' tears, hang on the walls still.

"Messieurs and Mesdames, behold here the place of the deaths by slow drowning!"

The pump which the victim was allowed to use until exhausted, stands in its foul cor-

ner to-day, frightful witness of man's inhumanity to man; and there are the pipes by which the sullen Scheldt waters were sucked in to do their work.

" Messieurs and Mesdames, I show to you here the apartment of the confession; in this iron hole the prisoner spoke, while—follow me if you please"—The guide waved his torch aloft and all the others made after him through the slit of a doorway. I did not; I stood still, hearing his voice, quick and rasping, as he continued his tale.

" —While here the priest listened unseen, to the confession, and conferred upon the repentant the absolution which he desired."

I did not know then, and have no idea now, why I stood there, the great beads starting on my forehead as I realized the awful woe and deviltry of those days so happily dead.

I leaned close to the confessional tube; I heard again the voice of the young Fleming —it seemed to me a great way off—and with a start I rushed through the arch to follow my companions.

As I did so the draught of my precipitate

movement put out my candle, and I stood alone in the total darkness.

I called, not loudly, for the demon of fear choked my utterance and made of me a whisperer. Only the faint echo of my own breath made me a mocking answer.

I stared into the blackness, for not the dimmest kind of light came to my straining eyes.

I put out my hands and caught blindly at the slimy walls. I then crept along with cautious, terrified tread, thinking I knew not where an open *oubliette* might yawn beneath my feet.

The tears of anguish started to my eyes as my calls stuck in my throat. Once more I dared to take a few steps, as my arms seemed to catch at something like the roughness of a supporting pillar. I clung to it, swinging myself around a corner apparently, and then, at last, light—soft, mellow, beautiful light—greeted my famished sight.

I opened my lips to speak, to call, but on the instant even I remained silent and stood still.

Yonder, at the end of the narrow corri-

dor where I stood, there opened out a wide, square space. It was railed about with iron bars and chains to the ceiling's height. Within this space a carpet was spread upon the stone floor, and there were a bed, chairs, and a table on which a lamp burned. Books and papers were littered about, also large maps. A man in a shooting-jacket of rusty brown velvet sat by the table, leaning over it.

His hands were large, firm, white, well-shaped.

His face was hidden in a mask which completely defied observation of what was behind it.

I stood still in the shadow, unseen. I dared not move. Once in a place where I could see, my calmness returned to me, and I felt sure that the Fleming would return to fetch me, or, at worst, that my party, noticing my absence, would be hunting me up.

Some undefined intuition kept me silent. In another moment, as I glanced down at my watch to see the hour—it pointed noon—I heard a clanking footstep, and started joyfully forward to greet the deliverer I believed to be at hand.

Not so. I caught the gleam of a scabbard; I heard the click of higher heels than the Fleming's; I heard, too, the rattle of chains, and again I drew back in my corner and stood still.

I felt myself in the unbidden presence of some one of Fate's mysteries, and can candidly say that I had no fear.

As I withdrew, a soldier, bearing a trayful of food, appeared. He was followed by another, evidently a subaltern, with a lantern and a drawn sword.

They approached the iron fencing. The figure inside remained motionless. Not until the second soldier thrust his keys into the double locks and pushed open the gate, admitting his superior and himself, did the prisoner stir, and then it was merely to return, with a movement of unusual grace, the salutes of the two men.

Not a word was spoken.

The tray of food was placed on the table, and the guard took a minute survey of everything, however trivial, in the enclosure, while the subaltern stood on guard at the gate.

The superior crossed to the prisoner, apparently satisfied that nothing untoward had occurred since his last visit, took a small key from his chain, placed it in the lock of the mask, turned it with a snap, and lifted the screen from the face it had shadowed.

It was the face of Louis Napoleon, third Emperor of France!

My eyes dilated; my heart stood still. The Emperor had died, been buried in Chiselhurst, and turned to dust long since.

Was I in a trance?

No; the soldiers saluted again, he returning the compliment, with the same grace; they shut the gate, locked it, marched away, and left me standing there.

I felt myself, awestruck and amazed as I was, in the indisputable presence of some tragic and mysterious fate; and my own gruesome position faded into insignificance beside the curious history that so unfolded itself to my vision.

Obeying an impulse which I stopped neither to combat nor question, as the footsteps of the soldiers died off in the distance, I emerged from my corner and came out into

the circle of mellow radiance emanating from the prisoner's lamp.

