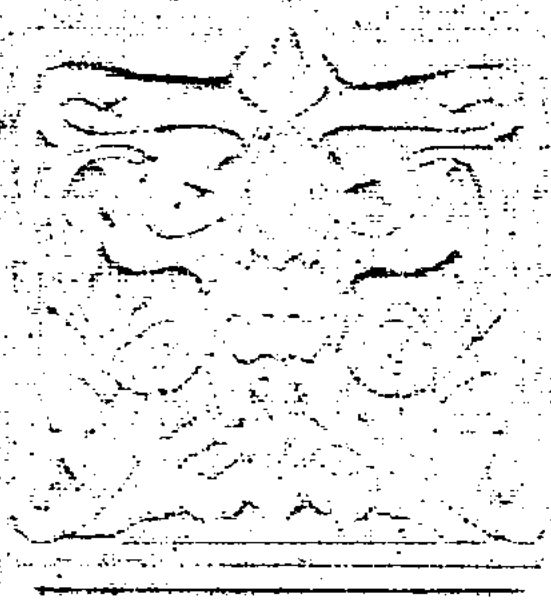

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Boccaccio

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FICTION

Edited by

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THE FALCON

BY

GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO

SOMETIME there lived in Florence a young gentleman named Federigo, son to Signior Filippo Alberighi, who was held and reputed, both for arms and all other actions beseeming a gentleman, hardly to have his equal through all Tuscany.

This Federigo, as it is no rare matter in young gentlemen, became enamoured of a gentlewoman named Monna Giovanna, who was esteemed in her time to be the fairest lady in all Florence; in which respect, and to reach to the height of his desire, he made many sumptuous feasts and banquets, jousts, tilts, tournaments, and all other noble actions of arms, besides sending her infinitely rich and costly presents, making spare of nothing, but lashing all out in lavish expense. Notwithstanding, she being no less honest than fair, made no reckoning of whatsoever he did for her sake, or the least respect of his own person; so that Federigo, spending thus daily more than his means and ability could maintain, and no supplies anyway redounding to him, his faculties, as very easily they might, diminished in such sort that he became so poor as he had noth-

ing left him but a small farm to live upon, the slender revenues whereof were so mean as scarcely allowed him meat and drink. Yet had he a fair hawk, or falcon, hardly anywhere to be followed, so expeditious and sure she was of flight. His low ebb and poverty no way diminishing his love to the lady, but rather setting a keener edge thereon, he saw the city could no longer contain him, where he most coveted to abide, and therefore betook himself to his poor country farm, to let his falcon get his dinner and supper, patiently supporting his penurious estate without suit or means making to one for help or relief in any such necessity.

While thus he continued in this extremity, it came to pass that the husband to Giovanna fell sick, and his debility of body being such as little or no hope of life remained, he made his last will and testament, ordaining thereby that his son (already grown to indifferent stature) should be heir to all his lands and riches, wherein he abounded very greatly. Next unto him, if he chanced to die without a lawful heir, he substituted his wife, whom most dearly he affected, and so departed out of this life. Giovanna being thus left a widow, as commonly it is the custom of our city dames during the summer season she went to a house of her own in the country, which was somewhat near to poor Federigo's farm, and where he lived in such an honest kind of contented poverty.

Hereupon the young gentleman, her son, tak-

ing great delight in hounds and hawks, grew into familiarity with poor Federigo, and, having seen many fair flights of his falcon, they pleased him so extraordinarily that he earnestly desired to enjoy her as his own, yet durst not move the motion for her, because he saw how choicely Federigo esteemed her. Within a short while after the young gentleman became very sick, whereat his mother grieved exceedingly, as having no more but he, and never parting from him either night or day, comforting him so kindly as she could, demanding if he had a desire to anything, urging him to reveal it, and assuring him withal that, if it were within the compass of possibility, he should have it. The youth, hearing how many times she had made him these offers and with such vehement protestations of performance, at last spake thus:

"Mother," quoth he, "if you can do so much for me as that I may have Federigo's falcon, I am persuaded that my sickness soon will cease." The lady hearing this, sate some short while musing to herself, and began to consider what she might best do to compass her son's desire, for well she knew how long a time Federigo had most lovingly kept it, not suffering it ever to be out of his sight. Moreover, she remembered how earnest in affection he had been to her, never thinking himself happy but only when he was in her company; wherefore she entered into private advice with her own thoughts: "Shall I send or go myself in person to request

the falcon of him, it being the best that ever flew? It is his only jewel of delight, and, that taken from him, no longer can he wish to live in this world. How far, then, void of understanding, shall I show myself to rob a gentleman of his felicity, having no other joy or comfort left him." These and the like considerations wheeled about her troubled brain, only in tender love to her son, persuading herself assuredly that the falcon were her own if she would but request it, yet not knowing whereon it were best to resolve, she returned no answer to her son, but sate still in her silent meditation. At length, love to the youth so prevailed with her that she concluded on his satisfaction, and come of it what could, she would not send for the falcon, but go herself in person to request her, and then return home again with her, whereupon thus she spake: "Son, comfort thyself, and let languishing thoughts no longer offend thee; for here I promise thee that the first thing I do to-morrow morning shall be my journey for the falcon, and assure thyself that I will bring her with me." Whereat the youth was so joyed that he imagined his sickness began instantly a little to leave him, and promised him a speedy recovery.

Somewhat early the next morning the lady, in care of her sick son's health, was up and ready betimes, and taking another gentlewoman with her, only as a morning recreation, she walked to Federigo's poor country farm, knowing that

it would not a little glad him to see her. At the time of his arrival there he was by chance in a poor garden on the back of the house, because as yet it was not convenient time for flight; but when he heard that Giovanna was come thither, and desired to have some conference with him, as one almost confounded with admiration, in all haste he ran to her and saluted her with most humble reverence. She, in all modest and gracious manner, requited him with the like salutations, thus speaking to him: "Signior Federigo, your own best wishes befriend you. I am now come hither to recompense some part of your past travails, which heretofore you pretended to suffer for my sake, when your love was more to me than did well become you to offer or myself to accept; and such is the nature of my recompense that I make myself your guest, and mean this day to dine with you, as also this gentlewoman, making no doubt of our welcome." Whereto, with lowly reverence, thus he replied:

"Madam, I do not remember that ever I sustained any loss or hindrance by you, but rather so much good, as, if I was worth anything, it proceeded from your deservings, and by the service in which I did stand engaged to you. But my present happiness can no way be equalled, derived from your superabounding gracious favour and more than common course of kindness, vouchsafing of your own liberal nature, to come and visit so poor a servant. Oh,

that I had as much to spend again as heretofore I have riotously run through, what a welcome would your poor host bestow on you for gracing this homely house with your divine presence!" With these words he conducted her into his house and then into his simple garden, where, having no convenient company for her, he said: "Madam, the poverty of this place is such that it affordeth none fit for your conversation. This poor woman, wife to an honest husbandman, will attend on you while that I with some speed shall make dinner ready."

Poor Federigo, although his necessity was extreme and his grief great, remembering his former inordinate expenses, a moiety whereof would now have stood him in some stead, yet he had a heart as free and forward as ever, not a jot dejected in his mind, though utterly overthrown by fortune. Alas! how was his good soul afflicted that he had nothing to honour his lady with! Up and down he ran, one while this way, then again another, exclaiming on his disastrous fate like a man enraged or bereft of his senses, for he had not one penny of money, neither pawn nor pledge, wherewith to procure any. The time hasted on, and he would gladly, though in mean measure, express his honourable respect to the lady. To beg of any his nature denied it, and to borrow he could not, because his neighbours were as needy as himself. At last, looking round about, and seeing his falcon standing on her perch which he felt to be

very plump and fat, being void of all other helps in his need, and thinking her to be a fowl fit for so noble a lady to feed on, without any further demurring or delay he plucked off her neck, and caused the poor woman presently to pull her feathers; which being done, he put her on the spit, and in a short time she was daintily roasted. Himself covered the table, set bread and salt on, and laid the napkins, whereof he had but a few left. Going then with cheerful looks into the garden, he told the lady that dinner was ready, and nothing now wanted but her presence. She and the gentlewoman went in, and being seated at the table, not knowing what they fed on, the falcon was all their food, and Federigo not a little joyful that his credit was so well saved. When they were risen from the table, and had spent some small time in familiar conference, the lady thought it fit to acquaint him with the reason of her coming thither, and, therefore, in very kind manner thus began:

"Federigo, if you do yet remember your former carriage toward me, as also my many modest and chaste denials, which, perhaps, you thought to savour of a harsh, cruel, and unwomanly nature, I make no doubt but you will wonder at my present presumption, when you understand the occasion which expressly moved me to come hither. But if you were possessed of children, or ever had any, whereby you might comprehend what love in nature is due unto them, then I durst assure myself you would

partly hold me excused. Now, in regard that you never had any, and myself for my part only but one, I stand not exempted from those laws which are in common to other mothers; and being compelled to obey the power of those laws contrary to mine own will and those duties which reason ought to maintain, I am to request such a gift of you, which I am certain that you do make most precious account of, as in manly equity you can do no less. For Fortune hath been extremely adverse to you, that she hath robbed you of many other pleasures, allowing you no comfort or delight but only that poor one, which is your fair falcon, of which bird my son is become so strangely desirous as, if I do not bring her to him at my coming home, I fear so much the extremity of his sickness as nothing can ensue thereon but his loss of life. Wherefore I beseech you, not in regard of the love you have borne me—for thereby you stand no way obliged—but in your own gentle nature (which hath always declared itself ready in you to do more kind offices generally than any other gentleman that I know), you will be pleased to give her me, or, at the least, let me buy her of you, which if you do, I shall freely then confess that only by your means my son's life is saved, and we both shall forever remain engaged to you."

When Federigo had heard the lady's request, which was quite out of his power to grant because the bird had been her service at dinner, he stood like a man merely dulled in his senses,

the tears trickling amain down his cheeks, and he was not able to utter one word, which she perceiving, began to conjecture immediately that these tears and passions proceeded rather from grief of mind, as being more loth to part with his falcon than any kind of manner which made her ready to say that she would not have it. Nevertheless, she did not speak, but rather attended his answer, which, after some small respite, he returned in this manner:

"Madam, since the hour when first my affection became solely devoted to your service, Fortune hath been cross and contrary to me in many occasions, as justly and in good reason I may complain of her, yet all seemed light and easy to be endured in comparison of her present malicious contradictions, to my utter overthrow and perpetual molestation. Considering that you are come hither to my poor house, which, while I was rich and able, you would not so much as vouchsafe to look on. And now you have requested a small matter of me, wherein she hath also most crookedly thwarted me, because she hath disabled me in bestowing so mean a gift, as yourself will confess when it shall be related to you in few words.

"So soon as I heard that it was your gracious pleasure to dine with me, having regard to your excellency, and what, by merit, is justly due unto you, I thought it a part of my bounden duty to entertain you with such excellent viands as my poor power could any way compass, and

far beyond respect or welcome to other common and ordinary persons. Whereupon, remembering my falcon, which you now ask for, and her goodness excelling all other of her kind, I supposed that she would make a dainty dish for your diet, and having dressed her so well as I could devise to do, you have fed heartily on her, and I am proud that I have so well bestown her. But perceiving now that you would have her for your sick son, it is no mean affliction to me that I am disabled of yielding you contentment, which all my lifetime I have desired to do."

To prove his words, the feathers, claws, and beak were brought in, which when she saw, she greatly blamed him for killing so rare a falcon to content the appetite of any woman. Yet she commended his spirit which poverty had no power to abase. Lastly, her hopes being frustrate for enjoying the falcon, and fearing the health of her son, she thanked Federigo for his kindness, returning home very melancholy. Shortly after her son, either grieving that he could not have the falcon, or by extremity of his disease, chanced to die, leaving his mother a woful lady. After so much time was expired as might agree with mourning, her brethren made motions to her to marry again, because she was very rich, and yet but young. Now although she was well contented to remain a widow, yet being continually importuned by them, and remembering the honourable generosity of Federigo, his last poor yet magnificent

dinner, in killing his falcon for her sake, said to her brethren: "This kind of life doth like me so well, as willingly I would not leave it, but seeing you are so earnest, let me plainly tell you that I will never accept of any other husband but only Federigo degli Alberighi."

Her brethren in scornful manner reproved her, telling her he was a beggar, and had nothing left. "I know it well," quoth she, "and am heartily sorry for it. But give me a man that hath need of wealth, rather than wealth that hath need of a man." The brethren hearing how she stood addicted, and knowing Federigo to be a worthy gentleman, though poor, consented thereto, so she bestowed herself and her riches on him. He, on the other side, having so noble a lady to his wife, and the same whom he had so long dearly loved, submitting all his fairest fortunes unto her, became a better husband for the world than before, and they lived and loved in equal joy and happiness.

THE BLACK PEARL

BY

VICTORIEN SARDOU

IT never rains in Amsterdam but it pours, and let the thunder but join in the uproar, and things go at a lively pace. Thus spoke to himself one summer night my friend Balthazar van der Lys, as he sped along the Amstel, to find refuge at home from the storm. Unhappily, the wind from the Zuyderzee outstript him. Along the quay swept a terrible blast, that unhinged hundreds of shutters, and bent dozens of signs and lamp-posts out of shape. Towels and handkerchiefs, hung up to dry, were at the same moment blown into the canal, whither Balthazar's hat followed them, and where he himself was within an inch of taking a bath. Anew the lightning flashed, the thunder roared as if to deafen one, and torrents of rain soaked our poor friend literally to the skin, and caused him to redouble his speed.

On reaching the Orphelin Straat, he rushed under the awning of a shop, to seek shelter from the rain. But, in his haste, he took little note of where he was going, and in a moment found himself in the embrace of another man, and the two went tumbling and rolling on

together. The person thus disturbed had been quietly sitting in an arm-chair, and was no other than our mutual friend, Cornelius Pump, unquestionably one of the leading scholars of that period.

"Cornelius! what the devil were you doing in that chair?" asked Balthazar as he picked himself up.

"Take care!" exclaimed Cornelius, "or you will break the string of my kite!"

Balthazar swung round, for he thought that his friend was jesting. But he saw, to his surprise, that Cornelius was busily trying to wind up the string of a huge kite that floated at a tremendous height above the canal. The kite struggled fiercely, and resisted every effort made to pull it down. Cornelius, with all his might, tugged in one direction, and the kite in the other. This monster, made up of paper and sticks, floated an ornamental tail of immense length, which was adorned with numberless scraps of paper.

"A strange idea," remarked Balthazar, "to fly a kite in a storm like this."

"It's not for the pleasure of the thing," answered Cornelius, smiling; "those clouds are charged with electricity, and I wish to verify the presence of nitric acid in them. Behold the proof!" And, with a mighty tug, our man of science succeeded in landing the kite, and pointed proudly to some bits of paper that had been burned to a dark red.

"Pshaw!" said Balthazar in the contemptuous tone of those who are ignorant of the little tricks that science plays. "This is a fine time to experiment, to be sure."

"The very best time possible, my friend," Cornelius replied simply. "Only look for yourself, what an observatory! A magnificent horizon, and ten lightning-rods in the neighbourhood, all on fire! It's the very storm I have been waiting for, and I am charmed to have had it turn up at last!"

A mighty roll of thunder shook the ground like an earthquake.

"Rumble away all you please," muttered Cornelius, with a pitying smile. "I have discovered your secret, and the world shall be told it."

"And what, after all, is so interesting in all this?" asked Balthazar, who, because of his drenching, was in a pretty bad humour.

"You poor fool," Cornelius replied, with a smile of pity; "now tell me, what is that?"

"A flash of lightning, to be sure!"

"Of course it is! but what is the nature of the flash?"

"Why, I always supposed all flashes to be alike."

"That shows your ignorance," said Cornelius disgustedly. "Now, there are several kinds of lightning; for instance: Lightning of the first class flashes in forked and crooked furrows of light that have a zigzag movement, and are

white or purple of colour; then, lightning of the second class, which usually embraces the whole horizon in circumference, is an extended sheet, and is of red colour; and, lastly, the third class is without exception in the form of an elastic, rolling, and spherical body. But the question is whether it is really spherical in form, or merely an optical illusion? It is just this problem that I am trying to solve! You will say, no doubt, that these globes of fire have been sufficiently observed by Howard, Schueblier, Kamtz——"

"Oh, that is all nonsense! I know nothing about it, and won't risk an opinion. It is raining again, and I want to go home."

"Wait a bit," calmly replied Cornelius. "As soon as I have seen a spherical or globular flash, I will——"

"But I have no time to wait; and, besides, I should be acting like a fool when I am within a hundred feet of my own door. If you want a good fire, a good supper, a good pipe, a good bed, you are welcome; and, if you must look at a globe, there is the globe of my lamp at your disposal. I can say no more."

"Wait an instant; my flash will turn up presently."

Balthazar's patience was very nearly at its end. He was preparing to depart, when the sky was suddenly illuminated by a bright flash, while the near thunder burst. So violent was

the shock that Balthazar came near being knocked over.

"That was a spherical globe without doubt," joyfully exclaimed Cornelius. "I have made a wonderful discovery; let's go to supper!" Balthazar, to make sure that he was really still alive, rubbed his eyes, and felt his limbs.

"The lightning struck near my house!"

"By no means," answered Cornelius; "it was in the direction of the ghetto."

Balthazar would hear no more, but started off at a swift run. Cornelius gathered up his bits of paper, and was soon at the other's heels, notwithstanding the drenching rain.

II

An hour had passed. The two friends, having enjoyed a hearty supper, were sitting on comfortable chairs, and, between whiffs of their meerschaum pipes, could laugh at the storm that was still raging furiously without.

"Genuine enjoyment I call this," said Cornelius. "A good bottle of white curacoa. a good smoke, and a congenial friend to chat with; am I not right, Christina?"

