

TALES  
FOR A  
STORMY NIGHT

## PREFACE.

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The title of this book has been chosen in deference to the wide-spread belief that stories of the marvellous and of the supernatural should be read at night, and by preference on a rainy, windy night. At such a time the mind is more receptive of the creatures of the imagination, be they one's own or another's; then, too, ghosts are said to walk abroad and to show themselves to whom they will.

Only two of these tales, "Ghosts" and "The Battle of Père-Lachaise," can be

called modern. The others were written more than fifty years ago—"Farewell," as early as 1830. The Russian story, "Ghosts," was translated into French by Mérimée, and from his version the present English rendering is given.

The editor of the present volume can hardly expect the reader to be so simple as to think that these translations were not made for publication; in fact he is not himself so credulous as to believe this. The tales were turned into English several years ago. No steps were then taken toward their publication, and, meanwhile, two or three of them have appeared in some collections of translations from the French. Though a listener has often been polite enough to express a wish that what he has heard read might be printed, the editor is not prepared to say that the clamors of ad-

miring friends have forced the translators to make their labors public; that they have yielded to irresistible pressure. In short, the editor, being himself one of the translators, must allow the intelligent reader to determine by his own reflection whether they were led to publication by consciousness of their own merit, by the hope of fame, or by the lust for money.

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I.



GHOSTS.

# GHOSTS.

[From Ivan Tourguéneff.]

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## I.

I COULD not sleep, and tossed on my bed from one side to the other. "The devil, himself," thought I, "must be in this table-turning to excite one's nerves like this."

After a while, however, I had begun to grow more calm, when, suddenly near me I heard a low sound like some stringed instrument; a sad, sweet note.

I lifted my head. The moon had just risen and its rays shone full upon my face. One bar of light, white as chalk, fell across the floor.

The sound was renewed, and this time more distinctly. I raised myself on my elbow; my heart beat quickly. One minute passed, and then another. . . . Somewhere in the distance a cock crew, answered, farther off, by another.

My head fell back upon the pillow. "This is pleasant," said I to myself; "will my ears never stop ringing?"

At last I fell asleep, or I thought I slept. I had strange dreams. I seemed to be in my room and in my bed, without the power to close my eyes.

Again the same sweet sound! I turned my head. The ray of moonlight crossing the floor slowly gathered itself together. . . . Before me, light as a mist, stood the light apparition of a woman. "Who is there," I asked with an effort. A voice soft as the rustling of leaves answered me, "'Tis I; I come to see thee." "To see me! what art thou?" "Come to-night—to the edge of the woods under the old oak tree; I shall be there."



I must see the features of this mysterious being. I shuddered involuntarily and felt chilled through. I found myself no longer lying down, but sitting up in bed; and where I thought I had seen a ghost, I saw only the white bar of moonlight strike across the black floor.

## II.

The day passed very slowly. I tried to read; to work: I could do nothing. At last it was night; my heart beat strongly as I waited for what might come. I lay with my face turned to the wall.

“Why didst thou not come?” murmured a voice soft and low, but distinct. It was in the room close behind me. It is she! The same mysterious vision, with its motionless eyes; its motionless face, so full of sadness.

“Come,” murmured she again. “I will,” said I, without fear. The phantom seemed to move towards me; it trembled; its form became confused and agitated like a vapor. In

another moment there was nothing there but the polished floor and the white moonlight upon it.

### III.

I spent the whole of the next day in the most violent agitation. At supper I drank nearly a bottle of wine. For a moment I went out upon the lawn, but immediately came in again and threw myself upon my bed, with my pulses throbbing.

Again the vibration sounded in my ears. I trembled and did not dare to look round. Suddenly I felt as if some one from behind laid a hand on each of my shoulders and murmured in my ear, "Come, come, come!" I tremblingly answered with a sigh, "I will come," and raised my head. The white lady was there leaning over my couch. She smiled sweetly and immediately disappeared. I had gained one good look at her face and it seemed to me I had seen her before somewhere; but when and where? The next morning I rose

very late and all day I walked about the fields. I went to the old oak-tree at the edge of the woods and looked carefully all around it.

As evening fell, I seated myself at the window of my study. My old housekeeper brought me a cup of tea, but I did not touch it. I could not make up my mind what to do, and felt almost as though I were going mad. The sun slowly sank; in the sky there was not one cloud. Suddenly the landscape was flooded with a purple light that seemed almost supernatural; the trees, the grass, the hills, all looked petrified and covered with a brilliant glaze. This glaze and immobility, the sharp and brilliant distinctness of every object, and the solemn stillness, all seemed in strange and incomprehensible contrast. Without the least noise a large brown bird flew suddenly to my window-sill, and as I looked at him, returned the glance with his round, deep eyes. "No doubt," thought I, "you are sent to me that I may not forget my rendezvous." At once the

bird flapped his downy wings and flew away with as little noise as he had approached.

For some time after I remained seated at my window, but all doubt or irresolution was gone. I felt powerless, as though drawn into some magic circle. Resistance was useless, dragged on as I was by some secret power, as a boat is carried along by the rapids inevitably towards the cataract.

At length I rose; the purple color of the landscape had vanished, the brilliant hues had died away and all objects were fast becoming lost in obscurity. The magic immobility had also ceased, a wind began to blow gently and the moon rose bright in a clear blue sky, and under her cold glance the leaves of the trees trembled and rustled, now silver, now black.

My housekeeper came in with a lighted candle, but a puff of wind extinguished it. I rose quickly, crushed my hat down over my eyes and walked rapidly to the corner of the forest where the old oak-tree stood.

## IV.

Many years ago this oak had been struck by lightning. Its shattered top was dead, but the rest had still life enough for several centuries. As I approached it a little cloud, passing over the moon, made the shadows under the foliage nearly black. At first I could make out nothing noticeable, but on looking to one side, my heart suddenly stopped, for I saw a white figure motionless, near a bush which grew between the oak-tree and the forest. My hair stood on end, I could scarcely breathe, but I kept on advancing toward the wood.

It was indeed she—my nocturnal visitor. Just as I came near to her, the moon emerged from behind the cloud. The apparition seemed to be made of a milky-white mist half transparent, for while gazing at her I could just discern through her head a branch waving in the wind behind her. Only her eyes and hair seemed darker. I saw, too, that on one of her fingers, as she held her hands crossed before

her, there gleamed a little gold ring, pale but brilliant.

Within two steps of her I stopped and wished to speak, but my voice stuck in my throat; still the feeling I had was not terror exactly. She turned her eyes toward me, her gaze expressing neither sadness nor gayety, only pensive attention. I waited for her to speak, but she remained silent, motionless, looking at me with a glance fixed and dead.

“Here I am!” I said finally, with a supreme effort. My voice sounded harsh and strange.

“I love thee!” said she, with her still soft voice.

“You love me!” cried I, stupefied. “Give thyself to me,” she whispered. “Give myself to thee! Why, you are a spirit—you are only a ghost!” My brain was in a whirl. “What are you? A vapor? A mist? A form of air? Give myself to you! First tell me who you are. Have you ever lived upon the earth? Where do you come from?”

“ Give thyself to me. I will not harm thee. Say only these two words : ‘ Take me.’ ”

“ What does she say ? ” I thought. “ What does all this mean ? Shall I venture ? ” “ Well,” cried I, suddenly and with unlooked for courage, as though something had pushed me on from behind, “ take me ! ” The words were scarcely spoken, when the mysterious figure, with a silent laugh which made it quiver all over, advanced toward me as she unclasped her hands and spread out her arms. I longed to spring back, but already I was in her power, and she held me in her arms.

I felt myself lifted from the ground and together we flew, moderately fast, over the top of the motionless grass.

## V.

At first my brain reeled and I closed my eyes. When I opened them a moment after, we were still flying and already the woods were left behind. Below us lay a vast plain, and I

saw with horror that we were at a prodigious height from the ground.

The thought struck me like lightning. "I am in the power of a demon!" Up to this time the idea of evil or of my own possible destruction had not crossed my mind. And still we flew along and it seemed to me we rose still higher. "Where are you taking me?" I cried at last. "Where thou wilt," answered my companion, clasping me yet more firmly in her arms. Her face touched mine, yet I could scarcely feel the contact. "Take me back to the earth," I faltered, "I am dizzy at this height."

"Well, but close thine eyes and hold thy breath."

I obeyed and at once felt myself falling like a stone. The wind lashed my hair. When I got my breath I found that we were flying along the ground just touching the tops of the long grass.

"Put me down here," I said, "I don't like to fly; I am not a bird."



“I hoped to give thee pleasure. As for us, we do nothing else.”

“Us! Yes; but, who are you?” No answer. “You do not dare to tell me!”

A plaintive sound like the sad note which had revealed her presence the first night, sounded in my ear as we flew along through the moist air near the ground.

“Put me down, I tell you,” said I. She inclined her head in token of obedience, and I found myself once more on my feet. She stood before me and again joined her hands as though waiting. As at first, her expression seemed to me one of quiet resignation.

“Where are we?” I asked, not recognizing the place where we had alighted. “Far from thy house, but we can reach it in a moment,” was the answer. “How can that be; must I trust myself to you again?”

“I have not harmed thee, nor will I. We can fly about together until dawn; that is all. Any-where thy thoughts or wishes lead thee I can take thee—in every country on the

earth. Give thyself to me. Say again, 'Take me.'"

"Very well, take me," and her arms once more closed round me. Again we left the earth and began our flight.

## VI.

"Where wouldst thou go?" said she.

"Straight ahead of us."

"But here is a forest."

"Let us pass over it, but not so fast."

Immediately we rose, whirling as a woodcock flies; and then flew straight on again. No longer grasses and shrubs, but the tops of majestic forest-trees seemed slipping away from under our feet. A strange sight was this forest, viewed from above, with here and there the moonlight striking through its dense foliage. It seemed like some great animal asleep, and breathing with an indistinct muttering noise. Now and then we would cross a clearing, and I could see the shadows of the trees,

sharply outlined. From time to time we could hear the hare's plaintive cry from the brush-wood, or the hoot of the screech-owl, which flapped its wings close beside us. The night breeze wafted up to us odors of mushrooms, wild parsley and the swelling buds of the wild rose. Cold and severe shone round us the moonlight, and right above our heads gleamed the Great Bear. Soon the forest was left behind, and we saw a plain, through which a long ribband of gray mist marked the course of a river. We followed one of its banks lined with bushes weighed down with the heavy dew. The current shone with a bluish lustre, and then again swept round and round in dark and threatening whirlpools. Here and there in spots little wreaths of mist played above the surface; and again I could see, where the water ran quieter, white water-lilies opening their petals and bathing themselves in the moonlight, like naiads who think themselves sheltered from every eye. I sought to pluck one, and stooped so low as almost to touch the clear

mirror of the stream, but a damp, unpleasant odor was flung into my face as I grasped its slippery stem. Now we began to fly from one bank across to the other, like the curlew, and in fact roused some real birds every minute. More than once we passed over pretty flocks of wild ducks, gathered in little groups among the foliage of the rose-trees. They did not fly; one would quickly draw his head out from under his wing, and look and look; and then, as if satisfied, would hide it again in the silky down, while his comrades would utter a feeble "quack, quack." From a cytusus bush we started up a heron, and when I saw him struggle on his long legs and awkwardly shake his great wings it made me think of a German professor more than ever.\* But as to fish, we did not see one; they must all have been asleep at the bottom. By this time I began to become accustomed to flying, and even to enjoy it.

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\* In Russia, the common nickname given to Germans is "herons."

Whoever has dreamed of it can understand my feelings. Completely reassured, I could observe more closely the strange phantom who was my companion in this incredible adventure.

## VII.

She appeared to be a young woman, with features with nothing of the Russian type about them. Her form, grayish-white and semi-transparent, reminded me of the figures we see carved on alabaster vases and lighted from within by a lamp. It seemed to me again that her features were not entirely unfamiliar.

“May I speak to you?” I asked.

“Speak.”

“You have a ring on your finger. Have you lived on earth? Have you been married?” I stopped; she did not answer.

“What is your name; or what was it?”

“Call me Ellis.”

“Ellis! That is an English name! Are you English? Have you ever known me?”

“No.”

“Then why is it to me that you come?”

“I love thee.”

“Are you happy?”

“Yes. To fly, to soar aloft with thee in the pure air!”

“Ellis,” cried I, suddenly, “are you not a lost spirit? Are you not a soul in torment?”

“I do not understand,” she murmured, lowering her head.

“In the name of God, I beseech you”—began I, but she interrupted me.

“What sayest thou?” said she, as though she did not at all understand me; “I know not what it means;” and I seemed to feel a feeble pressure from the arm that encircled me like a cold band. “Fear not,” she continued; “fear nothing, my friend!”

Her face bent down to mine; on my lips I felt a strange sensation as of the prick of a blunt needle, or the first touch of a leech that has not yet drawn blood.

## VIII.

We were flying at a considerable height, and looking down I saw we were passing over a town, which I could not recognize, built on the side of a hill. Church spires rose above a mass of shingled roofs and dark orchards. At one of the bends of the river I could see the black outline of a bridge. Gilded cupolas and metal crosses shone with a subdued brilliancy. Silently outlined against the moon-lit sky, I could see long well-sweeps amid the clumps of willows. Silently, too, the white high-road ran straight as an arrow into one end of the town, and emerged at the other as silently, to be lost in darkness and the monotony of an endless plain beyond.

“What town is this?” I asked of Ellis.

“N——.”

“In the province of J——?”

“Yes.”

“We are very far from my home!”

“For us, not far.”

“Really!” I suddenly became audacious.  
“Take me to South America.”

“Impossible. It is day there.”

“Ah, we are night-birds, are we? Well, never mind where; only far away.”

“Close thine eyes and do not breathe,” answered Ellis; and we set off swift as the storm-wind.

The air whistled in my ears with a deafening noise. Soon we stopped, but the roar continued, indeed it increased. It was like a horrible tempest, an unearthly struggle.

“Now open thine eyes,” said F

## IX.

I obeyed. “Great heavens, where am I?” About our heads crowded heavy thunder clouds, black, pushing and pressing on like furious monsters. Below us another monster, the tossing, raging ocean. Great mountains of boiling foam were shattered against crags as black as jet. The howl of the tempest; the



cold blast from the seething abyss; the hoarse sound of the surf grinding upon the beach! Above these I seemed to hear cries of distress, the distant discharge of cannon and the tolling of bells; boats grating upon the land; the scream of an unseen sea-gull; and by a sudden gleam of lightning there flashed across me the uncertain outline of a ship! Everywhere death and destruction! Again I shut my eyes overcome with horror.

“What is this? Where are we?”

“On the southern coast of the Isle of Wight, at the Black Gang Rocks, where many a vessel is wrecked,” answered Ellis, with what seemed to me an expression of malignant joy.

“Take me away, far from here! Take me home!”

I covered my face with my hands. We seemed now to fly faster than ever. The wind no longer whistled. It howled and tore at my clothing and at my hair. I could not breathe.

“Stand up!” said Ellis.

I tried to get my wits again about me. I

felt the ground under my feet, and the noise had ceased. All around me seemed dead; but the blood throbbed violently in my temples; my brain reeled, and in my ears was a feeble ringing sound. Gradually I overcame my faintness, stood up and opened my eyes.

## X.

We were on my own carriage-road. Straight ahead of us through the pointed leaves of a row of willows we could see a large pond, above which hovered the mist as though clinging to the surface; on the right the pale green of a wheat field; and on the left, looming out of the fog, my orchard with its great motionless trees covered with moisture. The breath of the morning had just touched them. Across the pale sky were scattered some white clouds, tinged with a faint golden light which announced the coming of the day; though from what point of the horizon the light came I could not tell. In the uniform paleness of the

sky no one could say where the sun would rise. The stars had disappeared; nothing was stirring, but every thing was at the point of awakening at the touch of the approaching dawn. "Day is coming," whispered Ellis in my ear. "Farewell until to-morrow."

I turned towards her. She was rising slowly in the air before me. Suddenly I saw her hold her two hands above her head. Her head, her hands, her shoulders, assumed all at once the color of flesh; in her dark eyes flashed a gleam of light; a singularly gentle smile drifted over her lips, now ruddy; she appeared a charming young woman. This sight lasted but an instant. As though suddenly overcome, she threw herself backward and quickly dissolved in air. For some time I remained stupefied and motionless. When I could look about me, it seemed as though the delicate rosy flesh tints that had so suddenly lighted up the apparition had not vanished, but filled the air all around. It was the sunrise. I felt all at once overcome by fatigue

and weakness, and turned toward the house. As I passed through the poultry-yard I could hear the fowls cackling; they are the first birds to awake. Along the edge of the thatched roof, like sentinels, perched the rooks, all busy with their morning toilets, strongly and sharply outlined against the milky sky. From the woods near I could hear the querulous note of the grouse, already up and in search of wild berries through the wet grass. As for myself, feeling a chill creep over me, I threw myself upon my bed and soon fell into a heavy sleep.

## XI.

The following night, as I approached the old oak, Ellis came to meet me quite like an old acquaintance. On my side all fear was gone, and I greeted her almost with pleasure. I had ceased to try to comprehend anything in this strange experience and, simply to satisfy my curiosity, was willing to let myself be carried flying through the air.

Soon I felt her arm embrace me, and we rose from the ground.

“Let us go to Italy,” I said in her ear.

“Where thou wilt, friend,” answered she, with quiet earnestness, and gently and gravely she bent down her head toward me. It seemed as though her face were less transparent than the night before, her features more feminine and less vaguely outlined; she recalled to my mind the beautiful vision which I had beheld that morning just as she disappeared.

“To-night,” said Ellis, “is the Great Night. It comes rarely when seven times thirteen” . . . Here I lost a few words: . . . “then,” she continued, “can be seen what at other times is hidden.”

“Ellis,” said I, in a suppliant tone, “who are you? Tell me at once!”

Without answering me she stretched out her long white hand; with her finger she pointed out far off on the sombre sky the dull red light of a comet shining among some small twinkling stars.

“How am I to understand you? Do you live as that comet wanders, between the planets and the sun? Do you wander among mortals? And what? and where?”

The hand of Ellis was suddenly laid upon my eyes. A heavy white mist, such as rises from damp valleys, surrounded me. “To Italy! To Italy!” she whispered. “To-night is the Great Night!”

## XII.

The fog was lifted, and I saw beneath us a boundless plain, and the warm air soft on my cheek told me we were no longer in Russia. The plain, too, did not look like our own; it was an immense desert tract without tree or shrub. Here and there on every side, like fragments of a broken mirror, shone pools of stagnant water. Further on I could just discern a noiseless, motionless sea. Between the masses of cloud the gleaming stars shone large, and on every side sounded the incessant, con-

tinuous hum and trill of a thousand voices. These sounds, at once dull and penetrating, were the voice of the desert.

“The Pontine Marshes!” said Ellis. “Hear the frogs! Can’st thou not smell the sulphur?”

The Pontine Marshes! A feeling of solemn sadness fell upon me.

“Why do you bring me to this melancholy, deserted place? We had better have gone to Rome.”

“Rome is near,” said Ellis; “be ready.”

We flew along just above the old Via Latina. Standing knee-deep in the swamp a buffalo raised his great head, with shaggy tufts of hair between his wide spreading horns. He shewed the whites of his stupid, wicked eyes and snorted loud through his wet nostrils, as if he scented us.

“Rome! Here is Rome,” said Ellis. “Look ahead!”

What bleak mass is this looming above the horizon? Are they the arches of some giant’s bridge? What river can it cross? Why is it

in ruins here and there? No, it is no bridge, it is an aqueduct, and this is the sacred Campagna! There rise the Alban Mountains! Their tops and the grey-brown of the old aqueduct are feebly lighted by the first rays of the rising moon. On we rushed swiftly, and found ourselves hovering over a detached ruin. No one could tell what it had once been: a tomb, a palace or a temple. A dark ivy-vine clasped it with its mournful foliage; and below, like a gaping mouth, opened the black entrance to a subterranean vault. A rank, earthy smell of decay rose from every ivy-covered stone, from whose rough surface the polished marble facing had long ago crumbled away.

“Here!” whispered Ellis, stretching out her hand. “Call loudly, three times, the name of a great Roman.”

“What will happen?”

“Thou shalt see.”

I thought a moment, then cried: “Divus Caius Julius Cæsar?” . . .

“Divus Caius Julius Cæsar!” and



with an effort prolonging the sound,  
“ Cæsar ?”

### XIII.

The last echo of my voice had not died away, when I heard—I despair of describing how I felt or what came over me. First there was the murmur of a confused noise, hardly perceptible to the ear, but constantly repeated and increasing; blowing of trumpets and clapping of hands. Then I heard as though far away in the distance, or from some bottomless abyss, a clamor and confusion of many voices that came up to me in swelling, always swelling waves of sound. There were cries, stifled shrieks, like those of a woman in some fearful nightmare: and then the air around the ruin became troubled and dark. I thought I saw myriads of shadows surging up from the door of the vault and defiling in every direction. Some rounded at the top as though wearing helmets; others sharply pointed as though carrying spears. The light of the moon

in thousands of blue rays glinted upon these casques and lance-heads, and all this army, all this multitude pressed on and pushed each other and grew in number. I could feel—I was suffocated and crushed by it—the wild, wierd, nameless force and energy that filled and animated the mass. Yet not one single shadow was distinct. Suddenly a swaying movement agitated the whole crowd; as great billows rush on and then backward: “Cæsar! Cæsar venit!” was the roar of ten thousand voices, like the sound of the storm-wind in the forest. A dull reverberation—as though, were we touching the earth, I should have felt it tremble; and there rose slowly from the ruin a pale, severe head, crowned with a wreath of laurel, the eyes closed. It was the head of the Emperor!

No human words can describe the horror that seized upon me at this sight. If those eyes or lips should open, I felt I must die on the spot. “Ellis!” I cried frantically, “Ellis, I will not! I can not! Take me away from

Rome, this brutal, terrible Rome! Take me away. Away!"

"Faint heart," she whispered, and we resumed our flight. Behind me I heard, this time high and loud, the cry of the Roman legions. Then all was hushed.

#### XIV.

"Look," said Ellis, "and be calm!"

I remember that my first feeling was so quiet and peaceful that I could only take in long breaths of the soft air. A blue vapor, half light, half mist, enveloped me in its silvery radiance. At first I could distinguish nothing—the blue light blinded me—but gradually I discerned the outline of wooded hills. A lake lay beneath us with the reflections of the stars shimmering on its deep waters. I heard the murmur of the gentle waves breaking on the strand. The perfume of orange-flowers was on the breeze, pure and strong, and with it as

pure and strong floated the sound of a young, fresh, woman's voice.

Led on, fascinated by the perfume and the voice, I desired to descend, and, floating lower and lower, we came toward a splendid palace of marble, girt in with great cypress-trees. From one of the upper windows came forth the voice: . . . Right against the foot of the palace walls broke softly the waves, glistening with the bright, dusty pollen of flowers; and directly opposite in front of us rose an island from the waters, dense with orange trees and laurels, and enveloped in a downy mist through which gleamed white the marble of porches, columns and statues.

"Lago Maggiore!" said Ellis, "and this is Isola Bella!" and I could answer only with a long breath of delight as we descended. The voice sounded always nearer and irresistibly drew me on. I must see the face of her whose voice made such music on such a night; and we neared the window.

In the middle of a room, decorated like a

villa of Pompeii, more like a museum of antiques than a modern apartment, crowded with Greek statues, Etruscan vases, rare plants and gorgeous draperies, lighted from above by two crystal globes for lamps, sat a young woman at a piano. With her head thrown back lightly, her eyes half-closed, she was singing an Italian song. She sang and smiled. She smiled, and from a marble niche across lazy wreaths of blue smoke slowly rising from a bronze incense burner, a faun of Praxiteles, young and careless as she—and, like her, soft and voluptuous, smiled too, I thought. The young woman sat and sang alone. Enchanted by her voice, her beauty, intoxicated by the light and the perfume, and my whole being stirred at the sight of her youth, her freshness and her rapture, I altogether forgot my shadowy companion. I forgot the strange means by which I had been thrust into the privacy of this life so foreign and so distant from my own. I tried to climb through the window and to

speak. . . . Suddenly my whole frame felt a shock, and quivered as though I had touched a Leyden jar charged to the utmost. Through the mist and cloud of Ellis' features her expression showed dark and threatening. Into her wide-opened eyes had come a look of fierce and deep malignity. "Away!" said she roughly; and again the rush of the wind, the roar, the giddiness, but this time, instead of the cruel cry of the triumphing legions, it was the last sweet note of the song I had heard, that long vibrated in my ear.

We stopped, but this sound still lingered, though I felt round me a far different atmosphere. Then louder and more shrill rose the note, and a fresh breeze sprang up as from some great river, with smells of hay and thatch and smoke. A second note sounded and then a third, but in so different a style, in one so familiar to me, I at once recognized a Russian song—a Russian singer. And then every thing around me grew distinct.

## XV.

We were on the banks of a great river. On our left the long, flat steppe from which here and there loomed up large wind-mills; on the right, far as the eye could reach, the river ran. Near the bank long boats at anchor, nodding with the current, floated up and down at the end of their cables, their masts pointing and moving like fingers making mysterious signs. In one of these boats, from which the singing came, gleamed a little fire, the light of which reflected in long lines of red, trembled on the ripples of the dark water. On every side shone similar fires, in the boats and on the shore. Were they far off or near? I could not tell. Now they would all of a sudden sink down, and then blaze up again. Countless crickets, busy as the incessant frogs on the marshes of the Campagna, chirped in the grass. The sky was without a cloud and here and there and now and then around us in the air

I heard the plaintive cries of birds I could not see. "Are we not in Russia?" I asked.

