

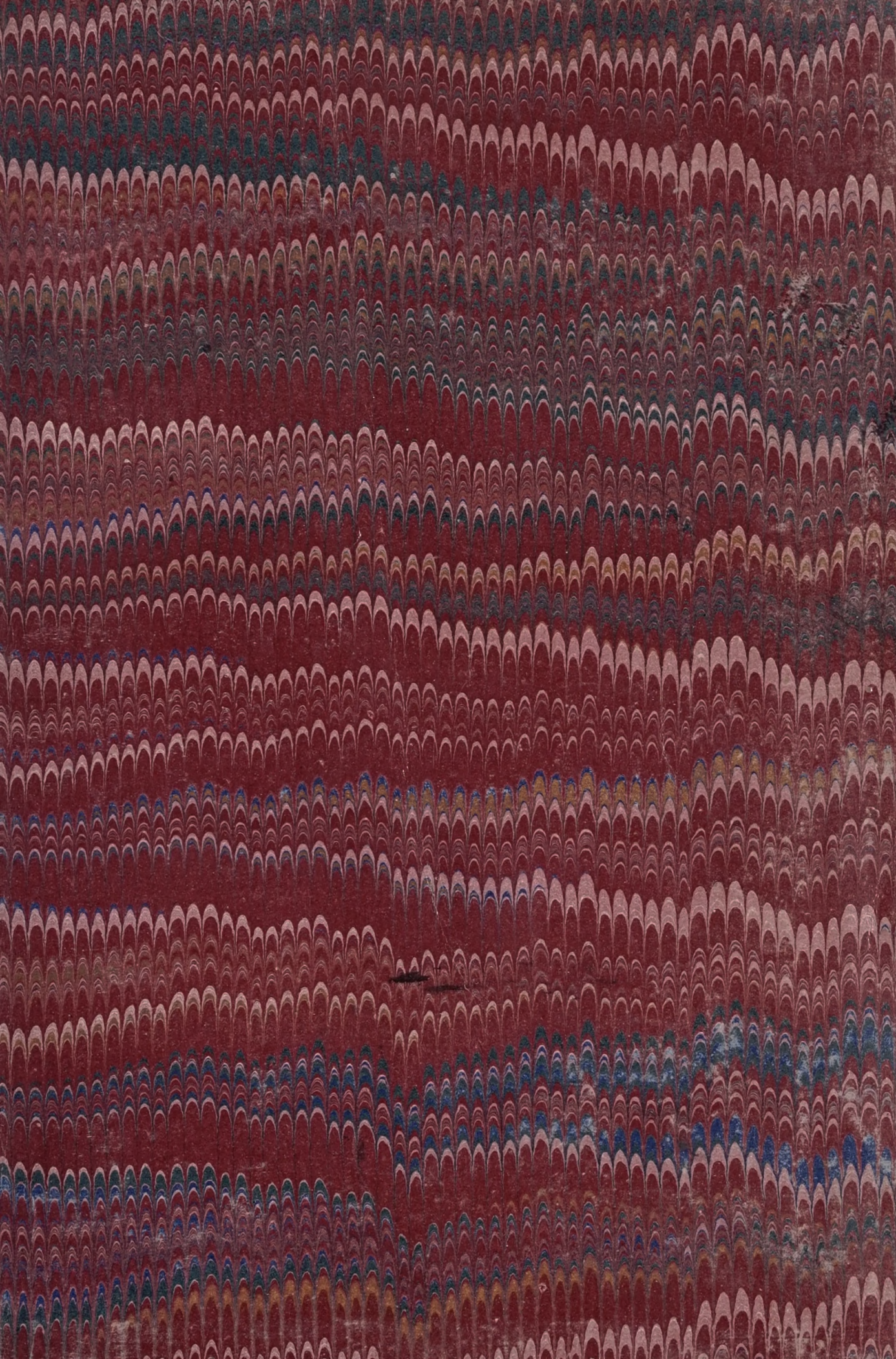
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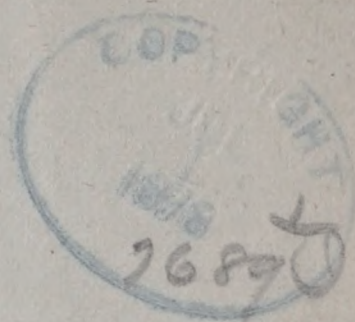


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No. X.

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# ARIADNE

FROM THE FRENCH OF  
HENRY GRÉVILLE



NEW YORK  
D. APPLETON AND COMPANY, PUBLISHERS  
549 BROADWAY 551



COLLECTION OF FOREIGN AUTHORS,

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A NOVEL

FROM THE FRENCH OF

HENRY GRÉVILLE

*Alice Fleury Durand*



NEW YORK  
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1878

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# A R I A D N E.

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## CHAPTER I.

THE first class was absorbed in deep study. A scorching August sun shone on the roofs of sheet-iron, and was reflected through the great windows, which were half-shut ; a storm seemed to be rising in the distance, while the professor, in a solemn voice, was explaining the causes of the decay of the House of Austria to scholars who were half-asleep. The first three in the class, the most intelligent, and consequently favorites with the professor, were taking notes, which would be of use to them in the final examinations, before leaving the institute. The governess, a pedantic, stiff old maid, continued crocheting her interminable afghan, which no one in the establishment had seen her begin. From time to time she would cast her vigilant eye upon the juvenile band before her.

Suddenly, in the midst of this solemn scene, there was an extraordinary interruption, which had never occurred before in the young ladies' institute under the special patronage of her Highness the Grand Duchess of X——. The professor was astonished, the pupils burst out laughing, while the governess was enraged, indignant, at the sound of a chromatic scale sung by a rich contralto voice. Even the maps on the wall seemed to be affected by the vibrations of the song.

“Ranine!” thundered out the governess.

The young girl thus called by her surname, according to the custom in institutes, stood up, with bowed head, ready to receive a scolding.

“Come here, Ranine!” said the governess, “here,” her threatening finger pointed to the professor's chair—he was still stupefied with amazement. “Come here, and make your excuses to the professor.”

The culprit approached him slowly, with arms hanging down at her sides, her head bowed, weighed down, as it were, but not under the burden of shame, rather under the weight of her heavy wealth of blonde hair, which was as golden as wheat during the harvest-time.

“Why did you sing during the lesson?” asked the dame, without waiting for the guilty one to come



near her. Ranine advanced a few steps, stopped before the chair, and lifted her great gray eyes timidly to the professor without replying at once.

“I pray you, sir,” said she, with her rich contralto voice—“I pray you to excuse me. I did not wish to disturb the lesson ; I did not mean to do it.”

The whole class were waiting for the last word, with malice rankling in their hearts, and their laughter only restrained because the formidable governess was present.

“How ! you did not mean to do it?” cried she, indignantly. “Is it possible one can sing without meaning it? You trifle with your superiors, Ranine ! You will pay dearly for this !”

Ranine slightly shrugged her shoulders, which were left uncovered by the brown, low-necked dress, the uniform of Russian institutés.

“I can do nothing more,” said she. “I regret, mademoiselle and monsieur, to have caused such a disturbance ; but it was not my fault. When I want to sing it hurts me here”—she put her hand on her round, white neck—“and I must sing or be suffocated.”

The professor, more and more astonished, looked at the governess to be assured that Ranine was in her right mind ; but the governess had stuffed her

crochet into a cotton bag—always a proof of great anger—and sat with arms folded on her afghan.

“Enough, mademoiselle ; we will speak of this again,” said she, majestically. “Take your seat.”

Ariadne Ranine, in going to her seat, which was the last and the worst, heard many unkind remarks from her companions.

“I was explaining, young ladies,” said the professor, adjusting on his flat nose a pair of refractory eyeglasses, “that, among the many causes for the decay of the House of Austria, we must notice first—”

That chromatic scale which so suddenly interrupted the misfortunes of the House of Austria had upset him so completely that he forgot the two most important causes of Austrian decadence ; he stammered, ended a worthless lesson, and put down a zero, or mark of “very bad,” for Ranine. The poor girl had never opened her mouth—except to sing.

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## CHAPTER II.

WHEN the lesson was finished, the whole class dispersed through the vast halls, and of course the chromatic scale was the subject of conversation. Ariadne, for the first time in the seven years she had lived in

the institute, was surrounded, and asked a thousand questions.

“Why did you sing?”

“Did you want to play the fool?”

“Or did you make a bet that you would sing!”

“No,” replied a tall brunette, with wicked eyes; “it was to fascinate the teacher with her charming voice.”

Ariadne shook her head.

“I did not wish to fascinate any one. I know very well that I am not charming; but I love to sing, it does me good; and, when the spirit moves me, it is stronger than I am, and I must sing.”

“What affectation!” cried out her charitable companions. “You can’t make us believe that. Grabinof is going to report you, and you will be ordered to call on the directress, and she will perhaps expel you.”

“I can’t help it,” said the young girl, with stoical indifference. “They can send me away if they like; I cannot force them to keep me.”

Ariadne Ranine was of no particular interest at this moment, as there were none to side with her. Every one gave her the cold shoulder, and once more she was in her usual loneliness.

During this time “the Grabinof” (as the young ladies of the institute irreverently called her) had

made her complaint. The inspectress, highly indignant, limped to the apartment of the directress. She had swollen limbs; some said she was suffering now from the follies of her youth—wearing tight shoes.

The grand duchess, titular protectress of the Institute of St. —, was represented, much to her discredit, by Madame Batourof, widow of a general who had been aide-de-camp to the emperor, and had died in the service from his wounds. In recognition of his merits, his widow was placed in the envied and enviable position as directress of one of the finest institutes in Russia.

The position was not solely honorary; the emoluments were munificent, a handsome house was provided in the heart of the city, with carriage and horses—all at the expense of the state; it also included food, wood, oil, the gratuitous services of numerous flunkeys, who were well enough paid by their filchings to keep from murmuring about the government's meagre appointments. The directress had absolute control and revision over all the bills presented monthly for supplies to the establishment. "Evil to him who evil thinks!" During the twenty-seven years of her administration, her creatures had not found life hard, though many had died during that time. The directress, left without any personal fortune, had

reared, dowered, and married three daughters; four sons had entered the army—it is to be hoped they kept a strict account, for each had horses and equipages. They had all “feathered their nests” well. Where was the wrong?

There was another side to the picture. The young ladies in the institute were from good families, almost all were placed there by imperial munificence, or admitted by high recommendation or by paying handsome board; and many were the bitter complaints about the miserable fare and short allowance.

They were brought there plump and rosy; seven or eight years after—the rule of the establishment being that they should not return home during the holidays—they were sent back to their astonished mothers pale, emaciated, with most unnatural appetites, craving such things as chalk and cucumber-parings.

“The result of hard study,” said the teachers, smiling. “These dear girls have studied so hard to pass brilliant examinations! They have overtaxed their strength.”

The young girls had not really worked harder than others; but they had eaten so little during the years they were growing that it took several seasons to recover from the pallor and unhealthy look acquired

in the institute. Providence, on the other hand, seemed to watch over the directress's family—eleven chubby little children dined with her every Sunday.

The Grabinof and the inspectress found the directress in her library, where she had, for twenty-seven years, listened to the complaints of her subordinates. The usual calmness was visible on her distended countenance, now wrinkled by time, and having a vulgar, coarse expression, under which lay the coldest indifference and selfishness. Among those who were honored by madame's intimacy, very few understood her.

“Well, my dear, what do you want with me?” said Madame Batourof, in a coarse voice, as soon as she saw Grabinof. “What news of our first class?”

The bevy of teachers in their blue dresses, who surrounded the directorial chair, made way for the new-comer to approach.

“A most disgraceful thing occurred this afternoon during the history-lesson. Ranine began suddenly to sing! You can fancy the confusion, Your Excellence! It was unheard of!”

A murmur of horror, respectfully restrained by the august presence of the directress, followed this strange news.

“She sang?” replied she, in addressing the Gra-

binof. "And what did she sing? Anything improper?"

"No, Your Excellence; only a scale."

The assistants, all in blue dresses and caps with blue ribbons, rolled their eyes heavenward; but heaven seemed to remain unaffected.

"A scale?" repeated the directress: "a simple scale?"

"Chromatic, Your Excellence," said Grabinof.

The hands of all the teachers were raised in holy horror.

"What reason did she give?" asked the directress, after a moment's reflection.

"She said it was not her fault, that an irresistible impulse forced her to sing. She is a very bad scholar, Your Excellence."

"Yes, I know," said her Excellence, slowly, reflectively; "a poor orphan—no family, no aptness. She is pretty, blonde?"

"Yes, Your Excellence, blonde; as for being pretty, I don't think she is; we have young ladies in the first class who are real beauties—Rozof, Naoumof, Orline—"

"Yes, I know," interrupted the directress, with a caustic smile, "the representatives of our most noble families are perfect beauties, and among the poor ones

some are pretty, too ; and it is well there are some. Ranine is pretty : a superb voice ? ”

“ Yes, Your Excellence,” said Grabinof, obsequiously, not daring to contradict.

“ She sings in chapel, and takes part in the singing-lessons, does she not ? ”

“ Yes, Your Excellence.”

Madame Batourof reflected a moment, then motioned to the governess to leave.

“ You may send her to me after supper. I wish to speak to her myself.”

Grabinof went out. If the expression were not banished from polite parlance, we would say she was completely “ squelched.”

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### CHAPTER III.

ARIADNE was plunged in meditation, while waiting for the summons ; she was not afraid of punishment ; she had experienced not a little, and was not much the worse for it. More duties, some reprimands, less recreation—all these had little effect upon her lazy temperament. Ariadne was a bad scholar ; she had no love of learning. Seeing favors always



showered upon the rich and well-born, she had begun to look with contempt upon the patient labor of her companions of more humble rank, who studied really to learn. Ariadne was the poorest, and of the most humble parentage in the institute ; it is not astonishing then she should have so little ambition for learning. For her, the road to learning was full of thorns.

She loved but two things in the world, her singing-lesson, and the beautiful chapel of the institute. The singing-lesson had many disagreeables also, although the teacher was partial to Ariadne, who had such a superb voice and innate love for music. She dared not always praise her, for fear of making the less gifted envious, and consequently often found fault with her.

“ You are ridiculous, Ranine ; you sing as if you were at the opera,” said she one day to Ariadne.

The young ladies were studying for some private festival a piece of five parts ; the words were not worthy of the deep feeling which Ariadne threw into them.

“ She is aspiring to the opera, madame,” said a beautiful young girl, who sang abominably false. “ Ranine wants to be a prima donna.”

“ It would be better for her to learn to write French correctly,” replied the singing-teacher, in a

harsh tone of voice. "Try again, young ladies; Ranine, a little less expression, if you please."

From that day Ariadne had to sing in the simplest, coldest manner, exercises which she usually performed with passion and feeling. She dwelt less on the accents, shortened the rests, sang the insignificant, meaningless words with no expression; in fact, sang as badly as she could. She did not exactly succeed, however; she only provoked fewer slurs upon her dramatic powers.

In the chapel it was another thing. She was passionately fond of it. The little church in the institute, with its pale pink walls, filled with pictures and images of saints, tapestry, and embroideries in silk and glass beads, in fact, all sorts of work done by the four hundred young recluses, was to Ariadne a new world.

The liturgical choir of this chapel was composed of the finest voices in the institute; the deacon and two precentors trained them in their responses; their task was an easy one, for only those were admitted who were willing to do their best. Ariadne had been a member for three years. Her deep contralto voice made her indispensable; indeed, she was the choir's mainstay.

As soon as the door closed upon the "Holy of

Holies," and the deacon with his deep voice led the first verse of the "Ectenia" (the prayer before the offertory), Ariadne would shut her eyes, and appear to be in another world. The deepest notes of her velvety voice seemed to sustain at every response those words, "Lord have mercy upon us." When one of those strange, sweet modulations would make even the profane look up, sad and weird, like an *Æolian* harp, the rich voice of Ariadne would change to a tone of prayer and supplication.

The liturgy was not for her a collection of canonical words, to be repeated every Sunday, every festival—and there are festivals enough in the Russian ritual! She threw into her prayer all the passion which had been suppressed during the week. The hymns, which were part of the service, though meaningless words, she sang with great pathos, and with the profound feeling of a martyr confessing his faith. All the sentiment in her still undeveloped nature seemed to come out and be wafted heavenward with the incense.

Until the spring of this year Ariadne had kept up very well. Always the last in her studies, she had succeeded in reaching the first class, which preceded graduation; one year more, and she would be seventeen years old, and would return to her family.

The word "family" was a cruel derision to Ariadne. Her parents left her an orphan before she could stand alone; an aunt, burdened with many children, took her out of charity until the institute opened its doors, but not very willingly, judging from expressions which greeted Ariadne upon her entrance. The aunt was dead, her cousins were scattered; seven years in an institute were enough to isolate young girls, without family or fortune, from the world. Ariadne would leave in one year—but to go whither?

She had never consulted anybody. Her proud, unsocial nature had never known the sweetness of confidence. If she had wept in her loneliness, only her pillow knew it. She would leave the institute; be sent to some charitable lady with a little money furnished by the government; there she would learn the world, and what she had to expect from it.

Suddenly an imperious, irresistible longing rose in her breast; she wanted to sing, she must sing. Sometimes, in her class, during study, at recreation, in the dining-room, even in the silence of the night, she felt a sort of tickling in the throat, as if the imprisoned notes must burst forth. The horrible constraint which Ariadne suffered all the time, the efforts she made to clench her teeth and keep in her voice,

were almost unbearable. She grew thin and pale; her character changed; she became morose. For fear of doing something which would excite the wrath of the faculty, she was in constant dread. Fortunately summer had come; the recreation in the large garden, shaded by linden trees, gave Ariadne a little freedom, without which she would have fallen ill. Almost always alone, she would walk up and down the most secluded paths, singing in a low voice everything she could think of.

Sometimes she sang airs without words, rhythm, or time. She seemed to give out her soul, like a dove that dares not coo: she murmured melodies which came to her girlish imagination, and almost whispered the scales and exercises so as not to be heard. Thus she passed three months, during which her beauty faded and her soul expanded.

But autumn soon comes in Russia; in August the evening walks cease; when the days are damp the morning walk is forbidden. The sorrows of Ariadne commenced again, and went so far that, after several days and nights of suffering, the young girl could not bear it any longer, when occurred the incident which we have described.

Grabinof found her scholar so stolid, it made her furious.

“What are you doing there?” she asked, roughly, right in Ariadne’s ear.

The girl trembled as she looked at her persecutrix with a disdainful air, and replied :

“I am doing nothing.”

“Are you not ashamed to be always idle? If you had a little thought you would do something—”

“Embroider slippers for you like Samarine, or make a border for your afghan like Sérof ! I would do so, but I have no money to buy slippers with, and you do not love me enough to allow me to work on your afghan. It is not my fault if you do not love me and I have no pocket-money.”

Mlle. Grabinof, burning with rage, tried to find a sharp answer, but could not, and walked away indignant.

After the meagre supper, while the young ladies were enjoying their recreation, the governess came out of her room, which opened on the corridor.

“Ranine !” cried she, with a shrill voice, “madame the directress sends for you.”

Every malicious, wicked eye was turned upon Ariadne, who rose quietly, laid down the book she was reading, and went up-stairs. The glances of her schoolmates followed her.

“They will expel her,” said a compassionate voice.

“It will be no more than she deserves,” replied Grabinof, coldly.

“Horrible creature ! that Grabinof,” whispered an independent girl, “ isn’t she hateful to-day ; I wish I had her by the nose ! ”

“ I wish you had. Are you coming to the dining-room to-night ? ”

“ Hush ! ” said the independent one, called Olga. She looked all around her, then said in a low tone : “ Not to-night—to-morrow night. ”

The two friends walked toward the governess.

“ Well, my dear Mlle. Grabinof,” said Olga, “ it is a long time since I did a row on your afghan. Give me your needle and let me work a little. ”

“ Not to-night, my dear, not to-night, it is too late ; but to-morrow if you wish,” said Mlle. Grabinof, as she rolled up the precious work.

“ The old mummy ! do you know,” said Olga, “ she commenced that afghan when she thought she was going to marry Prince Miravanti Fioravanti, our Italian ambassador in the time of Peter the Great—but he already had three wives in foreign countries. ”

The two friends ran along, tickling each other, and giggling, until they reached the door of the dormitory, where, with feigned politeness, neither would pass the other.

After going up the long stairs, through the halls and across the immense drawing-rooms, Ariadne, who did not hurry herself, at last reached the antechamber of the directress's apartment. A footman in livery opened the door for her, and there she found a housekeeper, the confidante of her mistress, guarding the passage-way. She made a sign to Ariadne to enter, remaining silent on the threshold. The young girl stepped forward, opened one of the folding doors which was half covered with large woolen curtains, made a bow, closed the folding-door behind her, and waited, with eyes cast down, and arms hanging listlessly at her side.

“Who is there?” said the directress.

“Ranine,” answered the culprit.

“Come nearer!” said the directress, in a milder tone than Ariadne expected.

She obeyed, and stood under a lamp so covered with a shade that it threw a sombre gloom around the room heavily draped with curtains.

At the end of the room was a large sofa, the wood-work massively carved, covered in light blue damask. Blue was the color of the institute, therefore all the curtains and draperies were of that color, which was quite bearable in the day, but at night looked dark and funereal.



Another lamp of more elegant form was shaded by a reflector, which threw the light upon a full-length portrait of the Grand Duchess, protectress of the establishment, that hung over the sofa where Madame Batourof always sat. Malicious tongues had asked secretly if the flowers, which were always fresh before the portrait, were for the fictitious or the real directress. Two other full-length portraits, of the emperor and empress, hung opposite to each other. These had no lights.

As Ariadne approached the lamp, she discovered that Madame Batourof was not alone. Ensnconced in a large arm-chair, with hands quietly folded, sat a woman of about fifty years, who looked fixedly at the young girl, but with no malice in her glance, like that in Madame Batourof's black, piercing eyes. Ariadne did not lose her self-possession.

"It was you who sang in the class?" asked the directress.

"Yes, Madame Superior," replied Ariadne.

The title of "Superior" is given by courtesy to the directresses of these establishments, although their functions are entirely secular.

"What motive prompted you to cause this disturbance?" asked Madame Batourof in a calm voice.

Ariadne bowed her head, and could not answer.

She would have to tell of her agonies, her irresistible desire to sing—the explanation was too long, and what was the use? Was it not better to be punished?

“Speak!” said the superior with anger.

“I must sing, I suffer when I do not,” said the offender, without lifting her head.

“Where do you suffer?”

Ariadne pointed to her throat.

“Now, at this moment, do you suffer?”

The young girl bowed her head.

“Sing then.”

This command was given as quietly as if it were an easy thing to sing in the midst of a reprimand. Ariadne looked in the impassible face of the directress, and found she was not joking. The young girl wanted to ask a question, but could not, she was almost blinded by the light which shone in her face.

“You sing in the chapel, do you not?” asked the lady in the chair, who for the first time gave any sign of life.

“Yes, madame,” replied Ariadne, encouraged by the benevolent voice of her new interlocutor.

“Sing for me the hymn to the Virgin.”

“I know only my part,” replied Ariadne, gently.

“Sing it,” said the directress.

Ariadne commenced, and immediately the room

was filled by her rich, full voice. Everything seemed to tremble in the vibration, the nicknacks on the *étagères*, the crystal lustres of the chandeliers : in fact she seemed to inspire life into inanimate objects.

Ariadne sang her part of contralto slowly. Her eyes fixed in vacancy, she appeared to be looking within herself, at some mysterious object, some solemn, though not mystic vision. She sang almost without moving her lips ; her mouth wide open, her head thrown back, she was calm, statuesque, as if in ecstasy.

When she finished the hymn, she was silent. The charm of that voice was so powerful that it had overcome anger and mockery. The superior exchanged glances with her visitor, and in this look there was something more than surprise—there was admiration.

“Do you know anything besides the liturgy?” asked the superior.

“I know the exercises.”

“Sing very slowly a minor scale,” said the lady with gray hair—“very slowly ; commence with the low A.”

Ariadne began. Was it the kindly voice of the old lady which aroused in her bosom new emotions ? She sang the scale with such a tone of prayer and supplication that, when she struck the high A, the two ladies felt as if an angel had been singing.

“Lower,” said the superior.

The voice of Ariadne, in tones of anger and deep despair, descended the scale, and dwelt long on the low E.

“It is wonderful !” said the visitor, falling back in her chair.

“She has really a remarkable voice,” said the directress ; “but that is no reason she should annoy the classes. You have caused a great scandal.”

“I made my excuses to the lady in the class, and to our professor,” said Ariadne ; “now I humbly offer them to you, madame.”

She inclined her head, but with so much dignity that the visitor was struck by it.

“For your love of me,” said she, in Italian to the directress, “forgive her. This girl will be a great artist.”

“For my love of you, I will do so,” said Madame Batourof, smiling. She was glad of an excuse to do what she had already made up her mind to do.

“You will go every day during recreation to the music-room, and sing there alone,” said the superior, as if she had inflicted the severest punishment. “You may go.”

Ariadne, astonished, looked at the two women ; the brow of the directress showed sternness, while the

visitor seemed pleased at the unexpected termination of the interview.

According to custom, Ariadne bowed and kissed the superior's hand ; and, moved by some impulse, she raised the other's lady's hand to her lips, then made a low courtesy as she went toward the door. Just as she was going out, the visitor said to her, "Sing another exercise."

Ariadne stopped and sang one of the most brilliant exercises. It was full of happiness ; trills followed each other as joyously as birds taking their flight. When she had finished, without taking breath, she said :

"Thank you, madame."

As soon as she closed the door, she glided through the hall to her dormitory, and confided her joys and tears to her sole *confidante*—her pillow.

"I am not sorry," said the directress to her friend, "to vex Mlle. Grabinof a little ; she has been finding fault with every one lately."

Thus was the wish of the handsome brunette realized.

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## CHAPTER IV.

THE astonishment was very great when, the next day, Mlle. Ranine was seen going toward the music-room, and greater still when Grabinof tried to stop her, and she informed her, distinctly and haughtily :

“It is by Madame the Superior’s order : and,” she added, “you are not on duty to-day.”

Mlle. Grabinof almost fell backward ; but she recovered sufficiently to realize what she heard. She was really not on duty, for the teachers took turns every other day ; thus she had time to make all the inquiries she desired. That hour of singing was rather a reward than a punishment for Ariadne. There was something at the back of it, and Mlle. Grabinof was determined to find out what it was.

When the young ladies were going into class, there arose great noise and confusion. Four or five of the oldest and handsomest ran to the staircase, where they could look over the railing into the vestibule. Just then two young officers, friends of one of the directress’s sons, were taking off their overcoats before paying their respects to the venerable lady.

Glances were exchanged, faint smiles and move-

ment of the lips, between the visitors and the pretty girls.

“Good-morning, M. Michel,” said a girlish voice ; “how handsome you are !”

There was a deal of laughter, which nearly drowned the words. The young man thus called looked up and replied impudently, “I am at your service, mademoiselle.”

“A teacher !” These words made the girls rush from their posts ; and Mlle. Grabinof, stiff, straight-laced, pinched-up, with crochet under her arm, appeared too late.

At the same time came Ariadne down the red carpeted stairs, with her music-book in hand, pale, and tired from the long singing-lesson, but looking in an ecstatic frame of mind.

“I have caught you now flirting with the young men who have come to see Madame Superior,” said Grabinof, who had just heard the last words of the girls.

Ariadne looked at her as if stupefied, and so disdainfully that the old maid actually trembled with rage.

“If I could only catch her !” murmured she ; and went off with her afghan to visit another teacher, who was free also that day. This friend lived on the

third floor with the little ones, where the two often took their coffee together when off duty.