Christina was everywhere at the same time. Coming and going softly, she removed the plates, placing on the table, instead, glasses and a huge earthen jug. When Cornelius pronounced her name, she blushed fiery red, but was silent.

Christina (it is high time you were told) was

a young girl whom our friend Balthazar had brought up in his house out of charity.

Not long after the death of her husband, Madame Van der Lys, Balthazar's mother, while she was one Sunday morning at her devotions in church, felt a tugging at her dress. She feared that some one was trying to pick her pocket, and caught the hand of the supposed culprit. The hand was a little girl's, small and pretty as a hand can well be. The depravity of one so young moved the good lady deeply, and she would have let the little one go. But her kind heart finally persuaded her to take the waif home. So she led little Christina from the church to her home, and all the while the child wept in fear of an aunt who would whip her. Madame Van der Lys soothed the child's fears, and at last got the information that its parents were of that class of idle wanderers who visit fairs and kermesses. The child had been trained early in all the tricks of itinerant mountebanks; its father had been killed while performing a daring feat on the horizontal bar, its mother had died in want and misery; and, lastly, the aunt was a wicked old hag, who beat the little girl black and blue, and taught her all manner of crime. Whether you ever met Madame Van der Lys I do not know, but she was as good a woman as her son is a good man. Hence she made up her mind that she would keep the child, who was never reclaimed by its aunt. So the little girl was brought up decently, and

taught by a good woman. In this way, she soon learned to spell, read, and write, and became a model of good manners and gentle ways. Thus, when the old lady came to die, she could leave behind not only Gudule the cook, but also a lass of fifteen, bright as a penny, who could be depended on not to let her master's fire burn out for want of proper care. But her good qualities did not end here: She was courteous and gentle, clever and good-looking. This, at least, was the opinion entertained by our friend Cornelius, who found in Christina's eyes a look that was not very unlike a flash of lightning of the third class. But this must be put a stop to. If I gossip any more, I shall be divulging family secrets.

I must add, however, that, because he always brought her interesting books, Christina gave Cornelius a hearty welcome whenever he came. And the young scholar made more ado about this little housekeeper than about all the painted beauties of the town. But the storm seemed to have stricken the young girl dumb. Under the pretext of waiting on the two friends, she would not take her seat at the table, but came and went, scarcely listening to the conversation, replying in monosyllables, and making the sign of the cross at every flash of lightning. And when, a little while after supper, Balthazar turned round to ask her a question, she was no longer to be seen. He rose, and started in the direction of her room; but, hearing no noise

of any movement within, was convinced that the young girl was fast asleep, and so returned to find Cornelius busily filling his pipe.

"What's the matter with Christina to-night?" he asked, pointing to her room.

"Oh, it's the thunder and lightning!" answered Balthazar; "women are so timid."

"And if they were not, we should lose the pleasure of exercising a protecting care over them, as over children. Christina especially is but frail. It brings tears to my eyes to look at her; she is so delicate."

"Oho, Master Cornelius!" cried Balthazar, with an understanding smile; "Christina seems to arouse your enthusiasm almost as much as the lightning did a little while ago."

Cornelius blushed to the roots of his hair. "But a very different kind of enthusiasm!" was his reply.

"I suppose so," answered Balthazar, laughing heartily. Then he took Cornelius by the hand and looked straight into his face. "Come, now," he added, "don't imagine that I cannot see what's going on? Flying a kite over the Amstel is not your only form of amusement, you overgrown boy; you play at racquets with Christina, and your two hearts serve as shuttlecocks."

"What, do you imagine that——?" murmured the scholar, evidently confused.

"You call here twice a day—at noon on your way to the zoölogical gardens, at four on your way home! You do not come twice a day

merely to see my handsome face. I have known that for over three months."

"But this is the shortest way," protested Cornelius.

"To the heart, without doubt."

"But——"

"Well, come, let us be reasonable. Christina is not like most girls of her age. She has a clever head and a loving heart, you may believe me; at all events, she is wise enough to admire and appreciate so talented a gentleman as Mynheer Cornelius Pump, who does not even mind lending her his rare books. You press her hands, you are anxious concerning her health; and, every time you see a spot on her dress, you read her a lecture on chemistry, or on botany if you espy a pot of flowers, or on anatomy if the cat comes your way. And she—she pricks up her ears, and her look of attention is quite charming. For all that, you pretend that love has little share in all this, especially seeing that the man of science is but twenty-five, and his pupil just eighteen."

"Well, then, if you must be told, I do love her," Cornelius answered with a defiant look in his eyes. "So kindly tell me what you intend to do about it?"

"It's for you to say that!"

"Oh, I intend to make her my wife!"

"Then, why in the world do you not tell her so?"

"That is exactly what I propose to do."

"Then embrace me!" exclaimed Balthazar, "and drink Cupid's health, for I, too, am going to get married."

"Let me congratulate you, my boy; and who is the happy one?"

"I am going to marry Mademoiselle Suzanne Van Miellis, the daughter of the rich banker," Balthazar said, all in one breath.

Cornelius gave a low whistle, which, being interpreted, means: the devil! Balthazar continued:

"And think of it—I have loved her for over six years! And because I feared that her father would suspect me of wanting his money rather than his daughter, I did not dare to pop the question. But at last I got my chance. She has been left sole heiress by the recent death of her father, and is now one of the wealthiest girls in town."

"The wealthiest by far," Cornelius interrupted gravely.

"We were one day walking together by the river side, when she stopped for a moment and, looking into my eyes, said: 'Now, my friend, you must not feel offended at what I am going to say; but since, by the death of my father, I came into my inheritance, believe me, I have been very unhappy. I cannot distinguish between those who love me for myself alone and those who care only for my riches. So many pretend to adore me that I have ended by being suspicious of all; and I would rather throw my

money into the Amstel than marry a man who aspires to my hand through any sordid motive.'

"'Ah, mademoiselle,' I sighed, terribly anxious, as you can imagine, not to be taken for one of these fortune-hunters.

"'My dear friend,' she exclaimed, 'I know you are not that kind of man. Now I will tell you my ideal of a husband: I would never accept the love of any man who had not loved me even before my father's death. Of the love of such a man I would feel sure, and I would return it a hundredfold!'

"'I am that man!' I cried out. 'For over six years I have loved you, though I never dared to tell you so; and you must have noticed that I was slowly but surely dying because I did not know whether I had your affection.' And then she cast down her eyes, and whispered, 'Perhaps I have'; and then she looked at me as if determined to read the proof in my eyes. It was easy to see that she wished to believe me, but hardly dared.

"'But can you prove that assertion of yours?' she asked after a brief pause. 'Do you recall that the first time we ever met you gave me a bunch of flowers? One of them was shaped like a little heart with two blue wings on each side. Well, then——'

"'I know what you would say. Then, as we were looking at the little flower together, our heads almost touched, and your curls brushed my face lightly, and you, perceiving

it, suddenly drew back. The little flower fell from its stem, and I can still hear your little cry of disappointment ringing in my ears. Then you cried a little, and, while your head was turned away, I picked up the flower.'

"'You have it still?' she asked.

"'Yes; I have always treasured it in remembrance of the happiest moment of my life. I will bring it the next time I call.'

"You should have seen the joy that illuminated Suzanne's face at that moment. She held out to me her pretty hands, which I took in mine and kissed.

"'Ah, my friend,' she said, 'that is all I wanted to know, and now I am truly happy. If you picked up that little flower, it was even then for love of me; if you have preserved it, your love still persists! Bring it to-morrow. You could give me no wedding-gift more welcome!'

"Ah, my dear old Cornelius, imagine my surprise and delight at these words! I came near doing something rash—I was so wild with delight. Her mother presently appeared. I threw my arms about the old lady's neck, and kissed her on both cheeks—which cooled me off. And then I seized my hat, took to my heels, and was this very night going to bring back the flower. But, through this confounded storm, it has come to nothing, and I must put off my visit until to-morrow. There, in a nutshell, you have the whole story of my courtship."

"Heaven be thanked!" cried Cornelius, embracing his friend. "Two weddings at once! Long live Madame Balthazar! Long live Madame Cornelius! I drink to the little Balthazars and Corneliuses!"

"Will you be quiet," said Balthazar, laughing, and he placed his hand over his friend's mouth in order to silence him. "You will waken Christina."

"Oh, I'll say no more, I promise you! But you must show me that famous blue-winged flower."

"It's kept in a little casket of steel hidden away with some jewellery in my desk. I have had it set into a little locket, and framed with gold and black pearls. Only this morning I was looking at it. But you may admire it for yourself."

With these words, Balthazar took up the lamp, pulled from his packet a huge bunch of keys, and opened the door to his study. Scarcely had he crossed the threshold when Cornelius heard him utter a cry of surprise. He rose to help him, and found Balthazar, pale as death, at the entrance.

"My God, Cornelius!"

"What is it? What is wrong?" the young scholar asked.

"Great Heavens! I am ruined! Come and see."

And Balthazar raised the lamp, flooding the interior of the study with light.

III

THE sight that met Cornelius's gaze justified Balthazar's exclamation. Something extraordinary had evidently taken place, for the floor was literally strewn with a profusion of documents. All of Balthazar's private papers were heaped pell-mell on the floor. Beside them lay the portfolio in which they had been kept; its steel lock had been forced open.

But this was not the worst. Balthazar hastened to his writing-desk. The lock had been broken open, and the top of the desk, hacked to pieces, lay in splinters on the floor. The nails were bent, and screws and hinges gave evidence of having been roughly used. The lid had been pried open, so as to give access to the private drawers and pigeonholes.

But, strangely enough, the many drawers containing valuable papers were practically intact, those containing gold and silver having absorbed the attention of the thief. About fifteen hundred ducats, two hundred florins, and the little steel casket of jewels of which Balthazar had spoken were missing. This drawer had been completely rifled; gold, silver, and jewels were gone without a trace. But Balthazar felt an even greater loss, when, on examining the steel casket, he found that the medallion had disappeared with the rest.

This discovery grieved him more than the

loss of wealth. He ran to the window, threw it open, and cried at the top of his voice:

"Help! Help! Stop thief!"

The whole population appeared at the cry, and, according to custom, would have answered with the call, "Fire! Here we come!" had not a squad of policemen happened to appear, and hastened toward Balthazar's house. Their sergeant, M. Tricamp, realising that a robbery had been committed, first warned Balthazar to make less noise, and then demanded that his men be immediately admitted to the house.

IV

The door opened without a sound. M. Tricamp entered on tiptoe, accompanied by one of his men, the rest of whom he left behind in the vestibule with strict orders to permit no one to pass in or out. It was near midnight. The neighbours were again fast asleep. It was evident, too, that Gudule, the deaf cook, and Christina, worn out by the emotions that attended the storm, had not heard the commotion, and were sleeping the sleep of the just.

"And now," said the sergeant, lowering his voice, "what is all this about?"

Balthazar drew him into the study, and pointed to the torn papers and the demolished writing-desk.

M. Tricamp was a little man whose legs were not big enough to support his bulky form.

For all that, he was sharp and unusually active. And he had another little peculiarity—he was extremely nearsighted, which forced him to examine every object at the shortest range.

His astonishment was evident, but it was part of the trick of his trade never to seem surprised at anything. In a self-satisfied way, therefore, he muttered, "Very good! Very good!" and cast a look of contentment round the room.

"You perceive, Mynheer, what has occurred!" cried Balthazar, choking with emotion.

"Perfectly!" replied M. Tricamp with an air of importance. "The desk has been forced open; the portfolio has been tampered with. Very well; it is superb!"

"Superb! Why, what do you mean?"

"All the money has been taken, I suppose?" continued the sergeant.

"Yes, all the money that was in my desk."

"Good!"

"And the jewels, and my locket!"

"Bravo! a case of premeditated burglary! Excellent! And you suspect no one?"

"No one, Mynheer."

"All the better, for then the pleasure of discovering the criminals will be ours."

Balthazar and Cornelius exchanged looks of surprise; but M. Tricamp proceeded as unconcernedly as before.

"Let us examine the door!"

Balthazar pointed out to him the massive

door of the study, which locked by means of one of those old-fashioned brass locks that are to be found to-day only in the Netherlands.

Tricamp turned the key. Crick! Crack! It was quite plain that no one had used the lock with violence.

"And the window?" asked the officer, returning to Balthazar the key of the study.

"The window was closed," said Cornelius; "we opened it when calling for assistance. And what is more, Mynheer, it is provided with stout iron bars, that no one could have passed through."

M. Tricamp, having convinced himself of the truth of this assertion, remarked that not even a child could have effected an entrance through those bars. Then closing and bolting the window, he concentrated his attention on the fireplace.

Balthazar followed all his movements in silence.

M. Tricamp leaned over and examined the fireplace with great minuteness. But here again he was doomed to be disappointed. The chimney had been recently walled up, leaving space enough only for a small stove-pipe.

M. Tricamp did not stop to speculate whether this opening could have admitted a human being. It was too improbable; and, therefore, when he drew himself up, he was anything but pleased.

"Hum, hum," he muttered; "the devil!" and, having replaced his eye-glass by a pair of spectacles, he looked up at the ceiling.

He took the lamp from Balthazar, placed it on the writing-desk, removed the shade, and, by this movement, suddenly revealed a clue which had entirely escaped their notice until this moment.

V

Driven fast into the wainscoting, about three feet above the desk, and half way between floor and ceiling, was discovered an old knife, a gift from a friend in the Dutch Indies.

Now, how did that knife come to be there?

A few hours before this discovery, it had been lying safely hidden in Balthazar's desk.

M. Tricamp called their attention to another fact. The wire that had been attached to the bell was bent and twisted and curled about the handle of the knife. He sprang upon a chair, and thence to the top of the desk, to inspect this new bit of evidence.

Suddenly he gave a cry of triumph. By inserting his hand between the knife and the picture-moulding, he made it evident that a large square of wall-paper, together with the woodwork and plaster, had been cut out and then replaced with a care and skill that almost defied detection.

So unexpected was this discovery that the young men could not avoid admiring the ser-

geant's skill. The cleverness with which the work had been done, remarked M. Tricamp, pointed to a professional thief. He raised himself on tiptoe, put his hand through the aperture, and ascertained that the wall in the adjoining room had been treated in a precisely similar manner.

It seemed beyond doubt, then, that the thief had entered the room through this aperture. M. Tricamp descended to the floor, and then proceeded to describe the movements of the criminals with an exactitude of detail as if he had been present.

"The position of the knife clearly proves it to have served as a step to aid the thief in his descent, and the wire was used in place of a guiding-rope. Now, doesn't that impress you as a reasonable supposition?"

To this explanation Balthazar and Cornelius listened with bated breath. But the former was hardly the man to grow enthusiastic over the description of a theft by which he had been the loser. He wanted to know the whereabouts of his medallion, and whither the thief had gone.

"Have patience," said M. Tricamp, following up the clue with professional pride; "a knowledge of their movements must now be followed by an investigation of their temperament——"

"Nonsense! We have no time to bother our heads with such stuff."

"Pardon me," replied M. Tricamp, "but, in

my opinion, this is very important. The study of criminal psychology is more illuminating than all the perfunctory examinations formerly so much in vogue with the police."

"But, Mynheer, while you are discussing the methods of the police, the thief is getting away with my money."

"Let him run. We will catch him fast enough," cooly replied M. Tricamp. "I am of the opinion that it is necessary to study the nature of the game in order to run it down. Now, all robberies differ from each other, and it is rarely that two murders are committed in the same way. Two servant girls, for instance, were accused of stealing a shawl from their mistress. At a glance, I discovered the criminal. The thief having the choice of two shawls, a blue and a white, stole the blue one. One of the girls had yellow, the other red, hair. I felt confident of the yellow-haired girl's guilt; the red-haired one would never have chosen a colour so unsuitable to her complexion."

"Wonderful!" said Cornelius. "Then make haste to tell me the name of the thief, for my patience is nearly exhausted."

"I can't do that so soon, but I believe this to be the criminal's first robbery. Perhaps you will not believe this assertion, and probably think you perceive the working of an experienced hand. But any child can loosen a piece of wall-paper, not to mention the broken desk and portfolio, both of which betray the novice."

"You are sure, then, that it is the work of a novice?" Cornelius interrupted.

"Without doubt; and of a very clumsy one, besides. A practised thief would never have left the room in such disorder, but would have shown more pride in the neatness of his work. Furthermore, the criminal is neither very tall nor very strong, or he would not have needed the assistance either of the knife or of the wire."

"But it must have required considerable strength to demolish the desk in this fashion."

"By no means; a child, or even a woman——"

"A woman?" exclaimed Balthazar.

"From the moment at which I entered this room, such was my impression."

Balthazar and Cornelius looked at each other, not knowing whom they could possibly suspect.

"To sum up, then: It is a woman, young—or she could not climb so well; small, or she would not have needed the aid of the wire. Again, she is acquainted with your habits, for she took advantage of your absence to commit her crime, and proceeded unhesitatingly to the drawer in which your valuables are kept. In short, if there is here some young housekeeper or servant, our search is ended, for she is guilty!"

"Christina!" the young men cried in the same breath.

"Ah, so there is a Christina in the house!" remarked M. Tricamp, with a smile; "well, then, Christina is guilty!"

VI

Cornelius and Balthazar both became as pale as death. Christina! Little Christina, good, kind, and pretty as she was, a thief—impossible! And then they recalled her origin and the manner of her adoption. After all, she was only a gipsy. Balthazar dropped into a chair as if he had been shot, and Cornelius felt as if a red-hot iron were searing his heart.

"Will you kindly send for this person?" suddenly remarked M. Tricamp, awakening them from their meditation; "or, what is better, let us visit her room."

"Her room—her room," stammered Balthazar, "why, there it is," and he pointed to the adjoining apartment.

"And it has taken you this long while to make up your mind who committed the theft!" sneered the sergeant.