"This is the Volga," answered Ellis, as we flew along above the river.

"Why did you take me away from that beautiful spot?" said I. "Did it displease you? Perhaps it was jealousy you felt!"

Ellis's lips trembled. Her look grew threatening; but almost immediately her features assumed their usual impassive quiet.

"I should like to go home," I said.

"Wait! wait!" she cried. "To-night is the Great Night! It will not come soon again. Thou may'st be of help. Wait!"

We crossed the Volga, darting obliquely on this side and that in short, sharp turning flights, as swallows fly before a storm. The deep waters murmured on beneath us, a cold wind struck us and beat against my face. Soon the right bank of the river could be seen and through the half darkness we perceived rough cliffs with crevices and caves seaming their



steep sides. "Cry 'Saryn na Kitchkou,'" said Ellis in a low voice.

I had but just recovered from my fright at seeing the Roman spectres, and besides was tired and felt strangely sad. In short, I lacked courage. I wished not to speak those terrible words, sure that they would summon—as in the Wolf's Glen in "Der Freischütz"—some frightful apparition, but in spite of myself my lips opened and in a stifled voice I cried, "Saryn na Kitchkou."\*

## XVI.

As at the Roman ruin, at first all was silent. All of a sudden, right in my ear, I heard a brutal laugh, followed by the sound of a body falling and struggling in the water. I peered about me; there was no one; but soon I heard

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\* These words of a Tartar dialect were the war-cry of the pirates of the Volga. At this sound the crews of vessels boarded by these outlaws would throw themselves on their faces on the deck on pain of having their throats cut.

the same sounds echoed along the cliffs; and there rose a fearful and ghastly tumult. It was a chaos of sounds; cries of agony, blows, furious imprecations, and laughter more terrible and hideous than all the rest; the splash of oars in the water; blows of hatchets; the sound of splitting open doors and chests; the creak of the rigging; the noise of wheels upon the sand; the tramp of many horses; the clanking of chains; the crackling and roaring of mighty fires; drunken songs; grinding of teeth and fearful curses; lamentations; entreaties; military orders; groans of the dying, all mingled with the shrill blast of the fife and savage yells of triumph. I could hear and distinguish cries of "Kill him!" "To the water!" "Burn them!" "To work!" "No quarter!" I could even hear the labored panting of the exhausted and the dying. And yet I could see nothing. The landscape remained unchanged. Beneath us rolled the river, dark and silent. The banks seemed wilder and more deserted than before.

I turned to Ellis. She placed her finger upon my lips.

“Stepàn Timoféitch! Here comes Stepàn Timoféitch!”\* The fierce cry rang all over the plain. “Long live our little father! Our Ataman! Our leader!” All at once, though I still saw nothing, I seemed to feel the approach of a gigantic form, and a terrible voice shouted: “Frolka! where art thou, dog? Set fire to every thing! Here, give a stroke of the hatchet to those white hands! Make mince meat of them all!”

I felt the heat of a fire not far from me; the pungent smell of burning wood choked me; warm drops like blood fell on my hands and face. Peals of savage laughter echoed around me.

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\* Stepàn or Stenka Razine, a Cossack; first a pirate on the Volga and Caspian Sea, then chief of a formidable insurrection of serfs. He captured Astrakhan and devastated the central provinces of Russia in the middle of the 17th century, and was afterward taken and broken on the wheel.

I lost consciousness, and when I had again come to myself I was flying with Ellis over my own forest near the oak-tree.

“See'st thou that pretty little path,” she asked; “there where the moonlight falls and those two birch-trees are moving? Shall we go there?”

I was so overcome and worn out, body and mind, that I could only utter the word “Home!”

“Thou art at home,” said Ellis's voice. I was standing alone at my own door. Ellis had vanished. The watch-dog came up, looked at me suspiciously and ran away howling. I dragged myself up stairs, and without undressing, flung myself upon the bed and dropped asleep.

## XVII.

The next day—all the morning—I was wretched. I could scarcely move, but my physical pains did not trouble me most; I was ashamed of my conduct and disgusted with

myself. "Faint heart!" I repeated. "Yes, Ellis was right; why should I have been afraid? Why not have used my opportunities? I might have seen Cæsar; and fear took away my senses, and I fled like a child from the rod! As to Razine, that is a different thing. In my position as a gentleman and landed proprietor—but even then, why have I been afraid? Faint heart! Faint heart?"

"All this—may it not have been all a dream?" I said to myself, at length. I called my old housekeeper.

"Marfa, what time was it when I went to bed last night? Do you remember?"

"Why, how can I tell, my master? Late, I should think. When it began to grow dark you went away from the house, and I could hear the heels of your boots on the floor of your room long after midnight—about morning. Yes, about morning. And this has been the way for two nights, now! Does any thing trouble you?" . . . "Good! These flights," thought I, "these flights through the

air — how can I doubt their reality now? Marfa! How do I look to-day?" I asked.

"How? Let me look at you. Your cheeks are hollow. Yes, and you are pale, master. Why, you are as yellow as wax, too!"

A little out of countenance, I sent Marfa away.

"I shall die of it, or else lose my wits," said I to myself, as I stood at the window. "This must end! It is terrible! My heart beats so strangely! While I fly, it seems as though something was drinking my heart's blood, or as though it were oozing away, drop by drop, as the birch-tree loses its sap, when its bark is pierced by a hatchet. All this is not natural. And Ellis! She plays with me as a cat with a mouse, and yet she does not appear to wish me any harm. Well, this shall be the last time that I trust myself with her. To-night I will see as much as I can, and then— But, what if she should be drinking my life-blood; absorbing my vitality! What a horrible thought! To fly so very swiftly must be injurious! They

say that in England it is against the law to travel faster on the railways than 120 versts an hour."

I thought it all over for a long time, but at ten o'clock in the evening I was standing again by the old oak-tree.

### XVIII.

The night was dark and cold; the air felt damp. To my great surprise, I found no one under the oak. I walked about for a little while; I went as far as the woods; I came back, always trying to penetrate the gloom. No one! I waited awhile, and then called "Ellis!" several times, raising my voice more and more, but all in vain. I felt disappointed, almost sad. Already I had forgotten the possibility of all those dangers that had troubled me so much a short time before. I could not make up my mind not to see Ellis again.

"Ellis! Ellis! Come! Will you not come?" I cried for the last time. Roused by my voice,

a crow suddenly took flight from the top of a neighboring tree, flapping his wings and making a noise through the branches. Ellis did not appear, and with hanging head I went back toward the house. I was already on the carriage road, and could see the light shining from the window of my room, now bright, now obscured by the foliage of the intervening apple-trees. It seemed like an eye that was watching and guarding me. Suddenly I heard a little rustling sound behind me, and felt myself lifted from the ground just as a quail is seized by a sparrow-hawk. It was Ellis. Her cheek touched mine, and I felt her arm embrace me tightly. She spoke, and her voice, always low and soft, fell on my cheek like a cold breath.

“It is I!” she said. I felt at once pleasure and fear. We were flying close to the ground.

“You did not wish to come to-night then?” I asked.

“Thou wert sorry not to find me? Oh, thou lovest me then! Thou art mine!”



These last words troubled me. I did not know what to say.

“I was kept back,” she said. “I was watched.”

“Who has the power to control you?” I asked.

“Where shall we go?” asked Ellis, as usually, without answering my question.

“Take me to Italy—to that lake. You know!”

She shook her head. At this instant I noticed for the first time that her face was no longer transparent. It seemed as though a faint rose-color had spread over its milky whiteness. I looked into her eyes, and their expression gave me an unpleasant feeling. There was, deep down, a sinister look, hardly visible, yet decided; like the eye of a frozen snake that the sun is just beginning to warm into life.

“Ellis!” I cried, “who are you? Tell me, I conjure you!”

She shrugged her shoulders in silence. I

was piqued, and thought I would give her a lesson. The idea struck me that we should go to Paris. "There," thought I, "she will have chance enough to be jealous."

"Ellis, you are not afraid of large cities? Of Paris, for instance?"

"No."

"No? Nor of the brightly-lighted places like the boulevards?"

"It is not the light of day," said Ellis.

"Very well. Take me, then, to the Boulevard des Italiens!"

She threw the end of her long sleeve over my head. At once I felt myself surrounded with the same white mist, with an odor of poppies in the air. Every thing vanished, light, sound, almost all sensation. I was scarcely conscious of life, and this state of almost annihilation brought me rest and pleasure. Suddenly the fog was lifted; Ellis took her sleeve from before my face; I saw below me vast buildings and a blaze of light and motion. It was Paris.

## XIX.

I had been to Paris before, and at once recognized the place to which Ellis had brought me. Here was the Tuileries Garden, with its old Indian chestnut-trees, its grated windows, its moats, its Sentinel Zouaves looking like wild animals. We passed in front of the palace and of St. Roch and stopped at the Boulevard des Italiens. Throngs of people, young and old, workmen in their blouses, ladies in gorgeous raiment, streamed along the sidewalks. From restaurants and cafés, lavishly gilded, shone innumerable lights. Omnibuses, fiacres, vehicles of all kinds crowded each other through the street—every thing gleamed and glittered, until the eye was dazzled, and yet, strange as it may seem, I was in no wise tempted to quit my airy post of observation—so lofty, so pure, to mingle with and lose myself in this human ants' nest. I felt mounting up towards me a heavy, red-hot vapor of a dubious smell. Too many human lives were mixed up in this

crowd! I was yet hesitating, when sharp and harsh, like the rasp of a file, there squeaked up to me the voice of a Lorette: the brazen tone penetrating me like the bite of some reptile. My imagination saw a stony face, flat, expressionless, a real Parisian face, white, red, with the eyes of a usurer, frizzled locks—a shrill bouquet of artificial flowers on an audacious hat: nails cut like claws and ample crinolines. I imagined at the same time I saw one of my stupid, good-natured countrymen fresh from the Steppes and just turned loose in Paris, trotting in meek admiration at the heels of this wretched venal doll. I could see him trying to hide his awkwardness under an air of effrontery, rolling his “r’s,” talking in a falsetto voice, endeavoring to imitate the manners of the waiters at Véfour’s, talking platitudes, bowing and cringing. In utter disgust I turned away. “Ugh!” said I, “Ellis need not feel jealous here.”

I noticed, however, that we had begun to

descend. All the noises and smells of Paris came up to meet us.

“Stop!” I said. “Don’t you feel, Ellis, that it is stifling here?”

“It was thine own wish to come to Paris.”

“I was wrong; I have changed my mind. Take me far off from here, Ellis, I beg of you! Why, there’s Prince Koulmametof trotting along the Boulevard, and his friend, Serge Varaxine, waving his hand to him and crying, ‘Ivan Stépanitch! Sup with me! I have engaged Rigolboche himself!’ Take me away, Ellis, far away from Mabilie, from the Maison Dorée, from the Jockey Club; far off from the soldiers with their shaven foreheads and gorgeous barracks, from the sergents de ville with imperials on their chins; from the glasses of absinthe, the gamblers at dominoes and at the Bourse; from the knots of red ribbon in coat and overcoat button-holes; far from M. de Foy, inventor of the Marriage Bureau; from courses of lectures on literature and from political pamphlets; far from Parisian Comedies,

Parisian Opera Bouffe, Parisian politeness and Parisian ignorance! Away! away! away!" . . . . I opened my eyes. A dark plain, with lighter lines cut across it here and there, by the many roads, was rapidly slipping away beneath us, and far off on the horizon, with a glare as of some great conflagration, gleamed the million lamps that light the Capital of the world.

## XX.

Again the sleeve of Ellis fell across my eyes; again I lost consciousness—and then again the cloud dissolved.

What is this? What park is this with its formal avenue of lindens cut trim and stiff like a wall, small trees looking like umbrellas, with porticos and temples in the Pompadour style; statues of rococo; tritons and nymphs in strangely shaped fountains, surrounded by balustrades of smoky marble? Can it be Versailles? No, it is not Versailles. It is another and smaller palace in rococo, that is

built near by under a group of oak-trees. The moon is veiled by a thin cloud, a smoky vapor seems to rise from the ground. The eye can not distinguish what it is. Is it really smoke, or only the misty moonlight? Further on, in one of the basins, floats a sleeping swan; its rounded white back recalls to me the frozen snow of the Steppes. Here and there glow-worms are shining like diamonds in the grass and on the pedestals of the statues.

“We are near Mannheim,” said Ellis. “This is the park of Schwetzingen.”

“Ah, we are in Germany,” I thought, and began to listen. All was still except an unseen spring, whose waters dropped into some hidden pool. It seemed as though the water were always repeating the same words: “There, there, always there!” In the middle of a path, between two formal walls of trees, I perceived a gentleman with a braided coat, red heels and lace cuffs, his sword dangling against the calves of his legs, who gave his hand with an exquisite grace to a beautiful lady, puffed

and frizzled and powdered. Pale, strange phantoms! I wished to see them closer, but they vanished, and I could hear only the babble of the spring.

“Those,” said Ellis, “are dreams out walking. Yesterday we could have seen very different things—strange things. To-night even the dreams fly from human sight. Away! Away!”

We rose and flew so straight ahead that I was hardly conscious of any motion, and the country beneath seemed flying from under us. Sombre, rocky mountains, covered with trees, came and went, followed by other mountains, with their rocks and ravines. Here and there were clearings, and the light gleams that came from some cottage beside a lake or stream; and still mountain succeeded mountain. We were in the midst of the Black Forest.

More mountains, more forests—grand forests with vigorous old trees. The night is clear; I can distinguish the different kinds of trees, and can see, above all, the great pines,



with their long, straight, white trunks. Now and then, at the edge of the woods, I see a fawn, motionless on his slender legs, now looking about him vigilantly, his small ears turning from one side to the other. I see the ruins of an old tower on top of a bare crag, its ragged outlines looking stern and sad against the sky. A star shines peacefully just above its crumbling walls. From a little, dark lake rise the complaining voices of croaking frogs. Other sounds as melancholy and prolonged as the tones of an *Æolian* harp, strike upon my ear. We are in the land of legends and fairy tales. Here, too, the thin vapor just touching the ground, that I had noticed at Schwetzingen, covers the earth. It is thickest in the valleys. I can count five, six, ten different clouds of this vapor marking the watercourses along the mountain side, and over all the landscape the moon shines peacefully. The air is light and clear; I feel light myself, and am singularly calm.

“Ellis,” I cry, “you must love this land!”

“I! I love nothing!”

“How? Not even me?”

“Ah yes, you,” she answered carelessly; and I seemed to feel her arm grasping me with renewed force.

“On! On!” she cried, with a sort of cold passion.

## XXI.

A sharp cry, a prolonged rattling sound arose suddenly above our heads, and was repeated in front of us. “It is the rear-guard of a flock of cranes traveling to the North,” said Ellis; “shall we join them?”

“Yes; let us fly with the cranes.”

Thirteen large and handsome birds flying in a triangle advanced rapidly, flapping their tufted wings. With heads thrown back and their strong breasts forward, they flew so fast that the wind whistled behind them. It was strange to see, at this height in the air, far from other living creatures, this bold, vigorous courage, this irresistible will. Without halting

or slackening the swiftness of their flight, they exchanged from time to time, as they clove the air, shrill cries with their comrade at the forward point of the triangle. There was something earnest and grave, like a feeling of unshaken confidence in a friend, in this aerial sociability and conversation. "We will hold out to the end, in spite of fatigue," they seemed to say, encouraging one another. And it crossed my mind that in Russia or in the whole world how few men were fit to be compared to these birds.

"Yes, we are in Russia now," said Ellis. I had noticed before that Ellis could nearly always read my thoughts.

"Wilt thou go elsewhere?" she asked.

"Elsewhere? No! I come from Paris. Take me to St. Petersburg."

"Now?"

"At once; only cover my head with your sleeve to protect me."

Ellis stretched out her hand, but before the mist closed round me, I felt again upon my

lips the leech-like touch I had noticed once before.

## XXII.

“Beware! Beware! or, or”— This cry resounded in my ears. “Beware! Beware! or”— echoed in the distance. “Beware! Beware! or”— the cry died away somewhere near the end of the earth. I shook myself. Right in front of me shone a great gilded arrow. I recognized the fortress of St. Petersburg.

Pale night of the North! Is it really night? Is it not rather a faint sickly day? I have never liked the night in St. Petersburg, but now I was almost frightened at it. Ellis had entirely vanished, dissolved like the morning mist in the July sun, and yet I could distinctly see my own body hanging heavily in the air at the height of the column of Alexander.

So this was St. Petersburg! There could be no doubt about it. The wide, deserted, ash-colored streets; the houses, yellow gray, blue

gray, grayish white, covered with thick stucco; the windows sunk deep in the walls, with gaudily painted signs and iron balconies above the doors! The dirty fruit stalls, the white-plastered Grecian columns, the sign-posts, the troughs for hack-horses, and the swarms of police guards! Here is the gilded cupola of St. Isaacs; the Bourse with its motley colors; the granite walls of the fortress, and the broken, worn out, wooden pavement. I recognize these boats loaded with hay and wood. I recall the odors of dust, cabbages, straw, and stables. I can see the porters standing in their long coats as if turned to stone, and the hackmen curled up asleep on the boxes of their old droschkes. Yes, this certainly is our modern Palmyra. In this pallid light every thing is seen with a painful distinctness that makes one sick at heart, and every thing is asleep in the mournful surrounding of this troubled and sickly atmosphere. The pink of yesterday's twilight, that consumptive pink, has not yet died away; it will last until morning comes

with its white, starless sky. In long lines upon the waters of the Neva its reflection is cast—the Neva, blue and cold, flowing slowly on toward the sea.

“Let us fly!” cried Ellis; and without waiting for my answer she carried me to the opposite bank of the river, the other side of the Place de Palais, near the Foundry. Beneath us, I could hear footsteps and voices. Through the streets passed a group of young men talking over some riotous ball they had just quitted.

“Second Lieutenant Stolpakof, No. 7!” cried out a sentinel, just roused from sleep near a pile of rusty cannon-balls. A little further on, through an open window of a large house, I saw a young woman in a tumbled, soiled silk dress, with bare arms, a band of pearls in her hair and a cigarette in her mouth, absorbed in a book; a volume of some very modern journal.

“Come away, quick!” I cried to Ellis.

In an instant the forests of stunted saplings

and the mossy marshes that surround St. Petersburg had vanished from beneath us. We were flying straight south. The sky and earth gradually grew darker as we flew. Sickly night; sickly day; sickly town; we left them all far behind! . . .

## XXIII.

We flew more slowly than usually, and I could easily follow with my eye the changes in the surface of my native land. It was a boundless panorama. Woods, fog, fields, valleys and rivers; further on towers and churches, and again beyond, fields, valleys, rivers, fog.

I was in a bad humor, indifferent and bored; but not uninterested, and bored simply because we were flying through Russia. No; the countries of the whole earth, with their short-lived populace, so full of petty cares and troubles and diseases, hanging on to this wretched ball of clay—this fragile red crust which has grown above the sand of our planet and been

covered by the thin moss-like growth which we dignify by calling it the vegetable kingdom—these human flies, infinitely more contemptible than the insects, the slight traces of their tiresome, miserable quarrels, their absurd battles against the immutable and the inevitable! Ah, how small this all seemed to me! My heart swelled within me; I no longer wished to gaze at so insignificant and absurd a caricature. I was disgusted. I even ceased to feel any pity for my kind. All my feelings were merged into one of which I myself was ashamed,—utter disgust, and worse still, disgust with myself.

“Stop!” said Ellis, “Stop! or I can not support you. You are growing heavy.” “Home,” I said to her, in the same tone that I might have used to a coachman at four in the morning, on leaving the house of some friend where I had been dining and talking over the future of Russia and the meaning of the Communistic principle.

“Home!” I repeated and closed my eyes.



## XXIV.

I soon opened them, for Ellis pressed close to me in a strange manner, almost pushing me. I looked at her and the blood froze in my veins. Who ever has seen the human face expressing the most abject terror without apparent cause, can faintly appreciate my feeling. Horror, the most real and wildly expressed, convulsed the face of Ellis. I never had seen the like on a mortal countenance. This bloodless phantom—this spirit of the air—this shadow—and yet such a look of horror! “Ellis! what is the matter?” cried I. “It is He! It is He!” gasped Ellis, with an effort.

“Who? He?”

“Do not speak his name! Don’t speak it,” she whispered. “We must fly! All will be over—forever! Look! There He is!”

I turned my eyes in the direction her trembling hand indicated, and I saw something—a horrible something!

It was all the more fearful because it had no distinct form. It was a heavy dark mass of a blackish yellow—spotted and writhing like the belly of a lizard. It was neither a cloud nor a mist. It crept slowly along the ground like a reptile; then with quivering leaps; now up, now down, with regular movements like the flapping of the wings of a bird of prey, ready to seize its victim. Now it would crouch close to the earth before making a hideous bound, as a spider throws itself upon a fly caught in its web. At its approach I could see it and feel it; every thing was destroyed and overwhelmed. A pestilent, venomous, cold breath spread around, and at its chill touch the heart stopped, the eye became blind, the hair stood on end. It was a moving, irresistible force, that nothing could stop; which, without form, without sight, without thought, could still see every thing and know every thing. As fierce as the vulture in seizing its victim; as cunning as the snake and like him slowly covering its

prey with the cold breath of its poison. "Ellis!" I screamed, shuddering, "I know Him! It is death!"

The plaintive sound I had first heard from her, came from the parted lips of Ellis; but this time it was more like a cry of human despair. We rushed on blindly in our flight. Ellis would whirl and plunge in the air, turning wildly from one side to the other like a wounded bird, or the quail trying to decoy the hunting-dog away from the nest.

And now from the horrible mass there stretched themselves long hairy tentacles, like those of the devil-fish, that spread out in the air toward us like claws. . . . Ellis desperately struggled on. "He sees us! All is over! I am lost," she cried, gasping, "Wretched me! I might have succeeded; life might have been mine! And now! Destruction! Annihilation!"

As I heard these last words my senses forsook me.

## XXV.

When I came to myself I was lying on the grass, and in all my limbs was a racking pain, as though I had fallen from a height. Day was dawning and things were already growing distinct. At a little distance a road, bordered with willows, wound along toward a forest of birch-trees. I knew the place well.

I began to recall the events of that terrible night, and I shuddered at the thought of the dreadful apparition that my eyes had beheld. "But why," I asked myself, "was Ellis so overcome by fear? Is she, too, subject to his dominion? Perhaps she is not immortal; perhaps she is destined to annihilation. But how can that be possible?"

A faint sigh close to me made me turn my head. About two steps away, stretched upon the ground, lay the body of a young woman, clothed in a long white robe. Her dark hair was dishevelled and one shoulder bare. Her left hand was behind her head, the other

across her breast ; her eyes were shut and about her lips I saw a faint stain of bloody foam. Was it Ellis? But Ellis was a phantom, and before me lay a woman of flesh and blood!

I dragged myself toward her, and leaning over her cried, "Ellis, can this be you?" Suddenly, with a slight quiver, her eyelids opened and her great black eyes were fixed upon me. I was transfixed by her gaze, and at the same instant I felt upon mine, her lips soft and warm, but with a faint odor of blood. I felt her burning bosom pressed against my breast as she clasped her arms about my neck. "Farewell, farewell, forever!" she murmured, in a dying voice, then all disappeared. . . . I rose, staggering like a drunken man ; and I looked about me for a long time, passing my hands across my eyes. At last I found the road to N——, two versts from my own house. The sun was up when I reached my room. . . . The next night I waited, I must confess, not without fear, the return of the phantom, but she did not come.

Once I went, at night, out under the old oak-tree, but saw nothing unusual. I could scarcely regret this. For a long time I had thought over my adventure, and felt sure that science could not explain it, nor legend or tradition furnish its parallel.

Who or what could Ellis have been? A ghost; a soul in torment; a demon; a vampire? Often it seems as though she were some woman I had known formerly. I have tried with all my might to recall where I could have seen her. Once—to-day—just now, I remember—no, all is confused in my memory, as in a dream.

Yes; I have thought it all over and over, and no one will be astonished when I say that I can come to no conclusion. I did not like to speak of this to my friends; they would think I was mad. At last I concluded to banish it from my mind. I had many things to occupy me. The emancipation of the serfs came, and arrangements about the property had to be made. Besides, my health was seriously affected. I

suffer from weak lungs, sleeplessness and a dry, hard cough. I have become emaciated; my face is as pale as a dead man's. My physician tells me my blood is poor. He calls my sickness anæmia. He sends me to Gastein. My steward says that without me he can not manage my affairs with the peasants. Well, let them manage themselves, then!

But what can be the meaning of those strange sounds, clear and distinct as the notes of a harmonica, that I hear whenever they speak to me of the death of anybody? They become stronger and stronger and wilder and wilder.

And why do I feel this terrible chill creep over me at the mere thought of annihilation?

II.

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A MIRACLE IN FLANDERS.



## II.

## A MIRACLE IN FLANDERS.

[From Honoré de Balsac.]