The first thing Mlle. Grabinof did was to tell her dear Annette how unjustly she had been treated. "Fancy, my dear! Madame Superior not only did not punish Ranine, but gave her permission to sing every afternoon."

"It is dreadful!" said the dear little Annette, adding another lump of sugar to her coffee. "And what did you say?"

"What do you think I said? I said nothing at all; the first I knew of it was when that horrible girl told me of madame's orders."

"They told you nothing of it!" exclaimed the astonished friend. Mlle. Grabinof thought she had better modify the statement a little. "The inspectress did tell me of Madame Superior's decision. If she had not, do you suppose I would have allowed that girl to go to the music-room?"

The dear Annette knew from experience that she must not believe word for word all that her friend said, so she did not notice her slight mistake. "And to think, too," continued Mlle. Grabinof, "that in coming from her music-lessons she had time to flirt with the two Mirsky!"

"What Mirsky?"



“The brothers Mirsky ; they came to call on Madame Superior.”

Dear Annette was silent a moment, when she finished her cup of coffee and put it in the saucer. As she took the handle of the coffee-urn to pour out the second cup of coffee, she gazed into her friend's face with a knowing look.

“Have you noticed that those Mirsky always come during recreation ? Did you know that ?”

Grabinof started, and looked at her friend as if she had been a small model of Medusa's head. “No,” said she, slowly, “I did not notice it, but it is so.”

“Well, my dear, watch that, as well as some other things.” The governess was so struck by the tone in which her friend said these enigmatical words that she forgot to sweeten her second cup of coffee, and made a face as she tasted it.

“This is very serious,” said Annette, a little amused at the grimace ; “you don't keep a strict lookout in your class, for you have a lot of pretty girls who are up to fun.”

“Ranine ?” asked Mlle. Grabinof, coming back to her all-absorbing subject. Annette shrugged her shoulders.

“Ranine has neither money nor friends, and it is not the poor girls who are up to mischief in schools.

I was governess before you, and I have seen a good deal, but I think your young ladies try you more than they would me."

"Madame Banz is a goose," said Mlle. Grabinof, thus slandering the quarrelsome, superficial character of the lady who shared with her the perilous honor of keeping the first class in order.

"It is not solely the fault of Madame Banz. You have some responsibility, for, thanks to our system of education, we teachers know our scholars from the time they are ten years old ; you ought to know those who would take advantage of you."

"But," stammered Grabinof, a little upset by the rebuke, "except Ranine, who is nobody, they are all well brought up, nice girls."

"Do you know what is going to happen to you one of these days?" said Annette impatiently. "No? Well, your twenty-two years of service will be a dead loss to you, and you will find yourself in a retreat on half-pay."

"Why?" exclaimed the unhappy Grabinof. She felt her hair stand on end.

"Because you will not see what is going on, or suffer me to explain it to you."

"But what is going on?" exclaimed Grabinof, greatly terrified. Annette looked at her dear friend

a moment, saw she was in earnest, then whispered a few words in her ear, which fell like a thunderbolt upon her companion ; she sank back into her chair as green in color as a young cucumber.

“In my class ; Heavens !” said she in a low voice.

“In my class ; and their names ?”

“Their names ! you should be able to tell me them.”

Mlle. Grabinof wrung her hands in a most tragic manner.

“How did you find that out ?” said she, when she recovered a little her self-possession.

“From my chambermaid.” (Each teacher had her maid, whom she selected and paid ; we can imagine what a variety of hateful elements was thus introduced into the institute.) “Févronia is intimate with one of the soldiers who cleans the dining-rooms ; she pretends he is going to marry her, so there are no secrets about the affair. Now you know why I say the girls are not closely watched.”

Mlle. Grabinof drew a long sigh.

“How can one find out the names ?”

“Of those young men ? They may be the two brothers Mirsky. That is very possible.”

“Are there but two ?”

Annette laughed.

“Allow me to suggest again that you are reversing the order of things ; it is you who should inform me ; I think, however, there are three.”

“Who lets them in ?”

“Anybody. With that golden key, you know.”

They both drew a long sigh ; and there was reason to sigh, for they had lost the last charm of womanhood, kindness of heart.

“What must be done ?” groaned Grabinof, “I will inform Madame Superior, for such an opprobrium—”

Annette shrugged her shoulders with an air of commiseration.

“My dear friend,” said she, kindly, “either your misfortune has caused you to lose your reason, or you are not practical. You know your plan did not succeed with Ranine, why should you try it a second time ? Suppose all prearranged, what would you do ?”

Mlle. Grabinof did not try to think what she would do under the circumstances, but wrapped her long, bony hands around her hairy arms, and said :

“Advise me, my dear Annette ; I will submit to your superior wisdom, and do as you tell me.”

The triumphant friend commenced a series of exhortations and suggestions, which lasted until the end of the study-hours. “And now,” concluded Annette,

when she heard a grand hubbub, which always announced the professor's departure, "go carry out your plan of battle."

The two friends embraced each other tenderly, like two noble souls linked together in a great cause, and Grabinof rushed down to the lower floor like a frightened hind.

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## CHAPTER V.

THE dormitory of the first class was deep in the quiet of their first sleep. The long line of little white beds, without curtains, but with immaculate covers, was lighted by two lamps which hung before the images of saints. The outlines of the graceful forms were scarcely distinguishable in the dim light; the heads of the blonde and the brunette all looked alike.

The governess slept behind a screen at the entrance of the dormitory, in a little room which resembled the sentinel-box of Cerberus. In this way she could watch the whole dormitory; but twenty years of service dull the faculties. The great clock on the staircase had just struck eleven, the reverberation still lingered in the vaulted roof, when one of the girls got up, put

on her slippers and wrapper, regardless of the noise she was making, and deliberately walked across the dormitory, until she reached the door which opened on to the court. It was Olga.

As she went along, she tapped on the shoulder of one of her sleeping companions, who soon followed her example; then a third joined them. All three were bold enough to open the door, which swung noiselessly on its well-oiled hinges, and go out into the hall.

They shuddered, either from fear or cold, and kept very close together. The dim light of the great hanging lamps made the long passages dreary enough. Although the thick carpet deadened the sounds of footsteps, yet every noise, like the nibbling of mice, startled the young girls several times before they reached the grand staircase.

They had to go down one flight, and cross another passage, before they reached the dining-room, which was situated at the extreme end of the building. All was done with such precision that it was evident this adventure was an habitual thing.

The three girls went into the dining-room, and there they found three charming young fellows, all officers in the army, about twenty years of age, and delighted to think they had defied the duen-

nas. They ran less risk in coming than the girls did in meeting them. They came through a little door of the dining-room, which opened into the kitchen: the kitchen opened into a court, the court, by a large gate, into the street. The gate was not shut until eleven o'clock at night, and any one could come in to visit the numerous inmates of the establishment, so it was very easy to enter. More precautions were necessary to get out; but, by paying well the unarmed soldier who guarded the gate, what couldn't be done?

Each of the young ladies had her gallant. The dining-room was dimly lighted; for the only illumination came from a lantern under a bench that was turned toward the wall; but the loving couples did not need much light to hear each other, as they sat face to face on the benches.

They talked about everything—the teachers, whom they disposed of as they liked—then Ariadne's affair.

“Tell me,” said one of the young men, “what does this Ranine look like? I am curious to see her.”

This absurd curiosity was punished by a little pouting and a lover's quarrel; but the others caused a reconciliation, and the young girl condescended to forgive her gallant by allowing him to kiss her hand.

The conversation became more and more familiar, the couples drew closer together, the institute and its doings absorbed their thoughts—for what else had these young girls to talk about? and what more curious, odd subjects could they find on which to keep up their prattle?

“You like chalk, then?” asked one of the men, with a certain disgust and curiosity.

“It is excellent when you crunch it with your teeth. We always take the pieces that are left after the lessons, and divide them. We take good care to wrap the bits in little paper ruffles, and the professors think we do it out of politeness to them; but not at all, it is because we don’t want their nasty, dirty fingers to touch what we eat—”

“Oh! you can’t make me believe,” interrupted one of the officers, “that you don’t have a little flirtation with some of the professors—for instance, that handsome professor of chemistry—”

“He?” replied the young girl. “No, indeed; he is too simple; but our German teacher is lovely—we all adore him. Last winter he received eighteen offers: it was like the whooping-cough, all the class had it.”

“Ah! and you, too?” asked the good-natured admirer.



He received a little slap for this, but peace was soon restored again.

“And you?” asked a third of his neighbor who was trying her beautiful teeth on a bag of sugar plums. It is useless to say the young men did not come empty-handed, for a large basket of dainties made its appearance at the beginning of the frolic, and was now lying empty at their feet.

“I! what, I?”

“Have you not been in love with your music teacher?”

“No,” replied the youthful gourmand. “I did adore our deacon last year, he was so handsome, with his long brown hair waving over his shoulders. He reminded me of Christ’s pictures, and then, when he said in the mass, ‘Pray the Lord!’ it went right here.”

The young girl, instead of putting her hand on her heart, put it on her stomach, for there she was really more impressionable than anywhere else.

“And now?” asked the lover in a jealous tone.

“Now, I love you,” said she.

Such a declaration and at such a time deserved some tender words, but there were none. These young men—the oldest was only about twenty years of age—and the girls were innocently amusing themselves,

because they were breaking the rules ; they were tasting forbidden fruit. The triumph of childish perversity made it sweet.

“It is time we went up-stairs,” said Olga ; “this is the hour when Madame Banz sneezes.”

When Madame Banz sneezed, it was for several minutes.

The young girls gaped without any embarrassment, politeness only prevented the men from doing the same ; then they bade each other a tender adieu.

“What shall we bring you next time ?”

“Some salt herrings, and onions, and then, my dear, some champagne.”

“That’s it, champagne, and *pâté de foies gras* ; we will sup together.”

With this noble resolve, the group separated. . . .

In returning to their dormitory, the girls were half asleep, therefore not so light-footed as they had been ; one of them stumbled, and struck a cross which she wore around her neck, and it fell all the way down-stairs.

This noise brought out the long, thin head of Grabinof over the railing. She had not been to bed that night, but in her vigils had fallen asleep on the staircase. By the light of the lamp she recognized the

three culprits, when a shudder of horror shook her whole frame.

“The three best!” said she, “the prettiest, noblest, and richest. Good Lord! what will become of us?”

Without waiting for an answer, she returned to her bed, to finish the night in sleeplessness. But her courage was kept up by two diverse elements; one was the little information she gained while listening over the railing; the other, the joy she would have in exposing Madame Banz’s stupidity.

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## CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning, or rather the same day, Mlle. Grabinof commenced her duties at early morn; those restless nights had not enhanced her beauty, for she had one of those faces which could not bear emotional efforts. The girls insisted upon knowing how their beloved teacher felt, how she had passed the night. We will see in this chapter what happened to one of the nocturnal rovers.

“You look tired, dear mademoiselle,” said Olga to her. “Did you spend a bad night? But you were not on duty.”

Such cunning ! so much *aplomb*, and such simplicity, and candor in the tone of the voice ! Grabinof felt herself trembling with rage.

“You are all yellow this morning,” said another ; “has anything disagreeable occurred ?”

Ariadne, who was silently eating her piece of bread, ventured to look up at Grabinof. She was conscious of having caused her some ill-feeling, but her offense was not sufficient to make any one yellow ; however, the expression of concentrated hatred that met her glance made Ariadne turn pale.

“Yes,” replied the irascible Grabinof, “I have been wronged ; there is justice even in this world, while we are waiting for the next.”

Every eye was turned toward Ariadne, who was boiling over with rage and disgust for human frailty. Alas ! this was no new feeling for her ; she was becoming more embittered every day.

The morning passed uneventfully. The three guilty ones seemed to have slept well ; the geography lesson was rather tedious, and their answers far from brilliant ; but these deficiencies were so frequent, the professor thought nothing of them. After recreation and dinner, Ariadne was going to her singing ; she had her roll of music in her hand, and with it accidentally knocked the chair on which was Grabinof’s work-box,

wide open. The contents rolled to the middle of the hall, and the precious afghan became entangled in the legs of the chair, so that several stitches were dropped, and the ball of worsted disappeared.

“You did that on purpose!” screamed Grabinof, as she bounded after her precious work, and hugged it to her breast as a mother would her child rescued from a wild animal.

“You know I did not,” said Ariadne quietly, as she stooped to pick up the *débris*, and place them methodically in the box.

“It is a falsehood! Your conduct deserves punishment. This is too much insubordination. I forbid your singing to-day.”

Ariadne, still kneeling, with her head bowed, heard this order from the teacher; and, at the last word, arose and placed the fatal box on the chair.

“My singing-hour,” said she, in a voice trembling with passion, “is a punishment inflicted by Madame Superior, and she alone can rescind it. I intend to obey her orders, and go now to my singing. If Madame Superior removes my punishment, you will have the kindness to let me know.” And, without giving herself any concern about the fury she left behind her, she walked slowly to the end of the hall.

When she reached the door, and found she was

alone, she ran to the music-room, shut herself in, fell on her knees by the side of the grand piano, and shed bitter tears—tears of wounded pride, of anger, as well as sorrow.

“Wretched, wretched girl!” said she, sobbing; “why does every one wish me harm, when I harm nobody? It is because I am poor.”

She did not weep long, for anger repressed and smothered grief. She sat down before the instrument, struck three chords firmly, then commenced the everlasting solfeggio. The solfeggio seemed to dispirit her. She stopped, closed the book, and let her hands fall listlessly in her lap. Was it possible that she was losing her love for singing? Had it come to this? Would she have a distaste for music—her only consolation?

“There is something else besides the solfeggio,” said Ariadne to herself, as she ran her fingers over the keys, and played some bars of the religious hymns which she had been accustomed to sing in chapel, and accompanied them with her voice.

Then she continued improvising and singing without words. She knew nothing of secular music; her improvisation was entirely original, and there was something weird, ecstatic about it.

She sang; her powerful, solemn voice seemed to

send such passionate appeals to that heaven which had frowned upon her ; to that world which had scorned her ; to all she might have loved and blessed ; to the professors, who almost ignored her, while they devoted themselves to the pupils on the first bench ; to the superior, whom the girls called "*mamma*," and who had never noticed Ariadne kindly during her seven years until the evening before, and whom the young girl loved and venerated ; to her companions, who had never given her anything but cruel mockeries ; to all, to everything, one could love on this earth !

Yes, Ariadne had a loving, trusting nature ; she was endowed by the fairies with a most precious gift—a tender heart, an enthusiastic imagination ; in fact, she had the soul of an artist. She had loved, alas ! all that surrounded her, but without reciprocity. Who wanted her tenderness ? Did not everybody have his cares, trials, and friendships ? God alone would refuse her nothing. But God was far away, and the bitterness of earth was very near. Ariadne addressed her earnest invocation to everything lovable here below.

She sang, and sang until an irresistible emotion filled her throat and caused her eyes to dim with tears ; but she sang on, pouring forth between her sobs such agonizing, sorrowful melody that it filled the whole

music-room. Tears continued to roll down her pale cheeks until they fell on the key-board. What she sang that day was simply sublime ; but she could never remember it.

As the sound died away, she felt exhausted, overcome, and leaned down on the piano. To her great astonishment, she felt such a peace of mind, a tranquillity never experienced before. Suddenly she found she was ready to brave anything. From the pupil she developed into the master.

Thinking she had lingered a long time, she took her book and went into the hall. Oh, horror ! it was empty ! In the class-rooms she heard the professors giving their lessons. Stupefied with terror, Ariadne ran to the stairs to see the hour ; but before she reached the steps the clock struck three.

Three o'clock ! The lesson had begun one hour ago—would last twenty minutes yet. It seemed impossible to enter the class, and meet the curious, scoffing eyes of her companions, the cruel glance of Mlle. Grabinof, and the unscrupulous questioning of the pedantic professor. To admit to these stupid people that she had taken no note of time while singing, with cheeks blanched by her recent rapture, she felt was impossible. It was better to run all risks ; so she sat down on the stairs and waited.



Many times had the girls during recreation practised over time ; but they had friends, and some one would run and tell them when the bell rang ; even the teacher would sometimes warn the too zealous musician of the hour. But we must have friends, and be on good terms with the teacher.

Ariadne had nothing to expect from any one. This forgetfulness, which Mlle. Grabinof should have prevented, appeared to the young girl full of evil forebodings.

“She is conspiring against me,” thought she to herself ; “she wants me to be expelled, that is certain.”

To send Ariadne away from the institute would be something like leaving a new-born babe under a *porte cochère*. She would be just as helpless, clothesless, and shelterless. It was the frozen river Neva in perspective, after suffering for days all the horrors of hunger and cold. Ariadne could not compare her suffering to anything else.

Instead of being overwhelmed, she again experienced that same quietude she felt in the music-room, and lost again in the class-room. A certain inspiration took possession of her.

“I will sing !” said the fortuneless orphan to herself ; and her heart was suddenly filled with confidence.

She had one friend and protector, that was Art, which had just appeared to her in an ecstatic vision.

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## CHAPTER VII.

WHILE Ariadne was dreaming in the music-room, Mlle. Grabinof had lost no time. Picking up her afghan, she gathered up all the articles which had been scattered by the accident and took them to her room, which opened on the walk. In crossing the vast hall, she saw a pretty group, composed of the "three graces," as they were called. She waited until they came within reach of her voice.

The "three graces" were walking arm-in-arm—these little familiarities, so natural and so sweet, were not forbidden in institutes in Russia as in France. As they came near the watch-dog, they lowered their voices, and she called to them :

"Come here, dear girls !"

The dear girls raised their heads simultaneously ; but they saw in the eyes of the watch-dog there was no passing her, even by throwing her a cake—that is, a compliment. All three walked into the teacher's room, and she shut the door quietly on her prisoners.

It was a pretty room, with a high ceiling, and walls covered with pictures. In Madame the Superior's room, the grand duchess filled the place of honor; with the teachers it was Madame the Superior. Even the teacher's chamber-maid proved her loyalty by hanging up the photograph of her mistress. Nothing could be wiser.

The chairs, sofa, and tables were covered with fancy articles, work of the girls in their leisure hours. The light streamed in through an enormous arched window, the sill of which was decorated with growing plants, making everything look very inviting in the watch-dog's grotto. Notwithstanding all this, the "three graces" felt a sort of chill run through them when the door was shut on them. Mlle. Grabinof rarely closed the door when she was on duty, and those who were honored with a *tête-à-tête* seemed in no hurry to speak of it.

The teacher came close to her beloved pupils, looked at them quietly, and then said, in a mild tone :

"I spent the night on the staircase."

Two of the culprits blushed suddenly from head to foot. Their arms and shoulders, only partially covered with a cape of *percale*, turned a color that would make wild strawberries envious. The third, and most

determined, was Olga. She looked at Mlle. Grabinof with astonishment, and said, boldly :

“What a strange idea—to spend the night on the stairs !”

Inwardly the old maid could not but admire her pupil's coolness, and confessed to herself that, under the same circumstances, she would not have had so much ; but this was not the time to pay compliments.

“I saw you go out, my dear, and I saw you come in.”

“Where were we going ?” asked the youthful offender.

“To the dining-room, where three gentlemen were waiting for you.”

“Dear mademoiselle,” said the guilty one, in a most persuasive tone, “you had a bad dream, you took cold certainly, and fancied you spent the night on the stairs.”

Mlle. Grabinoff shook her head negatively, without losing her self-possession.

“No, my dear, I dreamed nothing, and I intend to inform Madame Superior. Until I return, you will remain in my room ; I will put the key in my pocket, which will prevent any communication with your accomplices, so that we will entrap the young men at their next visit.”

The young girl turned pale at the name of the superior, but her invincible pride kept her up. She was a descendant of an illustrious race ; sure of her name, title, fortune, there was very little she was afraid of in this world.

“And you, Mlle. Grabinof, will fall into disgrace with Madame Superior for not sooner thinking of passing the night on the stairs.”

At this ill-sounding rebuke, the governess lost all the calmness she had armed herself with, and her natural temper got the better of her.

“Wretch that you are,” said she, “you defy me even here ! I can have you ignominiously driven from this establishment, this asylum of innocence, which you dishonor by your scandalous intrigues.”

The young girl straightened herself up proudly.

“We dishonor no one,” said she, haughtily ; “a frolic is not a dishonor, even for your establishment, which protects innocence. You do not suppose that a descendant of the Ruriks could dishonor any one, above all herself.”

This was not the malicious duplicity of her ordinary language ; it was the insolence of high lineage which felt its importance. The two more timid companions, in finding they were so well sustained, took courage, and put on a bold face.

“Frolic, if you wish,” replied the governess, who felt she must yield a little, “all such frolics must tarnish the reputation of young girls. You would not be allowed such liberty at home.”

“At home we are allowed to see young men, and talk to them; here we are bored to death,” retorted the young girl.

“You are in the institute,” replied Grabinof, “and while you are here you must obey the rules. I intend to complain to Madame Superior of your conduct first and your insolence afterward.”

“And I,” said the little rebel, stamping her foot, “if they want to send me away, I will appeal to the emperor, who is my godfather and I will tell him the only object we had in receiving the gentlemen was that they should bring us something to eat; for our rations, so liberally provided by the government, are reduced to nothing by the pilferings of our superiors. We went to the dining room to get something to eat,” concluded the young girl, looking Grabinof full in the face. “It was to eat! Yes. Was it not?” said she, addressing the greediest of the three. “Was it not to eat?”

“Oh! yes,” sighed the empty stomach.

“Now, see here, mademoiselle, do as you please, I admit our imprudence might cause us many dis-

agreeables, and you also. I think it is better to hush the matter up, for we have been sufficiently punished by your reprimand and the pain we have caused you. Suppose you hush it up, and we will promise to be always obedient and grateful."

This was spoken with just enough stress to make it appear perfectly natural. Peace was soon concluded. The offenders had to listen to a long scolding from Mlle. Grabinof, who prolonged it until all her appropriate expressions became exhausted. It was understood they were never to return to the dining-room at night; and the young men were to be informed by those who let them in that they were to abandon their secret expeditions; and, furthermore, the "three graces" were to uphold the teacher, who was so desirous of shielding them from the shame of public exposure and all its evil consequences. This last clause was presented in less formidable terms, but thoroughly understood by the contracting parties.

"Now," concluded Grabinof, "you will tell me the names of the gentlemen."

A shrugging of the shoulders, meaning evidently "You ask too much," was the response of the pretty transgressor.

"And the name of the soldier who let them in," persisted the old maid.

She received the same eloquent, silent answer.

Mlle. Grabinof was strongly tempted to go to the superior, but her haughty pupil intimidated her weak heart, for she had little of the courage of the Romans in olden times.

“You could not wish to exact from us, Mlle. Grabinof, any information which would imply cowardice. It is not *you* who could demand it. The question you have asked us is a proof of it; and notwithstanding your stern look, you are glad we did not answer you. Will you accept this little trifle as a token of respect, from one who feels how much she owes to you, and as a pledge of the kind feelings your words have aroused?”

The clock struck; the illustrious delinquent clasped on the stupefied Grabinof's arm a gold bracelet which she took off her own, and in her haste pinched the flesh of the governess, who uttered a little cry of pain and fright. After excuses, kisses, and some promises, the three girls rushed hurriedly into the hall, where they met the dignified, bald-headed professor just going into class.

“Ranine! where is Ranine?” exclaimed several compassionate voices.

Grabinof looked around her, saw that Ariadne was missing, and stood there a half-second with her



hand on the door-knob. "Shall I send for her?" thought she. In her indecision she glanced down at the bracelet, that symbol of fidelity and servitude. We know not what diabolical thought passed through the old maid's mind, but she shut the door and quietly took her seat, with the inseparable afghan, which grew several rows in a few minutes.

While the professor was drawing a complicated problem on the blackboard, the youngest of the graces whispered to Olga :

"Are you going to tell them not to come?"

"Goodness! how silly you are!" was the only answer she received.

"Good-by, champagne!" sighed a second, who loved good things.

"Why should we?" replied the eldest, proudly; "we will go to-morrow night. Madame Banz sleeps like a marmot, and she snores."

"I will not go!" murmured the delicate girl.

"Silly thing!" replied her elder; "I will!"

The professor called her to the blackboard; she had to stand there with the chalk in her hand, which was wrapped in gold paper, but her explanation of the problem was anything but brilliant.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE next evening was very eventful. Except the visits of the emperor and empress, it had been years since there had been such an excitement in the institute.

First, Ariadne was called to the superior's room for having missed her class in mathematics without a good excuse. This fresh insubordination was flagrant ; for she could scarcely have been one whole hour behind time ! And Grabinof, in making her report, took particular pains to dwell on Ariadne's own confession : she admitted having returned at three o'clock.

The young girl found in the superior's room the same lady with gray hair who had witnessed her first reprimand.

Madame Sékourof was a neighbor, rather than a friend, of the directress ; she was in the habit of spending her evenings with the old superior—not that she had any great sympathy for her, but sought to avoid her own lonely fireside.

Madame Batourof felt a most sincere, almost respectful esteem for her friend, who was without fortune, yet did much good with her little means. Ma-

dame Batourof had great faith in her judgment, and always listened to her advice in difficult matters, but seldom followed it. She said, with a sigh :

“The theory of life is one thing, the practice another, my dear !”

As Ariadne came in, she met the discerning glance of those kind, intelligent eyes, and suddenly felt strengthened. The old lady thought, if the young girl was so soon arraigned before her judge a second time, it could not be for any grave offense. The honest look of Ariadne did not defy censure, and there was no audacity in it, but she would not succumb to an unmerited affront.

“It is you again, mademoiselle !” said the superior, with severity. “You are, indeed, incorrigible !”

“I forgot myself, madame,” replied Ariadne ; “I beg your pardon. No one came to tell me the hour, and I had no watch.”

“You must have sung very loud, not to have heard the bell ring for class.”

“I did not hear it.”

When Ariadne remembered her rapture, there was a fixedness in her eyes which made them look strange. She heard again that celestial music, and was transported to another world.

“Well, mademoiselle, since you forget the hour,

you will sing no more ; we will find another punishment ; you may go !”

Ariadne bowed in silence, and went toward the door. When she was half-way, an irresistible impulse prompted her to turn toward Madame Sékourof, who was looking after her with a sad expression, and made her some little friendly signs. Ariadne, without knowing why, felt her heart less oppressed, and she walked toward the hall with a lighter step, until she met the triumphant Grabinof who was waiting for her, like a spider ready for a fly.

When the two ladies were alone, Madame Sékourof was for a moment silent.

“That is an extraordinary girl !” said she, gently, for fear she might break into her friend’s train of thought.

“Yes,” replied the directress, promptly, showing she too was following the same course of ideas. “But she has one drawback : her poverty. In a girl of noble family, that originality would be a charm ; but with a fortuneless girl, it is a grave wrong.”

“Has she absolutely nothing ?”

“Nothing.”

“But where will she go when she leaves here ?”

The superior made a significant gesture, which meant, “Never mind where.”

“I am sure,” insisted Madame Sékourof, “if she had a good master she would make a superior artist ; she has a wonderful voice, and with it such depth of feeling, which is so necessary on the stage.”

“There you are with your theatre puppet ! You would sell your last dress for a new opera !” said the directress, smiling.

“Not exactly. But that girl astonishes me. Has she a pleasant disposition ?”

“Until the present time, we have had no trouble with her : you know that last class has been most vexing. It is the age of revolts and other troubles.”

The superior silently repressed a sigh.

For several days past, even before the interview between Grabinof and her dear Annette, vague rumors were concentrating in that sort of acoustic horn which was called the “faculty’s cabinet.” An almost forgotten story, which had nearly cost the superior her place and resources twenty years ago, had been revived. Why had it been brought out of its oblivion ?