"But," ventured Cornelius, "she must certainly have heard us."

Tricamp took up the lamp, and, followed by the young men, entered the adjoining room to find it—empty. Simultaneously, all three exclaimed, "She has escaped!"

M. Tricamp placed his hand under the mattress, in search of stolen property. "The bed has not been slept in," he said, after a careful inspection.

At that moment, a struggle was heard without, and the officer who had been left to guard the vestibule appeared escorting Christina.

The poor girl seemed more astonished than afraid.

"This young woman was attempting to escape, Mynheer; I arrested her in the act of unbolting the back door," said the officer.

Christina looked about her with such an air of innocence that no one, except, of course, M. Tricamp, believed in her guilt.

"But do tell me what all this means?" she asked the officer, who locked the door after her. "Why don't you tell them who I am?" she continued, addressing Balthazar.

"Where have you been?" he asked.

"Up-stairs with old Gudule, who, you know, is afraid of the lightning. And, as I was very tired, I fell asleep in her arm-chair When I awoke, the storm was over, and I came down-stairs intending to go to bed; but first I wanted to make sure that you had bolted the door, and it was at this moment that the gentleman placed his hand on my shoulder and told me that I was under arrest. And, I assure you, he has frightened me thoroughly."

"You lie!" coarsely interrupted M. Tricamp. "You intended to go out when my man arrested you. Furthermore, you did not go to bed, so as to avoid the trouble of dressing when the moment for you to make your escape had come."

Christina looked at him, dumfounded. "Escape? Escape what?" she asked.

"Ah!" muttered M. Tricamp. "What impudence; what deceit!"

"Come here," said Balthazar, not knowing what to believe, "and I will tell you the meaning of all this." Taking the young girl by the arm, he drew her into the adjoining room.

"My God!" cried the young woman, crossing the threshold, and seeing for the first time the scene of devastation. "Who could have done this?"

So genuine did her surprise appear that Balthazar hesitated for a moment, but M. Tricamp was not so easily moved; he dragged Christina by the arm up to the desk, and exclaimed,

"You did it!"

"I!" cried Christina, without realising the full import of his words.

She looked at Balthazar as if to read his thoughts, cast a glance at the drawer of the desk, and, seeing it empty, the terrible meaning of the accusation flashed upon her mind With a heartrending cry she exclaimed:

"My God! And you say that I have done this!"

No one had the courage to answer her. She approached Balthazar, but he lowered his eyes. Suddenly she raised her hand to her heart. She tried to speak, but seemed to be suffocating. She could utter only a few syllables: "A thief! They say I am a thief!" And she fell

backward in a dead faint. Cornelius hastened toward her, and raised her gently in his arms.

"No, no!" he cried; "it is impossible! This child is innocent." And then he carried the young girl in his arms to her room, and laid her on her bed. Balthazar followed him, deeply moved, as could be easily seen. M. Tricamp, still smiling, followed immediately, but one of his officers motioned to him that he had something to communicate.

"Mynheer, we have already obtained some information in regard to this young woman."

"Well, what is it that you know?"

"The baker across the street says that, a little while before the storm, he saw Mademoiselle Christina slipping a package through the ground-floor window to a man who was standing outside, and that this man wore a long coat and a slouch hat."

"A package?" murmured M. Tricamp; "very good! Now, secure this witness, and keep a sharp watch outside. And first, go, and send the cook to me at once."

The officer withdrew, and M. Tricamp reentered Christina's room.

The young woman reposed on her bed in a dead swoon, while Cornelius chafed her hands. Without taking note of the girl's condition, M. Tricamp continued to examine the premises. He began with the bureau, making an exhaustive search through all its drawers. Then, with a

smile of satisfaction on his face, he approached Balthazar.

"What proof, after all, is there of the young woman's guilt?" asked the latter, looking at her tenderly.

"Why, this!" answered M. Tricamp, and handed Balthazar one of the missing pearls.

"Where did you find it?"

"There," and he pointed to the top drawer of Christina's bureau. Balthazar rushed to the drawer, and turned over the young girl's possessions, but found nothing more of the stolen jewels.

Christina opened her eyes at this moment. She looked about her as if trying to recall the situation, and burst into tears as she buried her face in the pillow.

"Oho!" ejaculated M. Tricamp, "tears, eh? She is going to confess." And, leaning over her, he added in his most insinuating voice: "Come, my child, return good for evil, and confess the truth. Confession is good for the soul. Not one of us is perfect. Now, I dare say, you permitted yourself to be led astray, or you fell a prey to a passion for finery. You wanted to make yourself look pretty for the sake of some one you are in love with, eh, my dear?"

"What an idea, Mynheer!" interrupted Cornelius.

"Silence, young man! I know what I am talking about. This woman has an accomplice, as sure as my name is Tricamp." And, leaning

over Christina, he continued, "Am I not right, my dear?"

"Oh, why not rather kill me than torture me like this!" cried Christina, with a fresh outburst of tears.

So unexpected was this that M. Tricamp started back in surprise.

"Kindly leave us alone with the girl, Mynheer; your presence irritates her," said Balthazar. "If there is anything to confess, she will confess it to my friend and me."

M. Tricamp bowed himself out of the room.

"Oh, just as you please," he replied; "but be very careful—she is a clever minx."

VII

Cornelius all but slammed the door in Tricamp's face; then the two young men approached Christina, who had assumed a sitting posture and was staring before her into space.

Balthazar held out his hand to her. "Come, my child," he said, "we are alone now, and you are with friends—so you need not be afraid."

"I don't want to stay here!" she sobbed; "I want to go away! Oh, let me go—let me go!"

"No, Christina, you cannot go until you have answered us," said Cornelius.

"I beg of you to tell us the truth, Christina," Balthazar added, "and I promise you, I pledge you my honour, that no harm shall befall you. I will forgive you, and no one shall ever know

anything of this. I swear to you, Christina, before God, I swear it! Don't you hear me, child?"

"Yes," replied Christina, who did not seem to listen. "Oh, if I could only cry—if I could only cry!"

Cornelius grasped the young girl's fevered hands in his own. "Christina, my child, may God forgive us all, and we love you too much not to forgive you. Listen, I beseech you. Do you not recognise me?"

"Yes," answered Christina, and her eyes filled with tears.

"Well, then, I love you—love you with all my heart! Do you hear?"

"And yet," said the young girl, now bursting into tears, "yet you think me a thief!"

"No, no!" Cornelius exclaimed quickly. "I do not, cannot believe it! But, dear child, you must help me to clear you from suspicion, and to discover the real criminal, and to do this you must frankly tell me everything."

"Yes, you are good, and the only one who is kind to me. You pity me, and do not believe their accusations. They accuse me because I am a gipsy—because, when I was a child, I stole. And so they call me a thief, a thief! They call me a *thief!*"

She fell backward on her bed, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

Balthazar could bear this no longer: he knelt at her bedside, and exclaimed in a voice as

pitiful as if he had been the accused and not the accuser: "Christina, sister, child, daughter —look at me! On my knees, I ask forgiveness of you for the wrong I have done you. No one will say or do anything more in this matter; it is all over—do you hear? But indeed, you will not repay all my mother's kindness and my own by making me endure all the torments of the damned? I beseech you, then, to tell me what has become of my little medallion. I do not ask you where it is, you understand; I don't wish to know that, for I don't suspect you. But, if you do know where it is, I implore you by the love you bore my mother, whom you called your own, I implore you to help me to find it. On the recovery of that jewel depends the happiness of my whole life. Please, please, give me back my medallion!"

"Oh," answered Christina in despair, "I would give my life to be able to tell you where it is!"

"Christina!"

"But I haven't got it—I haven't got it!" she cried, wringing her hands.

In his exasperation, Balthazar sprang to his feet: "But, wretched woman——"

Cornelius motioned to him to be silent, and Christina pressed her hands to her forehead.

"Ah," she said, bursting into a wild laugh, "when I am mad, this farce will be ended, I suppose?"

Worn out with emotion, she fell backward,

and hid her face in the pillow as if determined not to say another word.

VIII

CORNELIUS dragged Balthazar away, who staggered out of the room as if he had been shot. In the other room they found M. Tricamp, who had not been wasting his time, but had been examining the old cook Gudule, who, rudely awakened by one of the officers, was still half asleep.

"Come, come, my good woman, compose yourself, if you please," said M. Tricamp.

"Oh, my good master, my good master!" she cried, as Balthazar and Cornelius entered the room together. "What's the matter? They pulled me out of my bed, and now they are asking me all kinds of questions! For mercy's sake, tell me what it is all about!"

"Don't be frightened, my good woman," said Balthazar kindly; "all this does not concern you. But I have been robbed, and we are looking for the thief."

"You have been robbed?"

"Yes."

"My God! For over thirty years I have lived in this house, and not a pin has been stolen in all that time! Oh, Mynheer, why did they not wait with stealing until I was dead?"

"Come, come, my good woman, don't give way like that," said M. Tricamp.

"Mynheer," said Balthazar, "you will have to raise your voice a bit; the woman is deaf."

"And now, what I want to know is whether you were in the house when the robbery was committed?" continued M. Tricamp in a louder voice.

"But I never leave the house at all, Mynheer."

"You did not go out the whole evening?"

"Not over the threshold; besides, at my age, one does not go out in a blinding storm for the fun of it."

"So you were in your room?"

"No, Mynheer; for the greater part of the day I sat knitting by the kitchen fire."

"And you did not leave the kitchen for a moment?"

"Not until I went up-stairs to bed."

"Is your eyesight good?"

"Mynheer?" asked Gudule, not having heard clearly.

"I asked you if you had good eyes," repeated M. Tricamp.

"Oh, I can see well enough, even if I am a bit hard of hearing! And I have a good memory, too——"

"A good memory? Then tell me who called here to-day."

"Oh, the postman came, and a neighbour wanted to borrow a pie-plate, and Petersen, who came to ask something of Christina."

"Indeed! And who is this Petersen?"

"A neighbour, Mynheer—a night-watchman; my master knows him well."

"Yes," said Balthazar to the sergeant; "he is a poor fellow whose wife died a month ago, leaving him two little children, who are both ill. We help him from time to time."

"And this Petersen was in the house to-day?"

"No, Mynheer," answered Gudule; "he merely spoke through the window to Christina."

"And what did he say to her?"

"I did not hear, Mynheer."

"And after him, did no one else call?"

This question she asked him to repeat, and then answered:

"No one at all."

"And where was Christina while you were knitting?"

"Why, I was too tired to move my chair, and so the dear child, who is always so kind and obliging, looked after the cooking for me."

"But she wasn't in the kitchen the whole time?"

"No, Mynheer: toward evening she retired to her own room."

"Ah, so she retired to her own room toward evening?"

"Yes, Mynheer, to dress for supper."

"And how long did she remain in her own room?"

"About an hour, Mynheer."

"An hour?"

"Yes, fully an hour."

"And, during all that time, you heard nothing?"

"I beg your pardon?"

"I asked you if you heard anything, like the noise of some one hammering wood?"

"No, Mynheer."

"Yes, gentlemen," said M. Tricamp, turning to the young men, "she is as deaf as a post." Then he approached Gudule, and added in a loud voice,

"I suppose the storm was then at its height?"

"Oh, yes, Mynheer, I could hear the thunder clearly enough."

"No doubt she mistook the noise that the robber made in breaking in for the roar of the elements," he murmured to himself. "And then?" he asked Gudule in a still louder voice.

"And then, Mynheer, the night darkened, and the storm raged furiously, and master had not returned. I was very much frightened, and, as I was on my knees saying my prayers, Christina came down from her own room. She was as pale as a ghost, and trembling all over. Then the thunder burst right over us, and deafened me."

"So you noticed that she was nervous?"

"To be sure! The storm frightened me, too, almost to death. A little while later, master knocked at the door, and Christina admitted him. And that, Mynheer, is all I know, as sure as I am an honest woman."

"You need not cry, my good woman; no one suspects you."

"But, master, whom do they suspect? Father in heaven!" she cried, as the truth flashed upon her. "Then they accuse Christina?"

No one answered.

"Ah, you do not answer me," the old woman went on. "Master, is it so?"

"My poor Gudule!"

"And you let them accuse our little Christina?" and the old woman, who would not be silenced, continued, "that kind and dear angel whom Heaven sent us?"

"Come, come, if it is not you, it must be she," brutally interrupted Tricamp.

"Oh, why don't they rather blame me? I am an old woman, who cannot live much longer, but I won't let them touch a hair on this innocent child's head! Ah, Mynheer! She is a sacred trust; she must not be touched. Don't pay any attention to that wicked man who is causing all the trouble."

At a sign from M. Tricamp, his men seized the old woman by the arm. Gudule came forward a few steps, and then fell on her knees before the fireplace, weeping and bewailing her fate. Then M. Tricamp bade his men not to disturb the woman, who was praying that Christina should not be made to suffer for another's crime.

IX

TURNING to Cornelius, the agent of police said: "You perceive that no suspicious person

called here to-day; neither the postman, the neighbour, nor the fellow Petersen is such a one. It remains entirely, therefore, between the young girl and the old woman, and the latter can hardly have performed the necessary gymnastics. You may draw your own conclusions."

"Oh, do not ask me to form an opinion! In this dreadful nightmare, I do not know what to think."

"It may be a dream, but I have the feeling of being wide-awake and of reasoning remarkably well."

"It is true," said Cornelius, as he walked nervously to and fro; "you do reason remarkably well."

"And my suppositions are quite logical?"

"Yes, quite logical."

"And, as I have not so far made a single error, you must admit the young girl's guilt."

"No, I do not!" eagerly replied Cornelius, and looked the sergeant square in the face. "No, unless she herself says so, I will never believe her guilty. And God knows that, in spite of her own assertion, I would yet protest that she is innocent!"

"What proofs can you produce?" objected the officer. "I, at least, have proved the truth of my assertions."

"I know nothing, and can prove nothing," answered Cornelius. "Nor can your assertions and your evidence be disputed away——"

"Well, then?"

"But my conscience rebels against your statements, and something within me cries out: 'Her dear face, her agony and despair, are not those of a guilty wretch, and I swear that she is innocent. My assurance is beyond proof, and would assert itself in the face of the most damning evidence! If you listen to her accusers, whose logic is born of earthly evidence, they will lie away the future of a noble girl. My evidence, which comes from heaven, is true!'"

"Then——?"

"Do not heed them!" continued Cornelius, with intense excitement. "Remember that, when your pride is ready to dispute the very existence of a God, something within you still cries out to affirm that He *is*. And if this inner voice proclaims the girl's innocence, how can I suspect her?"

"If the police reasoned like this, criminals would have an easy time of it."

"I will not attempt to convince you," added Cornelius. "Go on with your work. Go on, and search for evidence, and heap proof upon proof in your efforts to crush this girl. I, however, will set myself to discover the proofs of her innocence."

"Then, if you will be advised, do not include this among them!"

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that I found this black pearl——"

"Where?"

"In her bureau drawer."

"Yes, my friend," interrupted Balthazar, "he found it in her drawer in my presence."

Cornelius seized the pearl eagerly. So convincing was the proof that he knew no longer what to believe. As if it had been a red-hot coal did that little pearl sear his hand—instinctively he stared at it, but without seeing it—and yet he could not take his eyes from that damning bit of evidence. Balthazar took him by the hand, but Cornelius seemed not to notice it. His eyes were fixed upon that pearl, the sight of which filled him with horror.

"Cornelius!" exclaimed Balthazar, now thoroughly alarmed. But Cornelius pushed him roughly aside, and leaned over to get a better view of the pearl.

"What is the matter with you, Cornelius?" Balthazar asked again.

"Get out of my way!" And once again he pushed his friend aside, and rushed to the open window.

Balthazar and Tricamp exchanged a look of mutual understanding, while Cornelius, with feverish excitement, hastened to the study.

"He has gone mad!" muttered Tricamp, following him with a look. "Will you permit me to give a drink of curacoa to my men? It is day now, and the air is somewhat chilly."

"With pleasure. Let the men help themselves from the bottle there."

Tricamp left the room. As Balthazar turned

round, he saw Gudule still kneeling in a corner. A moment later, he joined Cornelius in the study.

Cornelius was giving the handle of the knife a scrutiny that lasted several minutes. Then, without a word of explanation, he mounted a chair and proceeded to examine the broken wire.

"Where is the bell?" he suddenly asked Balthazar, who really believed that his friend's senses had deserted him.

"In the hallway."

Cornelius pulled at the wire a number of times, but the bell did not ring.

"Ah, she forgot nothing, but even removed the tongue!" sneered Balthazar.

Cornelius, still preserving his sphinx-like silence, continued to examine the wire, which passed through a little tin tube, about the size of a putty-blower. In this groove, the wire moved freely. In that direction, there was nothing out of order.

"Observe the bell, and tell me whether it rings when I pull the wire."

Balthazar went out into the hall and did as he was directed.

"Does it move?" called out Cornelius.

"Very little," answered Balthazar; "and it cannot ring at all because the bell is turned up-side-down, with its tongue in the air."

"Good; we will consider that later. Now, steady the desk while I get up on it."

Then, with the assistance of the knife, Cornelius

drew himself up painfully to where the wall-paper had been removed, as if to test the practicability of such an ascent.

Just then Gudule began to howl dismally outside, and Balthazar ran out to learn the cause, leaving his friend in mid-air.

"Oh, master!" cried the old woman, "she has just escaped!"

"Christina?"

"Yes, Mynheer; I saw her fleeing through the garden. Do hasten to follow her before it is too late!"

"The little serpent!" cried M. Tricamp. "She was lying low all the time. Now, then, my lads, let me see how soon you can catch her!"

Off started the officers with Tricamp at their head, while Balthazar hurried to the young girl's room to make sure that she was no longer there.

Instead of Christina, Balthazar met Cornelius, who had entered the room through the opening in the wall.