The *frou-frou* of my garments was audible enough in that forlorn and torturing silence.

He looked up startled, rose, and with parted lips and eyes redeemed wholly from coldness by the quick fire that shone in their languid depths, advanced close to the bars and bowed profoundly.

I beheld this man with only the more wonder as he spoke, for, notwithstanding the waxen, prison-born pallor of his face, the white hairs on his temples, and the attenuation of his figure, no closer image of one human being ever existed than was this of Louis Napoleon.

" Is it an angel? " he asks, in a soft, low tone, in French, of course.

I hurriedly make answer that I am merely an American girl lost for the moment in the Steen dungeons. I add exactly what it has been my most ardent wish to say to this man since the first moment I beheld him:

" Can I do anything for you? "

" Much—everything—if you will. First,

may I beg to know where I am, in what country, what city? I know nothing of my whereabouts. I was brought here by night, I do not know how long since, with this"—he indicates the mask—"on my face, and since the month after Sedan, where I fought and was wounded, I am in complete ignorance of everything, everybody, the world, all it contains!"

I hastily tell him what he wishes to know. I add the date of the year and month.

"And the Emperor?" he asks, with a quick glance; "France? the Prince Imperial?"

"The Emperor," I answer, "died at Chiselhurst. The Prince Imperial is dead also. France is a Republic. Neither Bourbon nor Buonaparte rules there now."

He seems startled, passes his hand across his forehead, and then with a stealthy look around into the gloom, he crosses to the table, whose thick legs are sunk in wooden sockets; he lifts one up and from beneath the large claw foot he draws forth some bits of folded paper.

"Madame," the prisoner says, "I do not

understand why you are willing to risk something in behalf of a man as miserable as the one you behold. It is enough for me to accept the bounty of God through you, His messenger. I am the eldest son of Napoleon III., Emperor of the French. This paper will tell you more, if you will examine it and this letter." Through the bars he hands the papers to me. I thrust them hastily into the breast-pocket of my jacket.

"Madame, I shall be forever your debtor if you can convey this letter to Marshal McMahon—if he is not dead also?" he adds, with a sudden apprehension.

"Marshal McMahon is alive," I reply, "and without fail I will mail this letter to him as soon as I leave the Steen."

"I wrote it," he continues, "it must be years since, that and the other, to have them in readiness, should fortune ever grant me the chance of entrusting them to any human being willing to listen to me."

"Not only willing, but happy, to aid you, Monsieur," I make answer, as through my brain there rushes the phantasm of the hor-

ror of the years this man has lived since he last saw the sunshine.

And then, afar, echoing through the wretched place, I hear the young Fleming's shrill voice.

The prisoner starts back.

" Do not let them find you here," he whispers in sudden affright, and yet something of imperial courtesy preventing him, as he bows low before me, from a dismissal, even in this crisis.

I put out my hand through the bars—for one instant it lies in both of his. The touch has in it the chill of a charnel-house.

" You have my word," I murmur, " for secrecy, silence, and all the help I can give you."

He falls on his knees, and with the sound of his " God bless you ! " in my ears I shrink back into the darksome passage-way. I crawl and shiver along its damp, mouldy sides until I catch the faint gleam of light, hear the shouts of the guide and his mother and the rest of his family, and presently I am up on earth once more, quit of the prison of the Inquisition.

The young Fleming regards me with curiosity as I somewhat incoherently describe the horror of my late situation; a couple of soldiers leaning near at hand in the courtyard laugh between themselves, little dreaming how recently I have seen them, as they watch me driven off in the cab back to the Hôtel de la Paix.

Were it not for the papers in my pocket I should have said that I had fallen asleep and dreamed dreams in the Steen; but there they were, the folded, creased, yellow bits.

The letter addressed to Marshal McMahon I did not, of course, unfold, but the other sheets (which the prisoner had requested me to read before sending to their destination) I took from the dingy envelope, and with illimitable interest and deference, spread out before me as soon as I reached home.