Foolish chambermaids had talked of having seen shadows flitting about the pantries ; they pretended that the porter was always drunk : these were little things in themselves, but they caused the directress great uneasiness of mind.

“Ranine is sanguine,” said the directress, for she dared not allow an old, faithful friend, the most discreet of women, to divine her thoughts ; “these sanguine girls do not turn out well.”

“Yes, when they do not have the means to direct their sanguineness toward the summits of ideality. Malibran was sanguine, and all who have made a name in the fine arts.”

“But, you know, my dear, the Conservatory cannot furnish purses to all the girls who take up an idea that they can sing.”

“For *all*, no ; but for some. Fortunate are those who obtain them ! Will you allow me to talk with the young girl ?”

“Certainly ; but wait a few days, if you intend to spoil her. I don’t want you to do it so soon after my reprimand.”

“Very well,” replied Madame Sékourof. “I will speak to you about her some other time.”

The conversation touched upon several subjects without dwelling upon any, for their thoughts were elsewhere ; and very soon they separated. The generous, enthusiastic heart of Madame Sékourof was absorbed in the thought of making an artist of Ariadne, and the directress was reflecting about that old story which had been so inopportunately revived in the last

few days. "It was in the dining-room the culprits were found! The dining-room could not have been well guarded. But who would have thought the demon of perversity would have prompted a girl to leave her dormitory, risk the vigilance of a governess, and cross this immense building? Her evil genius must have been very strong. That young girl must be sent away."

Eleven o'clock struck. The directress, prompted by a secret disquietude, rose with difficulty from her arm-chair. She was sixty-six years of age, and her limbs, swollen from the sedentary life she had lived, refused to carry her very far. She went out of her parlor, and in the waiting-room found her faithful housekeeper, as stiff and scowling as ever.

"You, madame!" she cried. "Did you ring?"

"No; come with me, Groucha; take a lamp; we are going to make a tour of inspection."

Groucha, terrified, looked at her mistress. An inspection! It was twenty years since one had been made. For years after the unfortunate event which had just been revived, the superior made frequent tours of inspection; but since that time surveillance had relaxed. Security was a great safeguard, and for several years the directress had not thought of making a round.

“Yes, Groucha, I tell you—a patrol. Let us go.”

Groucha, awakening to a sense of duty, took a lamp in her hand, and, after throwing a shawl around her mistress's shoulders, offered her arm to her, and the two women entered the large vestibule.

All was quiet. The lamps burned dimly; the great clock which stood at the head of the red-carpeted staircase marked the flight of time in regular beats; the soldiers—for the institute was guarded by soldiers who had unlimited furloughs—were snoring peacefully on the benches in the court. The porter, scrupulously attired in his scarlet uniform trimmed with black and white eagles on a yellow ground, slept in the room adjoining the drummer's, who guarded the outside gate. Nobody was watching the institute; but could it not take care of itself? The heavy bolts, the oaken doors, and the thick walls—were they not sufficient protection?

“Just see how we are guarded!” sighed the superior. “This way, Groucha.”

Instead of going toward the dormitories, as she had expected, the domestic saw with astonishment her mistress advance toward the dining-room. Remembering that twenty years ago it was there a discovery had been made, she recognized the motives of her mistress. Groucha thought there was some-



thing wrong ; and, as she hated all the teachers, she was not likely to grieve if some unpleasantness occurred.

They walked on slowly ; the superior stopped before every door opening on the vast corridor, to see if any light came through the cracks. The apartment of the inspectress was open according to the regulations, but everybody slept soundly.

Finally the two women stopped before the dining-room ; the superior listened with a sort of superstitious fear ; would she hear voices there as she did once ? No, nothing ! Reassured, she opened the door, and there in the dim light appeared before her three beautiful disheveled heads, and three young officers, who rose immediately when they saw her, and stood as if nailed to the spot.

The most frightful silence followed. The expression of the old lady's face was so full of indignation and fury that it was terrible.

“You here, gentlemen !” said she, finally, giving the Mirsky a withering look. “You, whom I have received with such confidence, to whom I have offered hospitality ! Betrayers of honor ! You, to enter this asylum at night, to corrupt children who are confided to me by God and the czar ! You ! gentlemen !”

She was not now acting a part, for there was no mean feeling in her heart. She turned away with a gesture so full of contempt and disgust that the young men could do nothing but bow their heads and murmur "Pardon!"

The old lady's eyes fell upon the basket of edibles, with the promised champagne, and she shrugged her shoulders with scorn.

"Certainly," replied she, "my girls are culpable, very, and I do not wish to excuse them; but they did not enter a house at night, delude surveillance, and bribe the guards! What do you expect, gentlemen? Have you come hither with a view to marriage? But they, those children, do they even know who you are? Their position, their fortunes, are they the same as yours?"

"We were not tempted by interest, aunt," said the third officer, who until then remained in the background; "I am to blame: I alone came to see one of the young ladies; my comrades accompanied me only."

"You, my nephew! Ah! this is too much!" cried the indignant aunt. "What is the name of the lady?"

"I cannot tell you, aunt. You can know it easily enough, but it is not for me to tell you."

Madame Batourof remained silent a moment, then continued :

“Come, gentlemen, the rules cannot be longer violated. I will open the door for you ; it must not be thought here that the superior can be deceived.” Going toward the door which opened out of the dining-room into the court, she cried out with a loud voice, “Help !”

The soldier on guard came at once, pale and trembling.

“Take these gentlemen out,” said the superior, “and come to me to-morrow morning. Gentlemen, you will remain in the regiment as if under arrest, until you hear my decision.”

The three officers bowed respectfully before Madame Batourof, who in acknowledgment made a slight inclination of the head, and they left ; madame and Groucha were alone in the hall.

“God has spared me this time,” said she, making the sign of the cross ; “at least I have not seen my children disgraced. Groucha, I must know their names to-morrow morning. Find them out !”

The superior, supported by her servant, crossed the halls once more, climbed up the stairs, and made thorough investigation in the dormitories. Everything was in perfect order. Quite a strong odor of ether

was perceptible near Mlle. Grabinof's room ; but the teachers were often nervous, and this odor was nothing unusual in the institute. The superior passed on to her own room, her mind much troubled.

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## CHAPTER IX.

Mlle. GRABINOF had not needed ether for herself, although her nerves had been strongly tested. She certainly had every confidence in the promises of her pupils, not to leave the dormitory again at night. But why did she conceal herself behind the door of the dormitory that night instead of going to bed quietly ?

She reproached herself for that vigil, for she was very weary from the two preceding bad nights, and yet there was a secret interest which kept her there : she felt certain of seeing something that night.

Sure enough, about eleven o'clock she heard the door of the dormitory open very softly, when Olga, the eldest of the graces, appeared, a little agitated and anxious for fear of discovery. She had not advanced more than three steps when Mlle. Grabinof stood before her, mute and menacing as an angel guarding a terrestrial paradise.

The young girl trembled, but showed extraordinary presence of mind.

“My dear mademoiselle, you not in bed ! So much the better. I came to ask you for some medicine. I have had a paroxysm of nervous strangling. I suffer horribly. Give me some medicine, I beg of you.”

She rubbed her throat with so much ease, and so naturally, that Mlle. Grabinof, although convinced it was all a pretext, took her into her room and mixed some sugar and water.

“Why did you not go to Madame Banz ?” asked she, suspiciously, as she crushed the sugar with a spoon. “She was the lady on duty, and you should have wakened her instead of leaving your dormitory.”

“Dear mademoiselle,” replied the roguish girl, “has Madame Banz any heart ? She has a boiled lobster in the place of it, I am sure. In the first place, she snores so loud it is impossible to awaken her, and then she has neither kindness nor civility. Not like you, my darling ! And then we are more closely united now, and I do not wish to be indebted to anybody but you !”

Mlle. Grabinof gave her a glass with a few drops of ether in it, took her back to her bed, and told her if she felt sick again to call out, as she would leave her door open all night, and be up at the least noise. This

charitable admonition was the best anodyne for Olga. Before she could reach the middle of the dormitory she began to laugh, thinking of the ridiculous figures the young men were making down-stairs. Her two companions were soon at her bedside, to know the details of her escape. Then she related her misfortune.

“And there is nothing to eat!” sighed the girl with the sensitive stomach. “You promised to bring us something!”

“If you wish me to bring you some soothing drops, there are still some in Mlle. Grabinof’s phial.”

Ten minutes after every one was asleep in the dormitory except Ariadne, who was thinking of her sad future. These nocturnal scenes did not trouble her, for she had for a long time been a silent, impassible witness of them.

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## CHAPTER X.

THE next morning the whole institute heard that “somebody” had been found in the dining-room that night.

The basket of edibles had been left there, and the first to find it appropriated the contents, without asking whence it came. The soldier on duty, sure of

being sent away and also punished, was determined to have a little consolation in something to eat ; and, when the directress remembered the basket as a proof of guilt, and sent for it, no one in the institute had ever seen it.

Who was the first to tell of the adventure ? How did the report spread so rapidly ? Nobody could say ; but, at seven o'clock in the morning, the "three graces" knew that their secret had been discovered.

"Bah ! I always thought it would come to this," said Olga, philosophically, in reply to the lamentations of her companions.

"But we shall be expelled !"

"Nobody ever confesses," continued the young girl, as she deliberately combed out her long, heavy tresses, which fell below her knee. "Only fools confess !"

"Then the whole class will be punished !"

"They would not send away a whole class ; that would cause too much scandal. Don't trouble yourself ; Madame Superior is more troubled than we to know how this thing will terminate."

This young person was indeed deeply versed in the science of the human heart. She was perfectly right, for the superior would have given anything if no one but herself had known of this affair. She even went so far as to regret the impulse which led her

to the dining-room, and, in her trepidation, sent for Madame Sékourof, whose counsels were always so excellent in theory, and so impossible in practice.

“You have some news?” she said, on entering.

“What!” said the directress, falling from the clouds, “you know it?”

“I heard it this morning. But what is it—a whole class led astray by a regiment? or is it only an abominable joke?”

Madame Batourof told all to her friend without concealment, for she had to deal plainly with her.

“And you do not know the names of the girls?” asked Madame Sékourof, when she had heard all.

The superior reflected a moment.

“I ask myself, sometimes, if it were not better not to know them.”

“But you must know them, at all hazards. The thing is too well known, thanks to the crowd of tell-tales and scandal-mongers who swarm around you. Public opinion must have satisfaction.”

“I can give it!” sighed Madame Batourof.

Five minutes afterward, Groucha appeared at the door. Her mistress guessed that she had something to tell her, and went out an instant. When she returned, she was so excited that Madame Sékourof was frightened.



“What is the matter? Another misfortune?”

“No, no, my dear; but I am a little upset! I have just learned their names!”

“Well?”

“Impossible to tell them, even to you. You can judge of my position.”

“Are you very certain?”

“Very sure. The chambermaid of the dormitory has known it since the change of classes this morning, and she became so frightened that she confessed all to Groucha.”

“They are of noble families?”

The superior bowed her head.

“Advise me,” said she.

“I cannot advise you; for it is one of those cases when the greatest service you can render a friend is to say nothing, so that she will not have to repent having listened to you.”

Madame Sékourof returned home; and the superior sent for the inspectress.

She came, too, in great consternation, for she knew the names of the girls; and certainly if the Evil Spirit had had any hand in it, he would have chosen those three girls, the “flower of the institute,” as they were called by the authorities during the imperial visits.

“I will not reproach you at present,” commenced

the superior, in her most authoritative tone. "We will speak of the affair later. At present you must advise. Can we punish those young girls? Do you believe it possible to make a bold stroke?"

The inspectress replied by shaking her head.

"However," replied Madame Batourof, "the report is spread far and near; it is impossible to stop it now—probably the young men have told their fellow-officers. My God! my God! what a predicament! What could the teachers have been thinking of? And you, yourself? But I will not say more now. What is to be done?"

The superior sat in a corner, as far away from the door as possible; the inspectress drew near to her, and they commenced whispering. The conversation lasted about a half hour, after which Madame Batourof rose, made the sign of the cross, and said:

"May the Lord assist me! My necessities are very great, and my heart bleeds to think of them! . . . . But you said it would be impossible to make a bold stroke! Send me Mlle. Grabinof."

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## CHAPTER XI.

Mlle. GRABINOF soon appeared. She was so drawn and pinched up, that she scarcely looked larger than a rat. The storm she expected did not come, at least, all at once, for she received the blow in a look, before the thunder roared.

“One of your scholars is seriously compromised,” said the superior.

Mlle. Grabinof thought she had not heard well, and looked at the directress to understand her.

“Do not feign ignorance, and make the situation worse by some absurdity. One of your scholars has compromised herself in a silly adventure, and it is said in the institute she is one of the noblest and richest.”

“It is false, your Excellence,” interrupted Grabinof, faithful to her treaty of alliance.

“I know it is false,” said the directress, “but do not interrupt me, I beg of you. I did wish that all these rumors could be hushed up; unfortunately they are now too wide-spread, for calumny flies rapidly; and if we do not give satisfaction to our most moral public, they will say the whole institute is plunged into the most frightful debauchery. You must give

me the name of the scholar who was guilty of the offense.”

Grabinoſ bent her head, not intending to do what was demanded of her.

“Excellence,” murmured she, “I assure you the names that have been mentioned are a pure invention, an abominable slander. I can prove to you how far the accused young girls are above such odious lies.”

“And Madame Banz, what does she say?” interrupted the superior, who had not a very high opinion of that teacher.

“She has made no statement at all, Excellence; it was during her term of duty these disturbances occurred. Such a scandal could never have taken place during my term. But she sleeps so heavy—she is so large.”

“You confess, then, a scandal?” continued Madame Batourof, with a vivacity which proved how glad she was to be, as we say, “on the scent.”

“Without doubt, Excellence, I cannot deny . . . .”

“Well, find me the guilty one. There must be one culprit; you know your scholars, and it is your place to find her. Come back in half an hour with the information desired.”

The superior took leave of her governess, who de-

parted as much stunned as if the institute had fallen on her.

“We must have a victim for public opinion’s sake,” thought Grabinof, “and she must not be rich, or of illustrious family; she must have no relatives or friends who would be likely to make a fuss. Who among the scholars combines these requisites so rarely found in institutes? I have it! Ranine! the hateful, malicious Ranine! whom destiny seems to have prepared for dismissal by frequent reprimands!”

Ranine! she was then going to be rid of Ranine!

Grabinof had much trouble to control herself during the half hour the directress allowed her to look for the lamb they were going to sacrifice. She looked at her watch twenty times; and when the half hour sounded, she presented herself for the audience.

“Well,” said the superior, “you have discovered her?”

“Yes, Excellence, and it is no other than the pupil who has been so conspicuous of late for her insubordination and laziness.”

“Her name?”

“Ranine.”

The word was pronounced without shame or hesitation, with as much indifference as a butcher slaughters a kid. The superior looked attentively at the governess.

“Are you very sure it was she? Remember you are responsible before God and man.”

“It was she, your Excellence, and no other.”

This reply astonished the superior, who turned away her head.

“How dearly they will pay for it!” thought she.

She was mistaken. Grabinof was more wicked than interested. If she had been offered money for what she was doing without remorse, she probably would have refused it; but to be rid of a despised scholar, and attach herself to others by ties of gratitude and obligation, was easier, and more agreeable to a callous conscience.

“Does Ranine confess her fault?” asked the superior.

“Confess? Oh, Excellence, you do not know her! She is pride incarnate! she will never confess!”

“Is she forewarned?”

“She knows nothing, Excellence. She does not believe she has been discovered.”

“That is good; you may go, but keep silent.”

Grabinof left, with her heart full of joy. Her perilous mission was accomplished so easily, she was surprised; but it was done.

Madame Sékourof was sent for, but in her presence the directress was troubled; before that upright

woman she dared not raise her eyes. However, twenty-seven years of despotic government had hardened her, and she succeeded in putting on a bold look.

“We have found the culprit,” said she; “this will suffice, I think.”

“You are going to expel her?”

“Immediately.”

“Then you can tell me who it is?”

The directress hesitated; then, overcoming her weakness, she said in rather a calm voice:

“It is Mlle. Ranine.”

“The one who sang the other day?”

“The same.”

Madame Sékourof sat down, clasped her hands, and said, quietly:

“It is not possible.”

“Those who ought to know affirm it.”

“You have been deceived, I tell you. That young girl does not know enough to risk such an adventure. To do that, she must have been reading frivolous books, have an unhealthy curiosity, and a contempt for conventionalities. I tell you that child is incapable of doing what she has been accused of. It is false.”

The superior was silent for a moment.

“Some one must have done it,” said she, slowly, “and it is upon her alone that suspicion rests.”

“Ah!” exclaimed Madame Sékourof, without saying more.

She understood it. State reasons prevail in institutes as well as in empires; and frequently lives of the most humble families are sacrificed for causes not made public.

“And you are going to cast her out into the street?”

The superior shrugged her shoulders, as much as to say, “This does not much change her destiny.”

“And you tell me she is entirely without resources?”

“Yes,” said the female autocrat, with regret.

“Will you do nothing for her?”

“The manner in which she leaves us will forbid my doing anything for her ostensibly, but I have a secret fund for charities; from this, I will take enough to give her a little outfit.”

“She will refuse it, be certain of that. You will humble her.”

“I shall regret it very much; but . . . .”

“Allow me to invest the money for her, will you?”

“Ah! noble heart!” cried Madame Batourof, who began to see light dawning.

“Is she informed of what awaits her?”

“No.”



“Well, send her to me ; I wish to see her before the blow strikes her. You have not a tender heart, my dear, but these young girls are sometimes delicately organized : to find herself unjustly cast out, for no fault of hers, might make many a girl crazy.”

A gesture from the superior made the good woman laugh.

“Yes,” replied she, with bitterness ; “it is her fault evidently, since you are resolved to send her away. Superior authority can never be mistaken. Can I see her ?”

“Of course.”

The directress rang the bell and sent for Ariadne. While the servant had gone for her :

“You delay the execution of my plans,” said she. “You must allow a little time to elapse between your interview with her and mine ; but I will refuse you nothing.”

The directress left the parlor. A few moments after Ariadne came in, with her placid brow and open countenance.

“Do you recognize me, mademoiselle ?” said Madame Sékourof, admiring the girl’s lovely, innocent face.

“I believe, madame, I have seen you here. It was you who made me sing.”

“Precisely. Would you be very happy, if you could devote your whole time to singing under a good teacher?”

“Oh, madame!” said Ariadne, clasping her hands, and looking up into the eyes of the good lady, without being able to speak, so full was she of joy.

“I am not rich, and I cannot do much for you; but if you will be content to live modestly, to deprive yourself of pleasures and toilets, I can have you taught the art of singing by good masters, who will prepare you for the stage if you have sufficient talent.”

“The stage!” repeated Ariadne—“singing!—madame, are you not joking?”

“I am talking seriously. You may not be capable of attaining that end; then you must be resigned to make your living by giving lessons.”

“Oh, madame! I would do anything if I could only sing.”

“Well, it is understood: you will live with me. There is a little room near mine, very small and simple, which my maid occupied. After thirty years’ service, she retired to a home for the aged. This will be your room; my chambermaid shares the cook’s room. You will go out only for your lessons, for I cannot take you into the world, where I do not go myself. You shall be my dear little friend.”

Madame Sékourof became more and more affectionate as she saw what intense, heart-felt joy filled the eyes of Ariadne. When she finished speaking, she drew the young girl to her to kiss her, but Ariadne slipped through her arms and fell on her knees, laughing and crying at the same time.

“My mother,” said she, “my second mother! give me your blessing, that I may feel your protection over me.”

She remained prostrated. The old lady, moved to tears, made the sign of the cross on her blond head, and lifted Ariadne in her arms.

“When you leave the institute,” said she—“do you hear me?—*when* you leave here, my house will be ready to receive you. You will not be one hour without shelter and friends.”

“Ah!” sighed Ariadne, “your friendship is the first I have known since my aunt’s death.”

“What! no friends here—no relatives elsewhere?”

“None! It is five years since I received a letter.”

“Poor child! So much the better; you will have nothing to regret in leaving the institute.”

“It is such a long time yet until the month of June!”

Madame Sékourof had not the courage to reply immediately.

“Never mind, my dear,” said she, “my house is always ready for you. Think of it in your moments of trial; and whatever sad or dreadful may happen to you, remember what I have promised.”

Ariadne thought no more of the sadness of life, but ran to the piano and opened it hurriedly.

“Do you wish me to sing for you?” said she to her benefactress.

It was all she had to offer her, and she gave it with a graceful willingness.

“No, no; this is not the time. Return to your class; I will see you again soon.”

Like a daughter submissive to the orders of her mother, Ariadne closed the piano and kissed the hand which had dragged her from the most horrible misery. She appreciated the lady’s beneficence, although she did not know the extent of it, then joined her companions. Nothing remarkable happened in the halls or the study-rooms. The day finished without further adventure, and the classes ended in the usual order.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THE next morning the scholars were told that there would be mass in the chapel. This happened often when there were no holidays, so no one paid much

attention to it ; but when the teachers all came in with their best bonnets on, and there were strangers present, the girls began to whisper.

“In honor of what saint are we excused from our morning lesson ?” Olga asked her cousin.

She, somewhat dissatisfied because breakfast was deferred, did not reply ; and mass was said as usual.

After the last prayers, the priest came out of the chancel, and presented the cross to be kissed by the congregation. When the processional was finished, there seemed to be some uneasiness pervading the crowd shut up in the chapel. The scholars, little and tall, asked each other what this solemnity meant, as it was not a *fête*-day. A sudden fright filled their young hearts as the superior advanced to the middle of the chapel, facing the congregation, and turning her back to the tabernacle, the door of which was closed, though the curtain of red silk was drawn aside.

“My children,” said the superior, whose lips were as white as her wax-like hands, “my maternal heart has been wounded in every fibre ; one among you has been unworthy of the czar’s gifts ; she has broken the rules of this house, has neglected her duties . . . .”

A horrible silence fell upon the frightened multitude ; they could hear the directress breathing heavily,

before finishing her sentence ; she had need of all her strength, but perhaps her pious, erring soul was invoking pardon from on high, before striking down an innocent being. She commenced again :

“This sheep cannot join our flock again. She must leave in peace, and obscurity, to do penance for the fault which to-day excludes her from our midst ! Ariadne Ranine is no longer a member of the institute.”

A faint cry responded to this sentence ; and Olga, pale with anger and indignation, her lips compressed to keep back the words, rushed forward, and caught in her arms her companion, who was just sinking to the ground.

The chapel was soon deserted, the young ladies going out with their teachers in the deepest silence. Each one felt that a most iniquitous sentence had been pronounced.

“Leave that young person,” said Grabinof to Olga, who was kneeling down supporting Ariadne’s head on her arm. “Leave her ; she is no longer one of the class.”

Olga gave her such a look that the old maid was silenced, and, without deigning to reply, continued taking the hair-pins out of her companion’s magnificent hair. As the superior came toward the group, a pas-

sage-way was made for her to pass ; Olga's glance met hers, and it was not the directress who showed the most anger. The black eyes of the young girl, full of indignation, defied the silent reproach of Madame Batourof, who bowed her head.

"I will take care of her until she leaves us," said Olga, without raising her voice.

"That will not be long," replied the superior ; "in a half hour she will leave the establishment."

She passed out, but the remembrance of Olga's look made her old face blush for shame a long time after every one had forgotten the scene.

Ariadne soon opened her eyes, and the first person she saw was Madame Sékourof, who was standing at the foot of the bed in the infirmary where they had taken her. The feeling of the disgrace which had just been publicly inflicted upon her caused her head to swim ; but the old lady came to her bedside, and, as she leaned over her compassionately, said :

"My house is ready for you ; come, my child."

Ariadne felt a flood of tears cover her face, without knowing whence they came.

"My poor child !" repeated Madame Sékourof. "Let us hurry, the sooner the better."

Ariadne tried to sit up, but her head turned, she stretched out her hand for a support, when she found

a strong arm ready to sustain her ; surprised, she moved her head away.

“Olga !” said she ; “here, near me ! but I am expelled !” Without replying, Olga continued to hold her ; and as she sat on the side of the bed, she saw, with surprise, that the haughty Olga was unlacing her shoes.

“Leave them,” she tried to say ; but Olga silently took them off, and upon that naked foot dropped a scalding tear. Ariadne looked at her companion.

“You are weeping ? you regret my leaving ? I thought no one loved me, you least of all !”

Olga continued to undress Ariadne, for she could take nothing away with her belonging to the institute. They put on her a very simple, ready-made black dress ; the rest of her costume, very plain also, was brought by Madame Sékourof.

When the toilet was complete, she took Ariadne by the hand, and said :

“Come now, there is one more trial for you, but the last ; Madame Superior is waiting to bid you good-by.”

“What for ?” asked Ariadne ; “she sent me away, I perhaps deserved it, but did not think myself so guilty. I would rather not see her.”

“Wait a minute,” said Olga, who ran down the red stairs.



She knocked at the superior's door, and was admitted. The room was full of people, professors and functionaries, who were consulting with Madame Batourof, and assuring her of their loyalty. The arrival of Olga astonished her ; such audacity was unheard of, particularly since the affair with Ariadne.

“What do you want?” asked the directress.

“I have a favor to ask of you, ‘mamma,’” said the young patrician, sweetly, and her intelligent eyes were fixed on “mamma” with an expression far from being in accord with her apparent submission.

The superior saw threatenings of a storm in that look, and, fearing she might lose her self-control, took Olga into the next room, to the amazement of the company.

“She does as she likes,” explained the priest to his astonished flock ; “she is from a noble family, and then her majesty stood godmother for her.”

In the little parlor adjoining, Olga stood face to face with the directress, who, notwithstanding her age and dignity, seemed terribly embarrassed.

“Ranine desires very much not to see you ; would you not, your Excellence, spare her this great trial ?”

“She must submit to the reprimand that she has deserved,” said the directress, looking out of the window.

“She is in no condition to bear it. Can I not tell her that you allow her to leave at once?”

The superior was indignant to hear such authority expressed in that youthful voice, yet addressed to her in the most respectful manner. She could not restrain herself.

“You ask a great many things, mademoiselle,” said she in French; “it seems to me your last records do not permit you to hope much from my bounty.”

“I admit that I am giddy and thoughtless,” replied Olga, without looking down, “but hereafter I will do better, and besides. . . .”

“What besides?” said the superior, harshly. Olga straightened herself up proudly.

“None of us are without sin,” said she, boldly. “Will you, ‘mamma,’ permit me to tell Ariadne she is free?”

“Go!” replied the superior, turning her back on her, to get rid of her importunity.

Olga made a low curtesey, and ran to the hall, where everybody was discussing the late events.

“For a good work, ladies!” said she, running out of breath, and holding up her white apron. “For a good work! give, all of you, what you can.”

“But,” said Madame Banz, “we must know what good work.”

Grabinof was not far off.

“I ask nothing of you, dear,” said the merciless Olga; “good works do not follow you. Pardon me! I mean to say, being perfection yourself, everything that you do is a good work. But you, ladies, who are not perfect, quick, every one a trifle, the most beautiful and the most precious.”

Without answering the numerous questions asked by the obtuse Madame Banz, Olga ran slyly up to each of her companions, the other two graces included, and stripped them of all their small pieces of jewelry: they stared at her, and would have demurred at the treatment, but dared not utter a word.

“Whither are you going?” cried Grabinof, seeing Olga take her flight with her apron full.

“To console the afflicted,” cried she. “It is one of the seven charities,” and she disappeared.

“Here are the farewells of the institute,” said she to Ariadne, who was weeping silently while leaning on Madame Sékourof’s shoulder, “and the superior says that you need not come to say good-by to her.”

The old lady stared at Olga, and divined the struggles her heart was suffering.