"That's right, my friend, look for her. She has just run away, so that now you must admit her guilt."

"I tell you she is innocent!" exclaimed Cornelius, and his eyes flashed. "It is we who are guilty in accusing her."

"You are mad!"

"You will not say so when I have proved to you that I know the name of the thief," Cornelius

went on, as he smiled sarcastically at Balthazar's doubting face. "And I will tell you, further, how he came in, and how he went out. First of all, he came in neither by the window nor by the opening in the wall, but simply glided down the chimney, and reached your study by way of the fireplace."

"You say that the thief entered my study by the chimney?"

"Certainly; and, as he has a well-known weakness for metals, he first proceeded to gather up your gold and silver, then attacked the steel and iron locks of your portfolio and desk, and, finally gathering up your florins, ducats, and jewels, carried the whole concern off, and left only the knife as a reminder of his visit. From your study, he made a dash, flying madly through woodwork and paper into this poor child's room, and, on his way, dropped the pearl into her drawer. And if you want to know what has become of your medallion, look here!"

He drew aside the curtains of the bed, and pointed to the little copper crucifix that hung on the wall, and that was now completely covered with molten gold.

"That's what he did with your medallion."

He put his hand into the little receptacle for holy water, and drew from it the glass covers of the medallion, which were smelted together at the edges, leaving the flower in the middle.

"That's what he did with the rest!"

Balthazar, dumfounded, gazed at his friend. He did not know what to expect next.

"And, if you want to know how he escaped again," continued Cornelius, dragging his friend to the window, "look!"

He pointed to the top pane of the window, which was pierced with a small hole about the size of a penny.

"But what does all this mean?" asked Balthazar, who began to fear that his senses were deserting him, too. "Who did this?"

"Why, you fool, do you not see *that the house was struck by lightning?*"

Balthazar felt as if the lightning had struck him. And when he realised at last that it was Nature herself that had deceived them, he was more dead than alive. A loud noise was heard outside, and the two young men rushed to the window and looked out. A crowd surrounded the building, while four officers entered the house, bearing on a stretcher the form of Christina.

X

In her despair, the poor child had thrown herself into the Amstel, but Petersen the watchman, like the brave lad he was, had sprung in after her and pulled her out.

When she had been put to bed, and had been visited by a physician, who prescribed only plenty of rest and quiet, M. Tricamp approached the two young men.

"As the young girl is not in a condition to be moved to-day, my men and I will retire."

"Why, has not Cornelius told you anything? We know not only that Christina is innocent, but also the name of the thief."

"The thief!" cried M. Tricamp; "and who is it!"

"The lightning, to be sure!" Balthazar replied, with a laugh.

M. Tricamp's eyes grew round with astonishment as he repeated, "The lightning!"

"Why, naturally!" replied Cornelius. "While you employ your knowledge of psychology in your criminal investigations, I apply mine of meteorology—a mere difference of method."

"And you dare to assert that the lightning was the cause of all this?" asked M. Tricamp, beginning to lose his temper.

"This is nothing compared with the tricks that lightning has been known to play. How about the tack that it tears out of the carpet and then drives through the mirror without cracking it; or the key that it takes out of the lock and conceals in the ice-box; or the package of cigarettes which it delicately lifts from the bronze ash-receiver that it has ignited; or the silver it volatilises without damaging the silken meshes of the purse through which it has passed; the needles so completely magnetised by it that they run after a hammer; the delicate little hole it made in Christina's window; or the wall-paper, so neatly disarranged to furnish

you with your wonderful clue; and this medallion, the glass of which it has melted without injuring the flower within, thus forming as exquisite a piece of enamel as I have ever seen, a finer wedding-present than the most skilled artist could have turned out; and, finally, the gold of the medallion with which it gilded Christina's crucifix!"

"Humbug!" cried M. Tricamp. "It is impossible! And what of the package? She was seen handing the package to the man through the window."

"Here is the man himself to answer your question!" A veritable giant entered the room.

"Petersen!"

"At your service. In that package were some old dresses for my little ones."

"Old clothes! That's likely!" replied Tricamp, whose rage had reached the boiling-point. "And where, I should like to know, are the florins, and the ducats, and the jewels?"

"The devil!" exclaimed Cornelius; "that reminds me——"

He sprang on the table, reached out his hand to the overturned bell, and exclaimed, "Here they are!"

A huge ingot of gold, silver, and jewels melted together into a solid mass with the tongue, rolled from the bell to the floor.

M. Tricamp picked up the ingot and examined it with care.

"But tell me," he said, "how did you come to think of it?"

Cornelius smiled, as he answered, "It was this black pearl, with which as evidence against her you defied me to prove the innocence of Christina."

"The black pearl?"

"Exactly, Mynheer! Do you observe this little white speck? It was by means of this speck, caused by electricity, that I was enabled to save the honour of a fellow-being."

"You must accept my congratulations," said Tricamp humbly; "the man of science is more far-sighted than the police, and I shall in future add the study of natural philosophy to my other acquirements. Had not this undoubted proof been brought forward, a graver error still might have been committed, for I was actually beginning to suspect you of being an accomplice."

To conceal his embarrassment, M. Tricamp withdrew, and Gudule rushed in to say that Christina was better, and had heard everything through the partition.

When, a little later, Balthazar knelt at Christina's bedside, he said, as he placed the ingot of precious stones and metal on her bed:

"My little Christina, if you do not wish to make me unhappy, do not refuse to accept this little sign of my esteem."

Christina hesitated.

"Oh, you must take it, for you will need a dower!" cried Balthazar, pressing her hand.

"Yes, you will need one," added Cornelius, "if only you will accept me for your husband?"

Christina did not answer; but the glance which she gave the man who had saved her honour meant anything but—no.

THE GREAT CARBUNCLE

BY

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

AT nightfall, once in the olden time, on the rugged side of one of the Crystal Hills, a party of adventurers were refreshing themselves, after a toilsome and fruitless quest for the Great Carbuncle. They had come thither, not as friends nor partners in the enterprise, but each, save one youthful pair, impelled by his own selfish and solitary longing for this wondrous gem. Their feeling of brotherhood, however, was strong enough to induce them to contribute a mutual aid in building a rude hut of branches, and kindling a great fire of shattered pines that had drifted down the headlong current of the Amonoosuck, on the lower bank of which they were to pass the night. There was but one of their number, perhaps, who had become so estranged from natural sympathies, by the absorbing spell of the pursuit, as to acknowledge no satisfaction at the sight of human faces in the remote and solitary region whither they had ascended. A vast extent of wilderness lay between them and the nearest settlement, while scant a mile above their heads was that black verge where the hills throw off their shaggy

mantle of forest trees, and either robe themselves in clouds or tower naked into the sky. The roar of the Amonoosuck would have been too awful for endurance if only a solitary man had listened while the mountain stream talked with the wind.

The adventurers, therefore, exchanged hospitable greetings, and welcomed one another to the hut, where each man was the host, and all were the guests of the whole company. They spread their individual supplies of food on the flat surface of a rock, and partook of a general repast; at the close of which a sentiment of good-fellowship was perceptible among the party, though repressed by the idea that the renewed search for the Great Carbuncle must make them strangers again in the morning. Seven men and one young woman, they warmed themselves together at the fire, which extended its bright wall along the whole front of their wigwam. As they observed the various and contrasted figures that made up the assemblage, each man looking like a caricature of himself in the unsteady light that flickered over him, they came mutually to the conclusion that an odder society had never met, in city or wilderness, on mountain or plain.

The eldest of the group, a tall, lean, weather-beaten man, some sixty years of age, was clad in the skins of wild animals, whose fashion of dress he did well to imitate, since the deer, the wolf, and the bear had long been his most

intimate companions. He was one of those ill-fated mortals, such as the Indians told of, whom, in their early youth, the Great Carbuncle smote with a peculiar madness, and became the passionate dream of their existence. All who visited that region knew him as the Seeker, and by no other name. As none could remember when he first took up the search, there went a fable in the valley of the Saco, that, for his inordinate lust after the Great Carbuncle, he had been condemned to wander among the mountains till the end of time, still with the same feverish hopes at sunrise—the same despair at eve. Near this miserable Seeker sat a little, elderly personage, wearing a high-crowned hat, shaped somewhat like a crucible. He was from beyond the sea, a Doctor Cacaphodel, who had wilted and dried himself into a mummy by continually stooping over charcoal furnaces, and inhaling unwholesome fumes during his researches in chemistry and alchemy. It was told of him, whether truly or not, that, at the commencement of his studies, he had drained his body of all its richest blood, and wasted it, with other inestimable ingredients, in an unsuccessful experiment—and had never been a well man since. Another of the adventurers was Master Ichabod Pigsnort, a weighty merchant and selectman of Boston, and an elder of the famous Mr. Norton's church. His enemies had a ridiculous story that Master Pigsnort was accustomed to spend a whole hour

after prayer time, every morning and evening, in wallowing naked among an immense quantity of pine-tree shillings, which were the earliest silver coinage of Massachusetts. The fourth whom we shall notice had no name that his companions knew of, and was chiefly distinguished by a sneer that always contorted his thin visage, and by a prodigious pair of spectacles, which were supposed to deform and discolour the whole face of nature, to this gentleman's perception. The fifth adventurer likewise lacked a name, which was the greater pity, as he appeared to be a poet. He was a bright-eyed man, but woefully pined away, which was no more than natural, if, as some people affirmed, his ordinary diet was fog, morning mist, and a slice of the densest cloud within his reach, sauced with moonshine, whenever he could get it. Certain it is that the poetry which flowed from him had a smack of all these dainties. The sixth of the party was a young man of haughty mien, and sat somewhat apart from the rest, wearing his plumed hat loftily among his elders, while the fire glittered on the rich embroidery of his dress, and gleamed intensely on the jewelled pommel of his sword. This was the Lord de Vere, who, when at home, was said to spend much of his time in the burial vault of his dead progenitors, rummaging their mouldy coffins in search of all the earthly pride and vainglory that was hidden among bones and dust; so that, besides his own share, he had

the collected haughtiness of his whole line of ancestry.

Lastly, there was a handsome youth in rustic garb, and, by his side, a blooming little person, in whom a delicate shade of maiden reserve was just melting into the rich glow of a young wife's affection. Her name was Hannah, and her husband's Matthew; two homely names, yet well enough adapted to the simple pair, who seemed strangely out of place among the whimsical fraternity whose wits had been set agog by the Great Carbuncle.

Beneath the shelter of one hut, in the bright blaze of the same fire, sat this varied group of adventurers, all so intent upon a single object that, of whatever else they began to speak, their closing words were sure to be illuminated with the Great Carbuncle. Several related the circumstances that brought them thither. One had listened to a traveller's tale of this marvellous stone in his own distant country, and had immediately been seized with such a thirst for beholding it as could only be quenched in its intensest lustre. Another, so long ago as when the famous Captain Smith visited these coasts, had seen it blazing far at sea, and had felt no rest in all the intervening years till now that he took up the search. A third, being encamped on a hunting expedition full forty miles south of the White Mountains, awoke at midnight, and beheld the Great Carbuncle gleaming like a meteor, so that the shadows of the trees fell back-

ward from it. They spoke of the innumerable attempts which had been made to reach the spot, and of the singular fatality which had hitherto withheld success from all adventurers, though it might seem so easy to follow to its source a light that overpowered the moon and almost matched the sun. It was observable that each smiled scornfully at the madness of every other in anticipating better fortune than the past, yet nourished a scarcely hidden conviction that he would himself be the favoured one. As if to allay their too sanguine hopes, they recurred to the Indian traditions that a spirit kept watch about the gem, and bewildered those who sought it either by removing it from peak to peak of the higher hills, or by calling up a mist from the enchanted lake over which it hung. But these tales were deemed unworthy of credit, all professing to believe that the search had been baffled by want of sagacity or perseverance in the adventurers, or such other causes as might naturally obstruct the passage to any given point among the intricacies of forest, valley, and mountain.

In a pause of the conversation, the wearer of the prodigious spectacles looked round upon the party, making each individual, in turn, the object of the sneer which invariably dwelt upon his countenance.

"So, fellow-pilgrims," said he, "here we are, seven wise men, and one fair damsel—who, doubtless, is as wise as any graybeard of the

company: here we are, I say, all bound on the same goodly enterprise. Methinks, now, it were not amiss that each of us declare what he proposes to do with the Great Carbuncle, provided he have the good hap to clutch it. What says our friend in the bear skin? How mean you, good sir, to enjoy the prize which you have been seeking, the Lord knows how long, among the Crystal Hills?"

"How enjoy it!" exclaimed the aged Seeker, bitterly. "I hope for no enjoyment from it; that folly has passed long ago! I keep up the search for this accursed stone because the vain ambition of my youth has become a fate upon me in old age. The pursuit alone is my strength —the energy of my soul—the warmth of my blood—and the pith and marrow of my bones! Were I to turn my back upon it, I should fall down dead on the hither side of the Notch, which is the gateway of this mountain region. Yet not to have my wasted lifetime back again would I give up my hopes of the Great Carbuncle! Having found it, I shall bear it to a certain cavern that I wot of, and there, grasping it in my arms, lie down and die, and keep it buried with me forever."

"O wretch, regardless of the interests of science!" cried Doctor Cacaphodel, with philosophic indignation. "Thou art not worthy to behold, even from afar off, the lustre of this most precious gem that ever was concocted in the laboratory of Nature. Mine is the sole

purpose for which a wise man may desire the possession of the Great Carbuncle. Immediately on obtaining it—for I have a presentiment, good people, that the prize is reserved to crown my scientific reputation—I shall return to Europe, and employ my remaining years in reducing it to its first elements. A portion of the stone will I grind to impalpable powder; other parts shall be dissolved in acids, or whatever solvents will act upon so admirable a composition; and the remainder I design to melt in the crucible, or set on fire with the blowpipe. By these various methods, I shall gain an accurate analysis, and finally bestow the result of my labours upon the world in a folio volume."

"Excellent!" quoth the man with the spectacles. "Nor need you hesitate, learned sir, on account of the necessary destruction of the gem, since the perusal of your folio may teach every mother's son of us to concoct a Great Carbuncle of his own."

"But, verily," said Master Ichabod Pigsnort, "for mine own part, I object to the making of these counterfeits, as being calculated to reduce the marketable value of the true gem. I tell ye frankly, sirs, I have an interest in keeping up the price. Here have I quitted my regular traffic, leaving my warehouse in the care of my clerks, and putting my credit to great hazard, and, furthermore, have put myself in peril of death or captivity by the accursed heathen savages—and all this without daring to ask

the prayers of the congregation, because the quest for the Great Carbuncle is deemed little better than a traffic with the Evil One. Now think ye that I would have done this grievous wrong to my soul, body, reputation, and estate, without a reasonable chance of profit?"

"Not I, pious Master Pigsnort," said the man with the spectacles. "I never laid such a great folly to thy charge."

"Truly, I hope not," said the merchant. "Now, as touching this Great Carbuncle, I am free to own that I have never had a glimpse of it; but, be it only the hundredth part so bright as people tell, it will surely outvalue the Great Mogul's best diamond, which he holds at an incalculable sum. Wherefore, I am minded to put the Great Carbuncle on shipboard, and voyage with it to England, France, Spain, Italy, or into Heathendom, if Providence should send me thither, and, in a word, dispose of the gem to the best bidder among the potentates of the earth, that he may place it among his crown jewels. If any of ye have a wiser plan, let him expound it."

"That have I, thou sordid man!" exclaimed the poet. "Dost thou desire nothing brighter than gold, that thou wouldst transmute all this ethereal lustre into such dross as thou wallowest in already? For myself, hiding the jewel under my cloak, I shall hie me back to my attic chamber, in one of the darksome alleys of London. There, night and day, will I gaze upon it; my

soul shall drink its radiance; it shall be diffused throughout my intellectual powers, and gleam brightly in every line of poesy that I indite. Thus, long ages after I am gone, the splendour of the Great Carbuncle will blaze around my name!"

"Well said, Master Poet!" cried he of the spectacles. "Hide it under thy cloak, sayest thou? Why, it will gleam through the holes, and make thee look like a jack-o'-lantern!"

"To think!" ejaculated the Lord de Vere, rather to himself than his companions, the best of whom he held utterly unworthy of his intercourse—"to think that a fellow in a tattered cloak should talk of conveying the Great Carbuncle to a garret in Grub Street! Have not I resolved within myself that the whole earth contains no fitter ornament for the great hall of my ancestral castle? There shall it flame for ages, making a noonday of midnight, glittering on the suits of armour, the banners, and escutcheons that hang around the wall, and keeping bright the memory of heroes. Wherefore have all other adventurers sought the prize in vain but that I might win it, and make it a symbol of the glories of our lofty line? And never, on the diadem of the White Mountains, did the Great Carbuncle hold a place half so honoured as is reserved for it in the hall of the De Veres!"

"It is a noble thought," said the Cynic, with an obsequious sneer. "Yet, might I presume to say so, the gem would make a rare sepulchral

lamp, and would display the glories of your lordship's progenitors more truly in the ancestral vault than in the castle hall."

"Nay, forsooth," observed Matthew, the young rustic, who sat hand in hand with his bride, "the gentleman has bethought himself of a profitable use for this bright stone. Hannah here and I are seeking it for a like purpose."

"How, fellow!" exclaimed his lordship, in surprise. "What castle hall hast thou to hang it in?"

"No castle," replied Matthew, "but as neat a cottage as any within sight of the Crystal Hills. Ye must know, friends, that Hannah and I, being wedded the last week, have taken up the search of the Great Carbuncle, because we shall need its light in the long winter evenings; and it will be such a pretty thing to show the neighbours when they visit us. It will shine through the house so that we may pick up a pin in any corner, and will set all the windows aglowing as if there were a great fire of pine knots in the chimney. And then how pleasant, when we awake in the night, to be able to see one another's faces!"