S. W. L.

**A**T a remote period of the history of Brabant the communication between the Island of Cadzant and the Flemish coast was kept up by a barque which carried passengers to and fro. Middleburg, the capital of the island, later so famous in the annals of Protestantism, contained scarcely two or three hundred firesides. Wealthy Ostend was an unknown harbor flanked by a straggling village thinly populated by fishermen, poor merchants and pirates. Nevertheless the burg of Ostend, composed of about twenty houses and three hundred cabins, huts or hovels built of the

debris of shipwrecked vessels, enjoyed a governor, a militia, forked gibbets, a convent, a burgomaster, in fact all the accompaniments of advanced civilization. Who reigned then in Brabant, in Flanders, in Belgium? On this point tradition is silent. Let us confess that this story has a strange flavor of the uncertain, of the vague, of the marvelous, that the favorite orators of Flemish vigils like to give to their tales, which are as varied in poetry as contradictory in detail. Handed down from age to age, repeated from fireside to fireside by the old wives, grandames, and gossips by day and by night, this chronicle has received a different coloring in each century. Like those monuments arranged according to the caprice of architects of successive periods, the dark and crumbling masses of which please the poets, this tale is the despair of commentators and gatherers of words, deeds and dates. The narrator believes in it as all superstitious minds in Flanders have believed in it, whether learned or ignorant. Only in the impossibility of har-

monizing all the versions, here is the fact, robbed, perhaps, of its romantic simplicity, impossible to reproduce, but with its boldness hardly consonant with history, with its morality, approved by religion, its fancifulness, the flavor of imagination, and its concealed meaning, which the wise can appropriate. To each one his own food and the care of sifting the grain from the chaff.

. . . . .

The boat which carried the passengers from the Island of Cadzant over to Ostend was about to leave the village. Before loosing the iron chain which fastened this skiff to a stone of the little jetty where passengers embarked, the skipper blew his horn several times, for this was his last voyage. Night was approaching. In the last rays of the setting sun the Flemish coast was dimly visible, and one could hardly distinguish the tardy passengers hastening along the walls of earth by which the fields were surrounded, or among the tall reeds of the marshes. The skiff was

full. Some one shouted: "What are you waiting for? Let us be off!"

At this moment a man appeared some steps off from the pier; the pilot, who had not heard his footsteps, was much surprised to see him. This traveler seemed to have suddenly risen from the ground, like a peasant who had lain down in the fields waiting for the hour of departure and awakened by the sound of the horn. Was he a thief? Was he a man from the custom-house or from the police-station? When he stepped on the pier where the boat was made fast, seven people standing in the stern of the skiff hastened to sit down on the benches in order to keep them to themselves and not to admit the stranger among them. It was an instinctive and rapid thought, one of those impulses of exclusiveness which come into the minds of the rich. Four of these persons belonged to the highest aristocracy of Flanders. First, a young cavalier, accompanied by two beautiful greyhounds, and wearing on his long hair a jeweled cap, clanked his

gilded spurs, and twirled his moustache from time to time, impertinently casting disdainful glances at the rest of the company. A haughty young lady held a falcon on her wrist, speaking only to her mother or to an ecclesiastic of high rank, who was undoubtedly their relation. These persons made a great noise, and conversed as if they were alone in the barque. Nevertheless, near them was a man very important in the country, a stout citizen of Bruges, wrapped up in a large cloak. His servant, armed to the teeth, had placed near him two bags full of money. Beside them was a man of science, a doctor in the University of Louvain, attended by his secretary. These people, who looked down upon each other, were separated from the bow by the rowers.

When the late arrival set his foot on the vessel, he cast a hasty glance at the stern, saw no vacant place, and went to seek accommodation among those at the bow of the boat. The latter were poor people. At the sight of a man with bare head, whose coat and trousers

of brown camlet, and neckband of heavy starched linen had no ornament, who held in his hand neither cap nor hat, with neither purse nor sword at his belt, all took him for a burgomaster sure of his authority, a burgomaster amiable and mild, like some of those old Flemings whose simple and kindly nature has been so well perpetuated by the painters of the country.

The poorer passengers then welcomed the stranger by respectful greetings, which excited the whispered jeers of those at the stern. An old soldier, worn and weary, gave his place on the seat to the stranger, seated himself on the edge of the boat, and kept himself balanced by the manner in which he supported his feet against one of those wooden crosspieces which, like the bones of a fish, serve to bind together the planks of a vessel.

A young woman, mother of a little child, who seemed to belong to the class of working women of Ostend, moved to make room for the new comer. This movement showed

neither servility nor disdain. It was one of those evidences of an obliging spirit by which poor people, accustomed to know the value of a service and the delights of fraternity, reveal the frank nature of their souls, simple in the expression of their good qualities and their defects. The stranger thanked them by a gesture full of dignity. Then he sat down between the young mother and the old soldier. Behind him were a peasant and his ten-year-old son. A poor old woman, with a wallet almost empty, old and wrinkled and ragged, a type of misery and wretchedness, was crouching on a pile of rope near the prow. One of the rowers, an old sailor who had known her in bygone days, when she was beautiful and rich, had allowed her to stay there, for the love of God, as the people admirably put it.

“Thank you, Thomas,” said the old woman, “I will say two Paters and two Aves for you in my prayers to-night.”

The skipper blew the horn again, looked at the silent company, threw the chain into the

boat, ran along the edge of the boat to the rudder, took hold of the tiller and stood there. Then, after having looked at the sky, he said, in a loud voice to his men, when they had got out to sea : " Row, row fast ; the sea looks squally. I feel the swell by the movement of the rudder and the storm by my wounds."

These words, spoken in naval terms, a kind of language intelligible only to ears accustomed to the noise of the waves, gave to the oars a hasty but always rhythmic movement, as different from the previous motion as the trot of a horse is different from the gallop. The company at the stern took pleasure in looking at these sinewy arms, these brown faces with glowing eyes, these tense muscles, and these different human forms moving in concert, in order to carry them across the strait for a paltry sum. Far from pitying this poverty, they pointed at the oarsmen, laughing at the grotesque expressions that the hard labor gave to their strained faces. In the bow the soldier, the peasant and the old woman



looked at the sailors with that kind of compassion natural to people who, themselves living by labor, know its hardships, and its feverish fatigue. Then, accustomed to living in the open air, all had understood by the appearance of the sky, the danger which threatened them; all were, therefore, serious. The young mother rocked her child, singing an old church-hymn to put her to sleep. "If we land safely," said the soldier to the peasant, "it will be only by a special interposition of God."

"Ah! He is the master," answered the old woman, "but I believe that it is His good pleasure to call us to Him. Do you see that light there?" And by a motion of her head she indicated the setting sun, the fiery bands of which cut sharply across some dusky clouds, shaded with red, which seemed ready to let loose a furious blast of wind. The sea sent forth a hollow murmur, a kind of inner moan, the voice of a dog which mutters and growls at his foe. After all, Ostend was not far off. At

this moment the sky and sea offered one of those spectacles which it is, perhaps, as impossible to put on canvas as to describe by words. Human creatures demand strong contrasts. Thus, artists ordinarily demand from nature her most brilliant phenomena, despairing, doubtless, to render her great and beautiful poetry in its ordinary aspect, although the human soul is often as profoundly moved by calm as by motion, by silence as by storm. There was a moment when every one in the vessel was silent and gazed at the sky and the sea, whether from presentiment or in obedience to that religious melancholy which seizes almost all of us at the hour of prayer, at the twilight hour, at the moment when nature is silent or when the church-bells ring. The sea gleamed pale and wan, ever and anon changing to a steely blue under the lowering gray sky. At the west were long, narrow streaks, like waves of blood, while at the east sparkling lines, as if marked by a fine pencil, were separated by clouds folded like wrinkles on the

brow of an old man. Thus sea and sky showed every-where a dull tone all in half-tints, which contrasted with the sinister glow of the setting sun. This aspect of nature inspired a feeling of awe in the beholders. If one can adopt the bold similes of the people into written language, one might repeat what the soldier said, that the elements were at war, or what the peasant answered, that the sky had the aspect of an executioner. The wind rose suddenly toward the west, and the skipper, who always kept a lookout on the sea, seeing it swell at the horizon, cried: "Hold, hold!" At this cry the sailors stopped suddenly and let their oars float. "The skipper is right," said Thomas, coldly, when the boat carried up by an enormous wave, plunged down again into the depths. At this extraordinary motion, at this sudden anger of the ocean, the people in the stern grew pale and uttered the terrible cry, "We are lost!" "Oh! not yet," answered the skipper, quietly.

At this moment the clouds were rent asun-

der by the blast, directly over the vessel. The gray, sinister masses stretched rapidly west to east; the gleam of twilight broke suddenly through a rift in the clouds and showed the faces of those in the boat. The passengers, nobles or rich burghers, sailors and paupers, remained a moment transfixed with awe at the aspect of the stranger. His golden hair, parted over his smooth and serene brow, fell in thick curls on his shoulders, outlining against the gray atmosphere a countenance sublime in its sweetness, where shone a divine love. He did not despise death; he was certain not to perish. But if at first the people in the stern forgot for a moment the implacable fury of the threatening tempest, they soon returned to their feelings of selfishness, the governing impulse of their lives.

“How fortunate that stupid burgomaster is not to see the danger that we are in! He is standing there like a dog, and will die without the agony of apprehension,” said the doctor.

Hardly had he uttered these words when the

storm unchained its legions. The wind blew on all sides, the vessel spun around like a top, and the sea rushed into the straining vessel.

“Oh, my poor child! my child! Who will save my child?” cried the mother in heart-rending tones.

“You yourself,” answered the stranger. The sound of his voice penetrated the heart of the young mother and gave her hope. She heard his soothing words notwithstanding the howling of the storm and the screams of the passengers.

“Holy Virgin of Bon-Secours, you who are at Antwerp, I promise you a thousand pounds of wax and a statue, if you rescue me from this,” cried the citizen, kneeling on his bags of gold.

“The virgin is no more at Antwerp than she is here,” answered the doctor.

“She is in heaven,” rejoined a voice, which seemed to come from the sea.

“Who spoke then?” -

“The devil,” cried the servant; “he is mocking the Virgin at Antwerp.”

“Let your holy Virgin alone,” said the skipper to the passengers. “Take hold of these scoops and bail out the water from the boat. And you others,” said he to the sailors, “row fast, we have a moment of respite; in the name of the devil who leaves you in this world, let us be our own providence. This little channel is furiously dangerous, you know. I have been crossing it these thirty years. Is it this evening only that I fight with the elements?”

Then standing at the tiller, the skipper continued to look in turn at the boat, the sea, and the sky.

“He always mocks at every thing, the skipper,” said Thomas in a low voice.

“Will God let us die with these wretched people?” asked the haughty young lady of the handsome cavalier.

“No, no, noble lady. Listen to me.” He threw his arm about her and whispered: “I know how to swim, but say nothing about it. I will take you by your beautiful hair, and will

carry you gently to the shore; but I can save only you."

The young lady looked at her old mother, who was on her knees and demanding absolution from the bishop, who was not listening to her. The young cavalier read in the eyes of his beautiful mistress a feeble sentiment of filial piety, and said to her in a low voice: "Submit yourself to the will of God. If He wishes to call your mother to Him, it will be for her happiness, doubtless, in the other world," added he in a still lower voice, "and for ours in this," thought he.

The lady of Rupelmonde possessed seven fiefs beside the barony of Gâvres. The young lady listened to the voice of her lover, self-interest speaking through the lips of the handsome gallant, a young infidel who haunted the churches, where he sought his prey, a young heiress to marry or good hard cash.

The bishop blessed the waves, bade them be calm, but believed his case desperate. He dreamed of his concubine who was awaiting

him with some delicate feast, who perhaps at that moment was in the bath, was perfuming herself, arraying herself in velvet or fastening her necklaces and jewels. Far from dreaming of the powers of holy Church, and of consoling those Christians while exhorting them to trust in God, the bishop mingled worldly regrets and words of love with the holy words of the breviary. The gleam which illuminated those pale faces showed their different expressions when the boat, raised aloft by a wave and then cast to the bottom of the abyss, then shaken like a frail leaf, a plaything of the autumn breeze, creaked in its shell and appeared about to break. Then arose horrible shrieks, followed by a frightful silence. The attitude of the persons seated in the bow of the boat contrasted singularly with that of the rich or powerful people. The young mother pressed her child to her breast every time that the waves threatened to swallow up the frail barque, but she held to the hope that the word spoken by the stranger had caused to spring



up in her heart. Each time she turned her glance towards that man, she drew from his face a new faith, the strong faith of a weak woman, the faith of a mother. Living by the divine word, by the word of love let fall by this man, the simple creature awaited confidently the fulfilment of that promise, and no longer feared danger. Clinging to the side of the vessel, the soldier did not cease to contemplate that singular being whose impassibility he tried to emulate. His rugged and sun-burned face displayed his intelligence and his will; his powerful energy was little impaired by a life of mechanical discipline; anxious to show himself quiet and calm in emulation of that high courage, he ended by identifying himself, unconsciously, perhaps, with the secret principle of that inner power. Then his admiration became an instinctive fanaticism, a love without limit, a faith in that man like the enthusiasm that soldiers feel for their chief when he is a man of power surrounded by the prestige of his victories.

The poor old woman said in a low voice: "Ah! miserable sinner that I am! Have I suffered enough to expiate the pleasures of my youth? Ah! why, unhappy creature, have you led a life of pleasure, devouring the substance of the poor publicans and sinners? Ah, I have sinned! Oh, my God, let me finish my hell on this earth; or else, holy Virgin, Mother of God, take pity on me."

"Console yourself, mother; God is not a money-lender. Although I have killed, perhaps at random, both the good and the bad, I do not fear the resurrection."

"Ah, sir, how happy those beautiful ladies must be to be near a bishop, a holy man!" answered the old woman; they will obtain absolution for their sins. Oh, if I could hear the voice of a priest saying to me, 'Your sins are all forgiven,' I would believe him."

The stranger turned toward her and his charitable look made her start. "Have faith," said he, "and you will be saved."

"May God reward you, my good lord," re-

plied she. "If you say truly, I will go for you and for myself on a pilgrimage to Notre Dame de Lorette with bare feet."

The two peasants, father and son, remained silent, resigned and submissive to the will of God, like people accustomed to follow instinctively, after the manner of beasts, wherever fate may lead them. Thus on one side riches, pride, science, debauch, crime, all human society, such as the arts, thought, education, the world and its laws make it; on that side only shrieks, terror, a thousand different sentiments assailed by horrible doubts; there only the anguish of fear. Then, superior to those beings, the skipper of the boat, a powerful man, questioning nothing, the chief, the fatalist king; making of himself his own Providence and crying, "Holy dipper," and not "Holy Virgin;" defying the storm and struggling hand to hand with the waves. At the other end of the frail barque, the weak! the mother rocking on her breast a little child who smiled at the storm; a girl, once merry, now

given up to horrible remorse ; a soldier, crippled with wounds, without other recompense than his mutilated life as the reward of indefatigable devotion, he had scarcely a morsel of bread moistened with tears ; nevertheless he laughed at everything and lived without anxieties, happy when he was drowning his glory in a pot of beer, or telling stories to the children who flocked about him. He committed to God the care of his future. Lastly, two peasants, working men, incarnations of labor, by which the world lives. These simple creatures were careless of thought and its treasures, but ready to merge them in belief, having that faith which is so much the more hardy from the fact that they have never discussed nor analyzed ; virgin natures, where the conscience had remained pure and sentiment powerful ; remorse, misfortune, love, labor, had exercised, purified, concentrated, their will, the only thing which in man resembles what the scientific call the soul.

When the vessel, steered by the miraculous

skill of the pilot, arrived almost in sight of Ostend, at fifty paces from the shore, she was driven back by a convulsion of the tempest and suddenly capsized. The stranger with the luminous countenance, said then to this little grief-stricken group: "Those who have faith will be saved; let them follow me!" He arose, walked with a firm step on the waves. The young mother at once took her child in her arms and walked beside him on the sea. The soldier got up suddenly, saying in his simple language: "In the name of my pipe! I will follow you to the devil." Then, without seeming surprised, he walked on the sea. The old sinner, believing in the Almightyness of God, followed the man and walked upon the sea. The two peasants said to each other: "Since they walk upon the sea, why should not we do the same?" They rose and ran after them, walking upon the sea. Thomas wished to follow their example, but as his faith wavered, he fell several times and rose again; then, after three attempts, he also walked upon the sea. The

brave pilot had clung to the bottom of the boat. The miser had had faith and had risen ; but he wished to carry with him his gold—his gold carried him to the bottom of the sea. The scientist, mocking at the charlatan and the fools who listened to him, at the moment when he saw the stranger proposing to the passengers to walk upon the sea, began to laugh and was swallowed up by the ocean. The young girl was dragged into the abyss by her lover. The bishop and the old lady went to the bottom, heavy with crime, perhaps, but heavier still with unbelief, with confidence in false images, heavy with superstition, light in alms and true religion.

The faithful group who trod with a firm and dry footing the plain of angry waters, heard around them the horrible howling of the tempest. Huge billows broke upon their path ; an invincible force assailed the ocean. Through the fog the faithful company perceived in the distance a little feeble light, which glimmered on the shore at the window of a fisherman's

hut. Each one, walking courageously toward this light thought he heard his neighbor calling through the moaning of the sea: "Courage!" And yet, mindful of their peril, none spoke a word. Thus they reached the shore. When they were all seated by the fireside of the fisherman, they looked in vain for their guide. Seated on the summit of a rock, at the foot of which the hurricane cast the pilot, bound to the plank with that force that sailors display in conflict with death, the *man* descended, raised up the shipwrecked, almost perished mariner, and said, resting his hand on his head: "Good for this time; but do not rely upon it again, it would be too bad an example."

He took the sailor on his shoulders and bore him to the fisherman's hut. He knocked, in order that the door of this modest asylum should be opened to the disabled man, then the Saviour disappeared. On this spot was built, for sailors, the Convent of Mercy, where was seen for a long time the imprint that the

feet of Jesus Christ had, it is said, left on the sand. In 1793, at the time the French took possession of Belgium, some monks carried off the precious relic, the witness of the last visit that Jesus Christ made on earth. It was there that I found myself, tired of life, some time after the revolution of 1830. If you had asked me the cause of my despair, it would have been almost impossible for me to tell you, so unstrung had my mood become. The springs of my intellect had relaxed under the soft breeze of a west wind. The sky looked black and cold, and the dark clouds which passed over my head gave a sinister expression to nature. The immensity of the sea, all said to me: "To die to-day, to die to-morrow; must we all die, and then—" I was wandering along, thinking of a doubtful future, and of my banished hopes. A prey to these sombre thoughts, I entered mechanically the chapel of the convent, the gray towers of which appeared to me thin, like phantoms, through the mists of the sea. I looked, without enthusiasm, at that



forest of columns, whose leafy capitals upheld light arches in a graceful labyrinth. I walked carelessly into the side-aisles which opened before me the interminable vista. The uncertain light of an autumn day hardly made visible above the vaulted arches the carved crowns, the delicate tracing which outlined so purely the angles of all the graceful vaulting. The organ was silent. Only the sound of my footsteps awakened the solemn echoes hidden in the dark chapels. I sat down near one of the fine pillars which support the dome, near the choir. From there I could catch the whole effect of the interior, which I contemplated without attaching any idea to it. The mechanical action of my eyes alone made me embrace the imposing labyrinth of all the pillars, the immense roses miraculously interlaced like net-work above the side doors or the grand door-way, the aerial galleries, where slender columns separated the panes encased in arches, by the foils or flowers, lovely filagree in stone. At the end of the choir

a dome of glass sparkled as if built of precious stones, skilfully set. At the right and left, two long aisles led from the central nave, white and colored alternately. In their black shadows were faintly outlined the indistinct shafts of a hundred greyish columns. By dint of looking at those wonderful arcades, those arabesques, those festoons, those spirals, those Saracenic fancies interlacing each other with bewildering effect, my perceptions became confused. I found myself as if on the boundary line of illusion and of reality, almost giddy with the multitude of impressions. Insensibly the carved vaultings melted. I saw them only through a mist formed by a golden dust, like that which dances in the luminous shafts traced by a ray of sunlight in a chamber. In the midst of that vaporous atmosphere, which rendered all forms indistinct, the carved lace-work of the roses suddenly shone out. Every vein, every carved leaf, the least feature grew silvery in the mist. The sun lighted up the fires of the window-panes, the rich colors of which

scintillated. The columns oscillated, the capitals rocked gently, a caressing motion shook the edifice, the friezes of which moved with graceful rhythm. Several large pillars had the solemn movement of a stately dowager who, at the close of the ball, makes up the quadrille as a favor. The slender upright columns began to laugh and leap, adorned by their trefoil crowns. The pointed arches clashed together with the high, slender windows, like those mediæval dames who carried the armorial bearings of their houses painted on their golden robes. The dance of those mitred arches with the graceful casements resembled the combat of a tourney. Soon every stone vibrated in the church, but without changing its place. The organ sounded, and I heard a divine harmony with which mingled the voices of angels, an unheard of music accompanied by the hollow counter-tones of the clocks, the striking of which announced that the two closed towers were rocking on their square bases. This strange witches' Sabbath seemed to me the most

natural thing in the world, and I was not astonished, even when Charles X. appeared on earth. I was myself gently swayed back and forth like a see-saw. The motion communicated to me a sort of nervous pleasure, of which it would be impossible for me to convey an idea. However, in the midst of this wild revel the choir of the cathedral seemed to me as cold as though winter reigned there. I saw a multitude of women clothed in white, but motionless and silent. Some censers scattered a sweet fragrance, which penetrated my soul and made it glad. The candles flashed. The lecturer, as gay as a chorister overcome by wine, jumped up and down like a Chinese hat. I understood that the cathedral revolved on itself with so much rapidity that each object seemed to remain in its place. The colossal Christ, hung above the altar, smiled upon me with a malicious benevolence which made me fearful; I ceased to look at it in order to admire, in the distance, a bluish vapor which hovered amidst the pillars, giving them an in-

describable grace. At last several beautiful women's faces appeared in the frieze. Children who supported heavy columns clapped their wings. I felt myself uplifted by a divine power which plunged me into an endless joy, into a sweet and happy ecstasy. I believe I would have given my life to prolong the duration of that phantasmagoria, when all of a sudden a shrill voice spoke in my ear: "Wake up! follow me!"

A dried-up woman took me by the hand, and gave the most horrible chill to my nerves. Her bones showed through the wrinkled skin of her pallid and almost greenish face. This little cold old woman was clothed in a black dress trailing in the dust, and wore on her neck something white which I did not dare to examine. Her fixed eyes, staring up to heaven, showed only the white eyeballs. She dragged me across the church, and marked her passage by ashes which fell from her dress. While walking, her bones clacked like those of a skeleton. As we walked, I heard behind me

the tinkling of a bell, whose sharp sounds echoed through my brain like those of a harmonica. "We must suffer, we must suffer!" she said. We issued from the church and crossed the filthiest streets of the city; then she made me enter a dingy house, where she drew me in, crying in a voice like a cracked bell: "Defend me, defend me!" We mounted a winding stairway. When she had knocked at an obscure door, a silent man, like a familiar of the Inquisition, opened the door. We soon found ourselves in a room hung with old torn tapestry, full of old linen, faded muslin, and gilded copper. "Behold eternal riches," said she. I shivered with horror, seeing then distinctly, by the light of a long torch and two candles, that the old woman must have recently come out of the grave. She had no hair. I wished to fly. She waved her skeleton arms, and surrounded me with a circle of fire armed with points. At this moment a cry, uttered by millions of voices, the hurrah of the dead, echoed near us: "I want to

make you forever happy," said she. "You are my son." We were seated before a fireplace, whose ashes were cold. Then the little old woman pressed my hand so hard that I had to remain where I was. I looked at her fixedly, and tried to divine the history of her life, examining the clothes in the midst of which she crouched. But did she exist? It was truly a mystery. I saw plainly that formerly she must have been young and beautiful, adorned by all the graces of simplicity, a real Greek statue with a maiden's brow.

"Ah! ah!" said I; "now I recognize you, unhappy woman. Why did you prostitute yourself to men? In the age of passion, when you had become rich, you forgot your pure youth, your sublime devotion, your innocent manners, your faith, and you abdicated your former power, your intellectual supremacy, for the powers of the flesh. Deserting your linen garments, your couch of roses, your grottoes illuminated by divine light, you shone with diamonds, luxury, and splendor. Bold, proud,

wishing for every thing, obtaining every thing, and overthrowing every thing which lay in your path, like a prostitute of fashion in pursuit of pleasure, you have been as bloody as a queen besotted with power. Do you not remember that you were often stupid at times; then, suddenly, marvellously brilliant like Art going out of an orgy? Poet, painter, singer, loving splendid ceremonies, you perhaps protected the arts only by caprice and in order to repose under magnificent canopies. One day fantastic and insolent, you who should have been chaste and modest, did you not put every thing beneath your slipper, and did you not cast it on the head of sovereigns who had here below power, money, and talent? Insulting man and taking pleasure in seeing how far human folly would go, sometimes you bade your lover's walk on all fours, to give you their wealth, their treasures, even their wives, when they were worth something! You have, without a motive, doomed millions of men. You have scattered them like clouds of



sand from the west to the east. You have descended from lofty realms of thought to seat yourself beside kings. Woman, instead of consoling men, you have tortured them, afflicted them! Sure of obtaining it, you demanded blood! You could, however, content yourself with a little flour, brought up as you were to eat cakes and put water in your wine. Original in every thing, you used to forbid your exhausted lovers to eat, and they obeyed you. Why did you go so far as to ask for the impossible? Like some courtesan spoiled by her adorers, why did you dote upon folly, and why did you not undeceive people who explained or justified all your errors? At last you have come to an end of your revel! Terrible as the love of a woman of forty, you have blushed! You have wished to clasp the universe in a last embrace, and the universe which belonged to you has escaped you. Then, after the young had deserted you, old men threw themselves at your feet and have rendered you

hideous. However, some men with eagle sight have said to you by a look: "You will perish without glory, because you have deceived, because you have failed in the promises of your youth. Instead of being an angel with peaceful brow, sowing light and happiness in your path, you have been a Messalina loving the circus and debauch, abusing your power. You can never again become virgin. You would have to have a master. Your time is coming. You already feel death. Your heirs believe you rich; they will kill you, and will get nothing. Try at least to cast aside your garments, which are no longer in fashion—become again what you were once. But, no! You have committed suicide. Is not that your history?" I said to her, ending my appeal. "Old, decrepit, toothless, cold, now forgotten, you pass without receiving a glance! Why do you live? What are you doing with your dress of a courtesan who attracts the attention of no one? Where is your fortune! Why have you

dissipated it! Where are your treasures? What good have you done?"