“Farewell!” said Ariadne. “You will thank all the young ladies for me, and you, I thank you,” said she, taking Olga’s hand. “I accused you of being

proud and wicked ; I was mistaken : you have proved yourself my friend in misfortune."

"Adieu !" interrupted Olga, kissing her. "Go away quickly ; this house has not been good to you."

Ariadne cast a glance around the bare cold walls of the infirmary. In truth this house had not been good to her. She went down the stairs, supported on one side by Madame Sékourof, on the other by Olga, for her steps were still very uncertain.

The girls all ran to the stairs to see her, for an official expulsion was such a rare thing that it caused terror in the institute for several generations of scholars. Nothing was said when the young girl passed by ; only a faint murmur of contempt was heard in the first row of busybodies—the only sign of disapprobation they dared to show.

When she reached the landing where her class stood, Ariadne seemed to be aroused from her stupor. Would they taunt her with their jeering now, at the last moment ? She raised her eyes from the floor ; they pitied her, for they all knew she did not go to the dining-room that night, and their eyes turned to Grabinof. The teacher had dared to be one of the witnesses of the despised pupil's departure ; and it was her infamous work !

"Be happy, mademoiselle," said Ariadne to her ;

then turning toward her companions, she added, "Forgive me my offenses, voluntary and involuntary, that I may depart in peace."

"May God pardon you!" the young girls solemnly murmured.

Ariadne went down the last steps with a heavy heart, until she reached the vestibule; there she found the door open before her. Olga let go her arm, kissed her three times, and Ariadne had no one with her but the old lady.

"Adieu!" said she to Olga, who took Ariadne's lifeless hand, and pressed it fervently, seemingly to ask pardon for her crime. The guilty was humiliated before the innocent. Two steps more, and the door was closed upon Ariadne Ranine, expelled from the institute for disobedience.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

A RECLUSE feels very strange when she first treads the pavement after a long confinement. It is not so much the bustle of the outside world that strikes her, but the sharp, rough stones under her feet, instead of the smooth flags and waxed floors she has been accustomed to.

Ariadne walked with difficulty, her feet were so tender that she suffered every step she took ; this was emblematic of her existence, for thus was she to be jostled in the rough paths of life.

The first days of her life with Madame Sékourof were for her an inexpressible happiness. She felt she was surrounded by real and not fictitious compassion ; and singing, that divine art, was heaven to her for long hours at a stretch—so much so that her protectress was obliged to forbid her singing beyond a certain time.

At heart, Ariadne was not unhappy, for she did not suspect the abominable plot which made her the expiatory victim, but believed she was expelled for having missed her class that day when she sang so long, and thought her punishment greater than the fault deserved. She attributed this severity to Grabinof's machinations ; but since she had lived such a peaceful life with her old friend, she was almost tempted to thank the wicked governess for sparing her eight months of misery.

She told Madame Sékourof her thoughts, who felt that Ariadne should be informed why she was expelled, but had not the courage to wound again the innocent, confiding girl. It will be time enough for her to learn the charges given to the public.

Ariadne did not go to the conservatory ; the manner in which she was sent away from the institute shut her out from all public establishments. A singing-teacher must be found who would devote himself to her musical education. There was no lack of professors in the world who would willingly undertake the task, but the peculiar situation of the girl made it difficult to select one.

Madame Sékourof found a first-class artist, of such high moral character that any mother could confide her daughter to his care. This phœnix had several times embarked in the most ungrateful enterprise of preparing superb voices for the stage, without any recompense during the long term of study, but a stipulated payment at the termination of the training. This arrangement was most generous, for, among the many singers whom the conservatories bring annually before the public, there are few who become known ; but the professor's experience had been so unfortunate that he swore he would never bring out another cantatrice.

At the first words of Madame Sékourof, he burst out :

“A beautiful voice ! Zounds ! There are dozens of beautiful voices ! Do you imagine it is a rare thing ? And what insignificant creatures these girls

are with beautiful voices ! I have had enough of it ; don't let us talk about it !”

“ But, my dear sir, listen to me a moment !” insisted Madame Sékourof ; “ when you have heard her you will be convinced.”

“ That is very possible ! I am such a fool ! That is precisely the reason why I do not want to hear her. Is she pretty ?”

“ Charming, rather handsome than pretty, and made for the stage.”

“ Better still ! your beauties with fine voices are unbearable ; only ugly women have any reason about them. What is her name ?”

“ Ariadne—a pretty name, is it not ? and one that will look well on a play-bill.”

“ A play-bill ! already ! how fast you are ! Is she tall ?”

“ Very tall, and elegant !”

“ What a misfortune for women to be handsome !” growled the old professor ; “ they are as vain as peacocks. How old is she ?”

“ Seventeen years old.”

“ Seventeen ! What sense is there in commencing to sing at seventeen ?”

“ Too soon ?”

“ Too late ! What do you suppose I can do with a voice with bad habits ?”



“But she has never sung anything except church music.”

“A prude, then ; and you talk to me about preparing her for the theatre !”

Madame Sékourof laughed.

“It is evident,” said she, “you do not want her ; but do not say so much evil of her until you know her.”

“A mezzo-soprano, did you say ?” asked the professor.

“A contralto.”

“Russia is full of contraltos. There is nothing else.”

“What day shall I bring her to you ?” asked the old lady—for she saw how anxious the professor was to hear her.

“Well, to-morrow, at eleven o’clock ; and do try to be punctual, for these pretty girls never finish dressing.”

Radiant with joy, Madame Sékourof carried the glad tidings to her *protégée*.

“You are going to sing before Morini !” said she. “He is the finest singing-teacher in the world. If you please him, he will doubtless take charge of you ; but he is whimsical. Be as unaffected as possible, for he likes simplicity ; and do not be afraid, for then you cannot sing well.”

Ariadne listened to this advice ; and, at the appointed hour, went to the professor's house.

It was the first time she had met a stranger since she had left the institute. The most renowned professor in Europe was to her something supernatural. Much to her surprise, she found a little old man resembling a monkey, but a monkey with great black eyes, limpid, sparkling, and full of expression. This illustrious professor wore a summer *paletot* of brown cloth, frayed out at the edges, with several buttons off ; his slippers were embroidered with little negroes' heads worked on the toes—a present doubtless from a pupil possessed of good intention, but bad æsthetic taste.

“Sing !” said the master, peremptorily, as he ensconced himself in the arm-chair, crossed his legs, and took his skinny left knee in his right hand.

At the first notes, he straightened himself up, let go his knee, seized the arms of the chair, and fixed his eyes on Ariadne. But she did not see him. “She had flown,” as Madame Sékourof said, smiling. Her mind was far off, above the little music-room, so far and so high that she had no longer any fear.

“Sing something else,” said the professor, when she had finished her exercises.

Ariadne sang the offertory hymn. Her voice filled

the small room, and the piano even vibrated in echo. Madame Sékouroff was listening, spellbound by the wonderful voice. Suddenly the professor jumped up from his arm-chair, which rolled back as far as the wall, caught Ariadne's head between his hands, and kissed her on the forehead, in perfect rapture.

“What an artist! My God! what an artist! But she does not know how to sing. Everything is to be done. But so much the better; at least you have nothing to forget. You will take your lesson three times a week,” said he to the astonished Ariadne, “and you will be a great cantatrice, mark my word!”

He pushed Ariadne aside, for she did not move quickly enough, and, in perfect taste, sang with his fine barytone voice, too feeble for the stage, but rich and powerful in a chamber, an aria from Händel's oratorio, “Alexander's Feast.”

“Well, what do you think of it?” said the master, leaving the piano.

Ariadne was still listening, and could scarcely come back to reality.

“Shall I sing that?” asked she.

The master laughed and replied: “No, not that; it is a gentleman's solo. But there are many others, only not now. For two years you must sing ‘oh! ah! oh!’ in every modulation.”

“You will not want me, then?” murmured the young girl, who did not quite understand him.

“Heavens! is she silly? If I did not want you, do you think I would trouble myself to surprise you? Little witch! Ah, she has talent! Of course she will prove ungrateful: that’s the way of the world.”

Madame Sékourof led the still dazzled and almost stupefied Ariadne away. The lessons were to commence the next day.

The young girl studied diligently, but did not allow her work to transport her to such an extent as to be followed by discouragement, which often produces an exhaustion of time and strength. She progressed slowly but surely. The elation resulting from her first efforts did not prevent her forming a serious resolution. She understood thoroughly that she was contracting a debt which she alone could pay; and most conscientiously she pursued her course of study, although the severe *technique* which was required of her did not give much opportunity for enthusiastic reveries.

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#### CHAPTER XIV.

Six months passed. The carnival had come, and this in Russia was a season of much gayety. People

amused themselves at this time, so as to be quits with the six weeks of *ennui* which followed.

Madame Sékourof could not offer Ariadne many pleasures, for her small fortune and conventual tastes forbade it. However, she would have taken the young girl to the opera had not the singing-master opposed it.

“Not yet,” said he. “What is the matter with you? Why, the deuce! are you in such a hurry? She will have time enough to spoil her taste! We have the good fortune to know that our pupil has never seen anything bad, or even mediocre, and you want to pervert her. Do you wish her to coo like Italian sopranos?”

Madame Sékourof took this tirade of the master's for what it was worth—that is, excellent advice—and Ariadne did not go to the opera. Instead of it, the good woman tried to find Ariadne a less perilous and more popular amusement. The last Saturday of the carnival, she took her to see the “Balaganes.” The “Balaganes” are theatres and places of nondescript amusements, which are put up temporarily at this time, extending all along the opening in front of the Admiralty, between the Winter Palace and the Senate, before the square recently built cut off half the space. Since the new improvements, the “Balaganes” have been transferred to the Champ de Mars, and the pict-

uresque *coup d'œil* which the long line of booths, ornamented with candles, carvings, and toys, used to present, has somewhat lost its charm.

In the good old times of which we were speaking, pantomime-theatres, circuses, swings, menageries, and wooden horses formed an immense collection of popular attractions ; monstrosities and somnambulists also played their part. The exhibitions were not so original in themselves, but the novelty lay in their being attended at this season by the cultivated classes.

It was quite the correct thing for young men to go into one or more of these temporary structures. Ladies did not go, except to please their husbands and children ; but equipages of the aristocracy of St. Petersburg, in double file and close together, were to be seen the whole afternoon rolling past the entire range of buildings, which extended half a kilometre in length.

Sometimes carriages would run into each other, and get so blocked that the procession would be stopped for an hour or two. These little accidents would allow lovers to exchange signs and coquettes to make eyes ; and it was not wise, therefore, for a cautious mother or grave directress to take her daughters or pupils to such places. However, it had been the custom, as old as the foundation of institutes, to send

girls to see the show in gala carriages drawn by four horses, each carriage with two footmen and coachman in red livery.

The magnificent equipages which took the young ladies from the institute were furnished from the court stables. Seven or eight girls were packed in each of the immense carriages with a governess, and they went off at a fast trot to the space before the Admiralty. There the carriages took their stand in line, and for two or three hours the young recluses enjoyed the gayest imaginable scene. It was very picturesque to see the variety of turnouts, for the most outlandish vehicle had a right to a place in the rank. The little low sleigh, drawn by an obstinate cob, and filled with a peasant's family, could claim a right of way, and no one dared contest it. In the crowd intermingled officers of the guard, galloping and prancing on their magnificent steeds; family carriages, filled with little broods of blond and brunette babies; smiling young girls, with frowning mammas, who, at the risk of taking cold, thought it their duty to show their progeny to the passers-by; rich merchants' wives, dressed in heavy bright silks, with head-dresses of silk attached with a pin under the chin, showing the rounded oval of their faces, as they sat up, as straight as wax candles, in their superb carriages drawn by magnificent

horses. In short, nothing could exceed the contrasts in costumes and modes of locomotion in this motley assemblage.

All this Ariadne contemplated with curiosity. The fair with its vanities was as amusing to her, and as unreal, as objects in a kaleidoscope. Suddenly an apparition proved to her the reality of the scene before her eyes.

The long line of carriages, coming and going, had to stop a moment to allow the vehicles from the institute to join in. When they fell in line, the young recluses leaned out of the windows as far as possible, to enjoy all the pleasure they could when they had a chance. In spite of governesses, their pretty heads were stuck out of the windows, looking eagerly for some familiar face in the crowd. The first three carriages contained the very young children, who clapped their hands with delight when they saw the play-bills pasted on the theatres. In the fourth carriage were the young ladies of the graduating class, and among them the pretty Olga. She was at the left side, looking out with a certain contempt upon the pleasures of the populace; her haughty glance scanned the carriages coming toward her, and sometimes she returned a bow from one of her mother's friends. Suddenly she saw Ariadne quietly seated by her benefactress



in a little hired carriage. When she discovered her, she leaned out of the carriage, blushing with shame and joy, and quickly called out :

“Ranine !”

Astonished to hear her name in public, Ariadne turned and perceived her former friend. Olga, seeing she was recognized, kissed her hand to Ariadne, much to the dismay of Grabinof, who was uselessly pulling her skirts to control the pretty little witch. As long as Ariadne was within sight, she was making signs and throwing kisses to her.

The moment she sat down she caught the eye of young Batourof, the superior's nephew, who was riding a beautiful English horse, which he seemed to love to tease. The young man had been trying to attract Olga's attention, for he had not forgotten that little unfinished romance, which he had hoped would be consummated by marriage. He watched the young girl, and looked as tenderly after her as possible for a cavalry officer ; but, oh, horror ! she assumed a look of unmistakable contempt, very different from the smile she had for Ariadne. When she saw Batourof, she stared like a near-sighted person trying to recognize a strange face, and turned away from him.

The young man was so stupefied by this reception that he left the high-road, dismounted, and went home

to meditate upon his ill-success, while Olga and her companions continued their drive. The patrician girl did not understand until that moment the extent of her imprudence. She never thought of the little nocturnal rendezvous as anything but innocent fun ; but when she saw that man take the liberty of speaking in dumb-show, she understood how she had risked her honor ; and her regard for Ariadne, who bore the stigma of her sin, was intensified.

On a lovely morning in June, three months later, Ariadne, accompanied by Madame Sékourof, who had taken the place of a mother, was passing by the gate of the institute on her way to her singing-lesson ; she saw a number of professors' carriages waiting in the street.

“What is going on in the institute?” said she to her adopted mother.

“It is the commencement,” replied Madame Sékourof, regretting that she had not informed Ariadne of the fact, and spared her sorrow. Since the girl had been thrown upon her hands, her relations with the superior had been very cool and formal. There was no sympathy between them from the day the innocent was punished for the guilty. Madame Sékourof blamed the superior, and she, knowing she was censured, had no more love for her old friend.

A carriage which had been waiting at the door just drove off, and in it Ariadne discovered Olga and her mother, a lady about thirty-six years of age.

It was Olga, although scarcely recognizable, for the elegant toilet of a fashionable girl had taken the place of the institute's uniform. In a pale pink silk, with a straw hat trimmed with roses, and draped in flounces of embroidered muslin, Olga was not like herself, although she was more beautiful than ever.

“How pretty she is!” cried Ariadne.

Madame Sékourof looked from one to the other of the young girls; Ariadne, in her *robe de laine grise* and her little black straw hat, was prettier than the Princess Olga, for so we must style her in future.

Before the carriage had passed the two foot-passengers, Olga saw Ariadne. Her small hands, with light pearl gloves, threw a sweet kiss to her unfortunate friend.

“What a good heart she has!” sighed Ariadne. “It is lovely in her to remember me after what has passed!”

Madame Sékourof stifled her desire to inform the young girl of her real situation. But why should she sow the seeds of rancor and hatred in the young heart?

The carriage drove rapidly away; several others

following passed the two modest pedestrians, but no one else thought of bowing to Ariadne.

“I should have graduated to-day also,” said she, going up the professors’ stairs.

It was her first word since the meeting with Olga.

“Do you regret it?” asked Madame Sékourof, as her *protégée* was going to ring the bell.

“No, certainly not! What I have is worth more than anything I could have attained,” replied the young girl; “and I have gained eight months of study . . . and kindness,” added she, looking back at her second mother before passing through the open door.

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## CHAPTER XV.

EIGHTEEN months elapsed, during which Ariadne passed through the most difficult training in the art of singing. Her old master, who had become enamored of her beautiful voice, spared neither time nor pains to perfect it. His advice, harsh sometimes, preserved her from self-conceit—the natural stumbling-block of rising talent.

He had never allowed her to sing anything but exercises, and the young girl had never asked for other music. One morning she came alone, for Madame

Sékourof's health had become precarious, and required careful watching. He said to her, brusquely :

“Can you sing that?” and he handed her the air of *Alice*, in the first act of “Robert le Diable.”

Ariadne took the piece, read it at sight, looked over the words, and commenced, hesitatingly. As her voice grew stronger, she forgot the outside world, and, with the deepest sentiment, and the most extraordinary expression, sang :

“Fuis les conseils audacieux  
Du séducteur qui m'a perdue.”

“Where on earth did you learn to sing like that?” cried the old Italian, standing right before her.

“Where? Here, with you,” replied Ariadne, perfectly stunned.

“It is not true! I did not teach you to sing opera. You found that out all alone; but you have learned it before!”

“I declare I have not!” replied the young girl, quickly, a little wounded at his suspicion.

Without replying, Morini tore from a book another piece and handed it to his pupil, and, going to the piano, commenced to play the *arioso* from the “Prophète,” which has caused so many tears to flow. He hoped to discover in the countenance of his scholar

some movement that would prove she had been accustomed to singing it, for every contralto has been tested in this simple but perilous air. Ariadne's face retained its astonished expression, and she missed the first note.

"But go on!" cried the professor; "the part is for you."

"Must I sing?" asked Ariadne, innocently.

The master shrugged his shoulders.

"Try to count the measures this time. Sing!"

She obeyed; and scarcely had the sentiment of this supreme invocation taken possession of her when her countenance was transfigured, her eyes darted like flames, her hands, which held the paper, fell as she uttered those passionate phrases, and her whole frame seemed to vibrate with emotion. She was completely overcome.

"Begin the words again!" said the old master, almost as much overcome as herself. "Act it!"

She began again. The first words, "*O mon fils!*" seemed to come from a tormented soul. The second wail, full of hope and tenderness, fell from her lips like a prayer. She was carried away by the part—her eyes dilated. She laid the music on the piano that she might follow the words, and, extending her beautiful arms heavenward, sang, "*Sois béni!*" while genuine tears rolled down her cheeks.

Morini left the piano, and ran toward her as if to kiss her ; but his respect for her made him take the cold hand of the cantatrice, who was pale and trembling, and lift it to his lips, as if she had been a queen.

“ You are a great artist ! ” said he ; “ you have the world in your hands. Next month you will give a concert. I can teach you nothing more. Let Nature guide you. That will be better than any lessons.”

“ It is real, is it not ? ” replied Ariadne.

“ What is real ? ”

“ The mother who blesses her son—that son who loves his mother above all else ? It is real ? It is so beautiful ! ”

“ Good Heavens ! Yes ; it is real ! ” rejoined Morini, delighted. “ Everything is real. Here, take the score ; read, study, find out the rôles, read the parts ; believe that all is real, sublime innocence ! and you will make the whole world weep, because *it will be real !* ”

The professor, controlling his enthusiasm, added :

“ Read everything, but not all at once. Find a rôle, and study it. Do not trifle with your gifts, for life is long.”

Six weeks after, the placards announced the first concert of Ariadne, under the assumed name of “ Ariadne Mellini,” which the professor and Madame Sékourof both advised.

## CHAPTER XVI.

THE concert took place in the hall of the "Court Singers," a little hall that takes precedence of all others in St. Petersburg for good music. From the first moment she sang, the public knew that she was no ordinary woman, there was so much natural dignity in her. Ariadne was born an artist, and could do nothing *médiocre*.

The professor selected his audience ; he sold all the tickets, for Ariadne had no acquaintances, and he distributed them in that music-loving circle which will never miss an artist's *début*, or a musical meeting. There is in St. Petersburg a nucleus of three or four hundred persons, who set aside a portion of their income for the encouragement of young artists, and the pleasure of hearing good music. This society of connoisseurs makes St. Petersburg one of the most musical capitals in the world. Ariadne had a great success, and was several times recalled by the adoring *dilettanti*. Her faultless beauty added a great charm to her wonderful voice.

Where did this young, timid girl, reared in seclusion, learn to carry herself so gracefully, to bow without any embarrassment, to sing with such ease ?



“She was born a cantatrice,” her master, when asked, would reply.

After the concert, while Ariadne was receiving the congratulations of her friends, she felt a little gloved hand tap her familiarly on the shoulder. She turned around, and saw Olga standing before her.

“I told mamma that you were an old friend of mine ; she is delighted with you ; here is our address, come to-morrow and see us.”

While uttering these words, Olga slipped into Ariadne’s hand a little piece of paper, torn from the programme ; on it was scribbled a note. The Princess Orline, Olga’s mamma, with her sweetest smile, added a few words of congratulation, and the mother and daughter went away ; their white-silk skirts rustling softly over the inlaid floor.

Ariadne returned to her benefactress’s home, with her heart full of emotion ; Madame Sékourof, who felt she was dying by inches, was as much delighted as Ariadne, to hear of her great success.

“When I am no more,” thought she, “Ariadne will have, to console her in her desolation, the life of an artist, which is so exacting, so absorbing, that she will forget the sorrow of my loss.”

She also advised the orphan to go and see the Princess Orline the next day.

“It may be useful to you,” said she, “for talent is often appreciated for its surroundings, as well as for itself.”

Ariadne went to see her old friend. She was struck with the luxury which surrounded her. The grand staircase was ornamented with rare flowers, in rarer vases ; two Japanese dragons in bronze guarded the vestibule, and two English lackeys, as immovable as and stiffer than the dragons, sat on the benches.

Ariadne’s simple black-silk dress was not in keeping with all this splendor, and the young girl waited some time before these pompous footmen decided to take her name. But no sooner had a mysterious little bell on the first floor ceased to ring than Ariadne saw her old friend running down the stairs, as beautiful, coquettish, and graceful as ever. She threw her arms around her, and led her up-stairs into a large parlor, furnished in yellow satin. There, with her back turned, stood the Princess Orline, arranging flowers in a *jardinière*.

“Mamma !” cried Olga, “here she is !”

The princess shook hands with Ariadne, uttered some kind words of welcome, and, glancing at her daughter, went into the next parlor. Olga took Ariadne to her own room.

“Come, now,” said she, as they sat down together

on a pretty little pink-and-white sofa, opposite an immense mirror, which reflected them from head to foot. "Come, tell me all about yourself ; what have you been doing ? what are you going to do ? and what are you doing ?"

"I have been studying," replied Ariadne. "I work, and I am going to work."

"Just the opposite of me !" cried Olga, joyously. "I never do anything of any consequence, and I never expect that I shall."

Ariadne smiled ; such a life would do for an heirless with an income of half a million, but it would not suit a poor singer.

"What a success you had yesterday ! It was lovely ! I would like to have been in your place ! How they applauded you ! It made me so happy when I heard you applauded ! Were you not delighted ?"

"Yes, it made me very happy yesterday, but I don't know that it will always ; I hope so."

"Nobody will ever applaud me !" sighed Olga, sadly. "However, I would like to try. I must play a society comedy, but there would be friends to listen, and they would applaud out of politeness, whereas you— Will you give another concert soon ?"

"Next month," replied Ariadne. "For two years

I am going to retire, for my teacher wishes me to study five *rôles* before making my *début* in the theatre. It has been a month since I opened a book."

"You will play in the theatre! How lovely! You have a peculiar, a wonderful voice!"

Ariadne smiled. Yes, she knew her voice was wonderful.

"And, until then, what are you going to do?"

"Work! four hours' singing every day, two hours' piano, and the rest of the time will pass quickly enough in household duties, and reading with Madame Sékourof."

"You do house-work! But such a creature as you should soar above this world, and only come down to charm us mortals! You are not mortal, you are a goddess!"

"I must work, however," said Ariadne, sweetly.

Olga reflected; her lovely face had an expression of gentleness and regret, which enhanced her beauty.

"Tell me," said she, with hesitancy, "did you ever suffer any vexation from that sad affair—leaving the institute?"

"Vexation? Why? No one cared enough about me to censure me for having been sent away before my studies were finished—who, then, could have vexed me?"

Olga looked at her companion ; she talked so innocently.

“Then no one has ever spoken to you about it?”

“I never see any one except my teacher and Madame Sékourof. And nobody cares to remember a scholar sent away for insubordination.”

Olga was silent.

“You can count upon me,” said she, in a moment. “I love you more than you think ; and if you ever get into trouble tell me, or write to me, and it will not be in vain.”

Ariadne wanted to go, but her friend had a thousand little trifles to show her, and loaded Ariadne with presents before she left.

When she returned to her protectress, Ariadne could not help expressing her astonishment at Olga’s affection.

“Who would believe,” said she, “that this rich princess, who was so cold toward me at the institute, should become my best friend in misfortune?”

“Keep up the friendship,” said Madame Sékourof to her. “When I am gone, she will be all that is left to you, and I feel that I shall not last very long.”

This good woman was growing weaker every day. She had not been able to chaperon Ariadne since her

first concert. The second was announced, and she felt she could not go to it.

After having superintended Ariadne's toilet, and placed a wreath of white jasmynes on her head, she kissed her tenderly, and threw herself on the bed, as her adopted daughter departed with Morini.

The oppression from which she suffered so much was disappearing by degrees, for she felt she was growing more feeble, though her head became worse. Others would have thought she was getting better, but she had seen death so often that she was not mistaken, and knew her condition.

"If I could only live a little longer, to guide that poor child," said she.

A great languor overcame her ; she tried to struggle against sleep, but had not the strength to resist for any long time ; and her eyes closed under the lamp that was turned low and shaded by a thick globe.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

ARIADNE'S concert was well attended ; a young violinist of great talent had just brought down the house by a new *polonaise* of extraordinary brilliancy. Scarcely had the applause he called forth ceased, when

it recommenced with renewed fury for Ariadne, who was to sing a duet with a tenor, then a great favorite. He had never sung except in opera. The exception he made in favor of Morini's young scholar enhanced the interest, so that every one was in a state of great excitement.

Ariadne, pale as she always was when she sang, waited until the long flourish on the piano was finished before she went in ; her partner, not the least embarrassed, scrutinized the faces before him, and, as he discerned his friends, would smile, or make some sign of recognition. Suddenly a voice from the first row of seats uttered a short sentence which made the young girl tremble :

“ Her real name is Ranine ; she was expelled from the institute for an intrigue with a young man.”

“ Impossible ! ” said a second voice.

“ It is true. She is very beautiful ; but that does not falsify what I say.”

A murmur of disappointment spread through the hall. Ariadne failed to come out.

“ Well,” said the tenor to her. “ What is the matter with you ? What are you dreaming about ? ”

A tumultuous applause was heard. The cantatrice was ill. Every one rose ; some persons stood on the chairs. But the alarm did not last long.

Ariadne suffered for a moment with vertigo, but she did not even lose consciousness, and soon recovered her self-possession.

“I do not belong to myself,” said she ; “I belong to the public, who have paid to hear me. I will think later.”

She made a sign to the pianist to repeat the last eight bars ; and she sang with such sweetness, such feeling, that her audience were carried away. The last chords of the duet were still vibrating in the air when the whole hall was clapping and crying “Bravo ! bravo !”

“Ah, mademoiselle,” said the tenor, leading her out before the public for the fifth time, “if I were a woman, I should be jealous of your success.”

She had two more pieces to sing ; the audience wanted her to repeat the first ; but, instead of responding to the encores which came from all parts of the house, she sang a little Russian air, with the most exquisite taste ; this made her triumph complete.