I read as follows:

"I am the only child of Louis Napoleon Buonaparte and an American lady, whose name and parentage my most strenuous endeavors, even pleadings and prayers, failed to wring from her in the years of my boy-

hood. Suffice it, she said, for me to know that she had been married secretly to my father in the city of New York, in America, on the 14th of May, 1837, by a priest of the Catholic Church; that immediately prior to this ceremony she, having been born a Protestant, had abjured that faith and been received into the religion which my father professed. Not even the sworn intimates of Louis Napoleon, such as Wyckoff, at whose house he was a guest, dreamed of this romance. When he quitted America my mother left in the same vessel, and all efforts of her family and friends to even trace her whereabouts were unavailing. Pledged to the man she worshipped, for whom she renounced all things and people, she never in my presence regretted her election.

"I was born in London on the 10th of March, 1838, and in 1846, my mother, always known as Madame St. Leon, removed to Paris. My father, immediately after the coup d'état, visited us frequently in our apartment in the Rue Bayard, near the Cours de la Reine. I can recall him perfectly when he would caress me as a child of ten, and

bring me bonbons and toy soldiers. Then for years I saw nothing of him, and presently I was placed at the school of St. Cyr, especially under the patronage of Marshal McMahon. My mother, always well supplied with money, yet was ever sad, mournful; and at last, becoming alarmingly ill, I was hastily sent for, to return and find her at the point of death with the two names on her lips of Louis and Marshal McMahon.

"The Marshal came, and in his presence, with his concurrence, assent, and endorsement, the story of my parentage was told to me. To him my mother entrusted her private papers, and with her last breath she exhorted me thus: 'Louis, my son, you are the lawful son of the Emperor of France; none other is lawful; my marriage to your father was valid and never annulled. Now that you are nearing man's estate, now that I have been for years cast aside for another, now that the boy of the Tuileries may usurp your place, I charge you by all you hold dear or sacred to right my name.'

"My mother died and was interred at Montmartre very quietly, Marshal Mc-

Mahon taking charge of everything. I returned to St. Cyr and profited entirely by the counsels which the great soldier bestowed upon me. His instructions were, watch, wait, be silent, and observe!

"I obeyed him to the letter, and no syllable of my history ever escaped my lips. Upon my graduation, I received a commission in the army. I served with valor, yet obtaining no distinction, until at last, on the field of Sedan I received a ball in the left shoulder, which reached me before it should have struck the son of Eugènie. Such is the sarcasm of destiny. Prior to this, it is quite a fact that my extraordinary resemblance to the Emperor was not infrequently remarked, but there was a tacit passing over of this, as well as an equally tacit acquiescence in it.

"Wounded and in hospital, I became, as they told me afterward, delirious, and I can but believe that in these moments I must have betrayed the story of my identity. While still unable to walk, I was conveyed to Dijon, a long distance for me in my condition.

"While there, I realized that I was more

closely watched than seemed necessary, and after the receipt, one day, of a letter from the Marshal, I felt instinctively that the espionage was redoubled. This letter ran thus: 'The time is ripe. Rest assured of my devotion and my services. As soon as you quit the hospital and can walk, you may also talk. France will rally to you, and the army, always pledged to fidelity, loyalty, and legitimacy, will be yours.'"

(It must be remembered that McMahon had very little to guide him save military honor, and that *noblesse oblige* could not have entered into the arrangements of the man, who successively espoused an Empire and a Republic, after having been born and educated within a Kingdom.)

"I slept with that letter under my palm.

"When I awoke it was gone. A dim and dizzy night had set in. Staggering under the influence of some anodyne I was hurried —whither? I have never known. The mask was padlocked upon my head and after that I have experienced nothing but a prison dungeon, and the implacable silence of those who are my jailers. Once, my first copy of

this letter was discovered, for I kept it always near me, hoping against hope that fate would accord me the means of communication with the outer world. Immediately upon its discovery, without a word, I was hurried in the night away, but only to another dungeon—it is this one. If there is pity, justice, humanity in this world, may it be granted to me to live once more in the daylight and to abjure forever the claims that I have to the Imperial throne of France!

[Signed] "LOUIS FRANCOIS MARIE NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE."

When I had finished reading this extraordinary document, whether rightly or wrongly, I made a copy of it in English, believing that the strangeness of the circumstances warranted my doing so. I then placed the original, with the letter to Marshal McMahon and the frayed envelope, in a fresh one, addressed the packet correctly, and mailed it with my own hands at the post-office in Antwerp.

The next morning, accompanied by my father, who counselled the move, I took a cab and drove at once to the Steen. The

Court gates were closed, and only after repeated loud knockings did the young and lusty Fleming respond to our calls.

"The Musée is closed, Monsieur and Madame," he said, abruptly. "It will not be reopened for some weeks; repairs are to be made."