At this question the old woman arose, cast off her rags, grew tall, grew bright, smiled, and issued from her black chrysalis like a new-born butterfly. An Indian goddess throwing away her cerements, she stood beside me, white and young, clothed in a robe of linen. Her golden hair floated on her shoulders, her eyes shone, a luminous cloud surrounded her, a circlet of gold surmounted her head, she made a gesture toward space, waving a sword of fire.

"See and believe!" said she.

Suddenly I saw in the distance thousands of cathedrals like that which I had just left, but adorned with pictures and frescoes. I heard beautiful music. Around those stately structures thousands of men crowded like ants in their ant-hills; some hastening to save some books, or to copy manuscripts; others serving the poor; almost all studying. From the midst

of the innumerable crowd towered colossal statues raised by them. By the fantastic light shed by a luminary as large as the sun, I read on the pedestal of these statues: "Science, History, Literature."

The light went out. I found myself before the young girl, who gradually entered again into her cold envelope, into her grave-clothes, and became old again. Her familiar brought her a few bits of coal that she might rekindle the ashes of her foot-stove, for the weather was cold; then he lighted for her who had had thousands of wax candles in her palaces a little taper, that she might read her prayers by it at night.

"They no longer believe!" said she.

Such was the critical situation in which I saw the most beautiful, the most vast, the most true, and the most fruitful of all the powers.

"Wake up, sir! we are going to close the doors," said a hoarse voice to me.

Turning round, I perceived the horrible face of the giver of holy water. He had shaken me by the arm. I found the cathedral

shrouded in gloom, like a man wrapped up in a cloak.

“To believe,” I said to myself, “that is to live! I have just seen the funeral procession of a monarchy pass by. We must defend the *church!*”

III.

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THE VENUS OF ILLE.

## III.

## THE VENUS OF ILLE.

[From Prosper Mérimée.]

E. F. B.

Ἰλεως, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἔστω δ'  
ἀνδριάς καὶ ἠπιος, οὕτως ἀνδρείος ἔν.

ΛΟΥΚΙΑΝΟΥ ΦΙΛΟΨΕΥΔΗΞ.

I WAS going down the last descent of the Canigou, and in the plain below, although the sun was already set, I could see the houses of the little town of Ille, the purposed end of my journey.

“You know,” said I to the Catalonian who had been my guide since the night before, “you doubtless know where M. de Peyrehorade lives?”

“Don't I, though!” he replied. “I know

his house as well as my own, and if it wasn't so dark, I could point it out. It is the finest in Ille. He is rich, M. de Peyrehorade is; and he is going to marry his son to a girl still richer than himself."

"And will the marriage soon take place?" I asked.

"Soon? I shouldn't wonder if the fiddlers were already hired for the wedding. Perhaps this evening, or to-morrow, or the day after; how can I tell? But it will be at Puygarrig, for his son is to marry Mademoiselle de Puygarrig. Won't it be fine though!"

"My friend, M. de P. had given me a letter of introduction to M. de Peyrehorade, telling me he was an antiquary, very well informed, and extremely affable; that it would give him pleasure to show me all the ruins for miles around. Now I depended upon him to visit the environs of Ille, which I knew to be rich in remains, both of antiquity and of medieval times. This marriage, of which I now heard for the first time, would spoil all my plans.



I shall be dreadfully in the way, I thought; and yet I was expected. M. de P. had already written, and at least I must show myself.

When at last we were in the plain, said my guide: "I'll bet a cigar that I guess what you are going to do at M. de Peyrehorade's."

"But," I replied, giving him a cigar, "it isn't very hard to guess that. At this time of day, after walking six leagues in the Canigou, the main thing is to get a supper."

"Yes, but to-morrow? Come now, I should like to bet that you have come to Ille to see the idol. I guessed that as soon as I saw you drawing the saints of Serrabona."

"The idol? What idol?" This word had aroused my curiosity.

"What! didn't they tell you at Perpignan how M. de Peyrehorade had found an idol in clay which"—

"Do you mean a terra cotta statue?"

"Oh! no; but a copper one, and that big enough to make many a big sou. It weighs as

much as a church bell. 'Twas way down in the ground below an olive tree we found it."

"You were present, then, when it was found?"

"Yes, sir; M. de Peyrehorade told Jean Coll and me two weeks ago to dig up an old olive tree that had been frosted last year, for we had a hard winter then, as you know. Well, while we were working, Jean Coll, who was digging with all his might, hit something with his pickaxe, and I heard bimm!—as if he had struck a bell. 'What's that?' said I. But we kept on digging, digging, and soon a black hand appeared, which looked like a dead man's hand coming out of the ground. I, well, I was afraid, and went off to find master, and I said to him: 'Master, there are corpses under the olive tree! We must call the curé.' 'Corpses,' said he; 'whose corpses?' He comes, and no sooner does he see the hand than he cries out: 'An antique, an antique!' You'd have thought he'd found a treasure. And then, just think, with the pickaxe, with

his hands, he does as much work as both of us."

"And, at last, what did you find?"

"A great black woman, more than half naked—begging your pardon, sir—all copper; and M. de Peyrehorade said it was an idol of pagan times—of Charlemagne's time or something."

"I see what it is—some blessed virgin that used to belong to a former convent."

"A blessed virgin! ah, well, well. I should have known her well enough if she'd been a blessed virgin. It's an idol, I tell you. Look at her and you can see that. Her great white eyes follow you. You'd think she would like to scratch a man's face. You lower your eyes after you have looked at her."

"White eyes? Doubtless they are inlaid in the bronze. It might be a Roman statue."

"Roman! yes, that's it. M. de Peyrehorade said it was a Roman woman. Ah! I see, you're a savant like him."

"Is it entire, well preserved?"

“Oh, sir, nothing is missing. It is still more beautiful and better finished than the bust of Louis-Philippe in painted plaster at the mayor’s office. But, in spite of all this, I don’t like the idol. She has a wicked look, and she is so, too.”

“Wicked! What harm has she done you?”

“Not me, exactly; you’ll see. We were hard at work getting her on her legs, and M. de Peyrehorade, too, was pulling at the rope, though he has no more strength than a rat, the dear man! With much trouble, we set her up. I was picking up a bit of tile to steady her, when, patatras! down she falls, all in a heap. I bawl out: “Look out there!” but I wasn’t quick enough, for Jean Coll didn’t have time to get out of the way”—

“And was he hurt?”

“His poor leg was broken, as if it had been a stick. By God! when I saw that, I was mad, and wanted to smash the idol with the pickaxe, but M. de Peyrehorade held me back. He gave some money to Jean Coll, but, for all

that, he has been in bed for two weeks since that happened, and the doctor says he can never walk on that leg as he does on the other. It's a great pity, for he was our best runner, and, except young M. de Peyrehorade, the sharpest tennis-player. I tell you Monsieur Alphonse was sorry, for Coll was always on his side. 'Twas a fine thing to see how they kept the balls flying. Paf! paf! They never touched the ground."

Chatting in this way, we entered Ille, and I was soon in the presence of M. de Peyrehorade. He was a little old man, still quite lively and active, with powdered hair, a red nose, a jovial and bantering air. Before opening M. de P.'s letter, he placed me at a well-served table, having presented me to his wife and his son as an illustrious archæologist who would rescue Roussillon from the oblivion in which it had been left by the neglect of the savants.

Though eating with a good appetite, for nothing so quickly brings this about as the

keen mountain air, I observed my hosts. I have already said a word about M. de Peyrehorade; I must add that he was vivacity itself. He spoke, he ate, he got up, he ran to his library, brought me books, showed me prints, filled my glass with wine; he was never quiet for two minutes together. His wife, a little too stout, like most of the Catalonian women after passing their fortieth year, appeared to me a downright country-woman, occupied solely with the cares of housekeeping. Though there was supper enough for six persons at the least, she ran to the kitchen, had some pigeons killed, cakes fried, and opened I know not how many pots of sweetmeats. In an instant the table was covered with dishes and bottles, and I should certainly have died of an indigestion, had I merely tasted of all that was put before me. And yet, whenever I declined a dish, there were new apologies. They feared I did not find things to my liking in Ille; there are so few resources in the province, and Parisians are so fastidious!

Amidst all these comings and goings, M. Alphonse de Peyrehorade kept as quiet as a monument. He was a tall young man, twenty-six years old, with features fine and regular, but lacking in expression. His height and athletic figure quite justified the reputation he enjoyed of being an untiring tennis-player. This evening he was elegantly dressed, exactly like the latest plates in the *Journal des Modes*. It seemed to me, however, that he was not at ease in his clothes; he was as stiff as a poker in his velvet collar, and he moved as if he had no joints. His hands, large and tanned, his short finger-nails, made a singular contrast with his costume. He had a workman's hands coming out of a dandy's sleeves. Moreover, although he examined me attentively from head to foot, knowing me to be a Parisian, he spoke to me but once the whole evening, and then to ask me where I had bought my watch-chain.

“And now, my dear guest,” said to me M. de Peyrehorade, as supper was ending, “you

belong to me. You are in my house. I shall not let you go till you have seen every thing worth seeing among our mountains. You must thoroughly know our Roussillon and do it justice. You can form no idea of all I am going to show you. Phoenician remains, Roman, Celtic, Arabic, Byzantine—you shall see them all, from the cedar to the hyssop. I shall take you every where and not a stone shall you pass by."

A coughing-fit made him stop. I took advantage of it to tell him I should 'be sorry to inconvenience him at a time so interesting for his family. If he would be kind enough to advise me as to the excursions I ought to make, I could, without troubling him to go with me—

"Ah! You are speaking of the marriage of that boy there," he exclaimed, interrupting me. "Nonsense! That will be day after tomorrow. You shall attend the wedding with us as one of the family, for the bride is in mourning for an aunt whose heiress she is. So



there will be no great celebration—no ball. I am sorry, too, for you ought to see our Catalonian girls dance. They are pretty and you might like to imitate my Alphonse. One marriage is said to bring on another. Saturday, the young couple married, I am free and we can begin our trips. I must beg pardon for boring you with a country wedding. For a Parisian tires of parties—and a wedding without dancing, too! And yet you shall see a bride—a bride—you shall tell me of her. But I forget; you are a grave man and you no longer look at women. I have something better to show you. I'll let you see something! I am keeping a brave surprise for you to-morrow."

"How hard it is," said I, "to have a treasure in the house without the knowledge of people generally. I think I know the surprise you are preparing for me. But if you mean your statue, the description my guide has given me of it has served merely to excite my curiosity and dispose me to admiration."

“Ah! he has spoken to you of the idol, for so these fellows call my beautiful Venus Tur—but now I will say no more about it. To-morrow you shall see her in broad daylight and you will tell me I am right in believing her a chef-d’oeuvre. Indeed you could not have come more apropos; there are inscriptions which I, poor ignoramus, explain after my fashion—but a savant from Paris! You will make fun of my interpretation—for I have written a memoir—I, who am speaking to you—an old provincial antiquary, I have launched out—I want to make the press groan. If you would be kind enough to read the article and to favor me with corrections, I might hope. For instance, I am very curious to know how you would translate this inscription on the pedestal: Cave— But I won’t ask you anything yet. To-morrow, to-morrow! Not a word about Venus to-day.”

“You do right, Peyrehorade,” said his wife, “to let your idol alone. You should have seen that you keep the gentleman from eating.

Come, now, he has seen many finer statues than yours. At the Tuileries there are dozens of them, and in bronze, too."

"Alas, the ignorance, the holy ignorance of the province!" interrupted M. de Peyrehorade. "To compare an admirable antique with the stupid figures of Coustou!

Comme avec irrévérence

Parle des dieux ma ménagère !

"Do you know that my wife wished me to melt my statue to make a bell for our church. She wanted to be the godmother of it. A chef-d'oeuvre of Myron, sir."

"Chef-d'oeuvre! chef-d'oeuvre! a fine chef-d'oeuvre she has made! Breaking a man's leg!"

"My dear, look here," said M. de Peyrehorade, in a determined tone, stretching out towards her his right leg in its colored silk stocking, "if my Venus had broken this leg of mine, I should not have regretted it."

"Good Heavens! Peyrehorade, how can you talk so? Happily the man is better—and

yet I can not make myself look at a statue that has done harm like that. Poor Jean Coll!"

"Wounded by Venus, sir," said M. de Peyrehorade, laughing aloud, "wounded by Venus, and the rascal complains.

*Veneris nec praemia nôris.*

Who has not been wounded by Venus?"

M. Alphonse, who understood French better than Latin, winked with an air of intelligence, looking at me as if to ask: and you, Parisian, do you understand?

The supper ended. For an hour I had eaten nothing. I was tired and could no longer hide the many yawns that overcame me. Madame de Peyrehorade was the first to notice it, and remarked that it was time to go to bed. Then began new apologies for the bad room I was to have. It would not be as if I were in Paris. Things are at such a pass in the province! I must be indulgent towards the Roussillonnais. In vain I protested that after such a mountain tramp as I had had, a

heap of straw would be a delicious bed; they kept on begging me to pardon poor country-people if they did not treat me as well as I might wish. At last I went up to the chamber assigned to me, accompanied by M. de Peyrehorade. The stair-case, the upper steps of which were of wood, came out in the middle of a corridor upon which opened several rooms.

“At the right,” said my host, “is the apartment which the future Madame Alphonse is to occupy. Your room is at the end of the opposite corridor. You can well understand,” he added with an air intended to be roguish, “you can well understand the necessity of isolating the married pair. You will be at one end of the house, they at the other.”

We entered a well furnished chamber, where the first object that met my eyes was a bed seven feet by six, and so high that a step-ladder was needed to mount it. My host, having shown me where the bell was and assured himself by personal examination that the sugar-

bowl was full, the eau de Cologne bottles duly placed on the dressing-table, after asking me several times if I had every thing I wanted, bade me good night and left me to myself.

The windows were closed. Before undressing, I opened one of them to breathe the fresh night air, delicious, indeed, after so prolonged a supper. Opposite was the Canigou, admirable to look at always, but this evening, lighted as it was by the brilliant moon, it seemed to me the finest mountain in the world. For a few minutes I remained contemplating its wonderful outline and was upon the point of closing the window, when, lowering my eyes, I saw the statue upon its pedestal, not sixty feet from the house. It was placed at an angle of a quick-set hedge which separated a little garden from a large, perfectly level square, serving, as I learned afterward, for the tennis-ground of the town. This plat of ground, belonging to M. de Peyrehorade, had been granted by him to the commune at the urgent solicitation of his son.

At my distance from the statue it was hard to make out the attitude; I could judge only of its height, which seemed to be about six feet. At this instant a couple of young fellows passed over the tennis-ground, quite near the hedge, whistling the pretty air of Roussillon: *Montagnes régala des*. They stopped to look at the statue; one of them addressed it in a loud voice. He spoke Catalonian, but I had been in Roussillon long enough to understand pretty well what he said. "Look here now, you wench!" [The Catalonian word was much more emphatic.] "Look here!" said he, "you're the thing that broke Jean Coll's leg. If you belonged to me, I would break your neck."

"Bah! what with?" said the other. "It's copper, and so hard that Étienne broke his file on it, when he tried to cut into it. It's copper of the old pagan times, harder than thunder."

"If I had my cold-chisel (he seemed to be a locksmith's apprentice), I would soon have

her big white eyes out, as I would take an almond from its shell. 'They are worth more than a hundred sous.'

They went off a few steps.

'I must wish the idol good-night,' said the larger of the apprentices, suddenly stopping.

He stooped and probably picked up a stone. I saw him stretch out his arm, throw something, and straightway the bronze resounded from a blow. At the same instant the apprentice rubbed his head with his hand, yelling with pain

'She threw it back at me!' he exclaimed.

And my two young rascals took to their heels. Evidently the stone had rebounded from the metal and punished the wretch for his outrageous address to the goddess.

I closed the window, laughing with delight.

'One more vandal punished by Venus! May all destroyers of our ancient monuments have their heads thus cracked!' With this charitable wish I fell asleep.

It was broad daylight when I awoke. Near



my bed on the one side was M. de Peyrehorade in his dressing-gown; on the other, a servant, sent up by his wife, a cup of chocolate in his hand.

“Come now, up with you, Parisian! Here we have the lazy man from the capital!” said my host, while I was hastily dressing. “Eight o’clock and still in bed, while I have been up since six. I came upstairs three times tiptoe; not a sign of life. At your age it is not well to sleep too long. And my Venus, whom you have not yet seen! Well, well, take this cup of Barcelona chocolate—real contraband. You don’t get such chocolate in Paris. Get together all the strength you can, for when once you stand before my Venus, you can’t be torn away from her.”

In five minutes I was ready; that is to say, I was half-shaved, my clothes hardly buttoned, my mouth burned by the chocolate I had swallowed boiling hot. I went down to the garden and found myself before an admirable statue.

It was indeed a Venus of wonderful beauty. The upper part of her body was bare, as the ancients ordinarily represent the higher divinities; the right hand, raised as high as the breast, was turned palm inwards, the thumb and first two fingers extended, the other two slightly bent. The other hand, placed near the hip, held up the drapery that covered the lower part of the body. The attitude of this statue recalled that of the Morra-Player, known, I know not why, under the name of Germanicus. Perhaps the intention was to represent the goddess playing morra.

However this may be, it is impossible to see anything more perfect than the body of this Venus; nothing smoother, nothing more voluptuous than its contours; nothing nobler and more elegant than its drapery. I had expected some work of the Lower Empire; I saw a chef-d'oeuvre of the best period of the art. What struck me above all was the exquisite truth of every part; one

might have believed it molded from nature, could nature offer so perfect a model.

The hair, falling over the forehead, appeared once to have been gilded. The head, small, like that of nearly all Greek statues, was inclined somewhat forward. As to the face, never should I succeed in expressing its strange character, the type of which resembled that of no antique statue I could recall. It did not have that calm and severe beauty of the Greek sculptors, who systematically gave to every feature a majestic immobility. Here, on the contrary, I observed with surprise the artist's marked intention to represent malevolence and almost malice. Every feature was somewhat contracted; the eyes a little oblique, the mouth raised at the corners, the nostrils slightly swelled. Disdain, irony, cruelty could be read upon her face, which yet was of incredible beauty. In truth, the longer you looked at this admirable statue, the more painful was the conviction that so mar-

vellous beauty could exist in the total absence of feeling.

“If the model ever existed,” said I to M. de Peyrehorade, “and I hardly think heaven ever produced such a woman, how I pity her lovers! She must have had her pleasure in making them die of despair. In her expression there is something ferocious, and yet I have never seen any thing so beautiful.”

“’Tis Venus, indeed, in quest of her prey!” exclaimed M. de Peyrehorade, satisfied with my enthusiasm.

This expression of infernal irony was perhaps increased by the contrast between the shining, inlaid eyes of silver, with the coating of blackish green that time had given to the whole statue. These shining eyes brought about a certain illusion of reality, of life. I called to mind what my guide had said, that she made those who looked at her lower their eyes. This was almost true; and I could not but be vexed at myself that I felt somewhat ill at ease before this face of bronze.

“Now that you have admired all in detail, dear colleague in antiquities,” said my host, “let us open, if you please, a scientific conference. What have you to say about this inscription, to which you have yet given no attention?”

He pointed to the pedestal of the statue, and I read there these words:

## CAVE AMANTEM.

“Quid dicis, doctissime?” he asked, rubbing his hands. “Let us see if we agree about the meaning of this *cave amantem*.”

“But,” I replied, “there are two meanings. We can translate: ‘Be on thy guard against him who loves thee; beware of lovers.’ But in this sense I am not sure that *cave amantem* would be good Latin. When I consider the lady’s diabolic expression, I am rather inclined to think the artist wished to put the spectator on his guard against this terrible beauty. I would translate, then: ‘Look out for thyself if she loves thee.’”

“Humph!” said M. de Peyrehorade, “Yes,

yes: that is an admirable interpretation. But, begging your pardon, I prefer the former translation, which, however, I would farther develope. You remember Venus' lover?"

"There were several of them."

"Yes; but the first, Vulcan. Was not this the meaning: 'In spite of all thy beauty, of thine air of disdain, thy lover shall be a blacksmith, an ugly cripple?' A profound admonition, sir, for coquettes!"

I could not but smile, so far-fetched was the explanation.

"The Latin language is terrible in its conciseness," I remarked, to avoid formally contradicting my antiquary, and I drew back a few steps, the better to look at the statue.

"One moment, colleague!" said M. de Peyrehorade, catching me by the arm. "You have not yet seen all. There is another inscription: Step upon the pedestal and look at the right arm." Thus speaking, he helped me up.

Without too much ceremony I held on to

the neck of Venus, with whom I began to be a little familiar. For a moment I looked at her, face to face, and thus found her even more malicious, even more beautiful. I then found engraved upon the arm some letters in an ancient running hand, as it seemed to me. With the help of eyeglasses I spelled out what follows, and M. de Peyrehorade repeated each word as I pronounced it, with approving gesture and tone. I read then :

VENERI TVRBVL—  
EVTYCHES MYRO  
IMPERIO FECIT.

After the word TVRBVL, of the first line, some letters appeared to have been effaced, but TVRBVL was perfectly legible.

“Which means?” my host asked me, radiant with joy, and maliciously laughing, for he had good reason to think that I should not easily get over that TVRBVL.

“There is one word which I do not yet understand,” I said to him; “the rest is quite

simple. 'Eutyches Myron has made this offering to Venus by her order.'

"Well done! But TVRBVL; what do you make of that? What is TVRBVL?"

"TVRBVL gives me a good deal of trouble. In vain I am searching for some known epithet of Venus to help me. Come, what do you say to TVRBVLENTA? Venus who gives trouble, agitation—you perceive that I am always preoccupied by her malicious expression. TVRBVLENTA, that is not a bad epithet for Venus," I added, in a modest tone, for I was not myself very well content with my explanation.

"Venus, the turbulent Venus, the blusterer! Ah! do you believe that my Venus is a tavern Venus? Not at all, sir; she is a Venus of good society. But I am going to explain to you this TVRBVL—but you must promise not to divulge my discovery before my memoir is printed. To find this Venus was a godsend, and I make my glory of it. You can very well leave a few ears for us to glean—for us,



poor devils of the province. You are only too rich, you savants of Paris!"

From the height of the pedestal, where I was still perched, I solemnly promised him I would never be so base as to rob him of his discovery.

"TVRBVL—sir," said he, approaching me and lowering his voice, for fear another than I might hear him, "read TVRBVLNERAE."

I was none the wiser.

"Give attention. A league from here at the foot of the mountain, is a village called Boulternère. This is a corruption of the Latin word TVRBVLNERA. Nothing is more common than these changes. Boulternère was once a Roman town. I had always suspected the fact, but never had the proof of it. Now, the proof stands there. This Venus was the local divinity of the town of Boulternère; and this word, Boulternère, which I have just shown to be of classical origin, proves a thing still more singular, and this is that Boulternère, before being a Roman town, belonged to the Phoenicians!"

He paused a moment to get breath and to enjoy my surprise. I could hardly repress an outburst of laughter.

“In fact,” he continued, “TVRBVLNERA is pure Phoenician; TVR, pronounced TOUR—TOUR and SOUR, same word, isn’t it? SOUR is the Phoenician name of Tyre; I need not recall to you what it means. BVL, that is Baal; Bâl, Bel, Bul, slight differences of pronunciation. As to NERA, that gives me some trouble. I am tempted to believe, a Phoenician word failing, that it comes from the Greek *νηρός*, moist, marshy. This, then, would be a hybrid word. To justify *νηρός*, I shall show you at Boulternère how the mountain streams form pestilential marshes. On the other hand, the termination, NERA, might have been added later in honor of Nera Pivesuvia, wife of Tetricus, who was a benefactress of the town of Turbul. Still, on account of the marshes, I prefer the etymology of *νηρός*.”

He took a pinch of snuff with an air of satisfaction.

“But let us leave the Phoenicians and come back to the inscription. I translate, then: ‘To Venus of Boulternère Myron dedicates by her order this statue, his work.’”

I refrained from criticising his etymology, but in turn I wished to show my sagacity, and I exclaimed, “Stop there, sir! Myron certainly consecrated something, but I don’t see that it was necessarily this statue.”

“What!” he cried out. “Wasn’t Myron a famous Greek sculptor? The talent must have been perpetuated in his family; one of his descendants must have made this statue. Nothing can be more certain.”

“But,” I answered, “I see a little hole in the arm. I think it served to fasten something, a bracelet, perhaps, which this Myron gave to Venus as an expiatory offering. Myron was an unhappy lover. Venus was irritated against him; he appeased her by the consecration of a gold bracelet. Notice that *fecit* is often used in the sense of *consecrauit*. They are synonymous terms. I could show

you more than one example of this if I had at hand Gruter, or even Orelli. It is natural enough that a lover should see Venus in a dream, to imagine she orders him to give a gold bracelet to her statue. Myron consecrated a bracelet to her. Then barbarians, or some sacrilegious thief—”

“Ah! how easy it is to see that you have written romances!” exclaimed my host, while he helped me down. “No, sir. It is a work of Myron’s school. Just look at the workmanship and you will be convinced.”

Having made it a law never to contradict obstinate antiquaries, I lowered my head with an air of conviction, remarking, “It is an admirable bit.”

“But, good heavens!” cried out M. de Peyrehorade, “still another trace of vandalism. A stone has been thrown at my statue!”