The *finale* of the second piece was very long, and she seized the opportunity of casting her eyes around to find out the person who had condemned her in those few words.

It was one of those men called “high livers,” probably because they lead the wildest life imaginable.



His wicked eye, coarse neck, hair cut short, full face, ornamented with a thin mustache, gave him a good-natured look, but those who knew him well called him a "rake." The decoration in his button-hole showed his rank; it was General Frémof.

He examined the young girl as if she had been a horse, and, much to his surprise, she gave him a look full of contempt and indignation, which he tried to return by a malicious wink; but his trouble was all lost, for, when Ariadne sang, the world for her no longer existed.

Upon the plea of indisposition, she hastened away from the crowd that awaited to compliment her, thanked Morini, who escorted her to the carriage, and, when she arrived, went to Madame Sékourof's room with less precaution than usual.

The old lady opened her eyes at the noise of the silk dress, and tried to move, but could not.

"Come near me, my child," said she to Ariadne, who was frightened to see the rapid change in that face, a few hours before so calm, now sunken by the approach of death. "Come closer. Are you happy?"

"Very happy," said Ariadne, thinking of the concert.

"I am sorry to grieve you, but my hours are num-

bered," continued Madame Sékourof, in a strangely muffled voice. "You will find my will and my last present to you in a box on the table. Be a good woman, as you have been a good girl . . . ."

"My second mother!" cried Ariadne, in despair—"my benefactress! my only help! There was a man who said I had an intrigue at the institute, and that I was expelled for it. He lied! You know he did; do you not?"

Madame Sékourof's eyes became dim; tears ran slowly down her blanched cheeks.

"I know it is not true . . . . but the world believes it—that you were sent away from the institute because of an intrigue."

"Ah!" cried Ariadne, "I understand now why we live in seclusion. I am disgraced!"

"You are not disgraced, because you did nothing wrong. I know all, and for that reason—"

"For that reason you have protected me," interrupted Ariadne, falling on her knees near her benefactress. "God will take you to heaven, because you are a saint."

She wept bitterly for one she knew she was to lose.

"God will watch over you," said the dying woman, as she placed her hand on the blond head, still crowned with flowers. "You, too, have suffered in this world.

Life will be hard for you, Ariadne ; be patient and kind."

Ariadne called for help. But what can we do when death comes? Before dawn the protectress was no more. In Madame Sékourof's will, she left her *protégée* a small sum, which would insure her annually two hundred rubles. In a letter to her was written :

"It is very little, scarcely bread, but it is all I have, and it may be enough to keep you from temptation. With it, and the work you may do, you will finish your studies, and then go on the stage. My blessing will rest upon you always, because you have a noble soul, and one that cannot err."

Three days after Madame Sékourof's death, Ariadne found herself in an apartment which was only rented for two weeks more, and of which the furniture was claimed by relatives, who were dissatisfied because a stranger had inherited some little money. Fortunately, she had saved enough from the concert to pay for her white dress and for mourning. When all was settled, one morning, while taking her tea, she examined her purse, and found she had just one hundred and thirty-three rubles, besides a monthly allowance of sixteen and a half rubles.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE examination of her means was not calculated to inspire Ariadne with a blind confidence in the future. She went to her teacher to beg him to allow her to make her *début* a little sooner. Morini inflexibly opposed the project.

“In the last ten years,” said he, “I have had ten pupils who had talent, who studied well, and all of them wanted to make their *début* before they were prepared. Where are they now? Who knows their names? They sang, some one winter, some two, but they made, in a word, a complete *fiasco*. Why? Because they were not prepared. They believed that one could come before the public like this” (and the old teacher walked across the room, swinging his arms, until he stopped before Ariadne, with his mouth wide open). “They opened their mouths, and what came out of them? An abominable croak, because they were afraid, and did not know how to play, or they were not sure of their parts! And you want to do as they did?”

“But, my dear teacher, I will do double work,” entreated Ariadne, with her hands clasped and eyes full of tears.

“You will work eight hours a day, and crack your voice. That is a splendid idea ! Remember, my child, for your own good, that work done slowly, in moderation, is everything ; that haste accomplishes nothing, and leads to ruin. It is greatly to my interest that you become a true artist, a great cantatrice. You do not seem to bear that in mind.”

Ariadne bowed ; he was right, and she felt that she ought to do everything to advance her talent—it was a sacred debt. She submitted, went home, thinking how she could live on sixteen rubles and a half a month—a little more than fifty francs. She must have shoes, hats, and gloves ; however simple and economical she was, such things were necessary.

“Lessons !” cried Ariadne, suddenly. “I forgot that. I will give lessons on the piano.”

She returned immediately to her teacher, to ask his permission to give lessons. Morini had repented of his cruel response, and not only granted the permission demanded, but promised to aid her in securing pupils.

She must live somewhere. Ariadne advertised in the papers that a young lady, pupil of Morini, desired board and lodging in exchange for lessons ; she had several answers, and once or twice everything seemed to be arranged, when Ariadne would receive a

short note saying the parties had changed their minds. It was some time before she understood the reason ; finally, after the fourth attempt, she guessed it. She was always asked where she had been educated ; she named the institute, of course. When persons inquired at the institute, and found out she had been expelled, they shunned her as they would a leper.

“They are right,” thought Ariadne ; “they cannot receive me in families where there are young girls—they would mistrust me. I would do the same in their place, but what injustice !”

She was so far from thinking ill of people, even in her fits of most violent indignation, that she never accused any one but Grabinof. She could not believe that she was the innocent victim of a conspiracy, and that the culprits were known. It was better for her that she did not know it, for such a discovery, in her present state, might have driven her to desperation.

She was at the piano, one afternoon, singing for her consolation, when she heard the bell ring. The maid of Madame Sékourof, whom she had kept until something definite could be decided upon, opened the door ; but, before she had time to announce the visitor, Olga rushed into the little parlor.

“My poor Ariadne !” said the young princess, “what trouble you are in ! But you did not tell me ; I

did not know it until yesterday ; it is dreadful ! dreadful ! ”

“ What good would it have done ? ” murmured Ariadne ; “ you could not have helped me. Who told you ? ”

“ I don't know ; some one who was at our house yesterday. And what will you do ? When will you make your *début* ? ”

“ In two years, ” said the young artist, sadly.

“ Two years ? My goodness ! That is a long time, and what will you do in the interim ? ”

“ Work, ” replied Ariadne, with resignation.

“ Work ! that is very well, but you must live. Have you any fortune ? ”

Ariadne shook her head.

“ What do you live on ? ”

“ Upon the gift of my protectress, who received me kindly when everybody else scorned me—excuse me—you were also kind when I was an object of reproach and horror to others. ”

Olga cast her eyes down. A feeling of shame came over her whenever she thought of that frightful moment.

“ I live, ” continued Ariadne, with a certain tenderness in her voice—“ I live upon what that good woman left me ; she who cared for me, fed and clothed me,

who enabled me to become what I am ; and the extent of her bounty I did not know until it was too late to prove to her my gratitude.”

“How too late?” said Olga, with a certain uneasiness.

“Yes, I learned some hours before her death that I had been, not, as I believed, expelled from the institute for insubordination, but sent away for bad conduct ; driven out for having received a young man.”

“Ah !” said Olga, with a sigh.

“My shame is so well known that it was spoken of the other night at the concert, and yet you know that I never thought of anything but God and music.”

“Ah ! certainly,” said Olga, involuntarily ; “if any one ever thought evil, he could not impute it to you.”

“Never mind,” continued Ariadne, who spoke from the fullness of a wounded heart, “I am judged, condemned. I may die from hunger, for I cannot find a shelter ! Fortunately, my benefactress did not believe me guilty ; she knew very well I was innocent, and she left me all she had.”

“How much ?”

“Sixteen and a half rubles a month for board. ‘That is bread,’ she said. O my venerated benefac-



tress, you charged me not to give up ; certainly I should not disobey your order ! It would be gross ingratitude !”

Ariadne wept bitterly, with her face in her hands ; she had revealed the secret of her thoughts since the loss of Madame Sékourof. In the agony of her desolation she vowed she would ever be an irreproachable woman, whatever she might suffer, to be an honor to her who had protected her when all others slandered her.

Olga allowed the sorrowful orphan to weep ; her own eyes were dim with tears, but a stinging remorse forbade her to mingle her tears with those of Ariadne. She dared not offer to console the innocent girl, who was bearing such a burden, and for no fault of hers.

“ Ah ! if I had known !” thought the princess Olga ; “ if I had known the wrong I was doing another !”

The remembrance of those scenes in the dining-room of the institute, which had cost her companion such sorrow, made her blush. She would have given all her fortune to be innocent. “ And yet I have done nothing wrong,” murmured indomitable Pride.

“ But see what you have made her suffer,” replied Conscience.

“Where will you live?” asked Olga, gently, when she saw Ariadne’s tears were nearly exhausted, as she rested her head on Olga’s shoulder.

“Nowhere,” replied the unfortunate girl. “Nobody wants me; my past history will prevent my finding an honorable shelter.”

“Can you not give lessons?” suggested the rich heiress, timidly.

“No one will take lessons of me!” cried Ariadne, rising suddenly. “Remember that I am disgraced, that no mother will allow her daughter to speak to me, that I can only find a home where the honesty of women is not regarded. I am lost! Lost until I go on the stage! I shall not be much better then, but the stage is not particular about morals.”

She turned away with bitterness.

“Listen, Olga,” she added: “this is not the place for you; you do yourself a wrong in coming to see me; nobody comes to see me; I am not a person one can visit. Let me thank you for the friendship you have shown for me, which commenced with my misfortune. Therefore it is the more noble and generous, but it will be fatal to you. Good-by! kiss me, and do not come here again.”

“Come to see me,” replied Olga, who felt insignificant before her friend.

“No, I cannot go to see you, because your mother will not allow it.”

Olga arose, stood there undecided, as if listening to an inward voice.

“Good-by,” said she, brusquely, kissed her companion, and left.

Ariadne heard the carriage roll away.

“I have nobody in the world now,” said she, aloud. The sound of her voice frightened her ; she was accustomed to solitude.

She paced several times around the empty apartment ; even the furniture had been taken away by the avaricious heirs ; and she was tempted to give vent to her feelings by a flood of tears, but bowed her head with submission before an invisible hand, murmuring :

“‘Be patient and forgiving.’ Those were *her* last commands. I will be patient and forgiving.”

She went to the piano, and gradually peace came to her weary soul, that peace which Art brings to her votaries.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

OLGA, on her return home, found her mother absent. Sending away the maid who had accompanied her on her expedition, she sat down in the little con-

servatory adjoining the yellow parlor, and became absorbed in anything but happy meditations. What she thought of, and resolved to do, gave her such an expression of firmness and determination that her mother, who had now joined her, looked at her fixedly, and said :

“Heavens ! what a face ! Why this determined mien ?”

“I have something to tell you,” replied the young girl, evasively. “Can I speak to you in private ?”

The princess looked at her daughter with astonishment.

“Perhaps,” thought she, “she has done some silly thing.” “Come into my dressing-room,” said the princess, seriously. “We can talk while I am dressing for dinner.”

She went in advance, and the daughter followed, into the large, delightfully-perfumed apartment which was used for a dressing-room. A maid, brought from Lower Russia expressly because she did not understand French, came to assist the princess, and Olga sat on a low sofa in front of her mother, who stood before a large mirror.

“Mamma,” said she, “I heard to-day a very strange story. I want to tell you about it.”

Delighted to think her daughter’s strange expres-

sion was caused by a simple, romantic story, the princess consented by nodding her head, while the maid was taking off her dress.

“Know, then, mamma,” commenced the young girl, “that there happened in the institute of young ladies, a long time ago, something very strange; several pupils in the graduating class thought they would have a little fun without the knowledge of the teachers, as they had very little opportunity to amuse themselves in the institute, and they decided upon a very dangerous diversion.”

The princess smiled in an abstracted manner, being wholly interested in her toilet; and Olga continued:

“Among the young men the superior received—for she had a large family and many acquaintances—there were two who used to stop on the stairs and talk to the girls; a third, who also visited the directress, proposed one night to some of the scholars they should have a supper in the dining-room, after every one else had gone to bed. There was one girl who was very greedy; at last they accepted the invitation.”

“What nonsense are you talking?” said the princess, knitting her aristocratic brow.

“It is the truth, mamma, I assure you. The three girls left the dormitory at eleven o’clock, passed by

the governess, who was snoring like an organ-pipe, went into the dining-room, and there the young men had brought something to eat ; and they all took supper together secretly."

"And they were not caught in this charming occupation ?" asked the princess, who began to be amused at the recital.

"Precisely, dear mamma—the directress surprised them one day ; but that day the young ladies had not come, because they were prevented by a stricter watch than usual, and the superior found only the gentlemen."

"Well, I suppose she caused them to repent ?" said the princess, laughing at the idea of the young men confronting the old lady.

"No, mamma ; probably the affair never would have been known if a chambermaid had not blabbed. But the next day the whole institute knew it. You understand, mamma," added Olga, with bitterness, "they could not let such a violation of the rules go unpunished—they must make an example."

"I know that story," said the princess, trying to remember something about it ; but the adventure in the institute had escaped her memory long ago ; for when she found the guilty one was of humble birth, it was not worth while to remember it.

“I believe you did know it, mamma ; at least it was told you.”

“They expelled the young girl,” said the princess.

Olga tried to say something ; her cheeks were burning, and eyes flashing.

“You can well imagine, mamma,” continued she, looking her mother full in the face, “that the rule required a victim, and they did expel a young girl, but that girl was innocent.”

“How ?” said the princess, lifting up her eyes. She stood as one petrified at seeing her daughter’s expression—so strange and painful.

“Yes, mother, she is innocent, and at this moment she cannot make a living because she is believed to be guilty ; she must die from hunger, while the real culprits are happy and esteemed by every one. Is it not horrible ?”

“Horrible, indeed !” murmured the princess ; “but was it not an invention of the girl’s to make herself interesting ?”

“Mother !” cried Olga, pale with indignation.

“For,” continued the noble lady, “why should they punish an innocent girl ? That would cause the worst suspicions. I do not believe a word of the story. Who told it to you ?”

“Mother!” cried the indignant girl the second time; “the innocent victim is Ariadne Ranine, and one of the guilty am I.”

Olga looked at her mother, not to defy her, but to prove the truth of her words.

“You! you!” repeated the princess, who believed her child was demented.

“I! And I was cowardly enough to permit Ariadne to be sent away, when it was my first duty to confess my guilt. I saw her fall unconscious, heard her moans, and even went as far as the door with her; yet I said nothing. I did not speak then, mother, because I did not believe an innocent girl would be disgraced for life. I thought in three weeks it would all be forgotten, and I thought of my mother, my father, of the name I bore, and said to myself, ‘If your daughter were sent away like this, you would both die of shame;’ and Ariadne had neither father nor mother.”

Olga was silent. The princess stepped back a little. The conversation took place in French; the maid, thinking they were disputing, went out of the room.

“You, an Orline!” repeated the princess. “You had a rendezvous! You took supper at night!”

“In the dining-room,” said the guilty one, quietly.



“Is it possible that you so far forgot what was expected of you?”

“I am guilty, mother, and I condemn myself ; but I was never told what was expected of me. At the institute they gave general rules, good for everybody and for nobody ; and then they were continually telling me that an Olga Orlin could do anything that came into her mind ; my misdemeanors were passed by unnoticed ; not because they did not know them, but because they did not want to punish me. It is only since I have had the happiness to live under your protection that I have learned what my duties are, and have trembled at my misconduct. It was only to-day that, seeing the harm I caused an innocent girl, I understood that my silence was more than a fault—it was a crime.”

“A crime ! You are not going to denounce yourself, I suppose ?” said the princess, with all the pride of a haughty woman who despises a plebeian.

“If there is no other way of reinstating Ariadne, I shall do it,” replied Olga, bravely.

There was silence. The princess looked around her, saw it was late, and rang for the maid.

“Go and dress yourself,” said she to her daughter. “We will talk of this later.”

“Does my mother forgive me ?” asked Olga, sub-

missively, and with all the tact she knew so well how to use.

The princess could not be severe ; it was so long ago—who would remember the story ? She smiled, and allowed her daughter to kiss her hand.

“We will see,” said she.

But she had already forgiven her.

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## CHAPTER XX.

IF the princess had been spoiled by a gay and frivolous life, she had a generous heart ; her judgment, often biased under ordinary circumstances by her despotic power in her home circle, when serious questions arose, was very resolute and firm.

During and after dinner, while talking with those around her, she was thinking what she should do ; and when her daughter came to her, as she was undressing, about midnight, she had solved the question.

“If I understood you rightly,” said she, “you acknowledge yourself guilty of a great wrong done that young girl of whom we were speaking, and you wish to atone for it ?”

Olga, in reply, threw herself around her mother’s

neck, almost smothering her with kisses. This proof of affection softened the princess's heart more than ever.

“But first tell me how you learned the results of this unfortunate affair.”

In a few words Olga acquainted her mother with Ariadne's life since she had left the institute.

“If you had seen her, mamma,” said she, “if you knew with what courage she bore her misfortune! And, when we reflect that she has no home—”

“I have thought,” said the princess, “that if we could give her a suitable settlement she might marry, and in the mean time live on the income.”

“And where do you think, mamma,” replied Olga, “this poor girl can find a husband if she never sees any good society? Husbands will not look for her in any but a respectable house, and there she cannot obtain board.”

The princess said nothing; it was indeed an embarrassing situation.

“Do you know, my dear mamma,” replied the young girl, “what I must do to ease my conscience? For my conscience has for a long time reproached me, as your kindness has comforted me; we must offer Ariadne a home.”

“I am willing,” said the princess. “I am ready

to express my kindest feelings. Does she know you are the involuntary cause—?”

“No, mamma, she knows nothing; it was only a little while ago she heard with what she was charged. But, mamma, to give her a dowry would be to tell her all, and I, who know her so well, am certain she would refuse your favors if she surmised their reason. Permit me to state, mamma, what you must do to be a true Orlene, great and generous, like all our race. You must make Ariadne an inmate of our home—here, in this house.”

“In my house?” cried the princess.

“In our house, my dear mamma. In the eyes of the world the object will be to give me music-lessons. Oh, do not be afraid, I will not cause any annoyance,” added the young girl. The princess did not like music in her own house, but she adored it away from home, when she did not hear the practising.

“Ariadne is a great artist; her music can never bore you; she is so sweet, so well brought up. I am often alone, I ought to have a companion. And then, mamma, if she has no home, it is my fault. If you love me, and have really forgiven me, you will do what I ask.”

Olga was on her knees, her arms around the princess. What mother could have refused? Not the

princess, who felt how heavy and sacred was the debt her daughter owed the orphan-girl.

“I will do it,” said she. “You will fetch her to-morrow.”

Olga looked at her watch, and regretted it was too late to go to her that night.

She lavished many grateful kisses upon her mother, and was so full of joy she could scarcely sleep.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

ARIADNE had been settled eight days in the Orline mansion; and it seemed to her still a dream. She had received many proofs of esteem and friendship from the princess, and Olga treated her so kindly that the orphan could not believe it was reality.

However, she very soon fell into her new position, for her instincts inclined toward everything that was rich and beautiful.

The only painful thing was her taking off mourning for her benefactress at the oft-repeated request of Olga, for the princess, like all Russian ladies of her time, did not like mourning worn in her house.

Although Ariadne's life was happy far beyond

what she had anticipated, her head was tortured by imaginary ills. She feared sometimes her presence annoyed Olga ; but the princess quieted her fears, although her manner wounded her sensitiveness.

“No one under my roof,” said the noble lady, “can be slighted. You are, mademoiselle, safe and sound with me.”

Ariadne thanked her, but with a heart full. It grieved her, because she thought she was not esteemed for herself. Nothing could make amends for the past.

The princess had compelled Olga to promise that she would not tell her friend what had happened ; it was upon this condition she received Ariadne into her house.

The Orline mansion was an open house, and much frequented ; the princess gave a dinner every Tuesday, and a ball twice a month during the winter ; a box at the Italian opera-house occupied another day, and this box was to Ariadne a source of indescribable joy. The princess rarely used it, but sent her daughter and Ariadne with a chaperon selected from the numerous poor, ugly, and old relations, to whom she very charitably wished to give a little pleasure now and then. It was there Ariadne learned how much real happiness music could give to a soul created

to feel it ; her talent from this time became stronger and more matured.

She had been with the princess about a month, when, one Monday, at the Italian opera, she remarked an opera-glass leveled directly at her. At first she pretended not to see it, but the glass followed her with such persistency that she took up hers, scanned the audience, directed a scornful glance to the insolent glass, and then assumed her usual indifference. It disappeared, and instead of the two round pieces of glass in a black case, Ariadne perceived the great, round, black eyes of General Frémof.

The young girl could not conceal her agitation ; she had never seen the general but once, at her second concert ; but the remembrance of the keenest sorrow of her life was recalled by the face of that *roué*, and she could not forget it.

She tried to think of other things ; to become absorbed in the music ; to be interested in generous, cheerful thoughts ; but to no purpose. That man's looks, and the remembrance of his words, haunted her until morning, all during the long hours of a feverish sleep.

“Perhaps,” said she to herself, “I shall never see him again !”

She dared not hope it. However, it was something

to have passed two months without meeting the man who was so odious to her.

It was not long before she saw him again.

The following Thursday—the day of the dancing party—the first arrival was a man who seemed to desire a little time to chat with the ladies before the other guests arrived.

“It has been a long time since we have seen you, general!” said the princess, pointing to a chair near her.

“I have been visiting my estates,” replied the general. “I left here after a beautiful concert given at the ‘Chanters’ Hall.’”

The princess noticed his eyes glanced in the direction of Ariadne.

“This young lady’s, probably,” said she, making a little movement with her fan.

The general took advantage of a new arrival to draw nearer to Ariadne.

“I am already one of your warmest admirers, mademoiselle, and”—he imperceptibly lowered his voice—“it remains with you to permit me to become more so.”

Ariadne felt the insult, and blushed all over. Her superb shoulders colored up suddenly, and the general gazed at her like an amateur before a beautiful picture.



The guests surrounded the princess ; the young girl stepped back to make room for them, but the general was not a man to be abashed.

“ Let me beg you at least to put my name down,” said he, lower still ; “ if your heart is engaged for the moment, let me have my turn.”

“ Sir ! ” said Ariadne, between her teeth, “ you are a coward ! ”

The princess turned quickly around. She alone in the group had heard the reply, not the provocation ; the look which the general had given Ariadne had doubtless put her on the watch.

“ General,” said she, “ they are playing yonder, and you do not, I think, waltz ; make way for the dancers.”

The general left, after having made a fool of himself, and gave Ariadne a leer to increase the measure of his rudeness.

The only way to excuse his conduct was to avow that he had the worst opinion of women in general and in particular. He was a man who was too weak to have a character of his own, so he borrowed one ready-made, and often selected a very bad one. He was so sure of feminine perversity that he had slandered Ariadne as coolly as he would swallow a glass of water ; and he had just insulted her with the

same heartlessness. He had promised himself numerous adventures with her ; and what more natural than to tell a pretty woman, "I am your humble servant and admirer?"

The princess saw Ariadne's anger, heard her words, and, fearing there might be some dispute, she tried a diversion, which succeeded.

"M. Constantin Ladof," said she, leading a young man with whom she was talking before Ariadne, still pale with emotion, "Mlle. Ranine."

"Can I have the pleasure of the next quadrille with you?" said Constantin Ladof, with his musical voice.

Ariadne turned paler, blushed, bowed mechanically, passed her arm in his, and breathed more freely, when they joined in the quadrille.

"Ah ! mademoiselle, if you only knew the trouble I have had to get acquainted with you ! Your voice made such an impression upon me, for two nights I could not sleep. Angels must have taught you to sing ! Do you know—it is foolish to say so while we are dancing—but you moved me to tears !"

Ariadne looked at the young man, and thought his blue eyes as honest and sincere as his words, smiled, and responded gracefully, and said to herself, "He, at least, will not despise me."

Toward the end of the evening, as the company was leaving, General Frémof, always full of conceit, approached the hostess to say good-night, and received a very unexpected compliment.

“You are a bad fellow, general,” said the princess, in an undertone, and a little reproachfully. “Bad fellows are well enough among themselves, or with old ladies who fear nothing; but I have young ladies to marry, and you must not come again to my house as long as there are young girls here.”

“To hear is to obey,” said Frémof, politely, as he kissed the hand which showed him the door. “Try to make it very soon, princess.”

The princess could not help laughing. However, Ariadne should not submit to an insult.

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## CHAPTER XXII.

“I CAN be spoken to in that way!” thought the young cantatrice, as she sat on the little sofa in her room, in a state of despondency, which often follows great indignation. “There are men who think they have the right to insult me, and coolly make such propositions to me! How can I be revenged? Who

will save me? Who will say to their faces, 'You are liars and cowards?'"

Ariadne expected help from no one, and from that time she resolved to retire more and more from the world. The sacrifice was accomplished without notice, and even without regret. This world seemed not to be made for her; she could find no real sympathy in it; she crossed it as a bird of passage traverses a country which separates her from her nest. Art was her true country; and it was in art she would find joys which would compensate for all her trials.

This resolution inspired her with that calmness of mind which generally followed one of her inward struggles.

Two years she was still to endure these sufferings; she awaited the end without impatience.

The day after the ball, the princess appeared at the breakfast-table, as polite and affable as ever. This serenity was not affected, for the princess was not one to be easily disconcerted. Calamities had not spared her aristocratic head. She had loved and mourned a young husband; but, with time, she had become resigned to her fate, as her face portrayed to those who were not admitted to her confidence. Her intimate friends were few.

She breakfasted with the two young girls in the

best of humors. As she left the table, and slipped away from her daughter, she passed into the conservatory to take coffee, according to her custom, and, in going, said to Ariadne, in a low voice :

“General Frémof was a little familiar with you last night.”

The young artist turned pale and suppressed a shudder, but replied :

“Yes, princess.”

“Well,” said the noble lady, sitting down, “he will never come again. I tell you this, my child, to prove to you how determined I am to protect you from all impertinence. You will not be offended if I ask you to be as prudent as possible ; but I am sure I need have no fears on that score.”

This was a very unexpected protection, though the young girl was a little disturbed in mind. The princess should have known it was not necessary to warn her to be prudent. However, Ariadne tried to forget this regret, and to think only of the favors she was receiving.

Thus the winter passed. Nothing happened to interrupt the entertainments, theatres, and receptions, until Lent.

Ariadne appeared at the princess's balls, dancing with some insignificant man when a *vis-à-vis* was

needed, and stiffening herself into icy coldness when some more brilliant partner presented himself.

This wise conduct excited the praises of the princess many times ; she could not help admiring such modesty and discretion. Upon several occasions she expressed her entire satisfaction, judging Ariadne worthy of her esteem and confidence. Ariadne had made a friend of the princess, and her friendship was not easily gained.

Among the insignificant men with whom Ariadne danced sometimes was Constantin Ladof. He was of good family. If he had not been, Orline House would not have welcomed him. His income was about ten thousand rubles a year ; but that was nothing in this set, where the most extravagant luxury was considered a necessity. He had one great advantage : he had no relatives, consequently was free to do as he pleased. But what benefit was that to a man such as he was, in search of a lever, or stepping-stone, to a greater fortune ?

Constantin Ladof was a very amiable, unimportant young man. Instead of wearing a uniform, which gives one so much grace, and makes a man so conspicuous, he unluckily entered diplomacy. A civil functionary is, according to custom, a hundred times lower than a soldier. If Ladof had been an officer of

the guard, he would have been a brilliant young man ; but employed in the ministry, he was simply a pleasant fellow, which was not at all the same thing.