There was a general smile among the adventurers at the simplicity of the young couple's project in regard to this wondrous and invaluable stone, with which the greatest monarch on earth might have been proud to adorn his palace. Especially the man with spectacles, who had sneered at all the company in turn, now twisted

his visage into such an expression of ill-natured mirth that Matthew asked him, rather peevishly, what he himself meant to do with the Great Carbuncle.

"The Great Carbuncle!" answered the Cynic, with ineffable scorn. "Why, you blockhead, there is no such thing in *rerum natura*. I have come three thousand miles, and am resolved to set my foot on every peak of these mountains, and poke my head into every chasm, for the sole purpose of demonstrating to the satisfaction of any man one whit less an ass than thyself that the Great Carbuncle is all a humbug!"

Vain and foolish were the motives that had brought most of the adventurers to the Crystal Hills; but none so vain, so foolish, and so impious, too, as that of the scoffer with the prodigious spectacles. He was one of those wretched and evil men whose yearnings are downward to the darkness, instead of heavenward, and who, could they but extinguish the lights which God hath kindled for us, would count the midnight gloom their chiefest glory. As the Cynic spoke, several of the party were startled by a gleam of red splendour that showed the huge shapes of the surrounding mountains and the rock-bestrewn bed of the turbulent river with an illumination unlike that of their fire on the trunks and black boughs of the forest trees. They listened for the roll of thunder, but heard nothing, and were glad that the tempest came not near them. The stars, those dial-points of heaven, now warned

the adventurers to close their eyes on the blazing logs, and open them, in dreams, to the glow of the Great Carbuncle.

The young married couple had taken their lodgings in the farthest corner of the wigwam, and were separated from the rest of the party by a curtain of curiously woven twigs, such as might have hung, in deep festoons, around the bridal-bower of Eve. The modest little wife had wrought this piece of tapestry while the other guests were talking. She and her husband fell asleep with hands tenderly clasped, and awoke from visions of unearthly radiance to meet the more blessed light of each other's eyes. They awoke at the same instant, and with a happy smile beaming over their two faces, which grew brighter with their consciousness of the reality of life and love. But no sooner did she recollect where they were than the bride peeped through the interstices of the leafy curtain, and saw that the outer room of the hut was deserted.

"Up, dear Matthew!" cried she, in haste. "The strange folk are all gone! Up, this very minute, or we shall lose the Great Carbuncle!"

In truth, so little did these poor young people deserve the mighty prize which had lured them thither that they had slept peacefully all night, and till the summits of the hills were glittering with sunshine; while the other adventurers had tossed their limbs in feverish wakefulness, or

dreamed of climbing precipices, and set off to realise their dreams with the earliest peep of dawn. But Matthew and Hannah, after their calm rest, were as light as two young deer, and merely stopped to say their prayers and wash themselves in a cold pool of the Amonoosuck, and then to taste a morsel of food, ere they turned their faces to the mountain-side. It was a sweet emblem of conjugal affection, as they toiled up the difficult ascent, gathering strength from the mutual aid which they afforded. After several little accidents, such as a torn robe, a lost shoe, and the entanglement of Hannah's hair in a bough, they reached the upper verge of the forest, and were now to pursue a more adventurous course. The innumerable trunks and heavy foliage of the trees had hitherto shut in their thoughts, which now shrank affrighted from the region of wind and cloud and naked rocks and desolate sunshine that rose immeasurably above them. They gazed back at the obscure wilderness which they had traversed, and longed to be buried again in its depths rather than trust themselves to so vast and visible a solitude.

"Shall we go on?" said Matthew, throwing his arm round Hannah's waist, both to protect her and to comfort his heart by drawing her close to it.

But the little bride, simple as she was, had a woman's love of jewels, and could not forego the hope of possessing the very brightest in the

world, in spite of the perils with which it must be won.

"Let us climb a little higher," whispered she, yet tremulously, as she turned her face upward to the lonely sky.

"Come, then," said Matthew, mustering his manly courage and drawing her along with him, for she became timid again the moment that he grew bold.

And upward, accordingly, went the pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, now treading upon the tops and thickly interwoven branches of dwarf pines, which, by the growth of centuries, though mossy with age, had barely reached three feet in altitude. Next, they came to masses and fragments of naked rock heaped confusedly together, like a cairn reared by giants in memory of a giant chief. In this bleak realm of upper air, nothing breathed, nothing grew; there was no life but what was concentrated in their two hearts; they had climbed so high that Nature herself seemed no longer to keep them company. She lingered beneath them, within the verge of the forest trees, and sent a farewell glance after her children as they strayed where her own green footprints had never been. But soon they were to be hidden from her eye. Densely and dark the mists began to gather below, casting black spots of shadow on the vast landscape, and sailing heavily to one centre, as if the loftiest mountain peak had summoned a council of its kindred clouds. Finally, the vapours welded

themselves, as it were, into a mass, presenting the appearance of a pavement over which the wanderers might have trodden, but where they would vainly have sought an avenue to the blessed earth which they had lost. And the lovers yearned to behold that green earth again more intensely, alas! than, beneath a clouded sky, they had ever desired a glimpse of heaven. They even felt it a relief to their desolation when the mists, creeping gradually up the mountain, concealed its lonely peak, and thus annihilated, at least for them, the whole region of visible space. But they drew closer together, with a fond and melancholy gaze, dreading lest the universal cloud should snatch them from each other's sight.

Still, perhaps, they would have been resolute to climb as far and as high, between earth and heaven, as they could find foothold, if Hannah's strength had not begun to fail, and with that her courage also. Her breath grew short. She refused to burden her husband with her weight, but often tottered against his side, and recovered herself each time by a feebler effort. At last she sank down on one of the rocky steps of the acclivity.

"We are lost, dear Matthew," said she mournfully. "We shall never find our way to the earth again. And, oh, how happy we might have been in our cottage!"

"Dear heart!—we shall yet be happy there," answered Matthew. "Look! In this direction,

the sunshine penetrates the dismal mist. By its aid I can direct our course to the passage of the Notch. Let us go back, love, and dream no more of the Great Carbuncle!"

"The sun cannot be yonder," said Hannah, with despondence. "By this time, it must be noon. If there could ever be any sunshine here, it would come from above our heads."

"But look!" repeated Matthew, in a somewhat altered tone. "It is brightening every moment. If not sunshine, what can it be?"

Nor could the young bride any longer deny that a radiance was breaking through the mist, and changing its dim hue to a dusky red, which continually grew more vivid, as if brilliant particles were interfused with the gloom. Now, also, the cloud began to roll away from the mountain, while, as it heavily withdrew, one object after another started out of its impenetrable obscurity into sight, with precisely the effect of a new creation, before the indistinctness of the old chaos had been completely swallowed up. As the process went on, they saw the gleaming of water close at their feet, and found themselves on the very border of a mountain lake, deep, bright, clear, and calmly beautiful, spreading from brim to brim of a basin that had been scooped out of the solid rock. A ray of glory flashed across its surface. The pilgrims looked whence it should proceed, but closed their eyes with a thrill of awful admiration, to exclude the fervid splendour that glowed

from the brow of a cliff impending over the enchanted lake. For the simple pair had reached that lake of mystery, and found the long-sought shrine of the Great Carbuncle!

They threw their arms around each other, and trembled at their own success; for, as the legends of this wondrous gem rushed thick upon their memory, they felt themselves marked out by fate—and the consciousness was fearful. Often from childhood upward they had seen it shining like a distant star. And now that star was throwing its intensest lustre on their hearts. They seemed changed to one another's eyes, in the red brilliancy that flamed upon their cheeks, while it lent the same fire to the lake, the rocks, and sky, and to the mists which had rolled back before its power. But with their next glance they beheld an object that drew their attention even from the mighty stone. At the base of the cliff, directly beneath the Great Carbuncle, appeared the figure of a man, with his arms extended in the act of climbing, and his face turned upward, as if to drink the full gush of splendour. But he stirred not, no more than if changed to marble.

"It is the Seeker," whispered Hannah, convulsively grasping her husband's arm. "Matthew, he is dead."

"The joy of success has killed him," replied Matthew, trembling violently. "Or, perhaps, the very light of the Great Carbuncle was death!"

"The Great Carbuncle," cried a peevish voice behind them. "The Great Humbug! If you have found it, prithee point it out to me."

They turned their heads, and there was the Cynic, with his prodigious spectacles set carefully on his nose, staring now at the lake, now at the rocks, now at the distant masses of vapour, now right at the Great Carbuncle itself, yet seemingly as unconscious of its light as if all the scattered clouds were condensed about his person. Though its radiance actually threw the shadow of the unbeliever at his own feet, as he turned his back upon the glorious jewel, he would not be convinced that there was the least glimmer there.

"Where is your Great Humbug?" he repeated. "I challenge you to make me see it!"

"There," said Matthew, incensed at such perverse blindness, and turning the Cynic round toward the illuminated cliff. "Take off those abominable spectacles, and you cannot help seeing it!"

Now these coloured spectacles probably darkened the Cynic's sight in at least as great a degree as the smoked glasses through which people gaze at an eclipse. With resolute bravado, however, he snatched them from his nose, and fixed a bold stare full upon the ruddy blaze of the Great Carbuncle. But scarcely had he encountered it, when, with a deep, shuddering groan, he dropped his head, and pressed both hands across his miserable eyes. Thenceforth

there was, in very truth, no light of the Great Carbuncle, nor any other light on earth, nor light of heaven itself, for the poor Cynic. So long accustomed to view all objects through a medium that deprived them of every glimpse of brightness, a single flash of so glorious a phenomenon, striking upon his naked vision, had blinded him forever.

"Matthew," said Hannah, clinging to him, "let us go hence!"

Matthew saw that she was faint, and kneeling down, supported her in his arms, while he threw some of the thrillingly cold water of the enchanted lake upon her face and bosom. It revived her, but could not renovate her courage.

"Yes, dearest!" cried Matthew, pressing her tremulous form to his breast, "we will go hence, and return to our humble cottage. The blessed sunshine and the quiet moonlight shall come through our window. We will kindle the cheerful glow of our hearth at eventide, and be happy in its light. But never again will we desire more light than all the world may share with us."

"No," said his bride, "for how could we live by day, or sleep by night, in this awful blaze of the Great Carbuncle!"

Out of the hollow of their hands they drank each a draught from the lake, which presented them its waters uncontaminated by an earthly lip. Then, lending their guidance to the blinded Cynic, who uttered not a word, and even stifled

his groans in his own most wretched heart, they began to descend the mountain. Yet, as they left the shore, till then untrodden, of the spirit's lake, they threw a farewell glance toward the cliff, and beheld the vapours gathering in dense volumes, through which the gem burned duskily.

As touching the other pilgrims of the Great Carbuncle, the legend goes on to tell that the worshipful Master Ichabod Pigsnort soon gave up the quest as a desperate speculation, and wisely resolved to betake himself again to his warehouse, near the town dock, in Boston. But, as he passed through the Notch of the mountain, a war party of Indians captured our unlucky merchant, and carried him to Montreal, there holding him in bondage till, by the payment of a heavy ransom, he had woefully subtracted from his hoard of pine-tree shillings. By his long absence, moreover, his affairs had become so disordered that, for the rest of his life, instead of wallowing in silver, he had seldom a sixpence worth of copper. Doctor Cacaphodel, the alchemist, returned to his laboratory with a prodigious fragment of granite, which he ground to powder, dissolved in acids, melted in the crucible, and burned with the blowpipe, and published the result of his experiments in one of the heaviest folios of the day. And, for all these purposes, the gem itself could not have answered better than the granite. The poet, by a somewhat similar mistake, made prize of a great piece of ice, which he found in a sunless

chasm of the mountains, and swore that it corresponded, in all points, with his idea of the Great Carbuncle. The critics say that, if his poetry lacked the splendour of the gem, it retained all the coldness of the ice. The Lord de Vere went back to his ancestral hall, where he contented himself with a wax-lighted chandelier, and filled, in due course of time, another coffin in the ancestral vault. As the funeral torches gleamed within that dark receptacle, there was no need of the Great Carbuncle to show the vanity of earthly pomp.

The cynic, having cast aside his spectacles, wandered about the world, a miserable object, and was punished with an agonising desire of light, for the wilful blindness of his former life. The whole night long he would lift his splendour-blasted orbs to the moon and stars; he turned his face eastward, at sunrise, as duly as a Persian idolater; he made a pilgrimage to Rome, to witness the magnificent illumination of St. Peter's Church; and, finally, perished in the great fire of London, into the midst of which he had thrust himself, with the desperate idea of catching one feeble ray from the blaze that was kindling earth and heaven.

Matthew and his bride spent many peaceful years, and were fond of telling the legend of the Great Carbuncle. The tale, however, toward the close of their lengthened lives, did not meet with the full credence that had been accorded to it by those who remembered the ancient

lustre of the gem. For it is affirmed that, from the hour when two mortals had shown themselves so simply wise as to reject a jewel which would have dimmed all earthly things, its splendour waned. When other pilgrims reached the cliff, they found only an opaque stone, with particles of mica glittering on its surface. There is also a tradition that, as the youthful pair departed, the gem was loosened from the forehead of the cliff, and fell into the enchanted lake, and that at noontide the Seeker's form may still be seen to bend over its quenchless gleam.

Some few believe that this inestimable stone is blazing as of old, and say that they have caught its radiance, like a flash of summer lightning, far down the valley of the Saco. And be it owned that, many a mile from the Crystal Hills, I saw a wondrous light around their summits, and was lured, by the faith of poesy, to be the latest pilgrim of the GREAT CARBUNCLE.

THE LIFTED VEIL

BY

GEORGE ELIOT

I

THE time of my end approaches. I have lately been subject to attacks of *angina pectoris;* and, in the ordinary course of things, my physician tells me, I may fairly hope that my life will not be protracted many months. Unless, then, I am cursed with an exceptional physical constitution, as I am cursed with an exceptional mental character, I shall not much longer groan under the wearisome burden of this earthly existence. If it were to be otherwise—if I were to live on to the age most men desire and provide for—I should, for once, have known whether the miseries of delusive expectation can outweigh the miseries of true prevision. For I foresee when I shall die, and everything that will happen in my last moments.

Just a month from this day, on the 20th of September, 1850, I shall be sitting in this chair, in this study, at ten o'clock at night, longing to die, weary of incessant insight and foresight, without delusions and without hope. Just as I am watching a tongue of blue flame rising in the fire, and

my lamp is burning low, the horrible contraction will begin at my chest. I shall only have time to reach the bell and pull it violently, before the sense of suffocation will come. No one will answer my bell. I know why. My two servants are lovers, and will have quarreled. My housekeeper will have rushed out of the house, in a fury, two hours before, hoping that Perry will believe she has gone to drown herself. Perry is alarmed at last, and is gone out after her. The little scullery-maid is asleep on a bench: she never answers the bell; it does not wake her. The sense of suffocation increases: my lamp goes out with a horrible stench: I make a great effort and snatch at the bell again. I long for life, and there is no help. I thirsted for the unknown: the thirst is gone. O God, let me stay with the known, and be weary of it: I am content. Agony of pain and suffocation—and, all the while, the earth, the fields, the pebbly brook at the bottom of the rookery, the fresh scent after the rain, the light of the morning through my chamber window, the warmth of the hearth after the frosty air—will darkness close over them forever?

Darkness—darkness—no pain—nothing but darkness, but I am passing on and on through the darkness: my thought stays in the darkness, but always with a sense of moving onward——

Before that time comes, I wish to use my last hours of ease and strength in telling the strange story of my experience. I have never fully unbosomed myself to any human being; I have

never been encouraged to trust much in the sympathy of my fellow-men. But we have all a chance of meeting with some pity, some tenderness, some charity, when we are dead; it is the living only who cannot be forgiven—the living only from whom men's indulgence and reverence are held off, like the rain by the hard east wind. While the heart beats, bruise it—it is your only opportunity; while the eye can still turn toward you with moist, timid entreaty, freeze it with an icy, unanswering gaze; while the ear, that delicate messenger to the inmost sanctuary of the soul, can still take in the tones of kindness, put it off with hard civility, or sneering compliment, or envious affectation of indifference; while the creative brain can still throb with the sense of injustice, with the yearning for brotherly recognition—make haste—oppress it with your ill-considered judgments, your trivial comparisons, your careless misrepresentations. The heart will by-and-by be still—*ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit;* the eye will cease to entreat; the ear will be deaf; the brain will have ceased from all wants as well as from all work. Then your charitable speeches may find vent; then you may remember and pity the toil and the struggle and the failure; then you may give due honour to the work achieved; then you may find extenuation for errors, and may consent to bury them.

That is a trivial schoolboy text; why do I dwell on it? It has little reference to me, for I shall

leave no works behind me for men to honour. I have no near relatives who will make up, by weeping over my grave, for the wounds they inflicted on me when I was among them. It is only the story of my life that will perhaps win a little more sympathy from strangers when I am dead than I ever believed it would obtain from my friends while I was living.

My childhood, perhaps, seems happier to me than it really was, by contrast with all the after years. For then the curtain of the future was as impenetrable to me as to other children: I had all their delight in the present hour; their sweet, indefinite hopes for the morrow; and I had a tender mother: even now, after the dreary lapse of long years, a slight trace of sensation accompanies the remembrance of her caress as she held me on her knee—her arms round my little body, her cheek pressed against mine. I had a complaint of the eyes that made me blind for a little while, and she kept me on her knee from morning till night. That unequalled love soon vanished out of my life, and, even to my childish consciousness, it was as if that life had become more chill. I rode my little white pony with the groom by my side as before; but there were no loving eyes looking at me as I mounted, no glad arms open to me when I came back. Perhaps I missed my mother's love more than most children of seven or eight would have done, to whom the other pleasures of life remained as before; for I was certainly a very sensitive child. I re-

member still the mingled trepidation and delicious excitement with which I was affected by the tramping of the horses on the pavement in the echoing stables, by the loud resonance of the grooms' voices, by the booming bark of the dogs as my father's carriage thundered under the archway of the courtyard, by the din of the gong as it gave notice of luncheon and dinner. The measured tramp of soldiery which I sometimes heard—for my father's house lay near a county town where there were large barracks—made me sob and tremble; and yet when they were gone past I longed for them to come back again.