He had just perceived a white spot a little below the breast of Venus. I observed a like mark upon the fingers of the right hand, which, I then supposed, had been hit by the

stone in its flight, or perhaps that a fragment had been broken off by the shock and had rebounded upon the hand. I related to my host the insult, of which I had been a witness, and the prompt punishment that had followed. He was much amused, and, comparing the apprentice to Diomedes, he hoped that he, like the Greek hero, might see all his companions changed into white birds.

The breakfast-bell broke up this classic interview, and, as I did the night before, I had to eat enough for six. Then came M. de Peyrehorade's tenants; while he was busy with them, his son took me to see the carriage he had bought for his bride at Toulouse, and which, you can well believe, I admired. Then I went with him to the stable, where he kept me a half-hour, boasting of his horses, teaching me their pedigree, telling me the prizes they had won him at the different races of the department. At last he began to speak to me of his future wife, from discoursing about a gray mare he intended giving her.

“We shall see her to-day,” said he. “I don’t know whether you will find her pretty—you are so fastidious at Paris; yet every body here and at Perpignan finds her charming. The best of it is that she is a fortune. Her aunt of Prades left her property to her. O, I shall be a lucky fellow.”

I was much shocked to see a young man more touched by the dowry than by the beauty of his destined wife.

“You are a connoisseur in jewels,” continued M. Alphonse, “how do you find this? This is the ring I shall give her to-morrow.”

Thus speaking, he drew from the first joint of his little finger a great ring, set with diamonds, and formed of two interlaced hands, a device that seemed to me infinitely poetic. The workmanship of it was ancient, but I judged it had been retouched to insert the diamonds. Inside the ring were to be read in Gothic letters these words: *Scmp̄r’ ab ti*—that is to say, Always with thee.

“It is a pretty ring,” I said to him; “but

these **diamonds** that have been added make it lose its character somewhat."

"Oh! it is much prettier as it is," he smilingly replied. "There are twelve hundred francs of diamonds in it. My mother gave it me. It was a family ring, very old—from the times of chivalry. It had belonged to my grandmother, who had inherited it from her own. God knows when it was made."

"The custom of Paris," I said to him, "is to give quite a simple ring, usually made of two metals, gold and platinum, for instance. See here; that other ring which you have on your finger there would be just the thing. The one with diamonds and the interlaced hands is too big to draw a glove over it."

"Oh! Madame Alphonse shall arrange that matter as she sees fit. I believe she will always be glad to have it. Twelve hundred francs on the finger is an agreeable thing. This little ring here," he added, with a satisfied air, looking at the simple ring he wore, "this little ring was given me one Mardi Gras day

by a lady in Paris. Ah! what a time I had in Paris two years ago! There is where amusement is to be had!" And he sighed regretfully.

"We were to dine that day at Puygarrig, with the relatives of the bride. We drove to the château, distant from Ille about a league and a half. I was presented and received as a friend of the family. I shall not speak of the dinner, nor of the conversation that followed it, in which I took little part. M. Alphonse, seated beside his bride, at intervals spoke a word in her ear. On her part, she hardly raised her eyes, and every time he addressed her she blushed modestly, but replied without embarrassment.

Mademoiselle de Puygarrig was eighteen years old; her supple and delicate figure formed a strong contrast with the bony form of her robust fiancé. She was more than beautiful—she was charming. I wondered at the perfect naturalness of all her answers; and her air of kindness, which, however, was not free from



a slight touch of mischief, recalled, in spite of me, my host's Venus. In this comparison, which I made to myself, I wondered if the superiority in beauty, which undoubtedly belonged to the statue, were not in great part due to its tigress expression; for energy, even in bad passions, always awakens our astonishment, and even a sort of involuntary admiration.

"What a pity," I thought, as I left Puygarig, "that so charming a person should be rich, and that her money should have won her a husband unworthy of her!"

After we had returned to Ille, not very well knowing what to say to Madame de Peyrehorade, whom I thought I ought to address now and then: "What brave people you are here in Roussillon!" I exclaimed. "How can you, Madame, celebrate a marriage Friday? In Paris we are more superstitious; no one would dare to take a wife on that day!"

"My God!" she said, "Do not speak of it; if it had depended on me, a different day would

have been chosen. But Peyrehorade so wished it, and we had to give way, but I am anxious all the same. Just suppose some misfortune should happen! There must be some reason for the belief, for, otherwise, why is every body afraid of Friday?"

"Friday!" interrupted her husband, "that is Venus's day, a good day, too, for a wedding. Don't you see, my dear colleague, I think only of my Venus. Upon my word, 'tis on her account I selected Friday. To-morrow, if you wish, before the ceremony, we will make a little sacrifice, two pigeons, for instance, and if I knew where to get some incense"—

"Come, come, Peyrehorade!" cried out his wife, scandalized to the last degree, "burn incense to an idol! It would be abominable! What would be said of us hereabouts?"

"At least," said M. de Peyrehorade, "you will let me put a crown of roses and lilies upon her head—

*Manibus date lilia plenis.*

You see, sir, the Charter is an empty word. We have no freedom in the matter of religion!"

The arrangements for the next day were in the following order: Every body was to be dressed and ready at ten o'clock precisely. After chocolate was served, we were to drive to Puygarrig. The civil marriage would be at the mayor's office, the religious ceremony in the chapel of the château. Then breakfast would follow. After breakfast, we would pass the time as we could till seven o'clock, when we were to return to M. de Peyrehorade's, where the two united families would have supper. The rest would follow naturally. Not being able to dance, we would eat as much as possible.

By eight o'clock I was seated in front of Venus, pencil in hand, trying for the twentieth time to sketch the statue's head, without succeeding in catching the right expression. M. de Peyrehorade came and went, gave me advice, repeated his Phœnician etymologies;

then he placed Bengal roses upon the pedestal of the statue, in a tragi-comic tone making vows for the new couple about to live under his roof. Toward nine o'clock he went in to dress, and at the same time appeared M. Alphonse, in a new tight-fitting coat, white gloves, polished shoes, jeweled shirt-studs, a rose in his button-hole.

“Will you make the portrait of my wife?” said he to me, leaning over my drawing. “She is pretty, too.”

At this moment a game of tennis began upon the plat of ground I have already mentioned, and this at once attracted the attention of M. Alphonse. As for myself, tired, and despairing of drawing this diabolical face, I gave up my work to look at the players. Among them were some Spanish muleteers who had arrived the day before. They were from Aragon and Navarre, nearly all of them of wonderful skill. Therefore the Illians, though encouraged by the presence and advice of M. Alphonse, were quickly enough beaten by these new cham-

pions. The national spectators were in a panic. M. Alphonse looked at his watch. It was only half-past nine. His mother's hair was not yet dressed. He hesitated no longer; taking off his coat, he asked for a jacket, and bade defiance to the Spaniards. I smiled as I saw him do this, and was somewhat surprised.

“The honor of the country must be sustained,” said he.

Then I found him really handsome. He was excited. His toilet, to which he had given so much attention a moment before, was now nothing to him. Then he feared to turn his head, for fear of disarranging his cravat; now he had no thought for his frizzled hair, nor well-starched frill. And his bride?—really, had it been necessary, I believe he would have put off the wedding. I saw him hastily put on a pair of sandals, roll up his sleeves, and confidently put himself at the head of the defeated side, like Cæsar rallying his soldiers at Dyrrachium. I jumped over the hedge, and sat down in the

shade of a nettle-tree, so as to have a good view of both camps.

Contrary to the general expectation, M. Alphonse missed the first ball; it is true it was sent just grazing the ground and with astonishing force, by an Aragonian who seemed to be the chief of the Spaniards. He was a man some forty years old, thin and sinewy, six feet tall, and his olive skin was almost as deeply tanned as the bronze of the Venus.

M. Alphonse dashed his racket to the ground with fury.

“It is that cursed ring,” cried he, “which binds my finger, and makes me lose a sure ball.”

Not without difficulty, he drew off the diamond ring; I approached to receive it, but he was too quick for me, and, running to the Venus, put the ring on her ring-finger, and again headed the Illians.

He was pale, but calm and resolute. From that time not a single mistake did he make, and the Spaniards were utterly beaten. It was

a fine spectacle to observe the enthusiasm of the spectators ; some uttered a thousand cries of joy ; others seized his hands, calling him the honor of the country. Had he repelled an invasion, I doubt if he had received more lively and sincere felicitations. The chagrin of the vanquished added still more to the lustre of the victory.

“We shall try it again, my bravo,” said he to the Aragonian, with a tone of superiority ; “but I will give you points.”

I could have wished M. Alphonse more modest, and I was almost distressed by the humiliation of his rival.

The Spanish giant deeply felt this insult. I saw him grow pale in spite of his tanned skin. He looked at his racket with an air of sadness, while grinding his teeth ; then with a muffled voice he said, quite low : “*Me lo pagarás.*”

The voice of M. de Peyrehorade interrupted the triumph of his son ; my host, much surprised at not finding him looking after the preparation of the new carriage, was yet more

so at seeing him all in perspiration, racket in hand. M. Alphonse ran to the house, washed his face and hands, put on his new coat and polished shoes, and five minutes afterward we were at full speed on our way to Puygarrig. All the tennis-players and a great number of spectators followed us with shouts of joy. Our vigorous horses could hardly keep ahead of these intrepid Catalonians.

We were already at Puygarrig, and the procession was forming to go to the mayor's office, when M. Alphonse, rubbing his brow, said to me, quite low :

“What a blunder! I have forgotten the ring. It is on the finger of Venus, and may the devil take her! Don't mention it to my mother, at all events. Perhaps she will not notice it.”

“Couldn't you send some one for it?” asked I.

“Bah! my servant remained at Ille. As for these fellows here, I wouldn't trust one of them. Twelve hundred francs worth of dia-



monds! That would be temptation for most of them. Besides, what would be thought here of my absence of mind? Too much fun would be made of me. I should be called the statue's husband. I hope, though, that the ring will not be stolen. Fortunately these rascals are all afraid of the idol. They don't dare to come within arm's length. Bah! it is of no consequence; I have another ring."

The two ceremonies, the civil and the religious, were conducted with becoming state; and Mademoiselle de Puygarrig accepted a Paris milliner's ring, without a suspicion that her fiancé was making the sacrifice of a pledge of love. Then we were seated at table, where we ate, drank, and even had singing, every thing at great length. I pitied the poor bride for the coarse expressions of joy that burst out around her; she, however, got along better than I could have hoped, and her embarrassment was as far from awkwardness as it was from affectation. Perhaps there is granted us courage equal to our difficulties. When at

last by the will of heaven the breakfast was over, it was four o'clock; the men went for a walk in the magnificent park, or to see the peasants, in their Sunday best, dance upon the lawn in front of the château of Puygarrig. In this way we worried through a few hours. Meanwhile the women were busy around the bride, who was showing them her wedding presents. Then she changed her dress, and I observed that she covered her beautiful hair with a bonnet adorned with a plume, for women like nothing better than to assume, as soon as they can, those articles of dress that usage forbids their wearing so long as they are unmarried.

It was nearly eight o'clock when we were ready to set out for Ille. But first there was a pathetic scene. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig's aunt, who had been a mother to the bride, a very old and devout woman, was not to go with us to the town. At the separation, she made to her niece a touching discourse upon the duties of the wife, the result of which dis-

course was a torrent of tears and caresses without end. **M. de Peyrehorade** compared this separation to the rape of the Sabine women. At last, however, we got away, and, during the drive, each did his best to cheer up the bride and make her smile; but all in vain. At Ille supper awaited us, and what a supper! If the coarse joy of the morning shocked me, much more was I now shocked by the equivocal jokes, the subjects of which were the groom, and, above all, the bride. He had disappeared a moment before we sat down at the table, and had returned, pale and serious as a saint. At short intervals he drank old Collioure wine, which is nearly as fiery as brandy. I was at his side, and thought it was my duty to advise him :

“Take care! it is said that wine”—

I know not what folly I uttered to be on a par with the other guests. He touched my knee, and in a very low tone said :

“When we get up from table, let me speak two words to you.”

His solemn tone surprised me. I looked at him more attentively, and noticed a strange change in his features.

“Do you feel ill?” I asked him.

“No.”

And he began again to drink.

Meanwhile, in the midst of shouts and the clapping of hands, a boy eleven years old, who had slipped under the table, showed to us a pretty red and white ribbon he had just detached from the bride's stocking. It is called a garter, I think. It was soon cut into little bits, and divided among the young people, in accordance with an old custom still observed in patriarchal families. The bride blushed to the white of her eyes, but her confusion was at its height, when M. de Peyrehorade, after demanding silence, chanted her some Catalonian lines, impromptu, as he said. This was their meaning, if I understood them:

“What then is this, my friends? Does the wine I have drunk make me see double? There are two Venuses here. . . .”

The groom turned his head abruptly with a frightened look that made every body laugh.

“Yes,” continued M. de Peyrehorade, “there are two Venuses under my roof. The one, I found in the ground like a truffle; the other, descended from heaven, has just divided her belt among us.”

He meant to say garter.

“My son, choose the one you prefer; the Roman Venus or the Catalonian. The rogue takes the Catalonian and it is the better choice. The Roman is dark, the Catalonian fair; the Roman is cold, the Catalonian inflames all who come near her.”

This conclusion excited such an uproar, such burning applause, such loud-resounding laughter, that I feared the ceiling would fall upon our heads. Around the table were but three serious faces, the bride's, the groom's and my own. My head was aching, and, besides, a wedding always makes me sad. This one in particular disgusted me a trifle. The last verses had been sung by the deputy-mayor,

and they were somewhat free I must confess, and we went into the drawing-room to see the bride's departure, who was soon to be led to her chamber for it was near midnight.

M. Alphonse drew me into the recess of a window and said to me, turning away his eyes :

“You will laugh at me—but I don't know what is the matter with me—I am bewitched. May the devil take me.”

The first idea that occurred to me was that he thought himself threatened by that sort of misfortune of which Montaigne and Madame de Sévigné have spoken.

“The whole empire of love is full of tragic stories,” etc.

In my secret soul I was thinking that this sort of accident happened only to men of a certain degree of intelligence.

“You have been drinking too much Collioure wine, my dear M. Alphonse,” I said to him, “I forewarned you.”

“Yes, perhaps, but there is something much more terrible.”

He spoke in broken tones, I believed him quite drunk.

“You remember about my ring?” he went on after a moment’s silence.

“Yes, yes. Has it been stolen?”

“No.”

“Then you have it?”

“No—I—I can’t get it off the finger of that devil of a Venus.”

Is that all? You didn’t pull hard enough.”

“But I did, though. But Venus—she has bent her finger.”

He looked at me straight in the eye with a haggard air, leaning against the window case-ment to keep himself from falling.

“What a queer fancy!” I said to him. “You pushed on the ring too hard. To-mor-row you can get it off with pincers. But be careful not to injure the statue.”

“No, I tell you. Venus has drawn in her finger; bent it. She has her hand closed; do you understand me? She, apparently, is my

wife, since I have given her my ring. She—she does not wish to give it back.”

I shuddered, and for a moment my hair almost stood on end. Then a sigh from the depths of his breast gave me more than the suspicion of wine, and all my emotion disappeared.

The miserable wretch, I thought, is dead drunk.

“You are an antiquary, sir,” added the young man, in a lamentable tone; you are acquainted with such statues. Is there not, perhaps, some spring, some devilish contrivance, which I do not understand? If only you would go and see.”

“Certainly,” said I, “come with me.”

“No. I prefer you should go alone.”

I left the drawing-room.

During supper the weather had changed and the rain began to fall in torrents. I was going to ask for an umbrella, when a sudden thought checked me. I should be a great fool, I said to myself, to go to verify what a



drunken man had told me. Perhaps, besides, he has wished to play me a joke for the amusement of his provincial friends; at the least, I should he wet to my bones and catch an awful cold. From the doorway I could see the statue dripping with water and I went up to my room without returning to the drawing-room. I went to bed, but I could not sleep. All the events of the day came back to my mind. I thought of that young girl, so beautiful and so pure, given over to a drunken brute. What an odious thing, thought I, is a marriage of expediency! A mayor with a tri-colored scarf, a curé in his stole, and, behold, the nicest girl in the world is given to the Minotaur! At such a moment what can two beings who have no love say to each other, a moment that two lovers would purchase with their lives. Can a woman ever love a man whom she has once found unmannerly? First impressions can not be effaced, and I am sure of it, M. Alphonse will well deserve to be hated.

During my monologue, which I cut somewhat short, I had heard much coming and going in the house, doors opening and shutting, carriages departing; then I thought I heard on the staircase the light footsteps of several women, directed towards the end of the corridor opposite my chamber. It was probably the bride's attendants taking her to bed. At last they came down the stairs. Madame de Peyrehorade's door was shut. How troubled and ill at ease this poor girl must be, I said to myself. I turned in my bed, quite out of sorts. After all, a bachelor plays but a sorry part at a wedding.

Silence reigned for some time and then was broken by heavy steps coming up the stairway, the wooden part of which loudly creaked.

“What a booby!” I exclaimed. “I bet he will fall on the stairs.”

Every thing became quiet again. I took a book to change the train of my thoughts. It contained statistics of the Department, and

was enriched by a paper of M. de Peyrehorade upon the Druidical remains of the Arrondissement of Prades. At the third page I was asleep.

I rested badly and often awoke. It might have been five o'clock in the morning and I had been awake some twenty minutes when a cock crew. Day was beginning to dawn. Then I distinctly heard the same heavy steps, the same creaking of the stairs, which I had heard before falling asleep. It seemed to me very singular. Yawning, I tried to guess why M. Alphonse was up-so early. I could think of no probable reason. I was about to close my eyes when my attention was again aroused by strange movements, with which were mingled the loud tinkling of bells, and the noise of opening and closing doors; then I distinguished confused cries.

My poor friend must have set something afire, I thought, as I jumped out of bed.

I dressed hastily and went into the corridor. From the opposite end came cries and lamen-

tations, and one shrieking voice mastered all others: "My son! my son!" Evidently some misfortune had happened to M. Alphonse. I ran to the bridal chamber; it was full of people. The first sight to meet my eyes was the young man half-clothed, stretched across the bed, the frame of which was broken. He was livid, motionless. At his side his mother wept and moaned. M. de Peyrehorade was busy rubbing his temples with eau de Cologne, or putting smelling-salts to his nose. Alas! For sometime already his son had been dead. Upon a sofa at the other end of the room, was the bride, a prey to dreadful convulsions. She gave utterance to inarticulate cries, and two stout servants had great trouble to hold her.

"My God!" I cried, "what has happened?"

I drew near the bed and lifted up the body of the unfortunate young man; it was already stiff and cold. His clenched teeth and purple face expressed the most frightful suffering. It seemed that his death had been violent and his

agony terrible. Not a trace of blood on his clothes. I threw open his shirt and saw upon his breast a livid imprint that stretched over his side and back. You would have said he had been tightly bound by an iron hoop. My foot struck something hard on the carpet; I bent down and saw the diamond ring.

I led M. de Peyrehorade and his wife to their own room. I had the bride taken there.

“You have still a daughter,” I said to them. “She needs your care.” Then I left them together.

I had no doubt that M. Alphonse had been the victim of assassins, who had found some way of getting into the bride’s chamber in the night. These bruises upon the breast, their circular course, were something I did not understand, for a club or an iron bar could not have produced them. Suddenly I remembered to have heard at Valence that bravos made use of long leather bags, filled with fine sand, to murder people for whose death they were paid. At the same time, I recalled the

Aragonian muleteer and his threat; still I could hardly believe that so thoughtless a pleasantry should be expiated by so terrible a vengeance.

I went into the house, seeking every-where traces of the murderers, but finding none. I went down into the garden to see if the assassins had entered that way, but I found no satisfactory proof. Moreover, the rain of the night before had so soaked the soil that it could keep no lasting mark of footsteps. And yet I noticed some footprints deeply impressed in the ground; they were in two opposite directions, though in the same line, extending from the corner of the hedge next the tennis ground to the door of the house. These might have been the footprints of M. Alphonse when he went to take his ring from the finger of the statue. On the other hand, the hedge, being at this place less thick, might here have been broken through by the murderers. Going to and fro in front of the statue, I stopped a moment to look at it. This time, I must

avow, I could not contemplate it without fear, so frightful was its expression of ironic malice; and my head filled with the horrible scenes I had just witnessed, I seemed to see an infernal divinity looking with approval upon the misfortunes that were falling upon this house.

I retired to my room, where I remained till mid-day. Then I went out to inquire about my hosts. They were somewhat calmer. Mademoiselle de Puygarrig, I mean M. Alphonse's widow, had regained consciousness. She had even spoken to the *procurcur* of the king, who lived at Perpignan, then on his circuit at Ille, and this magistrate had taken her deposition. He asked for mine. I told him what I knew, not concealing my suspicions of the Aragonian muleteer. He ordered him arrested forthwith.

“Have you learned any thing from Madame Alphonse?” I asked the procureur of the king, after my deposition had been taken down and signed.

“That unfortunate young woman has lost

her mind," he replied, sadly smiling; "lost her mind entirely. Just see what she relates:"

"She had been in bed, she says, a few minutes, the curtain drawn, when the chamber-door opened and some one came in. Madame Alphonse was at the backside of the bed, her face to the wall. She did not stir, believing it to be her husband. In an instant, the bed groaned as if loaded with an enormous weight. She was extremely frightened, but dared not turn her head. Five minutes, ten minutes, perhaps—she can give no account of time—passed in this way. Then she moved involuntarily, or the person in the bed did so, and she felt the contact with something icy cold—this is what she says. She drew back toward the wall, trembling in every limb. Shortly afterward, the door opened a second time, and some one came in, who said: 'Good evening, my dear wife.' Then the curtains were drawn. She heard a stifled cry. The person who was in the bed at her side sat up and seemed to stretch out her arms. She then turned her



head—and saw, she says, her husband on his knees near the bed, with his head as high up as the pillow, in the arms of a sort of greenish monster, which hugged him tightly. She said—and this she has told me twenty times, poor woman!—she says she recognized the bronze Venus, M. de Peyrehorade's statue; just imagine! Since that was discovered here, every body is dreaming of it. But I resume the story of this luckless, demented woman. At this sight she lost consciousness, and, probably, she had lost her reason some time before. She has not the slightest idea how long she was in the swoon. When she came to her senses, she again saw the phantom, or the statue, as she persists in calling it, immovable, its legs and the lower part of the body in the bed, the bust and arms extended, and in its arms her husband, motionless. A cock crew. Then the statue got out of the bed, let the corpse fall, and departed. Madame Alphonse seized the bell-cord, and the rest you know."

The Spaniard was brought in; he was calm,

and made his defence coolly and with presence of mind. Besides, he did not deny the conversation I had heard, but he explained it by pretending he had meant nothing more than that the next day, after he was rested, he would beat his opponent at a game of tennis. I remember that he added :

“An Aragonian, when he is insulted, does not wait a day before taking his revenge. If I had thought it the intention of M. Alphonse to injure me, in an instant my knife had been in his belly.”

His shoes were compared with the foot-prints in the garden ; the shoes were much the larger.

At last the inn-keeper, at whose house he had lodged, assured us that the man had passed the whole night rubbing and doctoring a sick mule. Moreover, this Aragonian was a man of good reputation, well known in the country, where he came every year in the course of trade. He was released with apologies for his arrest.

I had almost forgotten the deposition of the servant who had last seen M. Alphonse alive. It was just as he was going to his wife's room. Calling this man, he asked him, with an anxious air, if he knew where I was. The servant replied he had not seen me. Then M. Alphonse sighed, and remained longer than a minute silent, and then said: "Well, then, the devil must have carried him off too!"

I asked this man if M. Alphonse had his diamond ring when he spoke to him. The servant was slow in his reply; at last he said he thought not, but that he had not given much attention to this. "If he had worn that ring on his finger," he added thoughtfully, "I think I should have noticed it, for I thought he had given it to Madame Alphonse."

While I was putting questions to this man, I felt a little of the superstitious terror which the deposition of Madame Alphonse had spread throughout the house. The *procurreur* of the king looked at me and smiled, and I did not insist.

A few hours after the funeral of M. Alphonse, I was ready to leave Ille. M. de Peyrehorade's carriage was to take me to Perpignan. In spite of his weakness, the poor old gentleman insisted upon accompanying me as far as the garden-gate. We walked along in silence, he with difficulty, though leaning upon my arm. At the moment of separation, I gave a parting glance at Venus. I saw very well that my host, without sharing the terror and the hatred she inspired in a part of his family, would gladly be rid of an object that incessantly recalled a frightful calamity. My intention was to induce him to put it in a museum. I was hesitating to enter upon the subject, when M. de Peyrehorade mechanically turned his head in the direction he saw me looking. He perceived the statue, and burst into tears. I embraced him, and, without the courage to utter a word, I got into the carriage.

Since my departure, no new light, so far as

I have heard, has been thrown upon this mysterious catastrophe.

M. de Peyrehorade died a few months after his son. By his will he left me his manuscripts, which perhaps I shall publish some day. I have not yet found the memoir which relates to the inscriptions upon the Venus.

P. S.—My friend, M. de P., has just written me from Perpignan that the statue no longer exists. After her husband's death, the first care of Madame de Peyrehorade was to have it melted and cast as a bell, and in this new form it does service for the church of Ille. "But," adds M. de P., "an unlucky fate seems to pursue those who possess this bronze. Since this bell is rung at Ille, the vines have twice been nipped by frost."

**IV.**

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**BATTLE OF PÈRE-LACHAISE.**

IV.  
THE BATTLE OF PÈRE-LACHAISE.

[From Alphonse Daudet.]