Russian mothers were too willing to allow these pleasant young men to fly around their daughters ; they had seen each other grow up, were most familiar, although the young girls thought no more of them than they did of summer-nights' insects ; yet there was a secret pleasure and pride in being courted and attended by the amiable boys. Juvenile enthusiasm dies out with age ; but friendship, confidence, mutual esteem, last always. This is the reason why there are so many young men of twenty-five or thirty-five years of age, who frequent the *salons* of women of forty who have renounced all coquetry, but have not given up the pleasure of being admired and flattered.

Unfortunately, this picture has a dark side. Young girls, reared in this atmosphere of courteous, chivalrous deference, become so accustomed to flirting day by day that they think it after a while a necessity.

“Mamma is so handsome, and she jokes so much with the young men ! Why could not the daughter do likewise ?”

But “mamma,” if she knew it, would scold the daughter severely ; then the young girl has to manage her little arsenal of tricks and ruses under mamma's

eyes ; she flirts in corners, while mamma serves the tea in the large parlor, surrounded by young men not yet out of their teens, who wait upon the hostess with great deference, until some new relays come in.

Constantin Ladof made himself quite at home in the Princess Orline's house, and she showed him as much attention and kindness as she would a handsome dog, accustomed to eating sugar out of her hand. Ladof being of so little consequence, no one prevented his coming and going, bringing music, accompanying Ariadne when she sang, playing duets with Olga when she was forced to play on the piano, which was not often. It was Ladof who bought tickets for concerts or theatres ; it was he whom they sent out for ice-cream when they were thirsty ; but it was not he who paid for them ; it was understood the princess accepted nothing from gentlemen but politeness.

Ariadne knew that Ladof was a man of no consequence ; the princess expressed herself very freely upon the subject one day, when Olga dwelt too long upon the merits of the amiable young man ; and thus Ariadne was permitted to talk to him sometimes, and even to give him a sort of key to her soul.

Constantin Ladof was the only person who knew what Ariadne was thinking of when her eyes had that strange expression, as if she had left this living world,



and was dwelling upon some mysterious dream. He knew it because he had asked her :

“What are you thinking of, mademoiselle, when you no longer see anybody?”

Ariadne looked at him an instant, and replied, in a serious tone :

“I hear something that sings within me.”

Constantin looked at her in turn, and said nothing. This silence, which was compromising, opened Ariadne's heart ; she felt with Ladof she could talk of art, for he loved music passionately, and she knew he esteemed and honored her.

One day, summing up courage to speak, while her whole frame trembled with terror at the thought of the response he might make, she asked him :

“Do you know, M. Constantin, that much ill has been said of me?”

To this the young man, who had heard the slanders about Ariadne, replied, shrugging his shoulders :

“The fools ! what difference does that make ? You are much too good to think of such things.”

At these words Ariadne closed her eyes, that she might enjoy the warm, effulgent happiness which passed through her. She was then esteemed by this young blond, with blue eyes and honest, intelligent face ! She had a friend !

On another occasion Ladof, after talking with her an hour—Olga being the subject of conversation—said to her suddenly :

“You are the best creature in the world! If I had a sister I would wish her to be like you, or rather I wish that you were my sister.”

“I do not wish you were my brother,” thought Ariadne.

But there was no bitterness in the thought, for she extended to him her hand, to which she would have preferred to give him a greater right than the fraternal tie.

She allowed Ladof to penetrate by degrees into the inmost secrets of her heart. He was always in her thoughts. Up to this time she had tried to find in the rôles she was studying the poetical and passionate expression of maternal love ; she now looked there for the passion of love, and found it. Her magnificent voice made the chords in the piano tremble with the strains of sublime tenderness, such as she had never felt before.

“There was, then, something besides art!” said Ariadne, quite subdued, as she felt a something in her which soothed the distended fibres of a troubled heart. “I belong no more to myself. If he wishes it, I will renounce the theatre.”

This was the greatest sacrifice Ariadne could make ; she offered it to Constantin from the depth of her heart, but no one knew it, for Ariadne's resolutions were a secret between her and her conscience.

Constantin was far from dreaming of such a sacrifice, as far from it as from suspecting its cause. He was master of the orphan's heart without knowing it, for he had expressed his feelings exactly when he said he "would wish her for a sister," nothing more. He wished her for a sister because he was madly in love with the young Princess Olga.

Olga did not intend to lose her power over Ladof, still she had no desire to be drawn into a regular flirtation ; the remembrance of the institute was too disagreeable for her to compromise herself in the least, by word or look ; and she had snubbed him the first time he showed her any marked attention, so that he thought it more prudent to withdraw for a time. It was then, when he was the timid but resolute lover, dreaming of his idol, that he made Ariadne love him, certainly without any effort of his.

Winter glided into spring ; the princess rented a magnificent villa at Pavlovsk, for she loved fashionable life, and rarely ever had any desire to "bury herself," as she expressed it, on her own distant estates. This was a summer full of exquisite joy for Ariadne.

All she knew of Nature she had learned in the garden of the institute. The flowers, lawn, shady nooks in the park at Pavlovsk opened to her soul emotions as new and delicious as a blind man feels when he first sees light. She did not know whether it was young love budding, or the beauty of the old trees, which caused so many strange voices to sing within her. What did she care? The voices sang, and she listened to them in rapture; this was enough to fill her with joy.

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### CHAPTER XXIII.

ONE July evening—it was Monday, the fashionable day—a select audience was listening to Johann Strauss's orchestra, then at the height of its renown; and naturally the Princess Orline, with her daughter and the young cantatrice, had the best seats in the garden, and were dressed in the latest Parisian style. Her escort, a little less numerous than in the city, formed around her a guard of honor, and Constantin Ladof, who had arrived by the half-past-seven train, was enjoying Mlle. Olga's society, who was a little more polite to him than usual. Ariadne was listening to the orchestra; she had given her heart to Ladof; but when

Art spoke, *her* voice was more powerful than any other.

“Bah!” replied Olga to a phrase of Ladof’s; “men are full of promises, but when you want them to act, they boldly back out.”

“The books which taught you that have deceived you, mademoiselle,” replied Constantin, “for I swear—”

“What?”

“That if you deign to command me to do anything—”

Olga looked contemptuously at the young man through her long lashes.

“I will do it,” concluded Ladof—“I will do it at the risk of my life!”

“What an idea!” murmured Olga, frightened at his impassioned tone and earnest look.

“Put me to the test!” said the young man, emboldened by a crescendo in the orchestra, which he hoped would continue some time.

“Why do you want me to put you to the test?” asked Olga, faintly, for she knew the answer before she heard it.

“Because a poor fellow like me dares not love a person such as you, unless he has done something to draw her to him. You are too rich, mademoiselle, and of a family too illustrious for me to aspire to

your hand ; and yet I love you—yes, love you better than my life ! ”

Constantin spoke in a low voice, with eyes cast down, for two hundred persons could turn toward them at the slightest noise, and the princess was only two steps away. But when he had finished, he cast his eyes upon the young girl, with such a strange look: there was in it a question, and almost a promise, at the same time.

“ Would you really do something for me ? ” asked Olga, playing with her fan.

“ Anything. ”

“ Well, make that man leave Pavlovsk ; I cannot bear the sight of him ! ”

Ladof followed the direction of her fan, and discovered Madame Batourof’s nephew, who was one of the trio in the institute.

“ What has he done to you ? ” asked the young man, innocently.

“ What difference does that make ? ” murmured Olga. “ I hate him ! ”

Constantin became serious ; such words from the lips of a fashionable girl must have a meaning.

“ You see, ” replied Olga, in a joking manner, “ I was right when I said ‘ all ended in promises ! ’ ”

“ No, mademoiselle, ” said Ladof, firmly ; “ but a

man whom you hate, and have reason to hate, ought to leave, and he shall leave. However, I must know—”

“Come to me to-morrow afternoon,” said Olga; “we will find a minute to talk, and I will tell you why I hate him.”

The piece ended. It was impossible for them to exchange another word before the evening finished.

Olga went home, wondering why she had said anything so compromising to Ladof. It would be very hard for her to retreat now. The truth was, this stay in Pavlovsk, which was so delicious for Ariadne, was a punishment for the young princess. She was continually meeting Batourof, who stared at her so impertinently, that it put her in a rage. She felt like grinding him to powder, for he recalled so vividly that folly of hers at the institute, which she thought had been forgotten. And when he gazed at her, she not only suffered from her woman's pride, but felt weighed down with Ariadne's misfortune—the sting of remorse and shame wounded her haughty nature.

Batourof had not a bad heart. He was fond of teasing; it pleased him, as he said, “to vex the little Orline.”

He had not any ambitious aim when he visited the institute, for he had not committed himself in any way, and Olga had not to reproach herself for any

familiarity. Those visits were simply a frolic, and if he had known how he annoyed the young girl he would probably have given up the pleasure of staring at her ; but he enjoyed the fun too much at present.

Olga, however, had reached that degree of indignation which made her dangerous ; she would have killed Batourof without regret if she had been able.

In speaking to Ladof, she had acted under great nervous excitement, produced by long-suppressed anger. When she became more composed she wanted to retract, and found that she was less indifferent to Constantin's love than she was willing to admit. To tell the truth, she began to think more seriously of him from the day her mother had rallied her about dilating upon his many virtues.

Many romantic passions are developed in the hearts of young girls because their mothers suppress their first confidences about their lovers.

Olga vaguely hoped that Ladof would not come. Vain idea ! At four o'clock he was on the terrace, talking with the princess, in a more indifferent manner than usual.

Certainly, Olga's conduct was very strange, and gave rise to many suppositions. It was one hour before he was able to go into the garden. At last,



when a lady invited to dinner made her appearance, he hastened to descend the steps which separated the terrace from the garden ; here he found Olga, who, for one hour, had been pacing up and down the parterre, with the impatience of a caged lioness.

That hour of waiting had done her a great deal of harm, for in the beginning of her walk she had decided to turn the affair into fun ; but toward the second half hour, Batourof had passed that way and had winked at her ; this familiarity changed her mind completely, and she waited for Ladof as her delivering angel.

“ Well, mademoiselle ? ” said he, coming near her.

“ Well, monieur, Batourof must die ; or he must cease the insolent conduct he has kept up so long toward me ! ”

Ladof, dumfounded, stood before her, pale with indignation, scarcely daring to believe his ears.

“ Yes ! ” cried Olga ; “ because I was foolish enough to joke with him one day at the institute—not alone, but with others—because M. Batourof was my gallant, and brought me *bonbons*, he thinks he has the right now to stare at me in the most offensive manner. . . . I hate him ! I hate him ! ” repeated Olga, stamping her foot.

She suddenly burst into tears. Fortunately the

bushes in the parterre screened the pair from the spectators on the terrace. Ladof ventured to question her, and finally discovered the cause of the Princess Olga's sorrows.

"It is very serious," said he.

At twenty-three such things seem very serious.

"You shall be obeyed, mademoiselle," replied he, "whatever may happen."

Olga regretted having said so much. In theory it was very easy to make a man disappear; but when put in practice, it meant a duel—and the young girl had sense enough to know that there would be a duel—this altered the case.

"Is there no way?" said she, timidly.

"Olga!" called the princess. "Olga, where are you?"

The young girl ran off, not, however, without offering her hand to Ladof, who had only time to kiss it.

During the evening, Olga looked so pale that the princess became uneasy, and sent her to bed at nine o'clock. The poor child was delighted, for she was in a very uneasy frame of mind.

Going to bed so willingly, Olga foresaw a visit from her mother, and she called Ariadne, whose room adjoined hers.

“Sister Ariadne,” said the young enthusiast, “I must ease my conscience. I have wronged you!”

Olga hesitated, and asked herself why she should make this confession; but she had commenced the outpouring of her heart, and her honest nature, so long restrained, wanted now to be relieved.

“You? toward me?” said Ariadne.

“Yes; sit down on the bed, give me your hand, and promise me that what I am going to tell you will not make you cease to love me.”

“I promise it,” said Ariadne, smiling.

“Well! when you were so shamefully expelled from the institute, there were those who were guilty—you knew it.”

Ariadne bowed her head. It grieved her to recall the painful scene.

Olga turned her head away a moment, but her courage and uprightness sustained her.

“There were some young ladies who did a very foolish thing, and among them there was—”

“Who?” said Ariadne, innocently.

“I!” replied Olga, leaning on her pillow.

“You!” repeated Ariadne, in a dreamy way, but less astonished than her friend and she herself would have expected. “You! That is the reason you have been so good to me.”

“ You blame me very much ? ” said Olga, while she pressed her hand.

“ No, ” replied Ariadne, slowly. “ No ; you have shown true friendship for me ; and you did not expel me. ”

“ No, indeed, no ! ” cried Olga, seating herself on the bed. “ No, it was that horrible Grabinof who invented all ; and the superior was no better, for she knew very well it was I ! ”

Then the princess related to her humble friend the scenes which had occurred after her departure ; it ended in both of them laughing over the tricks they used to play their teachers. The reminiscences of childhood, even of our saddest days, often seem to us ludicrous.

Notwithstanding the gravity of Olga’s confession, and the sorrow the confession excited in Ariadne’s heart, when the princess came in she found them both laughing heartily.

“ You have fever, Olga, ” said she to her daughter. “ Is it well to agitate yourself ? ”

She arranged the covering and pillow, and then left when everything was as quiet as a sick-room should be. Olga was, indeed, suffering, and passed a sleepless night, as Ariadne also did ; but she was dwelling upon the bitterness of her past life, whereas

Olga, whose heart was lightened by her confession, saw the future full of ominous clouds.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

CONSTANTIN LADOF, boiling over with rage, went toward the barracks of Batourof's regiment; but he suddenly remembered they would probably be at table, so he stepped into the Vauxhall restaurant.

"What will monsieur have?" said the officious waiter, for there were no other customers.

"Whatever you have good," replied Ladof, indifferently.

A most excellent dinner was served up, which he ate, in order to distract his thoughts. His distraction must have been strong upon him, for when he read the bill he started.

"What! Have I eaten all that?" said he to the astonished waiter.

"Yes, monsieur. You remember the duck with green peas, the—"

"Yes, yes," murmured Ladof. "I was thinking of other things."

He paid, and went out, thinking how much one can eat when the most opposite feelings are struggling in the heart.

After having taken a cup of coffee and smoked a cigar, Ladof went to the barracks. Batourof had just come in, and was changing his dress for the evening. Constantin went to his room.

“Hallo ! Good-morning !” cried the young officer, on seeing his former friend walk in ; “it is very good of you to come and see me.”

“I did not come to see you,” replied Ladof (the cordial meeting had embarrassed him a little) ; “that is—”

Batourof burst out laughing.

“If you have not come to see me,” said he, “I must be dreaming. Take a cigar while I finish my toilet. There are some very good ones in the box. Those on top are for intruders ; but you are an old friend. Take a dry one ; those on top are moist.”

Constantin extended his hand mechanically toward the table ; but he remembered he did not come here to smoke Batourof’s cigars.

“I wish to demand an explanation from you,” said he, in a severe tone.

“An explanation ! Ten explanations, my dear fellow, or as many as you like. Pass me that brush near your left hand. That beast of a servant of mine has not the vaguest idea of his duties.”

Constantin took the brush and handed it to his friend, who began to brush his uniform energetically.

“Well, what do you wish me to explain to you?” said he, continuing his occupation.

“Your conduct is unbecoming, and I have come to demand the reason of it!”

Constantin finished the phrase with an inward groan. He did not imagine that it was so difficult to provoke a young fop.

“Eh?” said Batourof, who stood with the brush in the air, the uniform suspended in his left hand, his eyes wide open, mouth stretched—in fact, if Ladof had looked at him, he would have burst out laughing; but he was looking elsewhere.

“Do you hear?” continued Princess Olga’s champion. “I have come to demand the reason of your conduct.”

“What conduct? What reason? My word of honor, Ladof, you have lost your senses!”

Batourof’s arms fell, and his uniform, too; but he picked it up, put it on, and seated himself in front of Constantin, with a very serious expression.

“Have you come to provoke me to a duel? and why, if you please? Have I trodden upon your dog’s paw, or cracked my whip over your horse, or—?”

“Cease joking,” said Ladof, in a peevish tone. “You persist in cowardly—”

“What?” said the young officer, rising.

“Cowardly,” repeated Ladof, “insulting by your bantering a young girl worthy of every respect. This conduct is not becoming a man of honor.”

“I insult a young girl?—I?” said Batourof, rubbing his eyes. “But I dream, I dream, or you are a fool, Ladof! I have never insulted a young girl!”

“It is useless to deny it; you only aggravate your offense,” replied Constantin. “I seek to marry the girl whom you daily insult.”

“Name the young girl. If I have ever lacked respect for any one, at least for any one you want to marry—I confess I am not always respectful—but it is not in a society where you would look for a wife—”

“Stop your raillery. The girl who sends me—”

“She sends you! Well, that finishes it. Can I at least know her name?”

“This sham is useless,” said Constantin, with firmness. “When can I send you my seconds?”

Batourof looked at his friend, made some playful gesture, and sat down to his desk.

“Immediately, if you like,” said he, in a boorish



tone. "If I must fight a fool, I want to do it as soon as possible!"

Ladof got up, bowed solemnly to his friend, and went out with a measured step.

He had some trouble to find seconds—not that it was difficult in itself, but everybody was at the music-hall, or on the promenade; so he went where he thought he could find some one to serve him.

It was in the Vauxhall, between one of Strauss's waltzes and the overture of the "Barbieri," that he found one second; the other he procured a half hour later, while they were playing a *potpourri*, very much in fashion then, called "Le Tour de l'Europe." France was ostentatiously represented by "Malbrough s'en va-t-en guerre," and it was during this warlike accompaniment that Ladof explained his quarrel to a young sub-lieutenant, who had just been promoted in the corps to an ensigncy.

The seconds met at Batourof's house, who was fuming with anger the moment Ladof's name was mentioned.

"The fool! he made me miss a *soirée*," cried Batourof—"a superb party; and I had an appointment—"

He bit his lips, and listened more composedly to the young men's orders. He had not yet found any

seconds ; but, as time passed, he met some friends in the barracks who were willing to act for him.

The place was selected ; it was the moat of a small fort behind Pavlovsk ; the other arrangements were : arms, pistols ; distance, twenty-five paces ; time, four o'clock in the morning, for at five o'clock day would be too far advanced.

Thereupon they separated, and the two belligerents passed a wretched night.

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## CHAPTER XXV.

THE next day, at the hour appointed, just at the break of day, before the birds were up, six conspirators, covered with long cloaks, went toward the meeting-place in two groups of three. The grass was damp, which filled the air with a delicious perfume, and the combatants crushed mercilessly under their feet the lovely network of dew-drops sparkling upon the herbage in the month of August. But they were thinking of other things than gray skies and rosy tints in the east.

The distance was measured, and Batourof took the weapon offered him with a resigned air.

“ One moment, gentlemen,” said the oldest second,

“before committing an irreparable deed, is not an explanation possible between you?”

Batourof shrugged his shoulders ; and, pointing to Ladof with the end of his pistol :

“Ask him,” said he, “if he can tell why he wants to fight.”

The second turned toward Ladof, and received for an answer :

“Any arrangement between us is impossible.”

The two adversaries took their places respectively, and profound silence reigned while waiting for the signal.

Batourof munched his mustache, and looked over Ladof’s head. His thoughts could be interpreted in these words :

“Fool ! why do you want me to break an arm or a leg for you ? You place yourself before me without knowing the danger you run. I am a good shot, and you, imbecile ! if you only knew it, I could make you pass six weeks in your bed, to give you time to reflect ! But why should I do you any harm ? You are evidently driven to this by some one else, and are not responsible for your foolhardiness !”

At the same time Constantin thought :

“Poor Batourof ! he is a good fellow, after all, and I have known him for fourteen years. When I first

met him at my aunt's at a Christmas-tree party, I wore velvet pants, trimmed in gold braid, and a red silk shirt. Heavens! what a long time ago! I cannot kill an old friend who has always been good to me! You wished it, cruel Olga; I will die for you if Fate so ordains!"

"One, two, three!" said the second, clapping his hands.

The two reports went off, the smoke ascended slowly in the damp air, and from both sides came the cry:

"He fired in the air!"

"He fired in the air!" repeated Constantin and Batourof, who bounded over the distance which separated them, and fell into each other's arms, saying, "My dear friend!"

This effusion finished, the seconds came forward, and there was great shaking of hands; honor having been satisfied, the next thing was to have breakfast at the Restaurant Chalet; then the seconds completed their night's rest by taking a nap, while the reconciled adversaries, more intimate than ever, walked arm-and-arm around the park, the gates of which were opened at sunrise.

"Come," said Batourof, "now that all is over, tell me why you were in such a rage last evening, for

without your assistance I shall never know why we tried to kill each other."

"Oh, my friend!" cried Ladof, "I am madly in love."

Batourof lifted up his hands as if everything was now explained, then pressed Constantin's arm under his own.

"Tell me about it," said he, in the commanding way peculiar to a soldier.

"Well, you see," replied Constantin, "I am in love with a star; she is infinitely richer than I am, of a family—"

"It is not a grand-duchess?" interrupted the impatient Batourof.

"No, no!"

"Well, then, you can marry her! a Ladof can marry anybody."

"Her mother is so proud . . . . and, my friend, after what has passed, I hate to tell you, but you have affronted her! I know she was imprudent, but—"

"But who, then?" cried Batourof, planting himself in the middle of the walk; "may I at least know whom I have affronted?"

"Olga Orline!" murmured Ladof, a little embarrassed, and more vexed than he wished to appear.

"Olga Orline! Ah! I understand," said Batourof,

laughing so heartily that he had to sit down on a bench near by. "I understand your rage, and hers. There is nothing in it at all. But first tell me the truth—did she send you here to dispatch me to the next world?"

Ladof, somewhat confused, replied by nodding his head.

"The deuce! It takes a woman for revenge! Well, here is the truth, and I swear it is the truth. There is little amusement at the noble institute presided over by my aunt. On her birthday, in the month of July, I went there to spend the evening. After the usual courtesies, my venerable aunt, who, between you and me, is a fraud, had invited some of her prettiest boarders to pour out tea, and offer a contrast to the ugly old teachers. The young ladies were talking with us, and complained of being hungry; just for a joke, I proposed bringing them something to eat—the Mirsky were of the party—the beautiful princess, with her roguish eyes, which you know, dared me to do it. I swore I would swallow my aunt if she dared prevent us; an appointment was made, a bet taken, and we gained the bet, for we were on the spot with the eatables. Your beloved is a little minx—she has a fine appetite!"

"Batourof!" exclaimed Constantin.

His friend smiled, and went on :

“ Well ! if it annoys you, I will tell you she eats nothing, she is a sylph ; but the basket was always with her. Understand, now, this was only fun, which lasted as long as the roses last, a few weeks, until my formidable aunt heard of it, and that was the end of my little frolic. She put us out of the house.”

Constantin looked thoughtful.

Batourof began again :

“ What does your pretty princess want ? Shall I cease smirking at her ? Nothing easier ! If I had known it annoyed her I would not have ventured so far. I will make my excuses to her in your presence if you desire it. Will that do ? ”

“ Yes,” said Ladof, quite satisfied ; “ it will be the best thing to do.”

“ Well ! that is understood ; when you wish, you will find me ready ; and now, before we do justice to our breakfast, I think it would be well to sleep a couple of hours.”

The friends separated, shaking hands more heartily than ever.

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

IN the evening of the same day, so heroically commenced, all the fashionable world knew that there had been a duel between a civilian and a soldier, in honor of a young lady from the institute. How had the news of the duel been made public? The oft-repeated toasts at the breakfast-table might explain it.

“To the health of my aunt’s institute!” was the most frequently proposed by Batourof. Except for that, the affair would still have been wrapped in mystery.

When Ladof, somewhat agitated—(gossip might have accused him of drinking too much, but it was simply the thought of the reception Olga would give him, which upset the young man)—when Ladof came to pay his respects to the Princess Orline, he found her reclining on her long chair as usual; when she saw him she shook her finger at him.

“Come here, you bad fellow,” said she, smiling; “what is this you have been doing? Cracking the heads of our young hussars in honor of the ladies? What a Don Quixote!”

Olga, very pale, sitting a short distance behind her mother, glanced at Constantin with a look full of



thankfulness, and perhaps something more. The poor fellow lost his self-consciousness.

“Heavens ! princess,” stammered he, “what folly have you heard of ?”

“Probably just what you have committed,” replied the princess, with a smile which belied the severity of her words. “Now confess, true knight, what has happened ?”

“I really do not know,” said Constantin, confusedly ; but the princess looked as if she commanded an answer ; so he tried to find a pretext.

“I heard it said among young men,” replied he, “that young ladies from the institute were badly brought up. I would not permit such an accusation, which seemed to me unjust to several families that—where I have the honor of being received—”

“Especially mine,” interrupted the princess, with an approving nod of the head, looking very serious.

At this moment Ariadne approached nearer, and she was surprised at Ladof’s cowed expression, for he looked like a hound in expectation of a whipping.

“Yours, certainly, princess ; and also—”

“Thus you have compromised a whole institute,” added the princess, gayly. “Which of the two is dead ?” added she, in a calm voice that was too much for Constantin.

“Neither, princess, as you see.”

The princess burst out into such hearty laughter that her daughter could not resist the contagion, and had to hide her beautiful face in her handkerchief.

“You were beaten, monsieur?” Ariadne asked Ladof, with a little trembling in her voice.

Happy that some one had come to the rescue, when Olga, the ungrateful, seemed to have so cruelly abandoned him, Constantin turned toward the young girl, with thankfulness: “A trifle, mademoiselle.” And he felt glad to have afforded amusement to the princess and Mlle. Olga.

The ladies had quite recovered their seriousness when the princess extended her hand to Constantin, which he kissed, but not with very good grace.

“Come, young ladies,” said the Princess Orline, “give your little hands to M. Ladof to kiss; it is the least you can do for him after what he has done for you. But I would not advise him to commit himself again; if he does, I shall have to show him the door.”

With an impulsive, thoughtless manner, Ariadne gave her hand to the young man, who pressed it respectfully to his lips. She turned pale and withdrew her hand. This cold kiss was not what she expected; but she was so ignorant of love that she reproached herself immediately for a feeling of injustice toward a man who had risked his life for her.

Was it not for her? Probably Ladof had heard some disrespectful remark, such as Frémof might make, and he had avenged it. What better proof of esteem and love? That he did not speak of it was doubtless because there had not been a propitious moment. Was he not the best judge of that? Ariadne consoled herself with this thought, but did not experience the peace of mind which she had had before.

Olga did not stand upon so much ceremony. She gave her hand carelessly to Constantin, who was rewarded for his trouble by a slight pressure.

At the usual time for visits, the young people, according to custom, went down to the garden. Olga, upon the pretext of her slight indisposition, begged Ariadne to fetch her a shawl, and the moment her friend was out of sight, the designing young girl ran rapidly down a path which wound around behind a clump of trees, and did not stop until she got out of sight of the balcony.

“Well?” said she, quite out of breath.

“Well, mademoiselle, *he* ought to be there behind the hedge. I told him to be there at five o’clock.”

They took the lane which led to the road, and, sure enough, they saw Batourof’s back, as he was walking up and down the palisade to kill time.

“Ho!” exclaimed Constantin, with caution.

Batourof turned, and came rapidly toward them.

“Princess,” said he to Olga, bowing profoundly, but still on the other side of the hedge, “I am in despair to think I have merited your displeasure. Will you forgive the impertinence of a bad boy, and believe that I have never ceased to have the greatest respect for you?”

Olga replied by a gesture full of nobleness, which struck Batourof. He could not, however, suppress a smile, and added :

“You must admit, after all, princess, it was very droll.”

Olga smiled in reply.