I had misgivings; I shuddered at the fate, worse even than life in the dungeons of the Steen, that might be so easily dealt out to a prisoner in that horrible place, and yet at the same time I questioned what the object might be in keeping this man immured.

This my father easily explained; the Republic, now on a measurably assured foundation, yet not stable enough to run any risks, thought it wisest to place such entirely out of the question, and thus, what began at the instigation of the Empress was carried on for the welfare of the Republic.

Nevertheless, the Steen was all I could think of, and that moonlit night found me, having persuaded my companion to the unusual jaunt, down by the borders of the Scheldt, gazing curiously at the frowning walls of the stronghold as they rose from

the river, and then out into the broad stream where a merchant-man, bound for Guiana, swerved at her anchor as the smoke curled up from her stacks.

" She must be going to sail early in the morning," I observed.

" She is going to sail sooner than that," returned my father. " They are weighing anchor now."

It was as he said. And even as we were chatting of the beauty of the night, there shot out into the water, seemingly from under the very foundations of the prison, a boat. There were five men in it—two to row, two to watch, and one who sat between them with his head bowed in his hands.

I divined well enough who the passenger was, as in a few moments the rowboat reached the ship's side and the prisoner of the Steen was put aboard.

Two days later I received the card of a stranger; it read, " M. le Capitaine Georges d'Hulaincourt."

I went out to see him, after having sent word that I knew no such person, and having

in reply the assurance that the gentleman's mission was an important one.

"I have the honor," said Captain d'Hulaincourt, "of returning to Mademoiselle, in the presence of Monsieur, her father"—bowing profoundly as he spoke—"something that belongs to her."

Capitaine d'Hulaincourt took carefully from his pocket a large official envelope bearing on its corner the words "Palais de l'Elysée."

"Mademoiselle will do me the honor to examine the contents."

I drew out the envelope which I had addressed three days previously to Marshal McMahon.

It was empty.

"Mademoiselle comprehends?"

I "comprehended" entirely.

In the face of a military espionage as exquisitely adjusted in France to-day as under her last Empire my effort in behalf of the prisoner of the Steen, whoever he really was, had been as useless to him as the sun which shone where he never could behold its beams.

Was his story a true one?

I have searched records and memories of old people for any details of the story of Napoleon III. in this country, and while there is the faint reminiscence of his absorption in a girl of great beauty who disappeared mysteriously, there is no authentic connection between the two. In pursuing studious inquiries in Belgium and Holland, I find, however, that there is a tacit *sub rosa* acquiescence in the actuality of the Man with the Iron Mask of to-day, and, moreover, of his Napoleonic origin.

THE CAT'S-EYE

THE CAT'S-EYE

FOLA BARIATINSKI was the wife of a general of the army, now absent from Moscow on a campaign in the East.

She was not, to speak strictly, a handsome woman, but she possessed, nevertheless, that soft and delicious attractiveness of our Slav women which renders them to men irresistible. Mme. Bariatinski, moreover, was thirty years of age, and of that mobile, luxuriant and at once intellectual temperament, which urged her to the enjoyment of herself.

Conscious of her powers, aware of the emotions she was capable of awakening, she led, in the absence of her husband, a life not devoid of its excitements—if perchance at the same time she reserved within herself a certain subtle essence of sanctity, dedicated to the worship of that which to her was life's best and sweetest bread.

Each day Mme. Bariatinski wrote a letter

to her husband. Each day also she received visits from some friends, greeting them merrily with smiles and pleasant conversation. Notable among the guests of her salon were Sergius Chreptowitch and Ladislaus Herzen.

Chreptowitch was an artist, young, fanciful, ardent, and what is called original—that is to say, he had the admirable gift of doing things in a way in which the world had had time to forget that they had ever been done before.

Herzen was a musician—the older man of the two by ten years; dreamy, sad, quiet, a sorrowful gentleman to whom the instinctive sympathy of women went out, hand in hand with their admiration of his liquid gray eyes and his soft, gold-colored curls.

Mme. Bariatinski received her friends informally every day—or evening, rather—as I have said, in a pair of small rooms meagrely furnished. There were splendid large drawing-rooms used on fête or gala occasions, but these little apartments were well chosen for those who gathered in them. The floors were waxed wood, spread with fur

rugs, and the furniture was all of staring yellow satin. There were no pictures on the walls, no cabinets of art, no bric-à-brac; merely myriads of tall candles, portières and curtains of yellow, mirrors and great ruddy fires. A bare stupid spot without the people; with them, complete.