M. L. S.

**A** BATTLE here? but there never was any battle. It's an invention of the newspapers.

Here's all that actually did happen. On the evening of the 22d, which was Sunday, we saw some thirty Federal artillerymen come up with a battery of seven-pounders and a mitrailleuse of the new kind. They took position right above the cemetery, and as that part was in my beat, it was I who had to meet them. Their mitrailleuse was there at that corner of the path near my box; their guns

a little lower on the level. As soon as they came they made me open several chapels. I thought they were going to smash and plunder every thing down there, but the officer kept good order, and putting himself right in the middle made them this little speech: "The first hog that touches any thing, I'll smash his jaw for him! Break ranks!" He was an old man—all gray—with the Crimean and Italian medals, and didn't have an easy going way about him. The men took it as settled, and I will do them the justice to say that they did not take a thing from the monuments, not even the Duke of Morny's crucifix, which they say is worth two thousand francs by itself.

For all that, they were a lot of rascals, these gunners of the Commune. Second-rate artillerymen; they did not dream of any thing except to swallow down their big pay, three francs fifty. You ought to have seen the life they led here in the cemetery. They slept in heaps in the vaults in Morny's, in Favronne's,



that beautiful tomb of Favronne, where the emperor's nurse is buried. They put their wine to cool down in the Champeaux vault, where there is a spring. Then they had their women come. The whole night they drank and boozed. Ah! you'd have thought the dead people would have heard their jokes.

All the same, in spite of their clumsiness, these robbers did Paris a great deal of damage. Their position was so fine. From time to time would come an order: "Fire at the Louvre. Fire at the Palais-Royal." Then the old soldier would aim the guns and the petroleum shells would fall into the city at every discharge. What was going on down below, nobody knew exactly. We heard the firing coming nearer, little by little, but the Communists did not disturb themselves about that. It did not seem possible that the Versailles troops could advance under the cross-fires from Chaumont, Montmartre and Père-Lachaise. What brought them to their senses was the first shell

the sailors sent us when they reached the Montmartre hill. They expected it so little!

As for me, I was right in the middle of them all, leaning against the Morny monument, busy smoking my pipe. When I heard the shells coming I just had time to throw myself flat on the ground. At first our artillerymen believed that it was a mistake in aim or some comrade on a spree. . . . But that was just the beginning! At the end of five minutes there was Montmartre blazing out again and another big bomb-shell coming down upon us just as straight as the first. This time my bullies let their guns and mitrailleuse lie where they were, and stretched their legs to save themselves. The cemetery wasn't big enough for them. They kept crying out: "We are betrayed! we are betrayed!"

The old fellow, left there alone under the shells, stood like a brave devil in the middle of his battery and cried with rage to see how his gunners had deserted him.

All the same, toward evening, at pay-time,

some of them came back to him. Hold on, sir; look at my proofs. Here are still the names of those who came to draw their pay that evening. The old man called out their names and wrote them down as they came along: "Sidaine, present; Chondeyras, present; Billot, Vollon." . . .

As you see they were not more than four or five; but they brought their women with them. Ah, I shall never forget that pay-night. Down there, Paris was blazing, the Hôtel de Ville, the arsenal, the warehouses full of goods.

In Père-Lachaise you could see as in broad daylight. The Federals tried to settle down to their guns again; but they were not enough and then Montmartre made them afraid. Then they went down into a vault and set to drinking and singing with their wenches. The old man had seated himself between these two big stone figures at the door of the Favronne tomb and was staring at burning Paris, with a terrible look. You might have said that he suspected it was his last night.

From this time on I do not know very well what happened. I had gone to our place, that little hut you see down there hid in the branches. I was very tired. I lay down, all dressed, on my bed, keeping my lamp lighted as if it were a stormy night. All of a sudden there was a rough knocking at the door. My wife, all in a tremble, went to open it. We believed we were going to see more Federals. . . It was the navy. A captain, ensigns, a surgeon. They said to me: "Get up; make us some coffee."

I got up; I made the coffee for them. You could hear in the cemetery a murmur, a confused movement as if all the dead people were rousing themselves for the last judgment. The officers drank very quickly, standing up; then they took me outside with them.

The place was full of soldiers and sailors. Then they put me at the head of a squad and they set us to search the cemetery, tomb by tomb. From time to time the soldiers would see the leaves stir and would fire a shot down

a path at a bust or a grating. Here and there we found some unlucky fellow hid away in a corner of a chapel. His business didn't take long. . . . That is what happened to my friends, the artillerymen. I found them all, men and women, in a heap, near my box, the old man with his medals on top. It wasn't a cheerful thing to see in the cold of the early dawn. . . . Brrr. But what took me the most was a long line of national guards they were bringing out at this moment from La Roquette prison, where they had spent the night. They came up the grand avenue slowly, like a funeral. You couldn't hear a word—not a groan. These poor fellows were so fagged out, so crushed down! There were some who were asleep as they walked, and the thought they were going to die couldn't wake them up. They made them file into the lower end of the cemetery and then the volleys began. There were a hundred and forty-seven of them. Do you suppose that took

long? . . . That is what they call the battle of Père-Lachaise.

Here my old fellow, seeing his sergent, left me abruptly and I stood alone looking at his sentry-box with the names of that last pay-day written on it, by the light of blazing Paris. I called up that night in May, streaked with shells—no, with blood and flame; the great lonesome cemetery as brightly lighted up as a city on a holiday; the guns abandoned in the middle of the cross-ways; all around, the opened vaults, the orgies in the tombs, and near, mid this crowd of domes, of columns, of stone statues which the leaping flames made look alive, with his broad forehead and great eyes, the bust of Balzac looking on.

v.

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FAREWELL.

## V.

## FAREWELL.

[From Honoré de Balzac.]

M. L. S.

“**C**OME, deputy of the centre, forward! We must hasten our steps, if we wish to be at table with the rest. Right foot forward! Jump, Marquis! Well done! You leap the furrows like a stag!”

These words were spoken by a hunter, quietly seated at the outskirts of the forest of Ile-Adam. He was finishing a Havana cigar, while waiting for his companion, who had gone astray in the mazes of the forest. By his side four panting dogs gazed also at the person to whom he spoke. To understand the raillery



of his exclamations, uttered at intervals, it should be stated that the other hunter was a short, stout man, whose rotundity was quite ministerial. Thus it was with difficulty that he labored through the furrows of a large field, where the harvest had just been reaped, and the stubble obstructed his path. To increase his discomfort, the sun's rays, striking across his face, brought out great drops of sweat, which rolled down his flushed cheeks. With his whole mind bent upon preserving his equilibrium, he swayed his body, now backward, now forward, with a motion like a jolting carriage. It was one of those September days that mellow the grapes with an equatorial heat. A storm was brewing, although a wide strip of blue sky still separated two heavy banks of clouds which rose up in the east and the west. A light vapor sped swiftly across the blue, spreading a thin gray veil from west to east. The wind stirred only in the upper regions of the air, and the atmosphere below was stifling with the hot breath of the earth.

Surrounded as it was by lofty forests which shut out the slightest breeze, the valley crossed by the hunter was like a furnace. Burning and silent, the forest seemed to thirst. The birds, the insects, were mute, and the tops of the trees scarcely quivered. Those who can still remember the summer of 1819 must pity the sufferings of the poor deputy—sweating blood and water from every pore, in his endeavors to rejoin his mocking companion. The latter, while smoking his cigar, had observed that the sun was slanting, and that it must be about five o'clock in the afternoon.

“Where the devil are we?” asked the stout hunter, wiping his brow, and leaning against a tree in the field, almost opposite to his companion, for he felt too tired to jump the deep ditch that still separated them.

“And you ask *me* this question!” laughed the hunter, who lay couched in the tall yellow grass that crowned the bank; then, throwing the end of his cigar into the ditch, he cried: “I swear by St. Hubert never again to trust

myself in an unknown country with any magistrate, even though he should be like you, my dear d'Albon, an old classmate at college."

"But, Philip, have you forgotten your French? You must have left your wits in Siberia," rejoined the stout man, casting a glance of comic misery in the direction of a sign-post about a hundred yards away.

"I see!" exclaimed Philip. Seizing his gun, and starting to his feet, he leaped the ditch with a single bound, and ran toward the sign-post. "This way d'Albon; this way! the first turn on the left," he called to his companion, pointing in the direction of a broad high-road. "Road from Baillet to Ile-Adam!" he continued. "By following it, we shall certainly come to the Cassan road, which must branch off from this one."

"That is right, colonel," said Monsieur d'Albon, replacing upon his head the cap with which he had been fanning himself.

"Forward then, my respectable councillor,"

answered Colonel Philip, whistling to the dogs, who already seemed more obedient to him than to their master, the magistrate.

“Are you aware, Monsieur le Marquis,” continued the officer, mockingly, “that we still have more than two leagues to go? The village yonder must be Baillet.”

“Great heavens!” cried the Marquis d’Albon; “you may go to Cassan, if you choose, but you shall go alone. As for me, I prefer to wait here, in spite of the storm—for the horse, which you can have sent from the château. You have been playing a trick on me, Sucy. We were to have had an easy day’s hunt, staying close to Cassan, and in places where I knew my way. Bah! instead of amusing ourselves, you have made me run like a hare ever since four o’clock this morning, and all the breakfast we have had was a glass of milk! Ah, if you ever have a lawsuit, I will see that you lose it, should you be a hundred times in the right!”

The discouraged hunter seated himself upon

a milestone at the foot of the sign-post, laid aside his gun and his empty game-bag, and heaved a deep sigh.

“France, such are thy deputies,” cried Colonel de Sucey, laughing. “Ah, d’Albon, if you had but spent six months as I did in the depths of Siberia”—

He did not finish the sentence, but raised his eyes to heaven, as though the horror of that time were a secret known only to God and to himself.

“Come, march!” he added. “If you stay here, you are lost.”

“What would you have, Philip! To sit still is so fixed a habit with a magistrate; and, on my honor, I am ready to drop—if only I had killed a hare!”

The two hunters formed a striking contrast to one another. The deputy was forty-four years old, but did not look more than thirty; while the soldier, although but thirty, appeared to be past forty. Both were decorated with the little red rosette of the Legion of

Honor. The colonel's cap covered thick, short hair of mixed black and white, like the wing of a magpie; while fine blonde curls clustered around the brow of the magistrate. One was a tall, dry, nervous man, the lines of whose pale face betrayed either terrible passions or frightful suffering; the other had a jovial face, rosy with health, and worthy of an epicurean. Both were browned by the sun, and their gaiters of tanned leather bore the marks of every ditch and every morass through which they had toiled.

"Come!" cried Monsieur de Sucey; "forward! After a short hour's march, we shall be at Cassan, seated before a cheerful board."

"You never can have loved!" answered the councillor, with a comic look of remonstrance. "You are as un pitying as article 304 of the Penal Code!"

Philip de Sucey started violently; his broad brow was clouded, and his face grew as dark as the heavens were at the moment. Although some fearfully bitter memory distorted his fea-

tures in agony, he did not weep. Like all strong men, he knew how to keep down his feelings in the depths of his heart, and, perhaps, like many sensitive characters, he shrank instinctively from laying bare his inmost sufferings, which no human words could describe, and which might incur the ridicule of those who could not comprehend them. Monsieur d'Albon was one of those delicate souls who instinctively feel the pain they have unintentionally given. He respected the silence of his friend, rose to his feet, and, forgetting his weariness, followed him without a word, depressed at having roughly touched a wound which perhaps was scarcely healed.

“Some day, my friend,” said Philip, pressing his hand, and thanking him for his mute repentance with a piercing glance. “Some day I will tell you the story of my life. To-day I can not.”

They walked on without further conversation. When the colonel's sadness seemed to have vanished, the magistrate's fatigue re-

turned; and, with the instinct or the desire of a weary man, his eye sounded the depths of the forest, questioned the tree-trunks, and examined the paths, in the hope of finding some dwelling where he might ask for hospitality. Arrived at a cross-road, he thought he could see a light smoke rising among the trees. He stopped, gazing attentively, and saw in the midst of a group of immense deciduous trees, the dark green branches of a clump of pines.

“A house! a house!” cried he, with the ecstasy of a shipwrecked sailor, crying “Land! land!”

Then he plunged through a thicket, followed mechanically by the colonel, who had fallen into a deep reverie.

“Rather would I find here an omelette, home-made bread, and a chair, than feast at Cassan, reclining upon divans, and with truffles and Bordeaux wine.”

These words burst from the councillor at sight of a gray wall which stood out in the dis-



tance against the brown background of knotted tree trunks.

“Ah, ha! This place looks like an ancient priory,” continued the Marquis d’Albon, as he reached a rusty iron gate, through which he could see, in the centre of a large park, a building constructed in the style formerly used for monastic architecture. “How well those cunning monks knew where to choose a site.”

This last exclamation was one of admiration, wrung from the marquis at sight of the romantic hermitage which met his gaze. The house stood half way up the slope of the mountain, upon the top of which was the village of Neville. The giant oaks of the forest, which described an immense circle around the priory, rendered the solitude absolute. The main building, formerly intended for the monks’ abode, faced the south. The park seemed to cover about forty acres. Around the house was spread a green lawn gracefully broken by clear streams and pools skilfully arranged, but

without apparent art. Here and there grew green trees of elegant form and varied foliage. There were grottoes tastefully placed and massive terraces whose crumbling steps and rusty railings gave a strange aspect to this rocky wilderness. Art had united its works with the most picturesque effects of nature. It seemed as though human passions must fail and die at the foot of the great trees that guarded the approach to this refuge from the world's turmoil, while their spreading branches tempered the heat of the sun.

“What desolation!” said Monsieur d’Albon, enjoying the sombre expression given by these ruins to the landscape. The place seemed stricken by a curse, and was like a haunted spot, left desolate by man. A rich mantle of ivy had spread its tortuous tendrils everywhere. Mosses of every hue—brown, green, yellow and red—scattered their bright tints upon the trees, the benches, the stones and the roof. The worm-eaten windows were moldy and worn by weather and decay; the

balconies hung broken and the terraces had fallen away. A few shutters held only by one rusty hinge. The loose-hung doors seemed to offer but a weak defence against a possible assailant. Laden with shining bunches of mistletoe, the fruit-trees spread wide their neglected boughs. Tall grasses grew in the paths. This desolation filled the landscape with a poetic fascination and the mind of the spectator with dreamy visions. A poet would have stood there plunged in a long reverie, marveling at a disorder so full of harmony and a neglect so full of grace.

Golden shafts of sunlight struck suddenly through the rifts in the storm-clouds and lighted up the half-savage scene with a thousand quivering tints. The brown tiles shone out, the mosses glittered, fantastic shadows danced upon the grass and under the trees; dead colors awoke again, strange contrasts intermingled, and the green leaves stood out boldly. In an instant the light went out. This landscape, which seemed to have spoken, sank into a

sombre silence; or rather into a silence soft as the softest tint of autumn twilight.

“It is the Sleeping Beauty’s palace,” said the councillor to himself, already feeling as though he owned the house. “To whom can this place belong? The man must be a fool who would not live on such a beautiful estate.”

Suddenly a woman darted from under a walnut-tree to the right of the gate. She glided noiseless before the eyes of the councillor, and swift as the shadow of a cloud. This vision struck him dumb with amazement.

“Well, d’Albon, what is the matter with you?” asked the colonel.

“I am rubbing my eyes to see if I wake or dream,” replied the magistrate, his face glued to the bars in an attempt to see the phantom again.

“She is doubtless under that fig-tree,” he went on, pointing out to Philip the foliage of a tree which rose above the wall to the left of the gate.

“Who? she?”

“Eh—how do I know?” rejoined Monsieur d’Albon. “Just now, right before me,” he added, in a low voice, “there arose over there the strange form of a woman; she seemed to me to belong more to the world of shadows than to that of flesh and blood. She is so slim, so light, so misty that she might be made of air. Her face is as white as milk; her dress, her eyes, her hair, are black. She looked at me in passing, and although I am not timid, her fixed, cold gaze froze the blood in my veins.

“Is she pretty?” asked Philip.

“I do not know. I saw nothing of her face but the eyes.”

“The devil take the dinner at Cassan!” cried the colonel. “Let us stay here. I have a child’s longing to enter this strange place. Do you notice those window-frames painted red, and the red lines on the mouldings of the doors and the shutters? Does not it seem like the devil’s house? Maybe he inherited it from the monks. Come, let us run after the

black and white lady. Forward!" cried Philip, with forced gayety.

At this instant the hunters heard a little cry like the squeak of a mouse caught in a trap. They listened. The rustling of the leaves sounded through the silence like the ripple of troubled waters; but although they strained their ears to catch any new sound, the place remained silent, and kept the secret of the unknown, if indeed she had really walked.

"Here is something queer!" cried Philip. Following the line of the walls of the park, the two friends soon came to a forest road that led to the village of Chauvry. After having pursued this path in the direction of the road to Paris, they found themselves before another iron gate, and could now see the main front of the mysterious abode. On this side the disorder reigned supreme, and wide seams gaped in the walls of three square buildings. Broken tiles and slate were in scattered heaps below, and the sunken roofs announced complete neglect. Fruit fallen from the trees lay rotting

on the ground ungathered, while a cow grazed upon the grass-plats, nosing among the flower-beds, and a goat munched the green grapes and tendrils of a vine that clung to a trellis.

“Here every thing seems to be in harmony, and disorder is, after a fashion, organized,” said the colonel, as he pulled at the chain of a bell; but the bell had no tongue. The two hunters heard only the strangely rasping sound of a rusty bolt drawn to. Although very shaky, the little door cut in the wall near the gate resisted all their efforts.

“By Jove, all this grows very exciting,” said he to his companion.

“If I were not a magistrate,” said Monsieur d’Albon, “I should believe that the black woman is a witch.”

Scarcely had he uttered these words when the cow came up to the iron gate and put up her warm muzzle as though she felt the need of some human presence. Just then a woman, if by that name a strange being could be called, who rose from under a clump of bushes, pulled

the cow back by a rope. This woman wore on her head a red handkerchief, from which stray locks of blonde hair stuck out like flax from a distaff. She wore no neckerchief, and a coarse woollen petticoat, with broad gray and black stripes, too short by several inches, showed her legs. She looked as if she belonged to one of the tribes of red-skins described by Cooper, for her bare legs, neck and arms were of a deep brick-red. Not a ray of sense lighted up her flat face, and her bluish eyes were dim, without a touch of warmth. A few sparse, white hairs took the place of eye-brows, and her mouth, half open, showed irregular teeth as white as a dog's.

“Hello, woman!” cried Monsieur de Sucey. She came slowly toward the grating, looking vacantly at the hunters, at sight of whom a forced but imbecile smile widened her mouth.

“Where are we? What house is that? Whose is it? Who are you? Do you belong here?” To these questions and many others which the two friends alternately addressed to



her, she answered only by guttural noises more like the grunt of an animal than a woman's voice.

“Do you not see that she is deaf and dumb?” said the magistrate.

“Bons-Hommes!” cried the peasant woman.

“Ah! she is right. This may indeed be the ancient monastery of Bons-Hommes,” said Monsieur d'Albon.

The questions redoubled; but, like a whimsical child, the peasant blushed, played with her wooden shoe, and twisted the rope tied to the cow, which had resumed its grazing. She look at the two hunters, inspecting every detail of their dress. She squeaked and clucked and grunted, but she spoke not a word.

“Your name?” said Philip, looking her straight in the eyes, as though he wished to fascinate her.

“Genevieve,” said she, with an imbecile laugh.

“Up to the present moment, the cow is the most intelligent creature that we have met

with!" cried the magistrate. "I am going to fire a shot to attract attention."

At the instant that d'Albon had seized his gun, the colonel stopped him by a gesture, pointing with his finger toward the strange woman who had aroused in them such lively curiosity. These women seemed plunged in deep meditation, and advanced with slow steps along a path some distance away. The two friends had time to examine her attentively. She was clad in a worn black satin gown. Her long hair fell in thick curls over her face and down her shoulders, reaching below her waist, and covering her like a mantle. Accustomed, no doubt, to this dishevelled condition, she seldom shook back the hair from her temples; but, when she did, the thick veil was thrown back from her forehead and eyes with one quick toss. All her motions, like those of a wild animal, had an ease and perfection of mechanism combined with a swiftness wonderful to see in a woman. The astonished hunters saw her leap to the bough of an apple-tree,

and swing there light as a bird. She snatched some fruit, ate it, and then swung herself down to the ground, with the elastic grace so marvellous in a squirrel. Her limbs had a suppleness which took from her slightest motion any appearance of strain or effort. She played about the lawn, rolling on the grass as a child might do; then, suddenly throwing her feet and hands forward, she stretched herself at full length on the ground, like a kitten asleep in the sunlight. The thunder rumbled in the distance, and she sprang up suddenly on all fours, quick as a dog which hears an approaching stranger. In this strange position, her black hair was swept into two dark masses that fell on either side of her head, and left exposed to the admiring gaze of the lookers-on two shoulders white as the daisies in the grass, and a neck so perfect as to leave the imagination to conceive the symmetry of the whole form. A painful cry escaped her, and she rose to her feet. Her motions followed one another so easily and so swiftly that she seemed to be

no human creature, but one of the daughters of the air described by Ossian. She went toward a pool of water, lightly shook off the shoe from one of her feet, and seemed to take delight in dipping her white foot into the spring, and admiring the ripples that quivered in the sparkling water. Then she knelt down close to the edge of the pool, and, amusing herself like a child, she plunged her long hair into the water, and then quickly drew it out again, heavy with drops that glittered in the sunlight like chaplets of pearls.

“That woman is crazy!” cried the councillor.

A hoarse cry, uttered by Genevieve, sounded at their side, and seemed to be addressed to the stranger, who, starting up quickly, tossed back the hair that shaded her face. At this moment, the colonel and d’Albon were able for the first time to see her features distinctly. On beholding the two friends, she ran toward them, and, in a few bounds, she reached the gate, with the lightness of a deer.

“Farewell!” she murmured, in a voice soft and sweet, but which, to the eager ears of her listeners, seemed to express not the slightest intelligence or feeling.

Monsieur d’Albon admired her long eye-lashes, her black eye-brows, and the dazzling whiteness of a skin which seemed to have not the faintest tint of pink; only here and there a blue vein cut across its marble paleness. When the councillor turned to his friend to give voice to his amazement at sight of this strange woman, he beheld him stretched out upon the ground as if dead.

Monsieur d’Albon fired his gun in the air to summon assistance, and cried “Help!” and then he stooped to raise the colonel. At sound of the shot, the stranger, who had stood motionless, darted away swift as an arrow, screaming like a wounded animal, and went whirling about the lawn with every appearance of the most abject terror. Monsieur d’Albon heard the wheels of a carriage upon the Ile-Adam road, and, calling for help, he waved his hand-

kerchief at the occupants. The carriage turned at once toward the Bons-Hommes, and Monsieur d'Albon recognized Monsieur and Madame de Grandville, his neighbors, who hastened to alight and offer help to the magistrate. Madame de Grandville chanced to have a bottle of smelling salts, which Monsieur de Sucey was made to inhale. When he opened his eyes, he turned them toward the lawn, where the strange woman had not ceased to whirl about screaming, and a cry of horror escaped him; then he closed his eyes again, with a gesture full of entreaty which seemed to ask his friend to take him away from this scene. Monsieur and Madame de Grandville gave up their carriage to the councillor, insisting that they themselves should return home on foot.

“Who on earth is this lady?” said the magistrate, pointing to the stranger.

“It is believed that she comes from Moulins,” answered Monsieur de Grandville.

“She is called the Countess of Vandières, and

is said to be crazy; but, as she has been here only two months, I can not vouch for the truth of this report."

Monsieur d'Albon thanked Monsieur and Madame de Grandville, and set out for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philip, when he came to his senses.

"Who is *she*?" asked d'Albon.

"Stéphanie. Ah, dead and living—living and insane! I thought the sight would kill me."

The prudent magistrate, appreciating the dangerous shock which his friend had just suffered, refrained from questioning or exciting him, and awaited impatiently their arrival at the château; for the startling change in the face and in the whole appearance of the colonel led him to fear lest the sight of the countess had smitten him with her own terrible malady. As soon as the carriage had reached the high-road of Ile-Adam, d'Albon sent the footman to the village in quest of a physician;

so that as soon as the colonel was laid in his own bed, a doctor was seated beside him.

“If Colonel de Sucey had not been almost fasting,” said the surgeon, “he must have died. His fatigue saved his life.”

After having pointed out the necessary precautions against a second attack, the doctor left the room to prepare a sedative drink.

The next day Monsieur de Sucey was better, but the doctor himself had insisted upon sitting up all night with him.

“I must confess to you, Monsieur le Marquis,” said the doctor to Monsieur d’Albon, “that I apprehended an apoplectic stroke. Monsieur de Sucey has received a violent shock; he is a man of strong passions, but with him, the first attack is decisive. Tomorrow, he will probably be out of danger.” The doctor was not mistaken, and the next day he allowed the magistrate to see his friend.

“My dear d’Albon,” said Philip, pressing his hand, “I want you to do me a service. Go at once to the Bons-Hommes. Find out



all about the lady whom we saw there, and come back immediately; for I shall count the minutes."

Monsieur d'Albon leaped upon his horse, and galloped to the old monastery. When he got there, he found a large, tall man, with an anxious face, standing in front of the grating, who answered affirmatively Monsieur d'Albon's question, if he lived in the ruined house. Monsieur d'Albon told him the object of his visit.

"What!" cried the strange man. "It was you, then, who fired that fatal shot? You almost killed my poor patient!"

"Why, sir; I fired in the air!"

"You would have hurt the countess less if you had shot her."

"As for that, we have no need to reproach one another, for the sight of your countess has almost killed my poor friend, Monsieur de Sucey."

"Can he be the Baron Philip de Sucey?"

cried the doctor, clasping his hands. "Was he in Russia—at the passage of the Beresina?"