“We do not always think what we do,” said she, in a serious manner ; “and afterward we have to repent. We sought to be amused, and we were very, very reprehensible.”

They heard Ariadne’s voice ; she was calling Olga in the garden. Batourof did not understand, but Constantin, who was better informed, took it all in. While Olga was walking toward the parterre, he said to her, holding her hand, which she did not refuse :

“What? Mlle. Ranine—?”

“Yes,” replied Olga. “She bore her misfortune with wonderful courage, and, more than that, she forgave me the wrong I did her.”

“You have told her, then?” said Constantin, carried away with admiration. “How generous you are, princess! Who could love you enough?”

Ladof, like a devoted lover, raised his idol one step higher on its pedestal; but he had still great sympathy for Ariadne, at the thought of the wrongs she had suffered.

Ladof had one of those susceptible hearts which love easily and tenderly. His natural and expansive affection continued to deceive Ariadne; while Olga was charmed with his amiability, so true, and yet so weak, that she was sure of ruling him with a gesture or a glance.

Ariadne sought a master in the man she loved. Her dream of happiness was to kneel at her husband's feet and burn before him her heart's essence, like a perfume on the altar. Such was not Olga's dream; but every one has a different idea of happiness.

An increased familiarity became apparent among the three friends. A number of young men floated around the Princess Orline and her charming daughter; Ladof's assiduity, disguised under his attentions to Ariadne, was no longer remarked.

Olga did not conceal from Ladof her affection for him; but she knew her mother, and felt that this marriage would be strongly opposed by her. Without

being ambitious, the princess hoped to make a more brilliant match for her daughter ; and this Ladof was continually repeating to his *fiancée*, who would invariably reply :

“But what is that to you, since I love you? It is not my mother whom you marry, it is I!”

However, it was understood that they would wait a more favorable time to speak to the princess on the subject. If the reader would like to know what Olga meant by a more “favorable time,” we should have to admit that her ideas on the subject were very vague. Perhaps she meant when another suitor asked her hand ; that certainly would not be a favorable moment. But that was her affair, not ours.

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

SOME days after the duel, a duel which became legendary with the hussars, on account of the charming manner in which everybody behaved, Morini arrived at the princess's house by an early train, to the very great surprise of all the household—for it was most unusual to receive such an early visit.

Without heeding the remonstrances of the ser-

vants, Morini compelled a bewildered chambermaid to show him to Ariadne's apartment. Ariadne, startled from her sleep, jumped up, and bolted the door in her great astonishment.

"Ah!" said the professor, when he heard the bolt click, and found he was shut out. "Are you not ready? Very well; I'll wait."

He sat down on a wooden box, without abandoning his hope of seeing Ariadne at once; and very soon she appeared.

Before she had time to speak, he took her by the arm and led her toward the drawing-room.

"You will make your *début* in eight days," said he, continuing his train of thought, "and in the *rôle* of *Fides*. Boulkof is sick, and there is no one else for the opening, unless—"

He would have continued indefinitely, if Ariadne had not seized his arm for fear of falling.

"What is the matter with you? Ah! yes; I woke you up suddenly! These young girls—a Yes or a No will upset them!"

"It is not that," said Ariadne, sitting down on the first seat she could find. "Will you kindly repeat what you said? I did not understand it."

"The theatre has nothing ready," commenced the professor.

“No! no! You said that I should make my *début*.”

“Zounds! If it had not been for that, do you think I would have come so early?”

Ariadne drew a long sigh, and lay extended on the sofa, with her eyes closed, so pale that the professor began to be frightened; and he commenced rubbing her hands to restore her.

“I am not ill, my dear professor,” said she, opening her eyes; “but you announced the news so suddenly to me, that I felt the earth was going from under my feet. It is the dream of my life!”

“And mine, too!” exclaimed Morini, striding across the room, having no mercy on the chairs and stools which he kicked from side to side. “A pupil I have trained with all the care and love of a father! But you will be a success!”

“I don’t know the *rôle*,” said Ariadne, clasping her hands.

“That’s nothing; you have sacred fire, and you know how to sing. You can learn a *rôle* in three days.”

“But I never set my foot on the stage!” continued the young girl, terrified.

“Dreadful thing!” replied the Italian, shrugging



his shoulders. "Everybody knows it is nothing but boards! You will rehearse this afternoon!"

"Already?" said Ariadne, who thought she was dreaming.

"If you are to play a week from to-day, you must commence immediately. Come! pack your things."

Ariadne had great trouble to obtain the professor's consent to wait until the princess got up. He returned to St. Petersburg to announce that she had accepted the *rôle* he had proposed to her; and she was left alone to dream of the future before her.

It was an unheard-of dream. After resigning herself to eighteen months' obscurity, to be called before the public in such an unexpected manner, and under such favorable auspices!—before a public that would bear with her youth and inexperience—a public disposed to accept everything from her, because she so willingly took the place of another cantatrice. Under such circumstances, her amiability alone would have served her instead of talent.

She thought of all this, and gradually her possible incompetence assumed a sort of golden halo; she saw all the splendors of the "Prophète" defile before her; the shining masses of cuirasses, and flags, and gorgeous decorations glistened before her; the din of the choruses and orchestra gave her vertigo. Suddenly

she was up, her eyes lost in vacancy, where she alone could see a warrior clothed in white, who turned his eyes away from her, and repulsed her.

“No! this is not my son!”

A cry of despair, disdain, and anger in one unique expression escaped her lips. Ariadne was lost in her *rôle!*

Some hours later, overpowered with Olga's good wishes—who was perhaps a little jealous of the happiness in store for her friend—to appear on the stage, be applauded, loaded with honors—Ariadne left Pavlovsk, to make her *début* at St. Petersburg, where she would occupy the princess's palace until her future was decided.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

DURING rehearsals, Ariadne saw nothing that happened around her. Solely occupied in singing well, and in keeping time with the orchestra, she did not worry herself about the strangers of the place. The vast stage, with ropes hanging down on all sides, and enormous pieces of painted wood, trap-doors, and wings, was not what she expected. The actors played in their ordinary costumes; the illusion was dis-

pelled ; and the rehearsal, so new to the young cantatrice, was work indeed, but not art—at least not art as she had seen it in her dreams.

During the week Ariadne spoke to no one in the theatre except on what appertained to the rehearsal ; she frequently met persons in the side scenes, who gave her rather annihilating glances, but they passed out of her mind like shadows on the wall, leaving no impression whatever. Morini, who always accompanied her, would often take her aside to make corrections, or give advice ; the *débutante*, in short, saw nothing in the theatre during those few days.

“But,” said she, on the eve of the representation, “I shall never be able to sing unless I see the house lighted up. The great luminous gulf before me would frighten me if I do not get accustomed to it.”

“That is true,” said the professor, who went immediately to the manager with Ariadne’s suggestion.

A few moments after, as she came on the stage, the young girl found the chandeliers lighted ; but the house appeared to her cold and empty, surrounded by draperies like shrouds. She drew back, and missed her *entrée*. A murmur of disapprobation came from the choristers, the machinists, from all who usually attend rehearsals.

“This happens to everybody at first !” exclaimed Morini, rolling his terrible eyes from right to left.

“Silence !” said the manager.

Ariadne felt as if the whole public had slapped her in the face. With her over-sensitiveness, it seemed to her that all was lost ; and she sang with a dejection that was a death-blow to the old professor’s hopes.

The rehearsal over, he took her to the princess’s palace, and there gave her a long lecture. But for the first time Ariadne was intractable.

“Listen, my dear professor,” said she ; “if you wish me to sing to-morrow, leave me alone to-day. My ears tingle, and I no longer hear what you are saying.”

“You are right,” exclaimed Morini, “and I am a brute. Sleep well, little one, get up late, eat little to-morrow, and, above all, fear nothing. All the fools who have annoyed you to-day will be at your feet to-morrow—and I the first.”

He went away quickly, and left Ariadne alone with her thoughts.

She remained a moment with her head in her hands, then an idea struck her ; she went to the tomb of her benefactress. It was late ; the days are short at the beginning of September. When she arrived night was falling ; she had some trouble in persuading the

guard to admit her ; but a bribe did away with his scruples, and the orphan wandered to the cross she had erected to her second mother.

The trees were already losing their leaves, the autumn tints enriched the foliage, and the deep warm coloring seemed to retain a little of the setting sun's brilliancy. Ariadne distinguished in the darkness the white stone cross, and knelt before it on the damp grass ; she did not bring any flowers ; her only offering was a prayer, as pure and innocent as that of a little child.

When Ariadne returned to the city, the lamps were lighted, and the place looked as lively as if the fashionable world had returned from the country. Italian opera was played that night, and the carriages were loaded with amateurs bent upon losing nothing during the season. The Russian opera-house, just opposite, looked vast and deserted.

"To-morrow," said Ariadne to herself, "the carriages will be taking everybody to hear me. What if I should sing badly?"

She went home, and, following Morini's advice, retired early. She thought that she would fail, and was resigned.

"I have no chance!" said she. "Why should I succeed this time?"

The next day passed like lightning. The princess and Olga had come in to dinner, so as not to miss the rising of the curtain.

Olga was not overjoyed, but she embraced her friend continually, predicting for her the most astounding success.

She wanted to accompany her to her dressing-room ; but the princess positively forbade her doing so.

The "Prophète" commenced ; Ariadne was busy with her toilet, as she was not on the stage in the first scene ; they called her, she started to go hastily, still embarrassed with her costume, as she had not had time to accustom herself to it.

"Go now !" said the manager ; "time's up." The actress who was playing *Bertha*, perhaps for the thirtieth time, took her by the hand and actually dragged her on the stage. Ariadne was dumfounded when she saw the house brilliantly illuminated, filled with people, and every eye fixed upon her ; she trembled so that *Bertha* whispered to her :

"Look on the stage ; if you don't, you will have vertigo, and fall."

She followed her advice, and had time to recover herself during *Bertha's* solo. The moment she sang the first note, she experienced a singular impression,

as if her voice did not belong to her ; but, with all the strange surroundings, she went on bravely.

The attention of the public was fixed on her. Her statuesque beauty and noble bearing made her a strong contrast to the little, stout cantatrice whose *rôle* she had taken, for her tall, slender figure did not entirely disappear under a matron's costume, and, from the first, her beauty assured her success.

"Well," said her teacher, when she came behind the scenes, "it is all over ; you are no longer afraid ?"

"No," replied Ariadne ; "but is this opera ?"

"And what would you have it ?" asked the astonished Italian.

"I don't know. . . . It always seemed to me something very different."

No one spoke to her except the manager, who said something encouraging ; they waited to see what would come of the *débutante*.

The time was at hand for Ariadne to stand before a serious, expectant public. The scenery was sombre and simple, and she entered pale, stiff, with a movement almost mechanical. The first notes of the *arioso* arose faintly from the orchestra.

Ariadne felt a shudder through her whole frame ; something seemed to cry within her soul, which Art

had just awakened in her. Suddenly becoming calm and self-possessed, she put her hand on *Jean's* shoulder, overwhelmed with grief.

“*O, mon fils!*” she said, rather than sang, which caused a tremor throughout the house. People looked at each other in amazement. From that moment hope was at its highest pitch.

Ariadne no longer saw the audience which had frightened her so much. She sang the air with such intensity of feeling that it was almost painful. It was this that had taught her passion in art, which, until now, had been very vague to her. She finished, and suddenly she was awakened from her trance by the most enthusiastic clapping of hands. People were calling for her everywhere, up-stairs and down-stairs, crying out, “Bravo! bravo! Mellini!”

“You must bow to them,” said the tenor. “It is you whom they applaud.”

Ariadne, scarcely recovered from her dream, came forward and bowed.

“Encore!” cried they from all parts.

The leader of the orchestra raised his *bâton*, and made a sign to the cantatrice. The plaintive tones of the orchestra warned her that she must begin, for she had not understood. She commenced again. This time, sure of herself, sure of the audience, she dared



forget everything and be herself, and the house resounded with notes never heard before in such perfection.

There was the greatest excitement ; the orchestra applauded by knocking on their desks. Six times Ariadne was recalled. The play was interrupted, the bravos were frantic—in fact, the public offered her the wildest expressions of their delight. Never had a *débutante* received such an ovation.

When she came behind the scenes, all there was changed ; the artists, choristers, machinists—all the employés of the theatre—came to applaud her.

“ You are more than cantatrice,” said Morini, embracing his pupil, who trembled with emotion. “ Don’t believe a word they are telling you ; they will make you believe it, and you will become an ass instead of a nightingale.”

Ariadne ran no risk of being changed into an ass ; at least, the praises from her comrades could not accomplish that miracle. She mentally compared the coldness of the night before to the protestations of the moment, and pitied the weakness and baseness of human nature.

“ It is like the first act of the ‘ Huguenots,’ ” said she to her teacher ; “ the moment they see some one in favor, they declare their devotion. How is it that

playing comedy before the public does not disgust them with playing it among themselves?"

"You are a little philosopher," replied the enchanted Morini. "Rest yourself now, so as to keep up your success; the hardest is yet to come."

Ariadne was under such extraordinary excitement that nothing more frightened her. She had taken instant possession of her *rôle* and the public. She acted and sang the scene of the "curse" with such poetic grandeur that connoisseurs said they had heard nothing like it since Madame Viardot. The enthusiasts had made, during the *entr'acte*, an enormous bouquet, with the date written in white roses. At last the curtain fell upon such a tumult of applause that even the walls of the Italian opera, more accustomed to such brilliant triumphs, might have been envious.

Olga was waiting for her friend, with great impatience, in her mother's carriage, before the artists' entrance. Numbers of the curious had gone out before the end of the opera to see the *débutante* get into her carriage. She came at last, with a white woolen shawl covering her beautiful blond hair, pale still with emotion; but when she saw Olga at the door she smiled.

"Mellini!" cried about fifty of the enraptured *dilettanti*. "Bravo! bravo!"

The last echo of success conquered Ariadne's firm-

ness. Tears streamed from her eyes, but she bowed to the admiring crowd.

“A flower from your bouquet!” cried they, “a flower for a *souvenir*!”

Ariadne pulled out a handful of Parma violets and roses and scattered them among the crowd; the carriage-door was shut, and they drove off quickly, amid the people’s thanks for the cantatrice’s generosity.

“You are happy?” said Olga, throwing her arms around her friend, while the princess offered her the warmest, sincerest compliments.

“I am happy,” replied she, “except when I think that Madame Sékourof, to whom I owe all this, can never enjoy her good work.”

As she entered the parlor, Ariadne saw Ladof, who had come home in advance, having been invited to tea after the theatre. The princess, believing an attachment was growing up between the young cantatrice and him, thought she would encourage the affair, and give him an opportunity of seeing her as soon as possible. Constantin was indeed very much pleased, and complimented Ariadne with an earnestness that might have deceived anybody. Olga alone knew it was pure friendship and love of music, and therefore was not jealous.

Ariadne, not yet returned to the realities of life,

permitted them to compliment her, as she allowed them to pour out the tea, looking very happy, but perfectly indifferent. She still saw that great illuminated house, those faces turned toward her, with open mouths, ready to call out her name, and she shuddered. She was happy, yet she was afraid. She was like a child that would pass his hand over a lion's head ; it seemed to her that the enormous animal that flattered her to-night might become envious one day and devour her.

“You should be perfectly satisfied,” said Ladof to her, as he sat down near her.

The tender, affectionate nature of this young man, yet a child in many things, prompted him to come as close as possible to any one who, for the moment, attracted his fickle heart.

“Yes,” replied Ariadne, with her lovely, dreamy smile. “And you, are you content?”

She had thrown her whole soul into these words. She offered to Constantin the crowning success of the evening, like the aroma of her bouquet, which was near her on the table.

“Give me a flower as a *souvenir* of this evening,” said the young man, extending his hand.

“The people have had most of the flowers,” said Ariadne. “They asked me for them in the street. I would rather give you something else.”

She unrolled a wide, white ribbon, which tied the end of her bouquet ; but just as she was going to offer it to Constantin, she remembered that they were not alone.

She took the bread-knife from the table and cut the ribbon in two, giving one part to Olga, the other to Constantin.

“You are my two best friends,” said she. “I shall remember without a token.”

The two lovers exchanged stolen glances on receiving the pieces of ribbon. This look fell on Ariadne’s heart like a lump of ice. “Had she lived until that moment in such a dream that she had misconceived the truth?”

But Constantin kissed her hand with so much gratitude, and threw so much warmth into the expression of his joy, that the young girl believed she was mistaken. However, the wings of her happiness had fallen, never to rise again.

The next morning before mid-day, the remnant of her bouquet was fading on the tomb of her benefactress. Those flowers of success were the only ones Ariadne had ever been willing to place there.

The papers did not fail to notice the *débutante’s* success. Two days later a paper, unknown to the enlightened world, published a paid article about Ari-

adne, in which the poor girl's history was related in a most odious manner. The writer of the article must have been pressed for money, for it actually dragged Ariadne through the mud. In order that she might be sure to see the article, some careful hand had marked it with red chalk, and left it in a sealed envelope with the princess's butler.

Ariadne read this mass of scurrility, not with indifference, but with an appearance of calmness. Olga, who was there, wanted to read it afterward, but the young artist took it quietly out of her hands.

"What!" said Olga, provoked at meeting with any resistance, "don't you want me to know the compliments paid you?"

"They are not compliments," replied Ariadne, "and that will grieve you."

"What is it, then?" asked Olga.

"It is the other side of the story. If I had no enemies, it would be a proof that I had no talent."

Ariadne knew how to put on a brave face when her honor was touched, but the wound was left bleeding a long time. Other cutting articles appeared afterward. It was supposed that the actress whose place Ariadne had taken wrote them. She had never created a sensation in any *rôle*, content if she filled them passably well; and she now found how difficult it would

be, how impossible, to play in the "Prophète" after the *débutante*. On that account she was determined to disparage her in every way she could.

It was very easy to strike Ariadne a blow. After her second performance, she frequently received anonymous notes and sarcastic remarks from some practised hand; even the artists who had joined in the ovation of the first evening tried to make themselves disagreeable to her. She discovered that in the theatre more than anywhere else one has to battle for existence, and that in almost every case the good are the victims of the wicked.

It was a silent persecution. The tenor joked a little with her before giving her the cue, and Ariadne, not accustomed to this sort of amusement, felt troubled, and played coldly. Just as she was commencing a duet, *Bertha* said to her :

"Your rouge is coming off on the left; you look like a doll which has been washed."

A chorister stepped on her dress as she was going to the footlights. She found the bell of her room stuffed with paper. "Whom was she to accuse?" It was a sort of persecution in which every one was an accomplice, and yet everybody innocent.

Ariadne could bear it no longer; she went to the manager and complained.

“Can you,” said the manager, “point out any one in particular?”

“No,” said Ariadne; “it is everybody, which is nobody.”

“Well! what do you want me to do?” replied the practical man, accustomed to all sorts of complaints.

Morini laughed when Ariadne confided her troubles to him.

“You will have many more,” said he. “In my time I have seen some abominable tricks on the stage. A basso told me once of his troubles: while he was singing one of the actors was continually pulling the visor of his helmet over his mouth so that he could not sing. He did this ten times in an evening. Do you think he went to the manager in order to get rid of him? No. He would have had no more peace after that!”

“What did he do?”

“He did nothing; his tormentor got tired, and played upon somebody else. Try the same game, be expert yourself in practical jokes upon others. That forms character!”

Ariadne was little disposed to form her character in this way. Always fearing some trick, she became uneasy, and played with less effect. At the fourth



performance, people began to ask if they had not been mistaken in the *débutante*. The opposition paper took advantage of the change in public feeling, and tried to crush Ariadne.

The day of the fifth performance Morini came like a bombshell into the little parlor where his pupil was working.

“You made me pass a horrible night!” said he, in as bad a humor as it was possible to imagine; “if you sing as badly as you did on Wednesday evening, we might as well tear down the play-bills. Confound it! No encore of Mellini!”

“But, my dear teacher,” replied Ariadne, with tears in her eyes, “it is not my fault! I want to do well, but I am paralyzed by so many things! The leader of the orchestra no longer waits for my ‘runs,’ and it is with the greatest difficulty that I can sing in time!”

“Eh?” exclaimed Morini, more furious when he felt that Ariadne was right—there had been much trouble with the leader of the orchestra. “What the deuce! there are so many ways of pleasing people—”

The professor looked down when Ariadne fixed her eyes upon him.

“He did not mean anything wrong,” continued he, in a calmer tone of voice. “With a few kind words,

a smile, a trifle, one can easily flatter people. You pass by them as if they did not exist."

"Are they anything to me?" asked Ariadne, with more assurance.

Morini shrugged his shoulders.

"Never mind whether they are much or little to you," said he; "the one important thing is not to make them hate you. You act toward them as if you were a Fodor or a Malibran; but, my dear, they think they are just as good as you! You wound them unnecessarily; this is not the way to make a position on the stage."

"If what I have seen thus far is the theatre," said Ariadne, disgusted, "I prefer returning to my obscurity, and singing for myself."

"You speak very independently," exclaimed Morini, exasperated; "it is in order that you should not return to obscurity that I have given you lessons for two years and a half!"

"That is true," said Ariadne, bending down her head; "I am not free, excuse me. I will sing better to-night, I promise you."

"Come, my little girl," said the old Italian, who perceived that Ariadne's pride had misinterpreted his words, "do not get angry; you do not understand me; I meant that I had placed all my hopes on you,

that you would be known as my pupil, and your name would be connected with your old teacher's, and that they would both be handed down to posterity. You cannot blame me for having such a desire, can you?"

"My dear teacher," replied Ariadne, taking the professor's wrinkled hand, "I cannot blame you for anything. You are not responsible for my unhappy fate, to be born poor and dependent. Situated as I am, it would be very ungrateful in me not to be thankful to those who have tried to ameliorate my condition."

These words reassured the Italian, who went away easier in mind.

"Anyway," said he, at parting, "this is the last time you will sing this season. You will have the winter to rest, and next winter you will probably make your *début* at the Italian opera. For this once do your best. I am curious to see how the public will receive Boulkof when she takes her place after you. Then they will find out your worth!"

He went out; and Ariadne, left alone, clasped her hands over her breast to keep down the sobs swelling to her throat.

"No, I am not free," said she, bitterly; "the poor are never free!"

The door opened quietly, and Olga entered with precaution.

Ariadne looked at her, not without a pang. She owed to this girl, rich and happy, her daily bread. "Must she always be indebted to somebody?"

Olga came forward with an air of modesty, and even humility, which was not common with her; she held in her hand a little portfolio, so richly embellished that it looked more like an ornament than a thing for use.

"Your teacher scolded you, did he not?" asked she. "I heard, I even listened; excuse me, dear Ariadne."

The young artist made a careless gesture. What difference did it make to her? Her dependence was not a secret.

"I scarcely know how to explain what I have to say to you," said Olga; "it is very difficult, and your pride makes the task harder. We have prepared—my mother and I—a little *souvenir*, to recall to you the triumph of your first appearance, and we have put in it our portraits."

Ariadne extended her hand to receive the object presented by her friend, who still retained it with a sort of fear.

"I hope you will understand me thoroughly, dear

Ariadne," said she; "you know the extent of the debt I owe you, and you know I never hope to be able to pay it. That which we offer you here is nothing more than the means of relieving you of the burden which weighs upon you."

She embraced her friend affectionately, put the portfolio in her hand, and wished to run away; Ariadne kept her back with an imperious gesture.

"Wait," said she.

She opened the portfolio, which really contained the portraits of Madame Orline and her daughter, and in a pocket she found a package of bank bills, folded in an envelope which bore the inscription :

"Price of Signor Morini's lessons."

Ariadne's first impulse was to reject the money; her second, to burst into tears. Olga took her in her arms.

"Is it not better," said she, with a sweetness and humility no one but her companion would have suspected in her, "is it not a thousand times better to feel yourself free from your teacher? Suppose you should be sick, or the stage should displease you, you are free then to sing no more, as you said, except for yourself and a few friends. Tell me, can you have the heart to refuse us?"

"No," said Ariadne, looking at her friend with

eyes full of tears, and face covered with confusion ; “I have no right to refuse. Morini is old, not rich ; I owe him a great deal. If, indeed, I should fall sick, or if I should die before the debt was paid !—”

“Please do not speak of those things !” exclaimed Olga, putting her hand over the young artist’s mouth.

“Why not ? Death has no terrors for me ; it is only formidable for those who are rich, happy, loved—”

“But you will be loved,” said Olga, with enthusiasm.

“Do you think so ?” said Ariadne, without daring to look at her.

“I am sure of it,” replied Olga ; “you are too beautiful, too great an artist, not to be loved. Who could resist the love you would inspire ?”

Olga was sincere. Ariadne appeared to be so much mistress of her heart that her friend never supposed that Ladof had produced any effect upon it. Besides, do those who love ever see love in others ?

Ariadne did not reply ; Olga’s words harmonized too well with the secret desires of her heart. She clung to the hope offered her as to a saving plank. Stage-life did not please her, her dependence weighed heavily on her ; but Constantin, if he loved her, would raise her above these miseries ; for she felt that she

was beautiful, and worthy of being loved. . . . She hoped on.

“I must leave you,” said Olga, when she saw Ariadne was again quiet and composed. “You need rest, as you sing to-night. Think at least that, if you so wish, you can sing to-night for the last time. My mother begs me tell you your home is with us, and you need think of no other as long as you are happy at our fireside.”

Saying these consoling words she went out, leaving Ariadne alone in her meditations.

“No,” thought she, after a little reflection, “I will not give the money to my teacher—it would be a want of gratitude to him ; there was something besides mere interest in the lessons he gave me. But if some misfortune should happen to me, if I should lose my voice, for instance—”

She sighed ; her mind, tired of the incessant struggles with life, seemed to have gloomy forebodings.

That night she sang better than at her *début* ; the young cantatrice had such power over the public that the conspiracy against her dared not breathe ; whoever should have tried to withstand her success would have been annihilated without pity.

Crowns, recalls, enthusiastic cries, surpassed the ovation of the first evening ; and Ariadne left the

theatre consecrated "Star" by two thousand infatuated spectators.

"Well," said Morini to her, as he led her off, "are you reconciled to the theatre?"

He rubbed his hands together with joy. Ariadne, not wanting to throw a damper on his happiness, replied evasively. When she reached the quiet of her own little room, she considered how much self-love, infatuation, and deception are attached to a great success, and said to herself, with the wise man, "All is vanity."

"Ah! my beloved Art," said she, in the deepest dejection, "I loved you better when I sang alone in the institute, and when I cried at the sound of my own voice without knowing why!"

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

"You sing no more this winter?" asked the princess at breakfast next day.

"Not at the theatre, at least, princess," replied Ariadne; "I expect to give a concert."

"It is not the season for concerts," interrupted Princess Orline; "and as nothing keeps you in St.



Petersburg, will you not accompany us on a little foreign tour?"

Olga opened her eyes wide, and looked at her mother, more surprised than enchanted.

"This is a surprise I have prepared for my daughter," replied Princess Orlina; "she has been teasing me a long time to make a trip. The rainy season here is villainous, and the month of October in France is lovely. We could pass at least six weeks there and return for the sleighing."

"Six weeks, mamma!" exclaimed Olga.

"Well! are you satisfied?"

"Oh! yes, thank you, mamma," said the young deceiver, who ran and embraced her mother.

One hour later, the maid posted a little note which read thus:

"Mamma wishes to travel, my dear Constantin. Ask leave of absence at the embassy; come and tell us that your health requires a trip. You must join us. We can doubtless find, during our journey, some opportunity to talk over our schemes."

The message reached its destination at the right time, and the next evening Ladof informed the princess of his traveling projects.

"Ah!" said the astonished princess; "we, also, are going away."