"It is folly," Mme. Bariatinski says to Herzen, who stands leaning above the top of her chair, "to trim one's rooms with a million little objects; they are distracting and they break. I would much rather decorate my salon with people of beauty and genius."

"They do not break," Herzen says, softly.

"No," she laughs, looking up at him appreciatively.

"Only their hearts do—sometimes, that is all." His voice has sunk to a whisper.

"Hearts, hearts!" echoes Fola, fondling absently the fur of the large, sedate, one-eyed cat who is her familiar pet. "Herzen," she says, throwing up her pretty head audaciously, as only a woman with a faultless throat would risk doing, "tell me, now, what is the heart?"

"The capacity alike for infinite joy and

for as infinite a suffering," Herzen replies, glancing away from the lovely face that at that moment he would like to take between his cold and trembling hands, and kiss with his warm and quivering lips.

"And do you think, par exemple, Herzen, that I have a heart?" Mme. Bariatinski preserves the upward pose of her head, knowing very well the thoughts of the man who stands near her.

"Oh!" cries he, with impatience, "yes, yes."

Mme. Bariatinski laughs merrily, and Herzen crosses to a piano, where he plays for some time with great tenderness.

"And why do you thus laugh, madame?" cries Sergius Chreptowitch, entering the salon and bowing low over his hostess's hand.

"Because——" Fola hesitates and loses.

"I will tell you. You laughed just now because there were tears salting your eyes—is it not so? One's smiles so often veil one's tears."

"Well, granted, what then?" answers she, a little defiantly, her white neck throb-

bing slightly beneath the weight of the cat's-eye medallion which she always wears.

"Shall I tell you?"

"Yes, you shall."

"Well, you thought of the man you love. When women like you think upon their holy of holies, it is ever with that pleasure which is twin of pain; their rapture finds sound in a sigh, and there sits always at their feast the little serpent that stings the soul."

"Which is?" asks she, dreamily, smoothing the long fur of the cat's coat.

"The doubt of its own destiny."

"Well," she responds, in a commonplace tone, though after a brief pause, "you are correct."

"Put away that beast, do!" cries the young man, his eyes following her white hand's wanderings with jealousy.

Mme. Bariatinski laughs, drawing the one-eyed cat closer to her side.

"Sergius," she exclaims, "I wonder which you hate the more, my cat, or," touching her bosom, "my cat's-eye?"

It was true that not alone Chreptowitch, but Herzen as well, held in great abhorrence

the cat, and the medallion that glimmered in a melancholy splendor about the neck of Fola.

They both held to the superstition that some evil would one day come of the one-eyed cat, and they as well knew that the reverse of the medallion contained the portrait of a man.

Well, to be sure, each occasionally thought it the other; and, if the truth is to be told, each at certain moments believed it to be himself.

But no one knew.

The jewel had been seen, shining for centuries in the forehead of an idol, by generations of Hindoos. General Bariatinski had secured it as a bridal present for his wife.

The gift of a husband, it was exactly in the vein of this woman to use it as the cover to the portrait of a lover—at least that was one of the many remarks made of her by some of her guests behind the yellow silk hangings, as they gratefully sipped their tea and drank their wine.

" I hate neither," he replies, quickly. " I fear the beast; it as an evil one, I tell you.

It looks at you sometimes with that malicious eye as if it believed your jewel belonged to it. 'Aha! some day,' it seems to me to say, 'Madame, I will spring; I will tear my other eye from your neck with my claws. I will bite.' That is what I hear it say, Madame, when it purrs so softly beside you."

Mme. Bariatinski shrinks away from her pet, folding her arms tightly together. Then she looks up at Chreptowitch.

"Oh, I see!" cries she, catching the large cat in her embrace. "You are a jealous man. Yes, yes, I see."

"Not of a beast," Sergius responds, with contempt. "Of that jewel, perhaps. Fola," he whispers, bending before her, "for whom were those salt drops shining in your eyes when I entered? Who is the man whose face lies upon your white skin there always?" He glances at the cat's-eye. "Is it, as they say, the face of the man you love?"

Mme. Bariatinski, with the cat lying complacently in her arms, nods her head in a matter-of-fact fashion.