I fancy my father thought me an odd child, and had little fondness for me; though he was very careful in fulfilling what he regarded as a parent's duties. But he was already past the middle of life, and I was not his only son. My mother had been his second wife, and he was five-and-forty when he married her. He was a firm, unbending, intensely orderly man, in root and stem a banker, but with a flourishing graft of the active landholder, aspiring to county influence: one of those people who are always like themselves from day to day, who are uninfluenced by the weather, and neither know melancholy nor high spirits. I held him in great awe, and appeared more timid and sensitive in his presence than at other times; a circumstance which, perhaps, helped to confirm him in the intention to educate me on a different plan from

the prescriptive one with which he had complied in the case of my elder brother, already a tall youth at Eton. My brother was to be his representative and successor; he must go to Eton and Oxford, for the sake of making connections, of course: my father was not a man to underrate the bearing of Latin satirists or Greek dramatists on the attainment of an aristocratic position. But, intrinsically, he had slight esteem for "those dead but sceptred spirits"—having qualified himself for forming an independent opinion by reading Potter's "Æschylus," and dipping into Francis's "Horace." To this negative view he added a positive one, derived from a recent connection with mining speculations; namely, that a scientific education was the really useful training for a younger son. Moreover, it was clear that a shy, sensitive boy like me was not fit to encounter the rough experience of a public school. Mr. Letherall had said so very decidedly. Mr. Letherall was a large man in spectacles, who one day took my small head between his large hands, and pressed it here and there in an exploratory, suspicious manner—then placed each of his great thumbs on my temples, and pushed me a little way from him, and stared at me with glittering spectacles. The contemplation appeared to displease him, for he frowned sternly, and said to my father, drawing his thumbs across my eyebrows—

"The deficiency is there, sir—there; and here," he added, touching the upper sides of my head,

"here is the excess. That must be brought out, sir, and this must be laid to sleep."

I was in a state of tremour, partly at the vague idea that I was the object of reprobation, partly in the agitation of my first hatred—hatred of this big, spectacled man, who pulled my head about as if he wanted to buy and cheapen it.

I am not aware how much Mr. Letherall had to do with the system afterward adopted toward me, but it was presently clear that private tutors, natural history, science, and the modern languages were the appliances by which the defects of my organization were to be remedied. I was very stupid about machines, so I was to be greatly occupied with them; I had no memory for classification, so it was particularly necessary that I should study systematic zoölogy and botany; I was hungry for human deeds and human emotions, so I was to be plentifully crammed with the mechanical powers, the elementary bodies, and the phenomena of electricity and magnetism. A better-constituted boy would certainly have profited under my intelligent tutors, with their scientific apparatus; and would, doubtless, have found the phenomena of electricity and magnetism as fascinating as I was, every Thursday, assured they were. As it was, I could have paired off, for ignorance of whatever was taught me, with the worst Latin scholar that was ever turned out of a classical academy. I read Plutarch, and Shakespeare, and Don Quixote on the sly, and supplied myself in that way with

wandering thoughts, while my tutor was assuring me that "an improved man, as distinguished from an ignorant one, was a man who knew the reason why water ran down hill." I had no desire to be this improved man; I was glad of the running water; I could watch it and listen to it gurgling among the pebbles, and bathing the bright green water-plants, by the hour together. I did not want to know *why* it ran; I had perfect confidence that there were good reasons for what was so very beautiful.

There is no need to dwell on this part of my life. I have said enough to indicate that my nature was of the sensitive, unpractical order, and that it grew up in an uncongenial medium, which could never foster it into happy, healthy development. When I was sixteen, I was sent to Geneva to complete my course of education; and the change was a very happy one to me, for the first sight of the Alps, with the setting sun on them, as we descended the Jura, seemed to me like an entrance into heaven; and the three years of my life there was spent in a perpetual sense of exaltation, as if from a draught of delicious wine, at the presence of Nature in all her awful loveliness. You will think, perhaps, that I must have been a poet, from this early sensibility to Nature. But my lot was not so happy as that. A poet pours forth his song, and *believes* in the listening ear and answering soul to which his song will be floated sooner or later. But the poet's sensibility that finds no vent but in silent

tears on the sunny bank, when the noonday light sparkles on the water, or in an inward shudder at the sound of harsh human tones, the sight of a cold human eye—this dumb passion brings with it a fatal solitude of soul in the society of one's fellow-men. My least solitary moments were those in which I pushed off in my boat, at evening, toward the centre of the lake; it seemed to me that the sky, and the glowing mountain-tops, and the wide blue water, surrounded me with a cherishing love such as no human face had shed on me since my mother's love had vanished out of my life. I used to do as Jean Jacques did—lie down in my boat, and let it glide whither it would, while I looked up at the departing glow leaving one mountain-top after the other, as if the prophet's chariot of fire were passing over them on its way to the home of light. Then, when the white summits were all sad and corpse-like, I had to push homeward, for I was under careful surveillance, and was allowed no late wanderings. This disposition of mine was not favourable to the formation of intimate friendships among the numerous youths of my own age who are always to be found studying at Geneva. Yet I made *one* such friendship; and, singularly enough, it was with a youth whose intellectual tendencies were the very reverse of my own. I shall call him Charles Meunier; his real surname—an English one, for he was of English extraction—having since become celebrated. He was an orphan who lived on a miserable pittance while he pur-

sued the medical studies for which he had a special genius. Strange! that with my vague mind, susceptible and unobservant, hating inquiry and given up to contemplation, I should have been drawn toward a youth whose strongest passion was science. But the bond was not an intellectual one; it came from a source that can happily blend the stupid with the brilliant, the dreamy with the practical: it came from community of feeling. Charles was poor and ugly, derided by Genevese *gamins*, and not acceptable in drawing-rooms. I saw that he was isolated, as I was, though from a different cause, and, stimulated by a sympathetic resentment, I made timid advances toward him. It is enough to say that there sprang up as much comradeship between us as our different habits would allow; and, in Charles's rare holidays, we went up the Saleve together, or took the boat to Vevay, while I listened dreamily to the monologues in which he unfolded his bold conceptions of future experiment and discovery. I mingled them confusedly in my thought with glimpses of blue water and delicate floating cloud, with the notes of birds and the distant glitter of the glacier. He knew quite well that my mind was half absent, yet he liked to talk to me in this way; for don't we talk of our hopes and our projects even to dogs and birds, when they love us? I have mentioned this one friendship because of its connection with a strange and terrible scene which I shall have to narrate in my subsequent life.

This happier life at Geneva was put an end to by a severe illness, which is partly a blank to me, partly a time of dimly remembered suffering, with the presence of my father by my bed from time to time. Then came the languid monotony of convalescence, the days gradually breaking into variety and distinctness as my strength enabled me to take longer and longer drives. On one of these more vividly remembered days, my father said to me, as he sat beside my sofa:

"When you are quite well enough to travel, Latimer, I shall take you home with me. The journey will amuse you and do you good, for I shall go through the Tyrol and Austria, and you will see many new places. Our neighbours, the Filmores, are come; Alfred will join us at Basle, and we shall all go together to Vienna, and back by Prague——"

My father was called away before he had finished his sentence, and he left my mind resting on the word *Prague*, with a strange sense that a new and wondrous scene was breaking upon me: a city under the broad sunshine; that seemed to me as if it were the summer sunshine of a long-past century arrested in its course—unrefreshed for ages by the dews of night, or the rushing rain-cloud; scorching the dusty, weary, time-eaten grandeur of a people doomed to live on in the stale repetition of memories, like deposed and superannuated kings in their regal, gold-inwoven tatters. The

city looked so thirsty that the broad river seemed to me a sheet of metal, and the blackened statues, as I passed under their blank gaze, along the unending bridge, with their ancient garments and their saintly crowns, seemed to me the real inhabitants and owners of this place, while the busy, trivial men and women, hurrying to and fro, were a swarm of ephemeral visitants infesting it for a day. It is such grim, stony beings as these, I thought, who are the fathers of ancient, faded children, in those tanned, time-fretted dwellings that crowd the steep before me; who pay their court in the worn and crumbling pomp of the palace which stretches its monotonous length on the height; who worship wearily in the stifling air of the churches, urged by no fear or hope, but compelled by their doom to be ever old and undying, to live on in the rigidity of habit, as they live on in perpetual midday, without the repose of night or the new birth of morning.

A stunning clang of metal suddenly thrilled through me, and I became conscious of the objects in my room again: one of the fire-irons had fallen as Pierre opened the door to bring me my draught. My heart was palpitating violently, and I begged Pierre to leave my draught beside me: I would take it presently.

As soon as I was alone again, I began to ask myself whether I had been sleeping. Was this a dream—this wonderfully distinct vision

—minute in its distinctness down to a patch of rainbow light on the pavement, transmitted through a coloured lamp in the shape of a star —of a strange city, quite unfamiliar to my imagination? I had seen no picture of Prague: it lay in my mind as a mere name, with vaguely remembered historical associations—ill-defined memories of imperial grandeur and religious wars.

Nothing of this sort had ever occurred in my dreaming experience before, for I had often been humiliated because my dreams were only saved from being utterly disjointed and commonplace by the frequent terrors of nightmare. But I could not believe that I had been asleep, for I remembered distinctly the gradual breaking-in of the vision upon me, like the new images in a dissolving view, or the growing distinctness of the landscape as the sun lifts up the veil of the morning mist. And, while I was conscious of this incipient vision, I was also conscious that Pierre came to tell my father Mr. Filmore was waiting for him, and that my father hurried out of the room. No, it was not a dream; was it—the thought was full of tremulous exultation—was it the poet's nature in me, hitherto only a troubled, yearning sensibility, now manifesting itself suddenly as spontaneous creation? Surely, it was in this way that Homer saw the plain of Troy, that Dante saw the abodes of the departed, that Milton saw the earthward flight of the Tempter. Was it

that my illness had wrought some happy change in my organisation—given a firmer tension to my nerves—carried off some dull obstruction? I had often read of such effects—in works of fiction at least. Nay; in genuine biographies I had read of the subtilising or exalting influence of some diseases on the mental powers. Did not Novalis feel his inspiration intensified under the progress of consumption?

When my mind had dwelt for some time on this blissful idea, it seemed to me that I might perhaps test it by an exertion of my will. The vision had begun when my father was speaking of our going to Prague. I did not for a moment believe it was really a representation of that city; I believed—I hoped it was a picture that my newly liberated genius had painted in fiery haste with the colours snatched from lazy memory. Suppose I were to fix my mind on some other place—Venice, for example, which was far more familiar to my imagination than Prague; perhaps the same sort of result would follow. I concentrated my thoughts on Venice; I stimulated my imagination with poetic memories, and strove to feel myself present in Venice, as I had felt myself present in Prague. But in vain. I was only colouring the Canaletto engravings that hung in my old bedroom at home; the picture was a shifting one, my mind wandering uncertainly in search of more vivid images; I could see no accident of form or shadow without conscious labour after the necessary con-

ditions. It was all prosaic effort, not rapt passivity, such as I had experienced half an hour before. I was discouraged; but I remembered that inspiration was fitful.

For several days I was in a state of excited expectation, watching for a recurrence of my new gift. I sent my thoughts ranging over my world of knowledge, in the hope that they would find some object which would send a reawakening vibration through my slumbering genius. But no; my world remained as dim as ever, and that flash of strange light refused to come again, though I watched for it with palpitating eagerness.

My father accompanied me every day in a drive, and in a gradually lengthening walk as my powers of walking increased; and one evening he had agreed to come and fetch me at twelve the next day, that we might go together to select a musical box and other purchases rigorously demanded of a rich Englishman visiting Geneva. He was one of the most punctual of men and bankers, and I was always nervously anxious to be quite ready for him at the appointed time. But, to my surprise, at a quarter past twelve he had not appeared. I felt all the impatience of a convalescent who has nothing particular to do, and who has just taken a tonic in the prospect of immediate exercise that would carry off the stimulus.

Unable to sit still and reserve my strength, I walked up and down the room, looking out

on the current of the Rhone, just where it leaves the dark-blue lake; but thinking all the while of the possible causes that could detain my father.

Suddenly I was conscious that my father was in the room, but not alone: there were two persons with him. Strange! I had heard no footstep, I had not seen the door open; but I saw my father and, at his right hand, our neighbour Mrs. Filmore, whom I remembered very well, though I had not seen her for five years. She was a commonplace middle-aged woman, in silk and cashmere; but the lady on the left of my father was not more than twenty, a tall, slim, willowy figure, with luxuriant blonde hair, arranged in cunning braids and folds that looked almost too massive for the slight figure and the small-featured, thin-lipped face they crowned. But the face had not a girlish expression: the features were sharp, the pale gray eyes at once acute, restless, and sarcastic. They were fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity, and I felt a painful sensation as if a sharp wind were cutting me. The pale-green dress, and the green leaves that seemed to form a border about her pale blonde hair, made me think of a Water-Nixie—for my mind was full of German lyrics, and this pale, fatal-eyed woman, with the green weeds, looked like a birth from some cold, sedgy stream, the daughter of an aged river.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said——

But, while the last word was in my ears, the whole group vanished and there was nothing between me and the Chinese painted folding-screen that stood before the door. I was cold and trembling; I could only totter forward and throw myself on the sofa. This strange new power had manifested itself again——. But *was* it a power? Might it not rather be a disease—a sort of intermittent delirium, concentrating my energy of brain into moments of unhealthy activity, and leaving my saner hours all the more barren? I felt a dizzy sense of unreality in what my eye rested on; I grasped the bell convulsively, like one trying to free himself from nightmare, and rang it twice. Pierre came with a look of alarm in his face.

"Monsieur ne se trouve pas bien?" he said, anxiously.

"I'm tired of waiting, Pierre," I said, as distinctly and emphatically as I could, like a man determined to be sober in spite of wine; "I'm afraid something has happened to my father —he's usually so punctual. Run to the Hôtel des Bergues and see if he is there."

Pierre left the room at once, with a soothing "Bien, Monsieur;" and I felt the better for this scene of simple, waking prose. Seeking to calm myself still further, I went into my bedroom, adjoining the *salon*, and opened a case of eau-de-Cologne; took out a bottle; went through the process of taking out the cork very neatly, and then rubbed the reviving spirit over

my hands and forehead and under my nostrils, drawing a new delight from the scent because I had procured it by slow details of labour, and by no strange, sudden madness. Already I had begun to taste something of the horror that belongs to the lot of a human being whose nature is not adjusted to simple human conditions.

Still enjoying the scent, I returned to the *salon*, but it was not unoccupied, as it had been before I left it. In front of the Chinese folding-screen there was my father, with Mrs. Filmore on his right hand, and on his left—the slim, blonde-haired girl, with the keen face and the keen eyes fixed on me in half-smiling curiosity.

"Well, Latimer, you thought me long," my father said.

I heard no more, felt no more, till I became conscious that I was lying with my head low on the sofa, Pierre and my father by my side. As soon as I was thoroughly revived, my father left the room, and presently returned, saying:

"I've been to tell the ladies how you are, Latimer. They were waiting in the next room. We shall put off our shopping expedition to-day."

Presently he said, "That young lady is Bertha Grant, Mrs. Filmore's orphan niece. Filmore has adopted her, and she lives with them, so you will have her for a neighbour when we go home —perhaps for a near relation; for there is a tenderness between her and Alfred, I suspect, and I should be gratified by the match, since Filmore means to provide for her in every way

as if she were his daughter. It had not occurred to me that you knew nothing about her living with the Filmores."

He made no further allusion to the fact of my having fainted at the moment of seeing her, and I would not for the world have told him the reason: I shrank from the idea of disclosing to any one what might be regarded as a pitiable peculiarity; most of all from betraying it to my father, who would have suspected my sanity ever after.

I do not mean to dwell with particularity on the details of my experience. I have described these two cases at length because they had definite, clearly traceable results in my after lot.

Shortly after this last occurrence—I think the very next day—I began to be aware of a phase in my abnormal sensibility to which, from the languid and slight nature of my intercourse with others since my illness, I had not been alive before. This was the obtrusion on my mind of the mental process going forward in first one person and then another with whom I happened to be in contact: the vagrant, frivolous ideas and emotions of some uninteresting acquaintance—Mrs. Filmore, for example—would force themselves on my consciousness like an importunate, ill-played musical instrument or the loud activity of an imprisoned insect. But this unpleasant sensibility was fitful, and left me moments of rest, when the souls of my com-

panions were once more shut out from me, and I felt a relief such as silence brings to wearied nerves. I might have believed this importunate insight to be merely a diseased activity of the imagination, but that my prevision of incalculable words and actions proved it to have a fixed relation to the mental process in other minds. But this superadded consciousness, wearying and annoying enough when it urged on me the trivial experience of indifferent people, became an intense pain and grief when it seemed to be opening to me souls of those who were in a close relation to me—when the rational talk, the graceful attentions, the wittily turned phrases, and the kindly deeds, which used to make the web of their characters, were seen as if thrust asunder by a microscopic vision that showed all the intermediate frivolities, all the suppressed egoism, all the struggling chaos of puerilities, meanness, vague capricious memories, and indolent makeshift thoughts, from which human words and deeds emerge like leaflets covering a fermenting heap.