"Yes," answered d'Albon; "he was made prisoner by some Cossacks and taken to Siberia, from whence he returned about eleven months ago."

"Come in, sir," said the strange physician, conducting d'Albon into a parlor on the ground-floor of the house, where every thing bore the mark of the most capricious destruction. Precious vases of porcelain lay shattered beside a clock whose case was unharmed. The heavy silk hangings in front of the windows had been torn, while an inside curtain of thin muslin was untouched.

"You see," said he to Monsieur d'Albon, as they entered, "the havoc caused by the charming creature to whom I have consecrated my time and skill. She is my niece; in spite of the impotence of science I still hope some day to bring back her reason, attempting, as I am, a method which unfortunately can only be pursued by rich people."

The old physician, like all men who live in seclusion, was absorbed by his own unceasing cares. He told the magistrate at great length the following story, which we will repeat, omitting the digressions or interruptions of the narrator or the listener:

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Marshal Victor, upon leaving the heights of Studzianka, at about nine o'clock at night on the twenty-eighth of November, 1812, left a thousand men, with orders to protect until the very last moment the one bridge remaining of the two which had spanned the Beresina. To this rear-guard was given the herculean task of attempting to save the great multitude of stragglers, who obstinately refused to abandon the equipments of the army. The heroism of this troop of generous souls was thrown away. The soldiers who pressed down pell-mell to the banks of the Beresina had found there, unfortunately, all the wagons, caissons, and camp-furniture which the army had been forced to abandon during its passage across the river on the 27th and 28th of November. Taking pos-

session of these unlooked-for riches, the poor wretches, brutalized by cold, seized upon the empty bivouacs, and tore to pieces the camp-furniture in order to build themselves huts. They made fires out of all the scraps they could heap together, killed and roasted their horses for food, rent the cloth or canvas coverings of the wagons to wrap about them—and, finally, they lay down to sleep, in place of crossing quietly, during the night, that Beresina which had already been so fatal to the army. The apathy of these poor soldiers can only be understood by those who themselves have crossed these vast deserts of snow, where the eye sees nothing but snow, where there is no drink but snow, no bed but snow, no food but snow or a few frozen beets, a handful of flour or some scraps of horse-flesh. Dying of hunger, thirst, fatigue, or sleep, these poor creatures came suddenly upon a river-bank where they found wood, fire, food, numberless abandoned wagons and bivouacs, in fact a complete improvised town. The vil-

lage of Studzianka had been completely sacked, gutted, and transferred from the heights to the plain. However dangerous this village of ruins might appear, it was nevertheless hailed with delight by those who could see nothing ahead of them but the frightful deserts of Russia. It became a vast caravansary which existed for only twenty hours. Worn out by hardships, or welcoming this unexpected comfort, the mass of men which gathered together in this place had no thought for any thing but sleep. Although the artillery of the Russian left wing poured its shot and shell unceasingly upon the crowd—which looked from a distance like a huge stain, now black now luminous, in the midst of the snow—the whizzing balls were regarded by the sufferers as only one discomfort the more. It was like a storm at a time when the lightning is disregarded by every one because it can only strike the dying, the sick, or perhaps the dead. Every moment, scattered bands of stragglers were arriving. These men, who

seemed like walking corpses, separated at once and went to ask room at one camp-fire or another; most often repulsed, they would reunite so as to attempt to force the hospitality which had been denied them. Deaf to the voices of a few officers, who predicted death for the morrow, they spent all the courage needed in order to cross the stream in building a shelter for the night, or in cooking a meal which often proved fatal. The fate that awaited them seemed devoid of horror, provided it left them an hour of sleep. Nothing had *horror* in their eyes except hunger, or thirst, or cold. When there was no longer either wood or fire, covering or shelter left for the new-comers, fearful struggles arose between the famished sufferers who arrived and the rich ones who were in possession. The weakest were overcome. At last some stragglers, driven by the Russians, came here and found no bivouac but the snow, in which they lay down, never to rise again. This mass of humanity finally became so dense, so dull, so

stupid—or perhaps so happy—that Marshal Victor, who had been their heroic defender, keeping himself between them and an army of twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, found himself obliged to cut his way through them by main force, in order to bring his troop of five thousand brave men across the Beresina to join the emperor. The wretched creatures allowed themselves to be crushed to the earth rather than budge an inch, and they died mute, smiling at the ashes of their fires, and without one thought for France.

It was ten o'clock at night before the Duke of Belluno found himself on the other side of the river. Before crossing the bridges which led to Zembin, he left the fate of the rear guard at Studzianka in the hands of Eblé, who became the savior of all who survived the horrors of the Beresina. It was near upon midnight when this great general, followed by an officer, left his little cabin near the bridge and surveyed the strange scene presented by the

camp, which lay between the left bank of the Beresina and the road from Borizof to Studzianka. The Russian cannonade had ceased; the countless fires scattered over the snow could barely, here and there, cast a pale and fitful gleam upon figures that seemed to have nothing human in them. Wretched creatures, to the number of about thirty thousand, scraped together from every nation which Napoleon had hurled against Russia, were there, throwing away their lives with a brutal carelessness.

“Let us save them all,” said the general to the officer. “To-morrow morning the Russians will occupy Studzianka. We must burn the bridge the instant they appear. Have courage, my friend. Go up to the heights and tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his position, cut through this crowd of people and cross the bridge. When you have seen them set out, follow them. With the help of a few energetic men you can burn up all the huts, wagons and caissons—every



thing! Drive those creatures on to the bridge! Force every thing that has two legs to take refuge on the other side of the river. Fire is our last resource. If Berthier had let me destroy those cursed wagons, this river would have swallowed up no one but my poor bridge-builders—those fifty heroes who saved the army and who will be forgotten.”

The general passed his hand across his brow and ceased speaking. He felt a presentiment that Poland would be his grave, and that not one voice would be raised in praise of those noble men who stood in that icy water, the water of the Beresina! while they planted the supports of the bridge. One of them alone still survives—or, to be more exact—still suffers unknown in an obscure village! The aide-de-camp set out. He had scarcely gone a hundred steps when the general roused his weary men and began the charitable work of burning the bivouacs about the bridge in order to force the sleepers to cross the Beresina. The young officer, not without great

trouble, reached the only frame building left standing in Studzianka.

"These barracks must be very crowded, comrade," said he to a man who stood outside.

"If you can get in you will be a smart trooper," replied the man, without turning round or ceasing his occupation of cutting at the wood of the house with his sabre.

"Is it you, Philip?" asked the aide-de-camp, recognizing the voice of a friend.

"Yes. Ah! It is you, is it, old boy?" answered Monsieur de Sucey, looking at the aide-de-camp who, like him, was but twenty-three years old. "I thought you were on the other side of this cursed river. Did you come to bring us cake and jam for desert? You will be well received," he added, breaking away some strips of bark which he gave to his horse for fodder.

"I am seeking your commander to warn him, on the part of General Eblé, that he must set out for Zemin. You have scarcely time to force your way through that pile of corpses,

to which I am about to set fire in order to make them march."

"You almost warm me! Your news throws me into perspiration! Were it not for those two, my boy, I should already be dead. It is for them that I look after my horse, and that I don't eat him myself. For mercy's sake, have you a crust of bread? It is thirty hours since I had any food, and I have fought like a madman to keep heat and life in me."

"Poor Philip, I have nothing—nothing. But is your general here?"

"Don't try to go in! This place is crammed with our wounded. Go further up. You will find on the right a kind of pig-pen. The general is there! Good-bye, old fellow. If ever again we shall dance the *trénis* in a Parisian ball-room"—

He did not finish his sentence. The wind blew suddenly with such fierceness that the *aide-de-camp* had to walk on to keep from freezing, and the lips of Philip stiffened with cold. Silence reigned every-where, inter-

rupted only by groans of pain from inside the house, or the crunching sound made by Monsieur de Sucey's horse, which in a perfect rage of hunger, was tearing the frozen bark with his teeth from the logs of which the house was built. The major put his sword back in its scabbard, seized the bridle of the precious beast and dragged him away, in spite of his resistance, from the wretched repast which he enjoyed so much.

“Come, Bichette, we must set out! You alone, my beauty, can save Stéphanie. Come! Later on we may have a chance to rest; perhaps to die.”

Philip, wrapped in a cloak to which he owed his preservation and his strength, broke into a run, stamping his feet upon the ground to keep them from freezing. He had scarcely taken ten steps when he perceived a large fire burning at the very spot where that morning he had left his carriage under the protection of an old soldier. A horrible dread seized upon him. Like all those who, dur-

ing this retreat, were overmastered by an absorbing passion, he had worked miracles to save his friends, and had developed a strength which he never could have had to save himself alone. He soon came to within a few steps of a depression between two hillocks, at the bottom of which, sheltered, as he hoped, from the bullets, he had placed a young woman, who had been the companion of his childhood and who was dearer than life to him.

A few feet away from the carriage, a party of about fifty stragglers were gathered round a fire which they fed with boards, or with the wheels and splinters from the ammunition wagons. These soldiers were, doubtless, the latest comers of all those who made up the sea of heads, fires and barracks, which stretched from below the heights of Studzianka to the fatal river—a living sea quivering with life—from which arose a dull muttering, broken now and then by yells and shrieks of agony. Driven by hunger and despair, these wretches had ev-

idently seized upon the carriage. The old general and his young wife, whom they had found inside, wrapped in cloaks and covered by piles of clothing and baggage, were now crouched upon the ground before the fire. One of the carriage-doors was broken. As soon as the men seated about the fire heard the tread of the horse and of the major, a howl arose inspired by hunger: "A horse! A horse!" they shouted with one voice.

"Stand back! look out!" cried two or three soldiers, taking aim at the horse.

Philip threw himself between, crying: "Wretches! I will fling you into your fire! There are dead horses above yonder! Go after them!"

"That officer is a wag! One, two, three—will you move?" cried a gigantic grenadier. "Well, as you please, then!"

The shriek of a woman mingled with the sound of the shot. Philip was, luckily, unhurt; but Bichette had fallen, and lay in her

death-struggle. Three men, rushing forward, finished her with bayonet thrusts.

“Cannibals! Let me at least have the blanket and my pistols,” cried Philip, in despair.

“Take the pistols, and welcome,” answered the grenadier. “As to the blanket, here is a poor fellow who for two days has had no grub, and whose clothes are rags. He is our general.”

Philip said no more, when he beheld a man whose shoes were dropping off, whose pantaloons were in tatters, and who had on his head only a ragged cap caked with ice. He hastened to seize his pistols. Five men carried the horse to the fire, and set to work to cut her up with the skill of Parisian butcher-boys. The pieces were slashed off in wonderfully quick time, and thrown upon the coals. The major seated himself by the woman who had shrieked at sight of his danger. She sat motionless on a cushion of the carriage, trying to warm herself, and she looked at him in si-

lence, without a smile. Philip also saw for the first time the soldier in whose care he had left the carriage; the poor man was wounded. Overcome by superior numbers, he had been forced to yield, but, like the dog which has defended his master's dinner to the last, he had taken his share of the booty, and had made himself a sort of cloak out of a white sheet. At this moment, he was occupied in turning a piece of meat from the mare upon the coals, and the major could see how he gloated over these preparations for the feast. The Comte de Vandières, who had, during the past three days, fallen into complete imbecility, sat upon a cushion near his wife, and gazed with a fixed stare at the flames, which were gradually rousing him from his stupor. He had been moved neither by the danger and the arrival of Philip, nor by the fight and the plunder of the carriage. Sucey at first seized the hand of the young countess, as though to express his sympathy and grief at sight of her misery; but he did not speak, and, seating himself beside her



on a pile of snow from which trickled a stream of water, he gave himself up to the delightful sensation of warmth from the fire, forgetting every thing. His face took on, in spite of himself, an expression of imbecile joy, and he awaited with impatience the roasting of the slice of horse-flesh that his soldier had secured. The smell of the burning meat excited his hunger, and his hunger silenced his heart, his courage and his love. He looked without upon the spoils which had been dragged from the carriage. All the men about the fire had divided the coverings, the cushions, the cloaks, and all the male and female attire belonging to the count, the countess, and the major. Philip turned to see if the strong-box had been completely rifled, and he saw, by the light of the leaping flames, a heap of gold, diamonds, and silverware flung carelessly aside. No one had thought of taking away the smallest piece. Every creature among the crowd which chance had grouped about this fire kept an unbroken silence which seemed terrible, and did only

what he thought best for his own comfort. Their misery was grotesque. Their faces, swollen by the cold, were caked with mud so thick that their tears had worn deep gutters from eye to chin, and their matted beards made them still more hideous. Some were wrapped in a woman's shawl, others wore a saddle-cloth or a carriage-robe spattered with mud, or rags and tatters crusted with melting frost and ice; some had one foot in a boot, the other in a shoe; indeed, there was not one among them whose costume did not have something ludicrous about it. In the presence of these absurdities, they all kept a gloomy silence, uninterrupted save by the crackling of the wood, the snapping of the flames, the distant murmur of the camp, or the blows struck by the swords of the hungry men who hacked at Bichette, and tore away the meat. A few miserable wretches, wearier than the others, slept, and if any one of them rolled into the fire, nobody pulled him out. These severe logicians thought that if he were alive, the heat would

warn him of his danger; and, even when the poor wretch awoke amid the flames, nobody seemed to mind. A few of the soldiers looked at one another as though to justify their own heartlessness by the indifference of the rest. The young countess twice witnessed such a scene as this, and said nothing. When the meat on the coals was roasted, each one satisfied his hunger with the gluttony which, when we see it among brutes, is so disgusting.

“This is the first time that thirty fellows have got upon one horse!” cried the grenadier who had killed the mare.

This was the only spark of wit which attested the national spirit. Very soon the greater number of these poor soldiers rolled themselves in their coats, and lying down upon boards, or upon any thing else that might save them from the snow, they went to sleep, unmindful of the morrow. When the major felt warm and had appeased his hunger, an overpowering longing for sleep weighed upon his eyelids.

During the short time that he struggled against this feeling, he gazed at the young woman, who, with her face turned toward the fire to sleep, showed her closed eyes and a part of her forehead. She was wrapped in a fur-lined coat and a dragoon's cloak ; her head lay on a blood-stained pillow ; her Astrakhan cap was covered by a handkerchief, tied under her chin, which preserved her face from the cold as much as possible ; her feet were hidden under the cloak. Thus crouched and swathed, she was an amorphous shape. Was this the last of the vivandières, or could it be the once charming woman, the glory of her lover, the queen of Parisian ball-rooms? Alas! even the eye of her most devoted friend could see nothing feminine left in this heap of clothes and rags. Love had yielded to the cold, in this woman's heart. Through the thick veil spread by approaching sleep over the major's eyes, he no longer saw either the husband or the wife except as two shadows. The flames from the fire, the outstretched forms, the hor-

rible cold that roared in their ears only three steps away from the short-lived heat, all seemed a dream. One imperious thought alarmed Philip: "We shall all die, if I go to sleep; I will not sleep." He said this to himself—and he slept.

A fearful clamor and an explosion awoke Monsieur de Sucey after an hour's sleep. The memory of his duty and the danger of his loved one fell like a blow upon his heart. He uttered a cry like the roar of a lion. He and his soldier alone were on their feet. They saw a sea of fire lighting up a swarm of human beings while it devoured the bivouacs and the cabin. They heard yells and groans of despair, and saw thousands of woe-begone or furious faces. In the very centre of this inferno, a column of soldiers were cutting their way toward the bridge, mowing down all before them, and leaving behind a swarth of corpses.

"It is the retreat of our rear-guard," cried the major; "all hope is gone!"

“I respected your carriage, Philip,” said a familiar voice.

Turning about, Sucey recognized the young aide-de-camp by the light of the flames.

“Oh, all is lost!” cried the major. “They have eaten my horse. Besides, how could I make that stupid general walk, or his wife?”

“Take a fire-brand, and threaten them with it!”

“Threaten the countess!”

“Good-bye,” said the aide-de-camp. “I have barely time to get across this cursed river, and I must go. I have a mother in France! What a night! These wretches would rather lie still on the snow, or be burned up, than stir from here. It is four o’clock, Philip. In two hours the Russians will be up. I tell you the Beresina shall once more be swollen with corpses. Philip, look to yourself! You have no horses; you can not carry the countess. Come, then; come away with me,” added he, taking him by the arm.

“My friend! Leave Stéphanie!” The major seized the countess’ arm and raised her upon her feet. He shook her rudely in his desperation, forcing her to awake. She turned and looked at him with a glassy stare.

“We must move on, Stéphanie, or we shall die here.”

The countess, without answering, tried to lie down again, and the aide-de-camp seized a burning brand, and shook it in her face.

“We *must* save her, in spite of herself,” cried Philip, and taking the countess in his arms, he bore her to the carriage.

He came back to implore his friend to help him, and they both carried the old general, without knowing whether he were dead or alive, and bundled him in beside his wife.

The major turned each man over as he lay on the ground, and took from him every thing that he had stolen. He heaped the clothing in a pile in the carriage, and threw in also some pieces of roasted horse-flesh.

“What are you going to do now?” asked the aide-de-camp.

“Drag the carriage myself,” answered the major.

“You are mad!”

“That is true!” cried Philip, folding his arms. Suddenly a desperate thought seized upon him.

“You!” he cried, clutching the soldier by his sound arm, “I leave her to you for one hour! Remember that you must die sooner than let any person whatever come near this carriage.”

The major, holding the countess's diamonds in one hand and his drawn sword in the other, struck with the flat of the blade those among the sleepers whom he judged to be the bravest. He succeeded at last in rousing the colossal grenadier, and two other men whose grade it was impossible to determine.

“We have been burned out,” he said to them.



“I know that,” replied the grenadier, “and it is all the same to me.”

“Come! If it be one death or another, would you not rather sell your life for a beautiful lady, and risk one chance of seeing France again?”

“I’d rather sleep,” said one of the men, rolling himself over on the snow; “and if you bother me any more, major, you shall have a taste of my sabre.”

“What is it all about, major?” asked the grenadier. “That man is drunk. He is a Parisian, and such cattle like their ease.”

“This shall be yours, brave grenadier!” cried the major, holding up a river of diamonds, “if you will follow me and fight like mad. The Russian outposts are two minutes march from here, and they have horses. We will march upon their first battery, and carry off two of their beasts.”

“But the sentinels, major?”

“One of us three—” the major began;

then, interrupting himself, he turned to the aide-de-camp. "You are coming, Hippolyte?"

Hippolyte bowed assent.

"One of us three," the major resumed, "will take charge of the sentinel. Besides, the cursed Russians may be asleep, too."

"Well, major, you *are* a brave man! But you will give me a seat in your wagon?" asked the grenadier.

"Yes; if you don't leave your carcass up yonder. If I should perish, Hippolyte and you, grenadier," said the major to his two companions, "swear to me, both of you, to devote yourselves to saving the countess."

"Agreed!" cried the grenadier.

They started for the Russian line, toward the batteries which had so cruelly harassed the horde of unfortunate creatures crowded about the river-bank. A few minutes after their departure the gallop of two horses sounded upon the snow, and the awakened battery discharged two volleys after the fugitives, which passed over the heads of the sleepers. The

horses galloped so fast that their hoofs sounded like blacksmiths' hammers beating upon iron. The generous aide-de-camp had fallen, but the athletic grenadier was safe and sound. Philip, in defending his friend, had received a bayonet thrust in the shoulder, but he clung to his horse's mane and clutched him with his knees in such a desperate grasp that the animal seemed caught in a vice.

"God be praised!" cried the major, finding the soldier motionless and the carriage in its place.

"If you act justly, major, you will see that I get the cross. We played the fife and clarionet famously, eh?"

"We have done nothing, yet. We must harness the horses. Take these ropes."

"There are not enough."

"Well, grenadier, get the shawls of these sleeping fellows and their clothes"—

"Why, this fellow is dead," cried the grenadier, as he stooped over the first man. "Well,

I never!" he cried, as he went on. "Why, they are all dead!"

"All?"

"Yes; every mother's son of them! They say that horse-flesh is bad when it is eaten with snow."

These words made Philip shudder. The cold had redoubled.

"Great God! shall I lose her whom I have already saved twenty times!" The major shook the countess by the shoulder, crying: "Stéphanie! Stéphanie!"

The young woman opened her eyes.

"Madame, we are saved!"

"Saved!" she repeated, shutting her eyes again.

The horses were harnessed, after a fashion. The major held his sabre in his sound hand and the reins in the other. He was armed with his pistols and mounted one of the horses, while the grenadier got upon the other. The old soldier, whose feet were frozen, had been thrown into the carriage with the general and

the countess. The horses, urged and prodded by sabre pricks, dashed with fury up the slope and into the plain. Here obstacles innumerable awaited the major. Soon it was impossible to go on without crushing the sleeping men, women and even children, who refused to move when roused by the grenadier. In vain did Monsieur de Sucey strive to find the path which the rear guard had cut through this human mass the night before. It had been effaced like the path in the wake of a vessel upon the water. They could go only at a walk, often stopped by soldiers who threatened to kill the horses.

“Do you want to get through?” said the grenadier at last.

“At the cost of every drop of my blood. At the cost of the whole world,” answered the major.

“March, then! We can't make omelettes without breaking eggs;” and the grenadier urged the horses along until the wheels were bloody, the bivouacs overturned, and a wake

of corpses marked their track through the human sea. But let us do him the justice to say that he never omitted to warn them in a voice of thunder, crying, "Look out, rascals!"

"Poor creatures!" cried the major.

"Bah! This or the cold or the cannon-balls!" rejoined the grenadier, urging his horses and pricking them with his sword.

An accident, from which only the most wonderful luck had preserved them hitherto, put a stop to their further progress. The carriage was upset.

"I expected this," said the imperturbable grenadier. "Why, our comrade is dead!"

"Poor Laurent!" said the major.

"Laurent! of the 5th chasseurs?"

"The same."

"He is my cousin. Bah! This dog's life is not such a blessing that we can regret it at a time like this."

The carriage could not be righted, nor the horses disengaged without a fatal loss of time. The shock of the fall had been so violent that

the young countess, awakened and roused from her stupor, threw aside the cloak and the coverings that encumbered her and rose to her feet.

“ Philip, where are we ? ” she cried in a soft voice, looking about her.

“ Five steps from the bridge. We are going to cross the Beresina. On the other side of the river, Stéphanie, I shall not bother you any more, but let you sleep, for we shall be safe, and can easily reach Wilna. God grant that you may never know what your life has cost ! ”

“ Are you wounded ? ”

“ It is nothing. ”

The fatal hour had come. The Russian cannon announced the day. Masters of Studzianka, they raked the whole plain, and by the first light of morning the major could see columns of men forming and moving upon the heights. A cry of alarm arose from the multitude, roused and on foot in a moment. Each one instinctively understood his danger, and all rushed to the bridge like a tidal wave. The

Russians came down swift as a conflagration. Men, women, children, horses, all fled wildly to the bridge. Happily the major and the countess were still at some distance from the river-bank. General Eblé had just set fire to the supports of the bridge on the other side of the stream. In spite of the warnings given to those who clung to this plank of safety, not one would turn back. Not only did the bridge give way, laden with the herd of people, but the force of the human wave dashed toward it had been so furious that a mass of bodies was tossed like an avalanche over the brink. Not a cry escaped them; only a dull splash was heard, as of a stone flung into the water. Straightway the Beresina was covered with floating corpses. The backward movement of those who recoiled to escape certain death, was so violent, and the shock so terrible against the advancing masses, that many were stifled in the crowd. The count and countess of Vandières owed their lives to the carriage. The horses, after crushing so many poor



wretches, died, themselves crushed, trampled to death under the feet of the panic-stricken crowd that plunged headlong toward the river-bank. The major and the grenadier found safety in their strength. They killed rather than be killed. This human hurricane, this flux and reflux of a mass of bodies animated by one movement, produced one singular result. The bank of the Beresina, during a brief space of time, was almost deserted. The multitude had retreated to the plain. If a few men still fled toward the river it was less in the hope of reaching France than of escaping the deserts of Siberia. Despair was the salvation of a few bold spirits. One officer, leaping from one floating cake of ice to another, gained the opposite bank; one soldier crawled across by means of the ice and the floating corpses. The thought at last seemed to dawn upon the multitude that the Russians would not slaughter twenty thousand unarmed, famine-stricken men, who were utterly defenceless; and each one began to await his fate with a

gloomy resignation. During this time the major, the grenadier, the old general and the countess, remained where they had been before—a few steps removed from the spot where the bridge had fallen. They all four stood upright, silent and dry-eyed, surrounded by a field of the dead. A few soldiers who were unhurt; and a few officers were near them. The whole group numbered about fifty men. All at once the major noticed about a hundred yards away, the remains of the wagon bridge, destroyed two days before.

“Let us build a raft!” he cried.

Scarcely had these words escaped him when the whole group rushed down to the ruins. Some collected pieces of iron, others wood and ropes; finally they got together all the material needed for a raft. About twenty armed officers and soldiers formed a guard, commanded by the major, to protect those who worked from the desperate attacks which the crowd might make upon discovering their intention. Even the thirst for liberty which

inspires prisoners to work miracles, can not be compared to the spirit that nerved these poor soldiers at this moment.

“The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!” cried the guard to the workers, while the planks creaked and the raft grew wider and stronger. Generals, soldiers, colonels, all bent beneath the weight of wheels, iron, cord and planks; it was a living illustration of the building of Noah’s ark.

The young countess, seated near her husband, looked at this scene with regret at her own inability to aid in the work; however, she helped to tie the knots in the cordage. At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it on the river, while a dozen more held the ropes that kept it from floating away. As soon as the builders of the raft saw it upon the water, they jumped down from the high bank, moved by one selfish impulse, and the major, fearing the blind fury of the crowd, held back Stéphanie and the general; but he shuddered when he looked down and saw the

crowd below jammed together as close as though in the pit of a theatre.