"And he is——" Sergius Chreptowitch has lost his head. Reeling with an internal

fever that no conventionality has power to cool; maddened with the strength and deepness of his own love for this lady, he recklessly—crunching some of the folds of her yellow gown in his fingers, while Herzen still plays his sad airs at the piano, while the guests laugh and jest with considerable noise—asks his question.

"Who *should* he be?" Fola speaks very softly, raising her beautiful large eyes to his with an expression of unutterable, indescribable pathos and tenderness, and at the same moment laying her hand with a caressing motion upon the jewel on her bosom.

Sergius Chreptowitch is perhaps not more vain than many men, and just at this moment his cup of bliss appears to him overflowing with the nectar that at once quenches the unquenchable thirst, and causes it to cry out for more and more.

He catches wildly at her hand, but to hold those five small fingers for a second of time.

Well, the cat, disturbed, perchance, from its comfortable position by his abrupt movement, strikes at him with its paw, and the blood comes out in little drops on his wrist.

" That one-eyed devil!" he mutters, going away out of the room for water and a towel.

" Does it please you?" Herzen now inquires, having quitted his piano, as it is very late in the evening, and all the guests, save himself and perchance some lingerer with a patient purpose in an ante-room, have left.

" Your music is very beautiful, it always is," answers Fola, soaking up with her dainty handkerchief the one drop of Chreptowitch's blood which stains her gown.

" Beautiful!" murmurs the musician. " Surely you do not call music merely beautiful? It is one of the divinities."

" And the others are ——?" she asked with languorous lips.

" You—and you—and you," Herzen says, with anxious timidity, as his questioning and adoring eyes meet hers.

" Seriously, Herzen——" Mme. Bariatinski smiles a little to herself it seems. " Your art, your music is a great deal for you. Not simply an episode, but even a religion, which each day solaces and sustains you. Is it not so?"

"Aha!" cries he, emboldened a little by their solitude, broken only by the sputtering of the fire and the tinkle of the clock-bell on the shelf.

"You are my religion—dare I say it?"

"Yes," she replies, calmly, "you may say it!"

Herzen throws himself on the rug at her feet, and, transported, lays his head upon the sofa, beside where she sits.

"And since I am your creed, what becomes of your music?"

"It is," Herzen says, raising his head and clasping it with both his hands—"it is the sublimated essence of poetry which daily I lay before your shrine!"

"No, no, Herzen," Mme. Bariatinski shakes her head. "Music such as you made to-night sitting yonder at the piano is not poetry."

"It is what, then?"

"Prose, prose. Oh, Herzen!" cries she, throwing her lovely arms up over her head and clasping her hands together tightly there as she leans backward slightly.

"Do we speak in rhythm or rhyme when

we strive to express the best and holiest, the truest and tenderest thoughts that we have? No; in prose. Do we break into harmonious numbers and words that jingle, when we pray to our God to protect the one who is most absolutely dear to us?" Fola's voice is tremulous with a passionate joy and grief. "No, no; in prose, Herzen"—laughing a little, as she had at the entrance of Chreptowitch—"Herzen, your music is prose, for it speaks, too, of all this and more—of that which never was—and ——"

"Never shall be."

The musician rises and stands before her.

"Why is it that a woman like you, a creature of fire and snow, at once a siren and a vestal, full of intellect, nerve, tenderness, wastes her time with such men as——" He stops short.

"You mean Chreptowitch," she says, panting, with a half coquettish glance through her black eyelashes.

Herzen sighs and sits down near her.

Mme. Bariatinski, stroking the soft ears of the cat, looks at her companion with an

expression most puzzling—a little derision, a little pathos, impatience, weariness. What else! heaven knows!

"Herzen!" exclaimed she, "do you not know that there are women who, in the absence of the man who is the whole world to them, must have love, devotion, adoration, expression from some one—any one." Mme. Bariatinski rises and throws the cat—ill pleased with his transfer—to the floor.

Herzen buries his face in his palms.

"And yet I have seen you look into his eyes with the same expression that ——" He falters.

"Well?" Fola leans her shoulder against the shelf and touches the cat with the tip of her slipper as she speaks. "The same expression that you have beheld in them when looking at you, eh?"

"Oh, yes, yes!" he staggers toward her.

"Herzen, you are very clever, but you are like Chreptowitch; to you I am a sphinx—by the way, he is going to paint me as one."

"No?" with inquiring anxiety.

"Yes."

"Oh, very well."