At Basle, we were joined by my brother Alfred, now a handsome, self-confident man of six-and-twenty—a thorough contrast to my fragile, nervous, ineffectual self. I believe I was held to have a sort of half-womanish, half-ghostly beauty; for the portrait-painters, who are thick as weeds at Geneva, had often asked me to sit to them, and I had been the model of a dying minstrel in a fancy picture. But I

thoroughly disliked my own *physique*, and nothing but the belief that it was a condition of poetic genius would have reconciled me to it. That brief hope was quite fled, and I saw in my face now nothing but the stamp of a morbid organization, framed for passive suffering—too feeble for the sublime resistance of poetic production. Alfred, from whom I had been almost constantly separated, and who, in his present stage of character and appearance, came before me as a perfect stranger, was bent on being extremely friendly and brotherlike to me. He had the superficial kindness of a good-humoured, self-satisfied nature, that fears no rivalry and has encountered no contrarieties. I am not sure that my disposition was good enough for me to have been quite free from envy toward him, even if our desires had not clashed, and if I had been in the healthy human condition which admits of generous confidence and charitable construction. There must always have been an antipathy between our natures. As it was, he became in a few weeks an object of intense hatred to me; and when he entered the room, still more when he spoke, it was as if a sensation of grating metal had set my teeth on edge. My diseased consciousness was more intensely and continually occupied with his thoughts and emotions than with those of any other person who came in my way. I was perpetually exasperated with the petty promptings of his conceit and his love of patronage, with his self-

complacent belief in Bertha Grant's passion for him, with his half-pitying contempt for me—seen not in the ordinary indications of intonation and phrase and slight action, which an acute and suspicious mind is on the watch for, but in all their naked, skinless complication.

For we were rivals, and our desires clashed, though he was not aware of it. I have said nothing yet of the effect Bertha Grant produced in me on a nearer acquaintance. That effect was chiefly determined by the fact that she made the only exception, among all the human beings about me, to my unhappy gift of insight. About Bertha I was always in a state of uncertainty: I could watch the expression of her face, and speculate on its meaning; I could ask for her opinion with the real interest of ignorance; I could listen for her words and watch for her smile with hope and fear: she had for me the fascination of an unravelled destiny. I say it was this fact that chiefly determined the strong effect she produced on me: for, in the abstract, no womanly character could seem to have less affinity for that of a shrinking, romantic, passionate youth than Bertha's. She was keen, sarcastic, unimaginative, prematurely cynical, remaining critical and unmoved in the most impressive scenes, inclined to dissect all my favourite poems, and especially contemptuous toward the German lyrics which were my pet literature at that time. To this moment, I am unable to define my feeling toward her: it was not ordinary

boyish admiration, for she was the very opposite, even to the colour of her hair, of the ideal woman who still remained to me the type of loveliness; and she was without that enthusiasm for the great and good which, even at the moment of her strongest dominion over me, I should have declared to be the highest element of character. But there is no tyranny more complete than that which a self-centred negative nature exercises over a morbidly sensitive nature perpetually craving sympathy and support. The most independent people feel the effect of a man's silence in heightening their value for his opinion —feel an additional triumph in conquering the reverence of a critic habitually captious and satirical: no wonder, then, that an enthusiastic, self-distrusting youth should watch and wait before the closed secret of a sarcastic woman's face, as if it were the shrine of the doubtfully benignant deity who ruled his destiny. For a young enthusiast is unable to imagine the total negation in another mind of the emotions which are stirring his own: they may be feeble, latent, inactive, he thinks, but they are there—they may be called forth; sometimes, in moments of happy hallucination, he believes they may be there in all the greater strength because he sees no outward sign of them. And this effect, as I have intimated, was heightened to its utmost intensity in me, because Bertha was the only being who remained for me in the mysterious seclusion of soul that renders such

youthful delusion possible. Doubtless, there was another sort of fascination at work—that subtle physical attraction which delights in cheating our psychological predictions, and in compelling the men who paint sylphs to fall in love with some *bonne et brave femme*, heavy-heeled and freckled.

Bertha's behaviour toward me was such as to encourage all my illusions, to heighten my boyish passion, and make me more and more dependent on her smiles. Looking back with my present wretched knowledge, I conclude that her vanity and love of power were intensely gratified by the belief that I had fainted on first seeing her purely from the strong impression her person had produced on me. The most prosaic woman likes to believe herself the object of a violent, a poetic passion; and, without a grain of romance in her, Bertha had that spirit of intrigue which gave piquancy to the idea that the brother of the man she meant to marry was dying with love and jealousy for her sake. That she meant to marry my brother was what at that time I did not believe; for, though he was assiduous in his attentions to her, and I knew well enough that both he and my father had made up their minds to this result, there was not yet an understood engagement —there had been no explicit declaration; and Bertha habitually, while she flirted with my brother and accepted his homage in a way that implied to him a thorough recognition of its

intention, made me believe, by the subtlest looks and phrases—feminine nothings which could never be quoted against her—that he was really the object of her secret ridicule; that she thought him, as I did, a coxcomb, whom she would have pleasure in disappointing. Me, she openly petted in my brother's presence, as if I were too young and sickly ever to be thought of as a lover; and that was the view he took of me. But I believe she must inwardly have delighted in the tremours into which she threw me by the coaxing way in which she patted my curls, while she laughed at my quotations. Such caresses were always given in the presence of our friends; for, when we were alone together, she affected a much greater distance toward me, and now and then took the opportunity, by words or slight actions, to stimulate my foolish, timid hope that she really preferred me. And why should she not follow her inclination? I was not in so advantageous a position as my brother, but I had fortune; I was not a year younger than she was, and she was an heiress, who would soon be of age to decide for herself.

The fluctuations of hope and fear, confined to this one channel, made each day in her presence a delicious torment. There was one deliberate act of hers which especially helped to intoxicate me. When we were in Vienna her twentieth birthday occurred, and, as she was very fond of ornaments, we all took the opportunity of the

splendid jewellers' shops in that Teutonic Paris to purchase her a birthday present of jewelry. Mine, naturally, was the least expensive; it was an opal ring—the opal was my favourite stone, because it seemed to blush and turn pale as if it had a soul. I told Bertha so when I gave it to her, and said that it was an emblem of the poetic nature, changing with the changing light of heaven and of woman's eyes. In the evening, she appeared elegantly dressed, and wearing conspicuously all the birthday presents except mine. I looked eagerly at her fingers, but saw no opal. I had no opportunity of noticing this to her during the evening; but the next day, when I found her seated near the window alone, after breakfast, I said, "You scorn to wear my poor opal. I should have remembered that you despised poetic natures, and should have given you coral or turquoise, or some other opaque, unresponsive stone." "Do I despise it?" she answered, taking hold of a delicate gold chain which she always wore round her neck and drawing out the end from her bosom with my ring hanging to it. "It hurts me a little, I can tell you," she said, with her usual dubious smile, "to wear it in that secret place; and since your poetical nature is so stupid as to prefer a more public position, I shall not endure the pain any longer."

She took off the ring from the chain and put it on her finger, smiling still, while the blood rushed to my cheeks, and I could not trust my-

self to say a word of entreaty that she would keep the ring where it was before.

I was completely fooled by this, and for two days shut myself up in my room whenever Bertha was absent, that I might intoxicate myself afresh with the thought of this scene and all it implied.

I should mention that during these two months—which seemed a long life to me from the novelty and intensity of the pleasures and pains I underwent—my diseased participation in other people's consciousness continued to torment me; now it was my father, and now my brother, now Mrs. Filmore or her husband, and now our German courier, whose stream of thought rushed upon me like a ringing in the ears not to be got rid of, though it allowed my own impulses and ideas to continue their uninterrupted course. It was like a preternaturally heightened sense of hearing, making audible to one a roar of sound where others find perfect stillness. The weariness and disgust of this involuntary intrusion into other souls was counteracted only by my ignorance of Bertha and my growing passion for her—a passion enormously stimulated, if not produced, by that ignorance. She was my oasis of mystery in the dreary desert of knowledge. I had never allowed my diseased condition to betray itself, or to drive me into any unusual speech or action, except once, when, in a moment of peculiar bitterness against my brother, I had forestalled some words which

I knew he was going to utter—a clever observation which he had prepared beforehand. He had occasionally a slightly affected hesitation in his speech, and, when he paused an instant after the second word, my impatience and jealousy impelled me to continue the speech for him, as if it were something we had both learned by rote. He coloured, and looked astonished as well as annoyed, and the words had no sooner escaped my lips than I felt a shock of alarm lest such an anticipation of words—very far from being words, of course, easy to divine—should have betrayed me as an exceptional being, a sort of quiet energumen, whom every one, Bertha, above all, would shudder at and avoid. But I magnified, as usual, the impression any word or deed of mine could produce on others; for no one gave any sign of having noticed my interruption as more than a rudeness, to be forgiven me on the score of my feeble nervous condition.

While this superadded consciousness of the actual was almost constant with me, I had never had a recurrence of that distinct prevision which I have described in relation to my first interview with Bertha; and I was waiting with eager curiosity to know whether or not my vision of Prague would prove to have been an instance of the same kind. A few days after the incident of the opal ring, we were paying one of our frequent visits to the Lichtenberg Palace. I could never look at many pictures

in succession; for pictures, when they are at all powerful, affect me so strongly that one or two exhaust all my capability of contemplation. That morning I had been looking at Giorgione's picture of the cruel-eyed woman, said to be a likeness of Lucrezia Borgia. I had stood long alone before it, fascinated by the terrible reality of that cunning, relentless face, till I felt a strange poisoned sensation, as if I had long been inhaling a fatal odour and was just beginning to be conscious of its effects. Perhaps even then I should not have moved away, if the rest of the party had not returned to this room, and announced that they were going to the Belvedere Gallery to settle a bet which had arisen between my brother and Mr. Filmore about a portrait. I followed them dreamily, and was hardly alive to what occurred till they had all gone up to the gallery, leaving me below; for I refused to come within sight of another picture that day. I made my way to the Grand Terrace, since it was agreed that we should saunter in the gardens when the dispute had been decided. I had been sitting here a short space, vaguely conscious of trim gardens, with a city and green hills in the distance, when, wishing to avoid the proximity of the sentinel, I rose and walked down the broad stone steps, intending to seat myself farther on in the gardens. Just as I reached the gravel walk, I felt an arm slipped within mine, and a light hand gently pressing my wrist. In the same instant, a

strange intoxicating numbness passed over me, like the continuance or climax of the sensation I was still feeling from the gaze of Lucrezia Borgia. The gardens, the summer sky, the consciousness of Bertha's arm being within mine, all vanished, and I seemed to be suddenly in darkness, out of which there gradually broke a dim firelight, and I felt myself sitting in my father's leather chair in the library at home. I knew the fireplace—the dogs for the wood fire—the black marble chimney-piece with the white marble medallion of the dying Cleopatra in the centre. Intense and hopeless misery was pressing on my soul; the light became stronger, for Bertha was entering with a candle in her hand—Bertha, my wife—with cruel eyes, with green jewels and green leaves on her white ball-dress; every hateful thought within her present to me—"Madman! idiot! why don't you kill yourself, then?" It was a moment of hell. I saw into her pitiless soul—saw its barren worldliness, its scorching hate—and felt it clothe me round like an air I was obliged to breathe. She came with her candle, and stood over me with a bitter smile of contempt; I saw the great emerald brooch on her bosom, a studded serpent with diamond eyes. I shuddered—I despised this woman with the barren soul and mean thoughts; but I felt helpless before her, as if she clutched my bleeding heart, and would clutch it till the last drop of life-blood ebbed away. She was my wife, and we hated each other. Gradually

the hearth, the dim library, the candle-light disappeared—seemed to melt away into a background of light, the green serpent with the diamond eyes remaining a dark image on the retina. Then I had a sense of my eyelids quivering, and the living daylight broke in upon me; I saw gardens, and heard voices; I was seated on the steps of the Belvedere Terrace, and my friends were round me.

The tumult of mind into which I was thrown by this hideous vision made me ill for several days, and prolonged our stay at Vienna. I shuddered with horror as the scene recurred to me; and it recurred constantly, with all its minutiæ, as if they had been burned into my memory; and yet, such is the madness of the human heart under the influence of its immediate desires, I felt a wild, hell-braving joy that Bertha was to be mine; for the fulfillment of my former prevision concerning her first appearance before me left me little hope that this last hideous glimpse of the future was the mere diseased play of my own mind, and had no relation to external realities. One thing alone I looked toward as a possible means of casting doubt on my terrible conviction—the discovery that my vision of Prague had been false—and Prague was the next city on our route.

Meanwhile, I was no sooner in Bertha's society again than I was as completely under her sway as before. What if I saw into the heart of Bertha, the matured woman—Bertha, my

wife? Bertha, the *girl*, was a fascinating secret to me still: I trembled under her touch; I felt the witchery of her presence; I yearned to be assured of her love. The fear of poison is feeble against the sense of thirst. Nay, I was just as jealous of my brother as before—just as much irritated by his small, patronising ways; for my pride, my diseased sensibility, were there as they had always been, and winced as inevitably under every offence as my eye winced from an intruding mote. The future, even when brought within the compass of feeling by a vision that made me shudder, had still no more than the force of an idea compared with the force of present emotion—of my love for Bertha, of my dislike and jealousy toward my brother.

It is an old story, that men sell themselves to the tempter, and sign a bond with their blood, because it is only to take effect at a distant day; then rush on to snatch the cup their souls thirst after with an impulse not the less savage because there is a dark shadow beside them forevermore. There is no short cut, no patent tram-road, to wisdom: after all the centuries of invention, the soul's path lies through the thorny wilderness which must be still trodden in solitude, with bleeding feet, with sobs for help, as it was trodden by them of old time.

My mind speculated eagerly on the means by which I should become my brother's successful rival, for I was still too timid, in my ignorance of Bertha's actual feeling, to venture on any step

that would urge from her an avowal of it. I thought I should gain confidence even for this, if my vision of Prague proved to have been veracious; and yet, the horror of that certitude! Behind the slim girl Bertha, whose words and looks I watched for, whose touch was bliss, there stood continually that Bertha with the fuller form, the harder eyes, the more rigid mouth—with the barren, selfish soul laid bare; no longer a fascinating secret, but a measured fact, urging itself perpetually on my unwilling sight. Are you unable to give me your sympathy—you who read this? Are you unable to imagine this double consciousness at work within me, flowing on like two parallel streams which never mingle their waters and blend into a common hue? Yet you must have known something of the presentiments that spring from an insight at war with passion; and my visions were only like presentiments intensified to horror. You have known the powerlessness of ideas before the might of impulse; and my visions, when once they had passed into memory, were mere ideas—pale shadows that beckoned in vain, while my hand was grasped by the living and the loved.

In after days, I thought with bitter regret that if I had foreseen something more or something different—if, instead of that hideous vision which poisoned the passion it could not destroy, or if even along with it I could have had a foreshadowing of that moment when I looked on my brother's face for the last time, some softening influence

would have been shed over my feeling toward him: pride and hatred would surely have been subdued into pity, and the record of those hidden sins would have been shortened. But this is one of the vain thoughts with which we men flatter ourselves. We try to believe that the egoism within us would have easily been melted, and that it was only the narrowness of our knowledge which hemmed in our generosity, our awe, our human pity, and hindered them from submerging our hard indifference to the sensations and emotions of our fellow. Our tenderness and self-renunciation seem strong when our egoism has had its day—when, after our mean striving for a triumph that is to be another's loss, the triumph comes suddenly, and we shudder at it because it is held out by the chill hand of death.

Our arrival in Prague happened at night, and I was glad of this, for it seemed like a deferring of a terribly decisive moment, to be in the city for hours without seeing it. As we were not to remain long in Prague, but to go on speedily to Dresden, it was proposed that we should drive out the next morning and take a general view of the place, as well as visit some of its specially interesting spots, before the heat became oppressive—for we were in August, and the season was hot and dry. But it happened that the ladies were rather late at their morning toilet, and, to my father's politely repressed but perceptible annoyance, we were not in the carriage till the morning was far advanced. I thought with a

sense of relief, as we entered the Jews' quarter where we were to visit the old synagogue, that we should be kept in this flat, shut-up part of the city, until we should all be too tired and too warm to go farther, and so we should return without seeing more than the streets through which we had already passed. That would give me another day's suspense—suspense, the only form in which a fearful spirit knows the solace of hope. But, as I stood under the blackened, groined arches of the old synagogue, made dimly visible by the seven thin candles in the sacred lamp, while our Jewish *cicerone* reached down the Book of the Law and read to us in its ancient tongue—I felt a shuddering impression that this strange building, with its shrunken lights, this surviving, withered remnant of mediæval Judaism, was of a piece with my vision. Those darkened, dusty Christian saints, with their loftier arches and their larger candles, needed the consolatory scorn with which they might point to a more shrivelled death-in-life than their own.

As I expected, when we left the Jews' quarter the elders of our party wished to return to the hotel. But now, instead of rejoicing in this as I had done beforehand, I felt a sudden overpowering impulse to go on at once to the bridge and put an end to the suspense I had been wishing to protract. I declared, with unusual decision, that I would get out of the carriage and walk on alone; they might return without me. My father, thinking this merely a sample of my usual "poetic

nonsense," objected that I should only do myself harm by walking in the heat; but when I persisted, he said angrily that I might follow my own absurd devices, but that Schmidt (our courier) must go with me. I assented to this, and set off with Schmidt toward the bridge. I had no sooner passed from under the archway of the grand old gate leading on to the bridge than a trembling seized me, and I turned cold under the midday sun; yet I went on; I was in search of something—a small detail which I remembered with special intensity as part of my vision. There it was—the patch of rainbow light on the pavement transmitted through a lamp in the shape of a star!