“Will you allow me to accompany you, at least as long as my presence is agreeable?”

The princess frowned and looked at Ariadne. She, with her cheeks crimson, looked up at Constantin, surprised and excited. Princess Orline smiled; if there had been any connivance, it was for a laudable object: but then Ariadne's look of astonishment was so natural.

“Who told you of our trip?” said the princess, suddenly.

Constantin, somewhat abashed, came very near remaining silent; but he must reply.

“Your servants,” said he. “I called yesterday afternoon without finding you, and I learned that you would leave.”

The princess, fully reassured, could see in it nothing more than a proof of Ladof's love for Ariadne.

“I consent,” said she; “even if your company were not agreeable, the young ladies would make you useful in gratifying their whims. But, my dear Constantin, you will leave first. I don't want busy tongues to spread the news in St. Petersburg that I have carried you off.”

“Ah! princess!” said Ladof, very happy, but somewhat confused.

The princess arose, smiling, showing her magnificent figure and great beauty still in its prime. Olga dared not exchange word or look with Ladof; he, not knowing exactly what to do, approached Ariadne.

“And you, mademoiselle, will you permit me to inflict my society upon you?” said he, jokingly.

“Yes,” replied Ariadne, without lifting her eyes.

Paradise seemed to open before her.

Eight days later, the three ladies on entering the depot at Berlin found Ladof awaiting them. He had engaged for them a hotel, a carriage, and all that was needed.

“Oh! this is charming!” said the princess, rallying the young man, though not in an unfriendly manner. “You do better than a courier; and we have not to scold you to make you understand what we want! I engage you at once!”

“Most happy!” murmured Constantin, trying to make a passage-way for her.

He had received the most delicious smile from Olga, and his life was beginning to assume a rose-like tint for him.

At the end of eight days, Ariadne retained but few of her illusions; they left her one by one like the leaves when the autumn wind tears them from the

trees. She tried to shield herself from the increasing conviction of her nothingness in the eyes of Constantin ; she had struggled with energy against evidence ; then came the reaction, bringing with it sadness and bitterness.

“It is she whom he loves !” she repeated to herself every moment in the day.

But if Ladof came near her, if he took her shawl or bag, she thought she discovered some sign of affection in his civility. Affection for her certainly the young man had ; but the reserve he showed to Olga was far more eloquent than such meaningless demonstrations of politeness.

Instead of stopping in the capitals, and taking the ordinary routes, after several days' travel the princess thought it would be a novel idea to reach Paris by the coast. She went from Brussels to Ostend, and there the sea air had special charms for her. October days on the sea-coast have a softness elsewhere unequaled ; though gray and cloudy, except when the northeast wind blows, the days are there less autumnal than in the interior or in cities.

The downs and cliffs do not lose their verdure so early ; although the trees are soon stripped of their foliage by equinoctial storms, the grass, short and thick, keeps its freshness ; the rocks are the same at

all seasons, and the sea is as smiling in January as in July.

The princess made easy voyages from the mouth of the Somme to the Seine. The various ports, almost deserted except by the regular inhabitants and some lovers of salt breezes, scarcely became conscious of their distinguished visitors.

Olga amused herself exceedingly, visiting new hotels, taking meals at *tables-d'hôtes*, where the notable bachelors of the place discussed the events of the town; all this had for her the attraction of novelty. She felt as if she was reading a romance, so great was her delight.

Ladof, on the contrary, was far from being at his ease. He felt that his attentions must in time be explained, and the thought of what would then happen made him shudder.

Constantin was one of those who are very brave before the cannon's mouth, but cowardly before a woman's temper. He feared being reprimanded by the princess, and losing all chance of gaining Olga's hand; but what alarmed him perhaps more than all was his being one day questioned by Ariadne, who asked: "Why have you trifled with me?"

What Olga had not perceived, frivolous, selfish child that she was, Ladof saw, and felt most deeply.

This was his fate, and he was conscious of it ; his love for Olga was of the kind which imposes on one all the duties and responsibilities, while the other has all the privileges and pleasures ; but, contrary to the common order of things, it was Olga who would rule her husband, and yet be always adored in spite of her faults : not because her husband did not see them, but because he loved her just as she was, with all her defects.

There are some beings who must sacrifice themselves, and Ladof was one of them.

He felt that he had trifled with Ariadne ; his conscience reproached him for many little attentions and flattering words which he had addressed to the young girl, even in the presence of the princess : though in acting thus he had obeyed Olga's orders.

“ But if Ariadne should find it out ? ” said he one day, trying to resist the beloved influence which subdued all his powers.

“ Find out what ? That you have made love to her ? Great calamity ! One so clever, so thoughtful, would never care for such a simpleton as you ! There is nobody in the world but me silly enough to love you ! ”

Thus reproved, with an accompaniment of little taps and fascinating smiles, Constantin smothered his

conscience. But seeing Ariadne growing paler and thinner every day, less terrestrial, so to speak, the pangs of remorse again stung him.

Ariadne appeared to shun him, rather than reproach him ; without affectation, she held herself aloof, and the princess had often to make her join their group. The princess was not satisfied ; the marriage which she had deigned to favor with her interest seemed farther off than ever, and Princess Orline wondered what it meant. Her watchful eyes had noticed the visible change which had come over Ariadne ; she wanted an explanation, but the orphan's dependent position in her house made this difficult, and she put it off from day to day.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

ONE evening after their arrival at Fécamp, the travelers noticed the announcement of a concert of amateurs the next day for the benefit of the poor.

“Ariadne !” exclaimed Olga, “you ought to sing for the unfortunate. It is a long time since we have heard you, and I am sure the natives have never imagined such a voice as yours.”

“It will be a kindness, Mademoiselle Ariadne,” said Ladof, “and you will give everybody pleasure.”

Ariadne was silent ; the princess thought that she was waiting for her advice.

“If it gives you pleasure, my child,” said she, “I will not oppose you.”

Ariadne wanted to speak, but a flood of tears prevented her. She quickly wiped away her blinding tears, and, trying to appear calm, said with a trembling voice:

“I can sing no more.”

“What ?” exclaimed simultaneously the three persons present.

“I lost my voice fifteen days ago.”

“You have lost your voice,” exclaimed Olga, “and said nothing about it to anybody ?”

“What good would it have done to speak of it ?” said Ariadne, with a dejected air ; “it would not have bettered things. When we have nothing pleasant to say, it is better to be mute.”

Silence ensued, for every heart was full of sad thoughts.

“You are suffering, my child ?” said the princess, gently, deeply moved at seeing the colorless face of the young artist.

“A little ; but it will pass off—thank you, princess.”



Ariadne made an effort, and smiled, as the princess placed her hand on the girl's head. Her smile was so full of grief that Princess Orline impressed a mother's kiss on the orphan's brow.

"We will go to-morrow to Étretat, as I promised you," said she to her daughter, with a serious air; "we will then return directly to Paris; I am tired of these peregrinations; we have so fatigued Mlle. Ranine that there is nothing left of her."

The princess spoke with such severity that her daughter felt herself rebuked. Olga went out, and dared not even try to speak to Ladof. He felt as if a mountain was weighing on his shoulders.

The two young girls shared the same room. Olga that night noticed her companion, and was struck by the languor and fatigue she showed in every movement.

"What is the matter with you?" said she, with anxiety, noticing her friend's hollow eyes, short breath, and burning hands.

"Nothing," said Ariadne, with a smile.

This smile wore such an expression of suppressed grief that it rendered Ariadne more beautiful, more interesting than ever.

"Something serious must ail you, when you waste away as you are doing."

“I shall get well in time.” In another moment Ariadne added : “If I should not recover, do not forget my old teacher ; the price of his lessons is in the portfolio in St. Petersburg.”

“But, Ariadne,” said Olga, frightened, “you are not going to die?”

“I hope not,” said the cantatrice, with a little more energy ; “now I am easier ; good-night !”

She fell back on the pillow, and went to sleep immediately.

Very soon her breathing became more regular, her hands cooler, and Olga, leaning over her, saw the natural expression return to her beautiful face.

“Still she looks sad,” said the young princess to herself ; “she appeared happier at one time. She is perhaps grieved because she has no one to love her, while I—I don’t know why I have made with her such a mystery about nothing. I might have told her all. It may be this want of confidence which pains her. She may have thought that I no longer loved her. I will tell her all without fail to-morrow.”

Olga fell asleep on this good resolution.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE next day was beautiful and clear; it might have been said that the Channel was looking its best in honor of the foreign visitors, who were taking their last view of it.

The carriage containing the princess and her little family rolled rapidly toward Étretat; but those who occupied it did not pay much attention to the beautiful country they were passing through. Each one was buried in thought, and the journey was made in silence.

The princess began to question herself whether, for several months past, she had not been deceived; and her suspicions rested not upon Ariadne, nor upon Ladof, but upon her own daughter. She recalled to mind that freak at the institute, and reflected that Olga's temperament urged her toward the perilous; nothing was more plausible than that the spoiled child should concoct a little scheme in secret which would make her mother accept Ladof for a son-in-law.

But why so much concealment? The princess had loved her husband, not because he was a prince, but because in her eyes he was the only being worthy of

being loved. She would have consented without much opposition to the marriage of her daughter with almost any gentleman, provided he had the moral qualities which command esteem, and the advantages which would make it a suitable match. Constantin Ladof sufficiently possessed these attractions ; what, then, prevented Olga from saying to her mother, "I desire to marry him?"

The princess looked at Ariadne's pale face, as she sat near her, and wondered what sorrow had ravaged those regular features !

"If she loved Ladof, why did he not propose?" The result of her reflections was that these uncertainties should be set at rest before the day closed.

The travelers descended the road which leads to the village of Étretat. This beautiful slope, ornamented with superb houses now deserted, and terraced gardens bordered with late flowers, brought them to the middle of the valley. Breakfast was ordered in advance ; they sat around the table, but none did justice to the meal. When the dessert was taken off, the princess threw her napkin down with impatience. Olga trembled. She understood her mother well enough to know that a terrible storm was threatening.

"Go and see the cliff, which presents a novel appearance," said the princess, and she added in a low

tone, pointing to Ariadne, who was standing in the doorway: "Finish this affair, M. Ladof; the situation is becoming intolerable."

The two guilty ones went out with their heads bowed. A moment later, the princess saw them depart, and turn to the right to view the opposite cliff before examining it in detail.

She could not repress a mother's proud smile as she looked at her daughter.

Olga walked in front with her firm step; her long braids, which, while traveling, she had not taken the trouble to put up with a comb, fell below her waist. Her brisk gait and supple form made a great contrast to Ariadne's languid air.

Notwithstanding that Olga was a few months older than Ariadne, she appeared like a careless, happy bird, while Ariadne bore the impress on both face and form of one whose life had been saddened.

"At last!" thought the princess, as she reëntered the hotel. "When they return, all will be explained!"

Constantin, on a sign from Olga, offered his arm to Ariadne; she took it, but with all the reserve she felt in their present relations. She accepted it to avoid a painful and superfluous explanation, which her refusal would naturally have provoked; but as

soon as they were out of sight she withdrew her arm, saying that she preferred walking alone.

A guide offered his services, which they declined. The young people wanted to talk freely; and, besides, they had been assured that there was no danger on their side of the cliff.

They climbed up in silence; and when once at the top, far from all eyes and ears, without troubling themselves about the landscape, Olga turned her back to the sea, and addressed herself to Ariadne:

“My dear friend,” said she, taking her hand, “I am very guilty. I have deceived you; and yet there is no one in the world who deserved my confidence more than you. You will forgive me, however; for, before speaking to my mother on the subject, I wish to tell you that Constantin and I are engaged.”

Ariadne gazed at her friend; a slight trembling shook her frame, but there was no other sign of emotion.

“When did this happen?” said she, with an effort.

“Last August.”

The young artist looked at Ladof, who was gazing fixedly at the sea without seeing it.

“I hope you will be very happy,” said she, sweetly.

Her lips became white and her cheeks livid. She

looked around for a support. She saw a rock a few steps off, and sat down on it.

“I am very tired,” said she. “I ask your pardon for having received with such apparent coldness news that— Be assured, both of you, that I wish you much happiness from the bottom of my heart.”

She extended to each of them her hand. Olga threw herself impetuously around her friend’s neck, and covered her with kisses. Ladof timidly took the hand offered him, and pressed it, not daring to kiss it. Ariadne lifted it to his lips.

“It is the Mellini who compliments you, monsieur,” said she, with a faint smile. “Olga will not be jealous.”

“Jealous !” exclaimed Olga, “jealous of you ! Such an idea never came into my head ! Now are you satisfied ?”

“Perfectly,” replied Ariadne.

The sun shone on the sea ; the grass was green and thick ; a slight north wind gently moved the dried flowers at their feet. The lovers sat down on the ground ; they were almost at the extremity of the cliff on the northern coast. The high chalky wall, which runs as far as Dieppe, stood out in bold relief against the blue sky. All was peace and joy.

“I am very happy,” replied Olga.

Her *fiancé* held her hand in his, and the young

princess's face expressed the most complete delight : she was enjoying life to the full. Ariadne got up and stepped nearer the edge of the cliff.

“Do not go so near the edge !” cried Olga ; “you frighten me. Is the cliff very high ?”

“Very high,” replied Ariadne, in a calm voice.

“Can you see the ocean ?”

“Yes.”

“And the bottom ?”

“At the bottom is a flag-stone—flat, polished, and white ; the waves regularly break against the cliff just under us.”

“There are no pebbles ?”

“Not one.”

“That must be pretty. I will take a glance myself,” said Olga, trying to get up.

“I beg of you not to go there,” said Ladof, holding her back. “You might fall !”

Ariadne turned around. It was the first time she had seen any signs of affection between them. She glanced at them astonished, then thought that it was very natural, and again looked down the gulf.

“Mlle. Ariadne, you make me afraid,” said Ladof ; “come back, I beg of you !”

The young girl gave him a look which Constantin remembered all his life.



“What difference does it make to you?” said Ariadne’s eyes, though not with anger. “I am nothing to you; it is not I whom you love!”

She retreated a few steps.

“Listen, Ariadne,” replied Olga. “We are in a very embarrassing position. Mamma has taken it into her head, I don’t know why”—the blush which covered her face proved that her conscience was reproaching her—“that it was you to whom Constantin was paying attention. She wished to see you married.”

Ladof was made uneasy by these remarks; and, suddenly dropping Olga’s hand, he turned toward Ariadne.

“I have not acted right toward you, mademoiselle; I feel it, and I am distressed beyond measure. Will you forgive me? Unless you do, I would not dare—”

“I forgive you,” said Ariadne.

Her look, full of compassion, fell upon the young man like a beam of light from above. All the love she had suffered was concentrated in that sublime expression, full of tenderness and pardon.

“But that is not yet enough,” replied Olga. “Mamma will never consent to our marriage, after having imagined that you were the betrothed. You must render us a great service, my good Ariadne. Tell her that we love each other, and beg her to consent. . . .

She will not refuse you. If you knew what confidence she had in you, and how much she loves you ! Will you do us this pleasure ?”

“Tell the princess that you love each other ?” said Ariadne, slowly. “Why should I do this, and not you ?”

“Because she thought it was you. She could not, at least, be angry with you,” said Olga, innocently.

Constantin said nothing ; he was in torture. Ariadne’s face, upon which Olga, in her careless selfishness, saw no fatigue, betrayed to him the expression of a heart in despair.

“I will do my best,” said Ariadne, softly ; “but if I fail, you must not blame me.”

She left them, and returned to the brink of the cliff.

“Look !” said she ; “what is yonder ?”

A thick fog was advancing from the north ; it seemed to float along slowly, but was driven on rapidly by a stiff breeze. It resembled steam issuing from a boiling caldron, but more massive and compact. The cloud moved toward them, ascending the cliff, and discovering at intervals the ruggedness of the coast. Then it appeared to penetrate the mainland, after its passage leaving flakes of mist like tufts of wool on the trees of the neighboring farms. A

coaster's bark, in the act of tacking about, at some distance off, was caught in the cloud, and disappeared as if swallowed by a monster; and then the cloud passed on.

"That is very strange," continued Olga. "Is the fog coming toward us?"

"Without doubt," replied Constantin; "let us go down."

"No, no; we will stay here."

Ariadne's beautiful profile was brought out clearly, as she still stood on the edge of the cliff, with the sky for a background. With hands crossed over her breast, as if to suppress her suffering, she looked at the sky, the sea, the cloud, and wondered why all was so beautiful, so grand, so poetical, when a human being was enduring an agony more frightful than death itself.

"Tell me, Ariadne," said Olga, suddenly, "is it possible that you have lost your voice?"

"Yes," replied the artist, without turning around.

"Try it."

Ariadne threw her head back a little, and sang the same chromatic scale which had caused scandal at the institute two years before.

Her voice was as pure and velvety as ever, but it was but the echo of her old voice—it was so weak.

"Sing '*O mon fils!*'" said Olga.

Ariadne commenced the aria, but stopped at the fourth bar.

“Look at the cloud!” said she; “it is upon us!”

All of a sudden the cloud rested on the cliff; daylight disappeared, and it was dark and gloomy. Those exposed to it felt a damp coldness, which penetrated through their clothing.

“Oh!” said Olga, “it is more beautiful at a distance than near to us.”

“And so is life,” thought Ariadne.

“Let us go on,” said Olga.

The *fiancés* did not leave each other, but they could not see Ariadne, who was standing a few steps away from them.

“We must not stir,” cried Constantin. “We can no longer see our way; it would be certain death. The sea is on three sides of us!”

“How wearisome! I am frozen!” said Olga, a little impatiently.

“Mlle. Ariadne, do not move!” repeated Ladof. “The cloud will pass by in a moment, by you especially, you are so near the edge. Do you hear me?”

“Yes,” replied Ariadne.

Her voice seemed to come from a distance. She was thinking: “I am one too many in the world, and Olga evidently was thrown in my path to teach me so.

My first suffering was through her ; to-day the man I loved has chosen her ! I am a useless creature. . . . Art has deceived me. . . . I can no longer sing. . . . What will my life become ?”

A superstitious idea took possession of her.

“My hour has come ! I shall know my fate ! If I am to live, my star will lead me to safety ; if I am to die—”

She never finished thought or phrase. She took two or three steps in the opaque fog, with her hands stretched out to remove all obstacles.

“Ariadne !” cried Olga.

There was no response.

The fog cleared away ; there was already a yellow light in the sky which showed where the sun was.

“Ariadne !” cried Constantin, in a louder tone.

The fog rolled away from the earth ; the two young people were up in a minute ; they looked toward the spot where they last saw Ariadne’s profile. There was nothing there !

Horror-stricken, Constantin dragged himself on the grass as far as the brink of the cliff.

“Go back ! go back !” cried he to Olga, who wished to follow him ; “go back !”

“She is dead !” said she, clutching his arm.

Constantin drew back, sat down on the grass, and

passed his hand over his haggard eyes and disheveled hair.

“We have killed her !” said he.

The tide went out. When the two young people returned to the hotel, the princess saw that they were alone ; and when the fishermen made the tour of the beach, now almost dry, they found Ariadne lying on the great white polished flag-stone which she had admired.

The kindly wave had dashed her clothing around her, and her beautiful face had the same sad smile which had of late been seen so often on her lips.

The princess divined at once the catastrophe, and her daughter’s love for Ladof ; at the same time the lips of Olga trembled as she spoke.

“Do you believe it an accident ?” said the princess, with contempt, to the lovers. “I tell you, you have killed her ! I would rather have had for my daughter her who is lying there dead than the selfish, heartless child God has given me !”

However, every mother forgives ; and the two young people returned to Russia a few days after, ostensibly engaged.

Ariadne sleeps in the little cemetery of Étretat. Deserted in life, so was she in death. The princess paid a gardener to renew the flowers on her grave

regularly, but he never places any there except during the bathing season. What is the use of taking care of a grave which nobody visits ?

Morini received the money for his lessons, and swore he would never train another pupil. He always weeps when he speaks of Ariadne.

“Such a lovely voice !” said he. “So much talent ! so much heart ! but not made for the theatre !”

From time to time Ladof thinks of Ariadne. He is very happy with Olga ; but there are moments when he thinks that she who is dead knew better how to love.

THE END.





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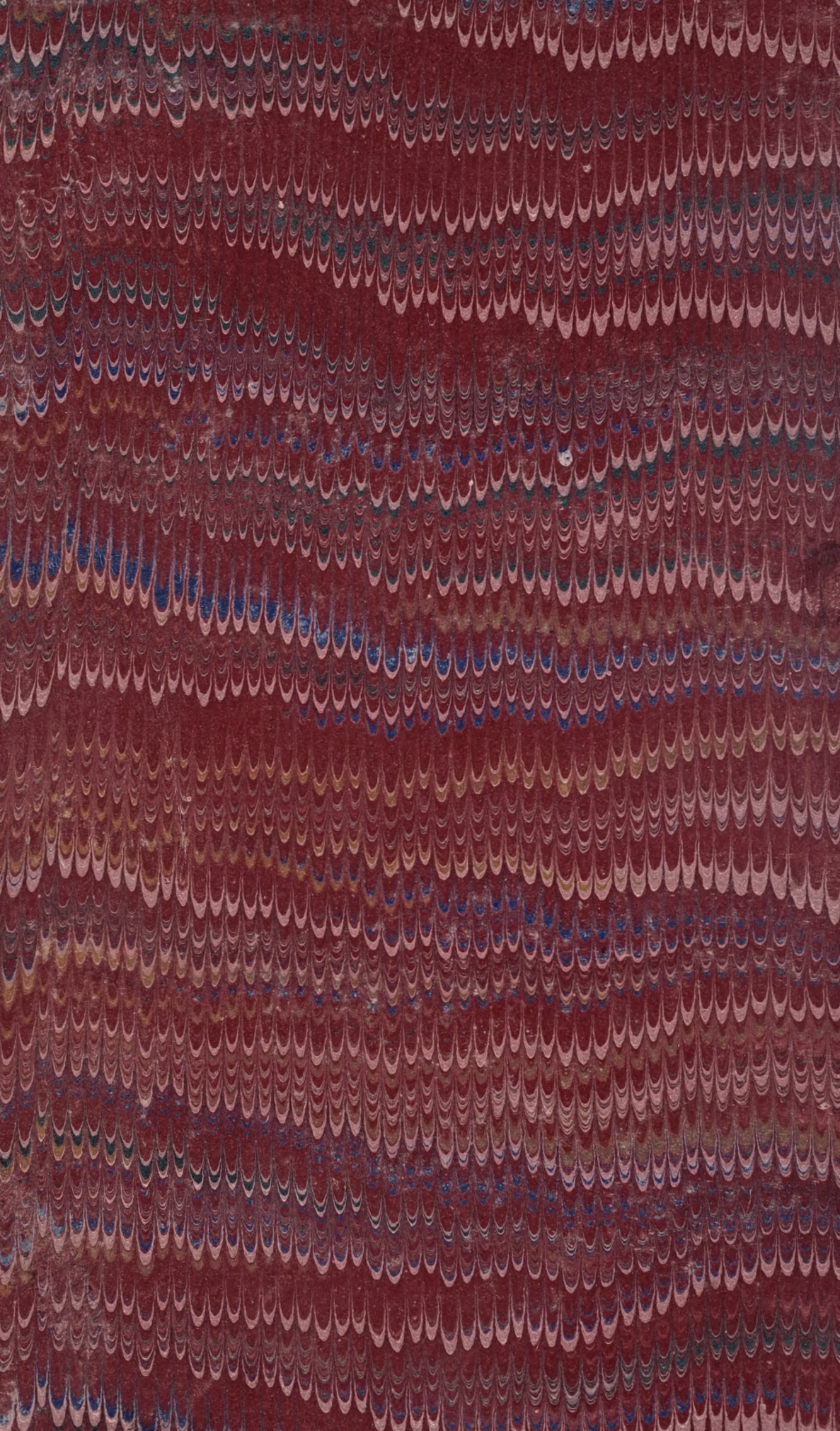


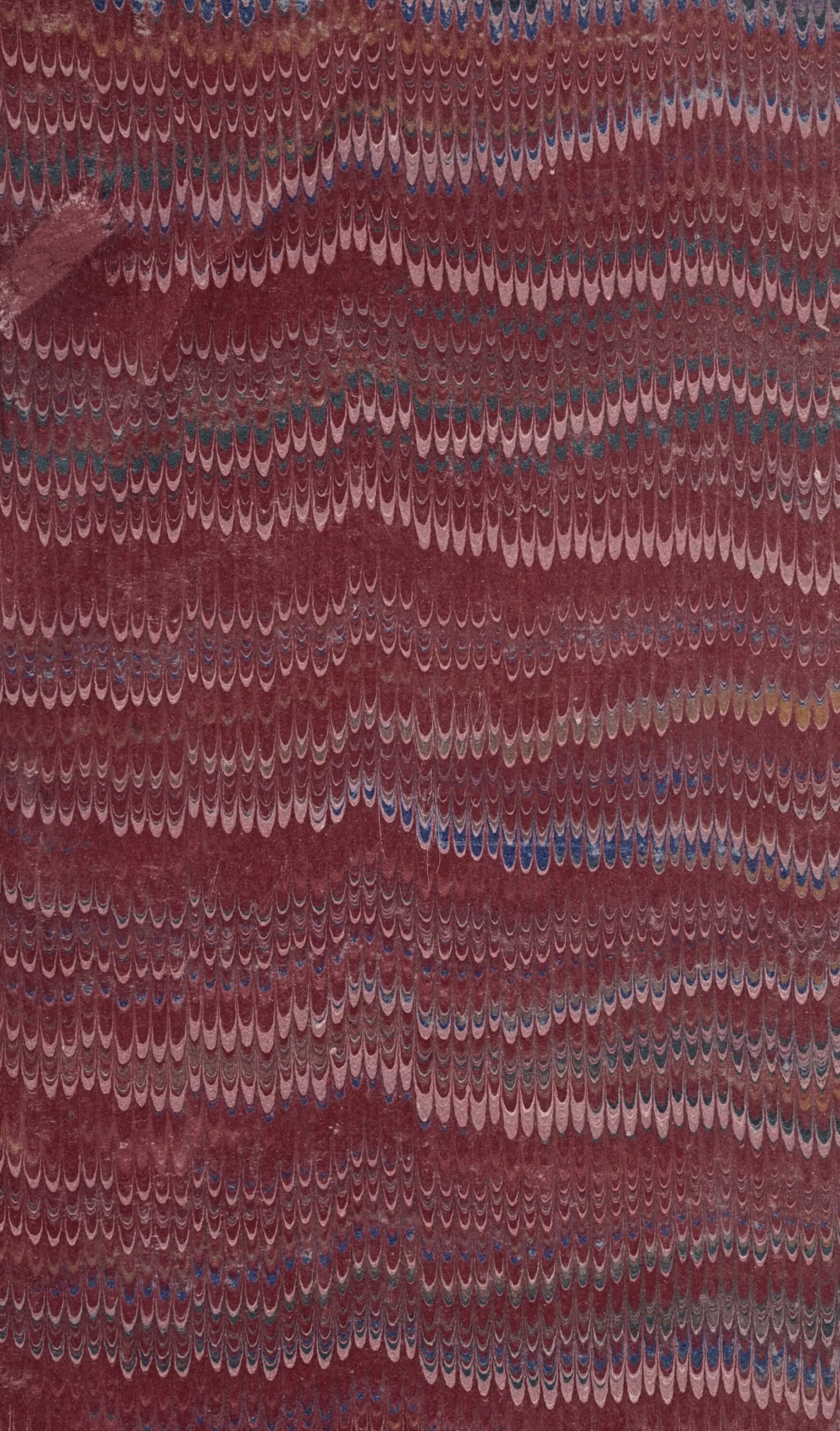












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