" Do you not know that there are women who must lavish their glances, their smiles, their caprices—no more than these—on some one, any one! In the absence of the idol one still bows the knee. Oh, Herzen," she cries, with almost a sob in her voice, " I am such a woman ! "

" Fola, for the love of heaven, tell me if it is possible for you to love ? "

" Oh, yes, truly," she replies, quietly, " it is indeed possible."

" They say," murmurs he, spreading his chilly fingers before the warmth of the fire, and looking up at her very piteously, " that under your jewel there, your cat's-eye, is the portrait of the man you love."

"It is the truth," she says, laying her hand over her treasure.

" Ah." Herzen touches with one timid finger the little slipper with which the cat is amusing himself—even caressingly allows himself to smoothe the silken stocking. " Fola, who is he ? "

" Who should he be ? " Mme. Bariatinski makes answer, looking down with an expression of indescribable tenderness and emotion

into the face of the man who kneels before her.

Chreptowitch has waited quite long enough, he thinks, in the ante-room, toying with books and photographs.

He comes in.

"You want me to give you a sitting to-morrow, do you not?" Fola says, without moving or turning her head.

"If you will be so gracious."

"And, Herzen, you will come and play for me—sitting is so tedious—will you not?"

"Indeed, I am but too glad. At what hour?"

"Well, let us say in the afternoon."

"So be it," the artist answers.

Mme. Bariatinski picks up the cat, and makes a slight movement away from the fireplace.

It is the signal of dismissal, which each is reluctant to obey, but happier for being obliged to submit to it together.

Yes; it was "to-morrow afternoon."

Fola, in the long blue gown that she was to sit in, stood in her boudoir; she listened to a footstep on the staircase very intently,

her hand to her ear. The one-eyed cat was cleaning his paws after emptying a bowl of milk.

"Hurry, Zaca, hurry. Why do you lag so!" cries Mme. Bariatinski to the maid servant, who now, panting, enters the room, bearing a packet of letters on a tray of bronze.

"There is also this dispatch, madame," the girl says, giving it to her mistress.

"A dispatch!"

Mme. Bariatinski rushes to the window, the better to read the slip of paper that flutters in her grasp.

It is not long—a line and a half.

A sound escapes her—half a sigh, half a sob, a terrible sound of human woe—and uttering it, she falls with a dull thud to the floor.

The maid servant shrieks, thus calling to her aid a half dozen more, who scream and wring their hands, running about, pulling bell-ropes, then rushing all of them down the staircase.

At the bottom they meet Chreptowitch and Herzen entering the house.

They inquire.

Incoherently the servants tell their tale, forgetting that above, and still unattended to, lies the beloved mistress whose virtues they are occupied in loudly extolling.

Chreptowitch dashes up the stairs, Herzen follows him, and then the servants.

From the glare of the candles and lamps of the entrance-hall, they pass bewildered, into the gloom of Fola's boudoir. The interminable twilight of the Russian winter has set in, and through its gloom all they can see at first is the glow and fire of two cat's-eyes very near to each other over by the window.

Chreptowitch bounds across the room; Herzen staggers after him, while the steward at last brings light to the scene.

Yes, the one-eyed cat sat curled close to Fola's white throat, sucking her breath with pleasure; and across her neck were the sharp scratches of his claws where he had tried vainly to pull away her jewel.

Chreptowitch kicked the cat out of the room, swearing at its unearthly shrieks.

Herzen took Fola's head upon his knees,

and presently, when Chreptowitch returned and knelt down there beside her, they both looked at each other in a stupid way, and laid her upon the sofa.

Mme. Bariatinski was dead.

They walked silently to the door of the room, and there they, as if by a common impulse, turned again and looked in. The cat's-eye shone in splendor on her neck.

Well—each person has his way.

Herzen, for once seemed not timid; was content to take the lead. He went to her, and stooping, turned over with cold fingers the glimmering jewel.

Very quietly Ladislaus Herzen laid it back again as it had been, and went downstairs and out of the house.

Chreptowitch picked it up eagerly with a warm hand. He gazed at the other side; he wrenched it from the chain and, with an oath, flung it against the opposite wall.

The one-eyed cat had crawled back into his mistress's room; he pounced upon the medallion, and playing with it, purred with satisfaction and good-humor.

The portrait was that of Mme. Bariatinski's husband.

The dispatch had announced his death on the field of battle the day previous.

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