“Savages!” he cried, “it is I who suggested that you should build a raft. I have saved you, and you refuse even to give me a place on it.”

A muttered growl was the only answer. The men on the edge of the raft, leaning on long poles pressed firmly against the bank, made ready to shove off toward the opposite side of the river, and force it through the water between the floating cakes of ice and dead bodies.

“Thunder and Mars! I will fling you into the water if you don't make room for the major and his two friends,” shouted the grenadier, who drew his sword and prevented their departure, pressing the crowded ranks together in spite of their horrible screams.

“I am going to fall! I am falling,” cried one and another. “Go on! Forward!” The major, with dry eyes fixed upon his lady-love,

was silent. She raised her eyes to heaven with a look of sublime resignation.

“We shall die together!” she said.

There was something absurd in the situation of the crowd on the raft. Although they all gave vent to cries and imprecations, not one among them dared to resist the grenadier, for they were packed together so closely that to push one would upset them all. In this dilemma, a captain tried to rid himself of the grenadier; but the latter, seeing the officer’s hostile movement, seized upon him, and tossing him into the water, cried: “Aha, my duck! If you want to drink, go!”

“There are two places now,” he cried. “Come, major; throw down the little lady and come yourself. Leave that old duffer behind; he will be dead to-morrow, any way.”

“Hurry!” cried a hundred voices in one.

“Come, major; they are all grumbling—and they are right, too.”

The Comte de Vandières, throwing aside his cloak, showed his general’s uniform.

“Let us save the count,” said Philip

Stéphanie pressed his hand, and then threw her arms about him in an agony of love.

“Farewell!” she cried.

They understood one another. The Comte de Vandières had just strength enough to leap upon the raft, and Stéphanie followed, casting one last look upon Philip.

“Major, will you take *my* place? I don’t care for life,” cried the grenadier. “I have neither wife, child, nor mother.”

“I bequeath them to you,” cried the major, pointing to the count and his wife.

“Never fear; I will be as careful of them as if they were my two eyes.”

Philip stood motionless, and the raft was pushed toward the further bank so violently that when it touched the other side the shock upset every one. The count, who stood on the edge of the raft, rolled into the river, and, as he fell, the ragged edge of a floating cake of ice cut his head clean off, and sent it spinning away like a ball.

“Eh, major!” shouted the grenadier.

“Farewell!” cried the woman; and Philip de Sucey, frozen with horror, and overcome by cold, grief, and weariness, fell senseless to the ground.

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“My poor niece became insane,” added the doctor, after a moment’s silence. “Ah, sir,” he went on, seizing Monsieur d’Albon’s hand, “what a terrible life was this woman’s, so young, so delicate! By some unheard-of misfortune, she was separated from the grenadier, whose name was Fleuriot, and she was dragged for two years at the tail of the army, the plaything of every wretched creature. She went barefoot and ill-clad, I have been told, and for months together was without proper food or care—sometimes cast into a hospital, sometimes driven forth like a wild animal. God alone knows what sufferings that poor girl has lived through. She was in a small town in Germany, shut up in an insane asylum, while her relations, believing her dead, shared her

property among themselves. In 1816, the grenadier, Fleuriot, recognized her in an inn at Strasburg, where she had just arrived after making her escape from the asylum. Some peasants told the grenadier how the countess had lived in a forest for a whole month, and how they had tracked her, trying to capture her, but had failed. I was at that time living within a few leagues of Strasburg. Having heard of this wild girl, I wished to see her, to learn how much truth there could be in the extraordinary tales that were told of her. What were my feelings, on beholding the countess! Fleuriot told me all that he knew of her pitiful story. I took the poor man with my niece into Auvergne, where, unhappily, we lost him. He had some influence over Madame de Vandières. He alone had succeeded in persuading her to wear clothes. 'Farewell!' that one word is for her a whole language, and she formerly spoke it but seldom. Fleuriot tried to awaken some ideas in her, but he failed, and all he could do was to



make her say her one sad word a little oftener. The grenadier knew how to amuse her, and he played with her often. Through him I had hopes; but—”

Stéphanie's uncle was silent for a moment.

“Here,” he continued, “she has found another creature with whom she seems to get along well. It is an idiotic peasant girl who, in spite of her ugliness and stupidity, once loved a mason. This mason was going to marry her, for she owns a few acres of land. Poor Genevieve was, for about a year, the happiest creature in the world. She dressed herself up on Sundays and danced with Dallot; love was awakened in her and she had just room enough for this feeling in her mind and in her heart. But Dallot paused to consider. He found a girl in full possession of her senses and also of two acres more than were owned by Genevieve. Dallot then left Genevieve and the poor creature lost the little spark of intelligence that love had awakened in her and she has only just enough sense left to look

after a cow or to make hay. My niece and this poor girl are in some sort friends, linked together by the chain of a common destiny and by the feeling which caused their insanity. See! Look here!" said Stéphanie's uncle, leading the marquis to the window. The magistrate beheld the beautiful countess sitting on the ground between the knees of Genevieve. The peasant was armed with an enormous comb and was absorbed in untangling Stéphanie's long black hair. The latter testified her delight at the proceeding by giving vent to little cries of pleasure.

Monsieur d'Albon shuddered as he noticed the careless *abandon* of her attitude and her animal enjoyment, which betrayed complete absence of soul.

"Philip! Philip!" he said to himself, "your past sufferings are as nothing. Is there, then, no hope?" he inquired.

The old physician raised his eyes to heaven.

"Good-bye," said d'Albon, pressing the old

man's hand, "My friend is waiting for me. You will soon see him."

"It is really she, then?" cried Sucy, at the first words of the marquis. "Ah! I could scarcely believe my eyes!" he added, as the hot tears rolled down his face, which was usually so calm and cold.

"Yes, it is the Countess of Vandières," answered the magistrate.

The colonel sprang from his bed and began to dress in haste.

"Good heavens, Philip!" cried the amazed magistrate, "are you going crazy?"

"I am no longer a sick man," answered the colonel simply. "This news has driven all pain away. How can I feel pain when I think of Stéphanie? I am going to the Bons-Hommes to see her, to speak to her, to cure her! She is free and happiness shall smile upon us, or else there is no Providence. Can you believe that she could hear me speak and not recover her reason?"

"She has already seen you without recogni-

tion," rejoined the magistrate gently, who, fearing to let his friend's wild hopes run on, wished to suggest some wholesome doubts.

The colonel shuddered, but he smiled directly and made a gesture of incredulity. No one dared oppose his wishes, and within a few hours he was installed as a guest in the old priory under the same roof with the Countess de Vandières.

"Where is she?" he cried upon arriving.

"Hush!" answered Stéphanie's uncle. "She is asleep. See—there she is."

Philip saw the demented woman lying upon a stone bench in the sun. Her head was protected from the scorching heat by a forest of hair which spread over her brow and shaded her eyes. Her arms hung listless to the ground and she lay in an attitude as full of grace as a sleeping fawn. Her knees were bent easily under her, and her bosom softly rose and fell. Her complexion had the porcelain-like delicacy of texture and color which is so beautiful in childhood.

Beside her silently sat Genevieve, the idiot, in her hand a poplar branch which Stéphanie had doubtless snatched from the tallest tree-top. She waved the green bough softly above her sleeping companion to drive away the flies and freshen the sultry air. The peasant girl gazed at Monsieur Fanjat and the colonel, and then, like a dog which knows his master, she softly turned her head again toward the countess and resumed her watch without having shown the faintest ray of surprise or intelligence. The air was burning hot. The stone bench seemed to glow, and from the grass arose a quivering vapor that danced and sparkled like gold-dust in the sunlight; but Genevieve seemed not to feel the withering heat. The colonel seized the physician's hands and grasped them in his own. Tears started from his eyes, and rolling down his manly cheeks, fell upon the ground at Stéphanie's feet.

“Colonel,” said the uncle, “for two long years my heart has thus been wrung every day. Soon you will be like me, and although you

will then no longer weep at this sight, your anguish will be none the less keen."

These two men understood each other, and again pressing each other's hands they stood silent marveling at the blessed calm that sleep had spread over this beautiful woman. From time to time Stéphanie sighed gently and this sigh, which seemed full of thought and feeling, made the poor colonel quiver with hope.

"Alas!" said Monsieur Fanjat, "do not be deceived. You see her now in her only lucid moment."

Whoever has sat in delicious silence for whole hours together, watching the sleep of a loved one whose eyes will smile back upon awakening, may be able to imagine the sweet and yet terrible thoughts which this sight roused in the colonel. For him this sleep was but a fearful illusion, and the awakening must be death, the most horrible of all deaths. Suddenly a young goat, bounding up to the bench, sniffed at Stéphanie and the noise awoke her.

She sprang lightly to her feet, without startling the capricious animal; but when she saw Philip she fled, followed by her four-footed comrade, to a clump of elder-bushes, where she uttered the same little sharp cry which the colonel had heard near the iron gate on the day when the countess had appeared for the first time before Monsieur d'Albon. Then she climbed up a laburnum-tree and seated herself in its green crotch, gazing curiously all the while at the stranger, like a wild nightingale in the woods.

“Farewell—farewell—farewell!” she cried, with neither soul nor accent in the word. It was like a bird whistling its tune.

“She does not know me!” cried the colonel in agony. “Oh, Stéphanie! It is Philip; your own Philip, Philip!” and the wretched man staggered forward toward the tree; but when he was three steps away the countess gazed straight at him in defiance, although a look of fear lurked in her eyes, and at a single bound she sprang from the laburnum to an

acacia, and from thence to a Norway fir, where she swung from branch to branch with marvellous lightness.

“Do not run after her,” said Monsieur Fanjat to the colonel. “You may arouse in her a dislike which you can never overcome. I will help you to quiet her fears and to tame her. Come to this bench. If you take no notice whatever of her, you will soon see her quietly approach to examine you.”

“*She!* not to know me, to fly from me!” gasped the colonel, seating himself with his back against a tree that shaded the rustic bench. His head fell on his breast. The doctor kept silence. Soon the countess slipped down quietly from the top of her lofty fir-tree. She swung upon the boughs like a will-o'-the-wisp, and swayed with the breeze that lazily tossed the branches. She stopped upon each limb as she came down to spy upon the stranger; but seeing him motionless, she finally leaped to the ground. Then with slow steps she crossed the lawn, and came to a tree about



ten feet away from the bench. Monsieur Fantat, without moving, now said in a low voice to the colonel: "Take out of the right-hand pocket of my coat some lumps of sugar; show them to her, and she will come to you. I will renounce for your sake the pleasure of giving her what she enjoys. By means of sugar, of which she is passionately fond, you will accustom her to approach you and to recognize you."

"When she was a *woman*," said Philip, sadly, "she did not care for sweet things."

When the colonel held out his hand toward Stéphanie with a lump of sugar between the thumb and fore-finger, she uttered the sharp cry again, and sprang toward him; but she stopped short again, held back by instinctive fear of him, and gazed steadfastly at the sugar, holding **her** head first on one side and then on the other, like a poor dog which has been forbidden to touch his dinner until his master shall have reached the last letter of the slowly recited alphabet. At last natural desire tri-

umphed over fear, and Stéphanie ran swiftly up to Philip, holding out her pretty brown hand. She seized the sugar, touching her lover's fingers as she did so, and instantly turning, fled away to a clump of bushes. This awful scene completely overcame the colonel, who burst into tears and rushed into the house.

"Is it possible that love can have less courage than friendship?" said Monsieur Fanjat. "I have still some hope in the future. My poor niece was in a much more wretched condition than she is at present."

"How can that be?" cried Philip.

"She went naked," answered the physician.

A shudder of horror ran through the colonel, and he turned so pale that Monsieur Fanjat, fearing another attack, seized his hand and laid a finger upon his pulse. The doctor found Philip in a high fever, and after much persuasion, induced him to go to bed, and administered a dose of opium to put him to sleep.

Eight days elapsed, in the course of which

Monsieur de Sucy suffered mortal agony. Soon, too, his eyes were dry, and he shed no more tears. His tortured soul could not grow accustomed to the sight of the countess; but he temporized, so to speak, with the cruel situation, and tried to find some alleviation for his grief. His heroism knew no bounds. He had the courage to propitiate Stéphanie by feeding her with her favorite sweetmeats. He was so careful in the manner in which he approached her, he knew so well how to retain the slight influence that he was able to acquire over her instinct, which was all that remained of her intelligence, that he succeeded in making her *tamer* than she had ever been before.

The colonel would go down every morning into the park, and if, after seeking the countess, he could not discover on what tree she was swinging, in what green nook she was playing with a bird, or on what roof she might be perched, he would whistle the well known air of "*Partant pour la Syrie*," a song associated with their by-gone days of love. At once

Stéphanie would appear, running lightly as a fawn. She had grown so accustomed to the colonel that he no longer frightened her. Soon she became used to sitting on his knee, with her lithe arm twined about his neck. While they sat thus in this posture so delightful to lovers, Philip would give the countess her sugar. After having eaten it all, she would often begin to rummage in his pockets, looking eagerly for more, with the quick gestures and agile manner of a monkey. When she was quite sure that none was left, she would look steadily at Philip with clear eyes, in which there shone not one ray of thought or intelligence. Then she would begin to play with him, trying to take off his boots, tearing up his gloves, or putting on his hat. She allowed him to pass his hands through her hair, to put his arm about her, and endured, without pleasure, his ardent kisses. When he shed tears, she would look on unmoved. She could recognize the tune of "*Partant pour la Syrie*," but he could not succeed in making her speak her

own name, Stéphanie. In all his terrible undertaking, Philip was borne up by a hope which never left him. If, some fine autumn morning, he saw the countess seated quietly upon a bench under a yellow-leaved poplar-tree, he would throw himself at her feet, and with his whole soul in his eyes would gaze into hers as long as she let him, in the hope that some gleam of thought and love would pass into her mind from his. Sometimes he allowed himself to be deceived, and to imagine that her hard and vacant glance was beginning to thrill, to soften, to grow deep and tender. Then he would cry aloud, "Stéphanie, Stéphanie, you hear me, you see me!" She would listen to the sound of his voice as though it were the wind in the trees or the lowing of the cow upon whose back she was climbing, and the colonel would clasp his hands in agony and despair eternally renewed. Time and many vain efforts only increased his suffering. One evening, under a clear sky, in the midst of the silence and peace of the forest, the doctor per-

ceived the baron at some distance away. He was loading a pistol. The old man understood then that Philip had given up all hope. Every drop of blood in his body rushed to his heart, and he was only able to control the dizzy whirl in his brain out of love for his niece, whom he would rather see alive and insane than dead. He sprang forward.

“What are you doing?” he demanded.

“That one is for me,” answered the colonel, pointing to a loaded pistol lying on the bench, “and this one for her!” he added, as he finished loading the weapon he held.

The countess lay stretched upon the ground playing with a ball.

“I have not yet told you,” said the physician with forced calmness, hiding his alarm, “that last night, in her sleep, she cried ‘Philip!’ ”

“She spoke my name?” cried the baron, dropping the pistol. Stéphanie picked it up, but he snatched it out of her hand, seized the other one and fled.

“Poor little girl!” cried the doctor, happy in the success of his ruse. He embraced the countess and continued: “He would have killed you, the selfish man! He wants to kill you because *he* suffers. He does not know what it is to love you for yourself, poor child! But we will forgive him, will we not? He is a maniac, and you—you are only demented. Go! Only God shall call you to himself. We think you unfortunate because you no longer understand our miseries, fools that we are! But,” he went on, holding her on his knees, “you are happy; nothing troubles you! You live like a bird or a fawn.” As he spoke she sprang from his knee, and pouncing upon a young black-bird hopping in the grass, she strangled it, looked at the dead body, and then flung it down carelessly at the foot of a tree.

The next day, as soon as it was light, the colonel went down into the garden to look for Stéphanie. Not finding her he whistled hopefully. The countess came and he took her by the arm, and walking together for the first time

they approached an arbor, from which the dry leaves were wafted one by one by the morning breeze.

The colonel sat down, and of her own accord Stéphanie seated herself upon his knee. Philip trembled with happiness.

“My love,” he said, kissing her hands, “I am Philip.”

She looked at him curiously.

“Come,” he added, taking her hand and pressing it against his heart. “Do you feel it beat? Every heart-beat has been yours alone. I love you always; only you. Philip is not dead; he is here! You are with him. You are my Stéphanie and I am your Philip.”

“Farewell,” she said, “farewell!”

The colonel trembled, for he thought he perceived that his excitement began to communicate itself to her, that his cry of agony, of hope deferred, this last outburst of delirious passion, of eternal love, had awakened her sleeping soul.

“Ah, Stéphanie, how happy we shall be!”



A cry of delight escaped her and her eyes lighted up with a fitful gleam.

“She knows me! Stéphanie!”

His heart swelled within him, tears started from his eyes. Suddenly the countess exhibited in triumph a little lump of sugar which she had fished out of his pocket while he was speaking. What he had taken for a gleam of human emotion, was only a degree of intelligence equal to a monkey's grimace. Philip fell in a fainting-fit and Monsieur Fanjat a little later found the countess seated on his body. She was munching the sugar with evident delight, shown by little gestures, which might have been amusing, when she had her senses, had she chosen for fun to imitate her parrot or her cat.

“Oh, my friend,” cried Philip when he came to himself, “I die daily, hourly! I love her too much! I might be able to bear it all if, in her insanity, she had kept one vestige of womanliness. But to see her gone wild, without modesty; to see her”—

“You wanted a romantic, operatic style of insanity, I suppose,” said the doctor, bitterly, “and so your devotion of a lover succumbs to your conventional prejudices? Good heavens, sir! I have given up to you the privilege of feeding my niece, the pleasure of playing with her, and have kept for myself only the burden of a weighty responsibility. While you sleep I watch over her. I— but go, sir. Leave our sad place of refuge. I know how to live with the dear child. I understand her disease. I watch her every look. I am in all her secrets. Some day you may, perhaps, be grateful to me.”

The colonel left the Bons-Hommes to return only once again. The doctor was chagrined at the effect of his words on his guest, and began to love him as much as he did his niece. If, of the two lovers, one deserved pity, assuredly it was Philip. Did he not all alone bear the burden of a terrible agony? The doctor made some inquiries as to the colonel's whereabouts, and was told that the miserable

man had gone to bury himself in the country on an estate which he owned near St. Germain.

The baron had, on the faith of a dream, conceived a plan for curing the countess. Without the doctor's knowledge, he spent the remainder of the autumn in preparing his enormous project. A little river ran through his park, and in winter it inundated a large marshy field, which bore some resemblance to the plain on the right bank of the Beresina. The village of Satout, on the top of a hill, commanded a view of this gloomy scene, like Studzianka above the valley of the Beresina. The colonel employed a large gang of workmen in digging a canal to imitate the devouring river which had engulfed and scattered the treasures of France—Napoleon and his army. Aided by his memory, Philip succeeded in reproducing in his own park that part of the river bank where General Eblé had built his bridges. He planted supports and burnt them, to imitate the ruins on both

sides of the river which had told the stragglers that the way to France was closed against them. The colonel had charred timbers and all manner of débris like that from which the raft had been constructed scattered about upon the ground. The park was devastated to heighten the resemblance, and complete the illusion on which his last hope rested. He ordered uniforms and tattered costumes in which to dress several hundred peasants. He had built cabins, batteries, bivouacs, and set fire to them. He neglected nothing which was needed in order to reproduce the most horrible scene imaginable, and he succeeded. During the first days of December, when the snow had spread a thick white mantle over the country, he could recognize the Beresina. This imitation of Russia possessed such a startling truthfulness that several of his companions in arms at once recognized the scene of their former misery. Monsieur de Sucey kept secret the object of this tragic metamorphosis, and in

the upper circles of society it was talked about as an evidence of incipient insanity.

In the beginning of January, 1820, the colonel, seated in a carriage just like the one which had conveyed the Count and Countess of Vandières from Moscow to Studzianka, drove to the forest of Ile-Adam. The horses resembled those which he had captured at the risk of his life from the Russian battery. He wore the same soiled and ragged uniform and cap, and carried the battered sword, which he had kept since the 29th of November, 1812. He had even let his beard and hair grow, and made his face grimy, that nothing should be lacking to the frightful reality.

“I have guessed your plan,” cried Monsieur de Fanjat, as he saw the colonel alight from the carriage. “If you wish it to succeed, you must not let yourself be seen. To-night my niece shall take a dose of opium. While she sleeps, we will dress her as she was dressed at Studzianka, and put her into the carriage. I will follow in my barouche.”

At about two o'clock in the morning, the sleeping countess was placed in the carriage upon cushions, and covered with a coarse blanket. A few peasants with torches lighted up this singular abduction. Suddenly a shrill scream broke the silence of the night. Philip and the doctor, turning, saw Genevieve, who, half-dressed, came out of her sleeping room in the basement.

“Farewell, farewell, it is over; farewell!” cried she, while hot tears streamed down her cheeks.

“Well, Genevieve, what is the matter?” asked Monsieur Fanjat.

Genevieve shook her head in despair, raised her hands to heaven, looked at the carriage, gave vent to a prolonged howl, shuddered with terror, and relapsed into silence.

“That is a good omen,” cried the colonel. “This girl is taking a last leave of her companion. She sees, perhaps, that Stéphanie will recover her reason.”

“God grant it,” said Monsieur Fanjat, who seemed affected by the occurrence.

Since he had given himself up to the study of insanity, he had met with several instances of a prophetic spirit, and of second-sight, in insane persons, which are also cited by many travellers as occurring among savage tribes.

As the colonel had calculated, Stéphanie reached the mimic plain of the Beresina at about nine o'clock in the morning, and was awakened by the discharge of a cannon about a hundred paces away. It was the signal. At once a thousand peasants uttered the most frightful shrieks and howls, like the screams of despair which fell upon the ears of the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers saw themselves given over to death or slavery. At this cry, and the cannon-shot, the countess sprang from the carriage and rushed in wild agony over the snow. She saw the burned bivouacs, and the fatal raft just launched upon the icy Beresina. Major Philip de Sucey was

there, threatening the crowd with his sabre. Madame de Vandières, with a cry which froze the blood in the spectators' veins, threw herself in front of Philip, who quivered with expectation. She recoiled, and gazed with blank wonder upon the scene before her. For an instant her eyes had the clear, vacant brightness of a bird's eye; then she passed her hand across her brow like a person in deep thought; then casting another glance upon this living remembrance, this picture out of her past, she turned her head quickly toward Philip, and *she saw him*. An awe-struck silence fell upon the crowd.

The colonel, panting for breath, could not speak a word. The doctor wept. Slowly a faint blush spread over Stéphanie's beautiful face; then it deepened, tint by tint, until her cheeks glowed crimson, and she looked like a young girl in all her rosy freshness. Life and happiness, lighted by a glowing mind, burned through her like a conflagration. A convulsive tremor shook her whole frame. All these



surging emotions seemed to meet and shine out of her eyes in a look of ecstasy—a glance of living flame. She lived, she thought. She trembled, perhaps with fear. God for the second time loosed her palsied tongue, and breathed the fire of life into her. The human will came back with its electric currents, and permeated each fibre of the body from which it had so long been absent.

“Stéphanie!” cried the colonel.

“Oh! It is Philip!” the poor countess exclaimed.

She rushed into his outstretched arms, and he folded her to his breast in a passionate embrace which thrilled through every heart.

Stéphanie burst into tears. Suddenly she ceased weeping, her whole body stiffened as though struck by lightning, and she faltered, in a dying voice:

“Farewell, Philip! I love you. Farewell!”

“Oh God! She is dead!” cried the colonel, dropping his arms.

The old doctor caught his niece's lifeless body, embraced her passionately, and carrying her to a pile of logs he laid her down, and seated himself beside her. He looked into her face as he placed his trembling hand over her heart. Her heart had ceased to beat.

"It is true," he said, looking first at the colonel, standing motionless, and then at Stéphanie, upon whose face death had cast a momentary splendor like the dawn of a beautiful future.

"Yes; she is dead."

"Ah! but her smile," cried Philip. "See her smile. Can it be!"

"She is already cold," answered Monsieur Fanjat.

Monsieur de Sucey turned and slowly walked away; then he stopped, and looking vacantly about him, whistled the tune with which he was wont to call the insane woman. Not seeing his mistress approach, he staggered onward, reeling like a drunken man, and, still

whistling, he disappeared from sight without once turning round.

General Philip de Sucey in the fashionable world was looked upon as a man who was very amiable, and above all very cheerful. A few days ago a lady complimented him on his good humor and equable temperament.

“Ah, madame,” he rejoined, “I pay dearly for my gaiety when I am alone at night.”

“Are you ever alone, then?”

“No,” he answered, smiling.

If at this instant a keen observer of human nature had seen Philip, he would, perhaps, have shuddered.

“Why don’t you marry?” went on the lady, who had several daughters at a boarding-school. “You are rich, titled; you belong to the old nobility; you have talents, and a future before you. Every thing smiles upon you.”

“Yes,” he replied; “but it is a smile that kills me.”

The next day, the lady heard with amaze-

ment that Monsieur de Sucy had blown his brains out the night before. High society held different opinions as to this event, and tried to divine the reason of it. According to the taste of each individual, it was either play, love, ambition, or some hidden sin, which had caused the catastrophe which was the last scene of a drama begun in 1812. Two men only, a magistrate and an old physician, knew that Monsieur de Sucy was one of those men who turn a smiling face to the world every day after a night of deathly struggle with a horrible, unseen monster; and that, should God withdraw his hand from them for one instant, they fall and die.

THE END.