II

BEFORE the autumn was at an end, and while the brown leaves still stood thick on the beeches in our park, my brother and Bertha were engaged to each other, and it was understood that their marriage was to take place early in the next spring. In spite of the certainty I had felt from that moment on the bridge at Prague, that Bertha would one day be my wife, my constitutional timidity and distrust had continued to benumb me, and the words in which I had sometimes premeditated a confession of my love had died away unuttered. The same conflict had gone on within me as before—the longing for an assurance of love from Bertha's lips, the dread

lest a word of contempt and denial should fall upon me like a corrosive acid. What was the conviction of a distant necessity to me? I trembled under a present glance, I hungered after a present joy, I was clogged and chilled by a present fear. And so the days passed on: I witnessed Bertha's engagement, and heard her marriage discussed, as if I were under a conscious nightmare—knowing it was a dream that would vanish, but feeling stifled under the grasp of hard-clutching fingers.

When I was not in Bertha's presence—and I was with her very often, for she continued to treat me with a playful patronage that wakened no jealousy in my brother—I spent my time chiefly in wandering, in strolling, or taking long rides while the daylight lasted, and then shutting myself up with my unread books; for books had lost the power of chaining my attention. My self-consciousness was heightened to that pitch of intensity in which our own emotions take the form of a drama which urges itself imperatively on our contemplation, and we begin to weep, less under the sense of our suffering than at the thought of it. I felt a sort of pitying anguish over the pathos of my own lot: the lot of a being finely organised for pain, but with hardly any fibres that responded to pleasure—to whom the idea of future evil robbed the present of its joy, and for whom the idea of future good did not still the uneasiness of a present yearning or a present dread. I went dumbly through that

stage of the poet's suffering in which he feels the delicious pang of utterance, and makes an image of his sorrows.

I was left entirely without remonstrance concerning this dreamy, wayward life: I knew my father's thought about me: "That lad will never be good for anything in life: he may waste his years in an insignificant way on the income that falls to him: I shall not trouble myself about a career for him."

One mild morning in the beginning of November, it happened that I was standing outside the portico, patting lazy old Cæsar, a Newfoundland almost blind with age, the only dog that ever took any notice of me—for the very dogs shunned me, and fawned on the happier people about me—when the groom brought up my brother's horse which was to carry him to the hunt, and my brother himself appeared at the door, florid, broad-chested, and self-complacent, feeling what a good-natured fellow he was not to behave insolently to us all on the strength of his great advantages.

"Latimer, old boy," he said to me in a tone of compassionate cordiality, "what a pity it is you don't have a run with the hounds now and then! The finest thing in the world for low spirits!"

"Low spirits!" I thought bitterly, as he rode away; "that is the sort of phrase with which coarse, narrow natures like yours think to describe experience of which you can know no more than your horse knows. It is to such as you that

the good of this world falls: ready dullness, healthy selfishness, good-tempered conceit—these are the keys to happiness."

The quick thought came that my selfishness was even stronger than his—it was only a suffering selfishness instead of an enjoying one. But then, again, my exasperating insight into Alfred's self-complacent soul, his freedom from all the doubts and fears, the unsatisfied yearnings, the exquisite tortures of sensitiveness, that had made the web of my life, seemed to absolve me from all bonds toward him. This man needed no pity, no love; those fine influences would have been as little felt by him as the delicate white mist is felt by the rock it caresses. There was no evil in store for *him:* if he was not to marry Bertha, it would be because he had found a lot pleasanter to himself.

Mr. Filmore's house lay not more than half a mile beyond our own gates, and, whenever I knew my brother was gone in another direction, I went there for the chance of finding Bertha at home. Later on in the day, I walked thither. By a rare accident, she was alone, and we walked out in the grounds together, for she seldom went on foot beyond the trimly swept gravel walks. I remember what a beautiful sylph she looked to me as the low November sun shone on her blonde hair, and she tripped along, teasing me with her usual light banter, to which I listened half fondly, half moodily; it was all the sign Bertha's mysterious inner self ever made to me. To-day, perhaps the

moodiness predominated; for I had not yet shaken off the access of jealous hate which my brother had raised in me by his parting patronage. Suddenly I interrupted and startled her by saying, almost fiercely, "Bertha, how can you love Alfred?"

She looked at me with surprise for a moment, but soon her light smile came again, and she answered sarcastically, "Why do you suppose I love him?"

"How can you ask that, Bertha?"

"What! your wisdom thinks I must love the man I'm going to marry? The most unpleasant thing in the world. I should quarrel with him; I should be jealous of him; our *menage* would be conducted in a very ill-bred manner. A little quiet contempt contributes greatly to the elegance of life."

"Bertha, that is not your real feeling Why do you delight in trying to deceive me by inventing such cynical speeches?"

"I need never take the trouble of invention in order to deceive you, my small Tasso"—(that was the mocking name she usually gave me). "The easiest way to deceive a poet is to tell him the truth."

She was testing the validity of her epigram in a daring way, and, for a moment, the shadow of my vision—the Bertha whose soul was no secret to me—passed between me and the radiant girl, the playful sylph whose feelings were a fascinating mystery. I suppose I must have shuddered,

or betrayed in some other way my momentary chill of horror.

"Tasso!" she said, seizing my wrist and peeping round into my face, "are you really beginning to discern what a heartless girl I am? Why, you are not half the poet I thought you were; you are actually capable of believing the truth about me."

The shadow passed from between us, and was no longer the object nearest to me. The girl whose light fingers grasped me, whose elfish, charming face looked into mine—who, I thought, was betraying an interest in my feelings that she would not have directly avowed—this warm-breathing presence again possessed my senses and imagination like a returning syren melody which had been overpowered for an instant by the roar of threatening waves. It was a moment as delicious to me as the waking up to a consciousness of youth after a dream of middle age. I forgot everything but my passion, and said with swimming eyes—

"Bertha, shall you love me when we are first married? I wouldn't mind if you really loved me only for a little while."

Her look of astonishment, as she loosed my hand and started away from me, recalled me to a sense of my strange, my criminal indiscretion.

"Forgive me," I said hurriedly, as soon as I could speak again; "I did not know what I was saying."

"Ah! Tasso's mad fit has come on, I see," she

answered quietly, for she had recovered herself sooner than I had. "Let him go home and keep his head cool. I must go in, for the sun is setting."

I left her—full of indignation against myself. I had let slip words which, if she reflected on them, might rouse in her a suspicion of my abnormal mental condition—a suspicion which of all things I dreaded. And, besides that, I was ashamed of the apparent baseness I had committed in uttering them to my brother's betrothed wife. I wandered home slowly, entering our park through a private gate instead of by the lodges. As I approached the house, I saw a man dashing off at full speed from the stable-yard across the park. Had any accident happened at home? No; perhaps it was only one of my father's peremptory business errands that require this headlong haste. Nevertheless, I quickened my pace without any distinct motive, and was soon at the house. I will not dwell on the scene I found there. My brother was dead—had been pitched from his horse, and killed on the spot by a concussion of the brain.

I went up to the room where he lay, and where my father was seated beside him with a look of rigid despair. I had shunned my father more than any one since our return home, for the radical antipathy between our natures made my insight into his inner self a constant affliction to me. But now, as I went up to him and

stood beside him in sad silence, I felt the presence of a new element that blended us as we had never been blent before. My father had been one of the most successful men in the money-getting world; he had had no sentimental sufferings, no illness. The heaviest trouble that had befallen him was the death of his first wife. But he married my mother soon after, and I remember he seemed exactly the same, to my keen, childish observation, the week after her death as before. But now, at last, a sorrow had come—the sorrow of old age, which suffers the more from the crushing of its pride and its hopes in proportion as the pride and the hope are narrow and prosaic. His son was to have been married soon—would probably have stood for the borough at the new election. That son's existence was the best motive that could be alleged for making new purchases of land every year to round off the estate. It is a dreary thing to live on, doing the same things year after year, without knowing why we do them. Perhaps the tragedy of disappointed youth and passion is less piteous than the tragedy of disappointed age and worldliness.

As I saw into the desolation of my father's heart, I felt a movement of deep pity toward him, which was the beginning of a new affection—an affection that grew and strengthened in spite of the strange bitterness with which he regarded me in the first month or two after my brother's death. If it had not been for the soft-

ening influence of my compassion for him—the first deep compassion I had ever felt—I should have been stung by the perception that my father transferred the inheritance of an eldest son to me with a mortified sense that fate had compelled him to the unwelcome course of caring for me as an important being. It was only in spite of himself that he began to think of me with anxious regard. There is hardly any neglected child for whom death has made vacant a more favoured place who will not understand what I mean.

Gradually, however, my new deference to his wishes, the effect of that patience which was born of pity for him, won upon his affection, and he began to please himself with the endeavour to make me fill my brother's place as fully as my feebler personality would admit. I saw that the prospect, which by and by presented itself, of my becoming Bertha's husband was welcome to him, and he even contemplated in my case what he had not intended in my brother's—that his son and daughter-in-law should make one household with him. My softened feeling toward my father made this the happiest time I had known since childhood—these last months in which I retained the delicious illusion of loving Bertha, of longing and doubting and hoping that she might love me. She behaved with a certain new consciousness and distance toward me after my brother's death; and I, too, was under a double con-

straint—that of delicacy toward my brother's memory, and of anxiety as to the impression my abrupt words had left on her mind. But the additional screen this mutual reserve erected between us only brought me more completely under her power: no matter how empty the adytum, so that the veil be thick enough. So absolute is our soul's need of something hidden and uncertain for the maintenance of that doubt and hope and effort which are the breath of its life, that if the whole future were laid bare to us beyond to-day, the interest of all mankind would be bent on the hours that lie between; we should pant after the uncertainties of our one morning and our one afternoon; we should rush fiercely to the Exchange for our last possibility of speculation, of success, of disappointment; we should have a glut of political prophets foretelling a crisis or a no-crisis within the only twenty-four hours left open to prophecy. Conceive the condition of the human mind if all propositions whatsoever were self-evident except one, which was to become self-evident at the close of a summer's day, but, in the meantime, might be the subject of question, of hypothesis, of debate. Art and philosophy, literature and science would fasten like bees on that one proposition which had the honey of probability in it, and they would be the more eager because their enjoyment would end with sunset. Our impulses, our spiritual activities, no more adjust themselves to the idea of their

future nullity than the beating of our heart, or the irritability of our muscles.

Bertha, the slim, fair-haired girl, whose present thoughts and emotions were an enigma to me amidst the fatiguing obviousness of the other minds around me, was as absorbing to me as a single unknown to-day—as a single hypothetic proposition to remain problematic till sunset; and all the cramped, hemmed-in belief and disbelief, trust and distrust, of my nature, welled out in this one narrow channel.

And she made me believe that she loved me. Without ever quitting her tone of *badinage* and playful superiority, she intoxicated me with the sense that I was necessary to her, that she was never at ease unless I was near her, submitting to her playful tyranny. It costs a woman so little effort to besot us in this way! A half-repressed word, a moment's unexpected silence, even an easy fit of petulance on our account, will serve us as *hashish* for a long while. Out of the subtlest web of scarcely perceptible signs, she set me weaving the fancy that she had always unconsciously loved me better than Alfred, but that, with the ignorant, flattered sensibility of a young girl, she had been imposed on by the charm that lay for her in the distinction of being admired and chosen by a man who made so brilliant a figure in the world as my brother. She satirised herself in a very graceful way for her vanity and ambition. What was it to me that I had the light of my wretched prevision on

the fact that now it was I who possessed at least all but the personal part of my brother's advantages? Our sweet illusions are half of them conscious illusions, like effects of colour that we know to be made up of tinsel, broken glass, and rags.

We were married eighteen months after Alfred's death, one cold, clear morning in April, when there came hail and sunshine both together; and Bertha, in her white silk and pale-green leaves, and the pale hues of her hair and face, looked like the spirit of the morning. My father was happier than he had thought of being again: my marriage, he felt sure, would complete the desirable modification of my character, and make me practical and worldly enough to take my place in society among sane men. For he delighted in Bertha's tact and acuteness, and felt sure she would be mistress of me, and make me what she chose: I was only twenty-one, and madly in love with her. Poor father! He kept that hope a little while after our first year of marriage, and it was not quite extinct when paralysis came and saved him from utter disappointment.

I shall hurry through the rest of my story, not dwelling so much as I have hitherto done on my inward experience. When people are well known to each other, they talk rather of what befalls them externally, leaving their feelings and sentiments to be inferred.

We lived in a round of visits for some time

after our return home, giving splendid dinner-parties, and making a sensation in our neighbourhood by the new lustre of our equipage, for my father had reserved this display of his increased wealth for the period of his son's marriage; and we gave our acquaintances liberal opportunity for remarking that it was a pity I made so poor a figure as an heir and a bridegroom. The nervous fatigue of this existence, the insincerities and platitudes which I had to live through twice over—through my inner and outward sense—would have been maddening to me if I had not had that sort of intoxicated callousness which came from the delights of a first passion. A bride and a bridegroom, surrounded by all the appliances of wealth, hurried through the day by the whirl of society, filling their solitary moments with hastily snatched caresses, are prepared for their future life together as the novice is prepared for the cloister—by experiencing its utmost contrast.

Through all these crowded excited months, Bertha's inward self remained shrouded from me, and I still read her thoughts only through the language of her lips and demeanour: I had still the human interest of wondering whether what I did and said pleased her, of longing to hear a word of affection, of giving a delicious exaggeration of meaning to her smile. But I was conscious of a growing difference in her manner toward me; sometimes strong enough to be called haughty coldness, cutting and chill-

ing me as the hail had done that came across the sunshine on our marriage morning; sometimes only perceptible in the dexterous avoidance of a *tête-à-tête* walk or dinner to which I had been looking forward. I had been deeply pained by this—had even felt a sort of crushing of the heart, from the sense that my brief day of happiness was near its setting; but still I remained dependent on Bertha, eager for the last rays of a bliss that would soon be gone forever, hoping and watching for some afterglow more beautiful from the impending night.

I remember—how should I not remember?—the time when that dependence and hope utterly left me; when the sadness I had felt in Bertha's growing estrangement became a joy that I looked back upon with longing, as a man might look back on the last pains in a paralyzed limb. It was just after the close of my father's last illness, which had necessarily withdrawn us from society, and thrown us more upon each other. It was the evening of my father's death. On that evening, the veil which had shrouded Bertha's soul from me—had made me find in her alone among my fellow-beings the blessed possibility of mystery, and doubt, and expectation—was first withdrawn. Perhaps it was the first day, since the beginning of my passion for her, in which that passion was completely neutralised by the presence of an absorbing feeling of another kind. I had been watching by my father's deathbed: I had been witnessing the

last fitful, yearning glance his soul had cast back on the spent inheritance of life—the last faint consciousness of love he had gathered from the pressure of my hand. What are all our personal loves when we have been sharing in that supreme agony? In the first moments when we come away from the presence of death, every other relation to the living is merged, to our feeling, in the great relation of a common nature and a common destiny.

In that state of mind, I joined Bertha in her private sitting-room. She was seated in a leaning posture on a settee, with her back toward the door; the great, rich coils of her pale blonde hair surmounting her small neck, visible above the back of the settee. I remember, as I closed the door behind me, a cold tremulousness seizing me, and a vague sense of being hated and lonely—vague and strong, like a presentiment. I know how I looked at that moment, for I saw myself in Bertha's thought as she lifted her cutting gray eyes and looked at me: a miserable ghost-seer, surrounded by phantoms in the noonday, trembling under a breeze when the leaves were still, without appetite for the common objects of human desire, but pining after the moonbeams. We were front to front with each other, and judged each other. The terrible moment of complete illumination had come to me, and I saw that the darkness had hidden no landscape from me, but only a blank, prosaic wall: from that evening forth, through

the sickening years which followed, I saw all round the narrow room of this woman's soul—saw petty artifice and mere negation where I had delighted to believe in coy sensibilities and in wit at war with latent feeling—saw the light, floating vanities of the girl defining themselves into the systematic coquetry, the scheming selfishness, of the woman—saw repulsion and antipathy harden into cruel hatred, giving pain only for the sake of wreaking itself.

For Bertha, too, after her kind, felt the bitterness of disillusion. She had believed that my mild poet's passion for her would make me her slave; and that, being her slave, I should execute her will in all things. With the essential shallowness of a negative, unimaginative nature, she was unable to conceive the fact that sensibilities were anything else than weaknesses. She had thought my weaknesses would put me in her power, and she found them unmanageable forces. Our positions were reversed. Before marriage, she had completely mastered my imagination, for she was a secret to me; and I created the unknown thought before which I trembled as if it were hers. But, now that her soul was laid open to me, now that I was compelled to share the privacy of her motives, to follow all the petty devices that preceded her words and acts, she found herself powerless with me, except to produce in me the chill shudder of repulsion—powerless because I could be acted on by no lever within her reach. I was dead to

worldly ambitions, to social vanities, to all the incentives within the compass of her narrow imagination, and I lived under influences utterly invisible to her.

She was really pitiable to have such a husband, and so all the world thought. A graceful, brilliant woman, like Bertha, who smiled on morning callers, made a figure in ball-rooms, and was capable of that light repartee which, from such a woman, is accepted as wit, was secure of carrying off all sympathy from a husband who was sickly, abstracted, and, as some suspected, crack-brained. Even the servants in our house gave her the balance of their regard and pity. For there were no audible quarrels between us; our alienation, our repulsion from each other, lay within the silence of our own hearts; and, if the mistress went out a great deal, and seemed to dislike the master's society, was it not natural, poor thing? The master was odd. I was kind and just to my dependents, but I excited in them a shrinking, half-contemptuous pity; for this class of men and women are but slightly determined in their estimate of others by general considerations, or even experience, of character. They judge of persons as they judge of coins, and value those who pass current at a high rate.

After a time, I interfered so little with Bertha's habits that it might seem wonderful how her hatred toward me could grow so intense and active as it did. But she had begun to suspect,

by some involuntary betrayals of mine, that there was an abnormal power of penetration in me—that fitfully, at least, I was strangely cognisant of her thoughts and intentions, and she began to be haunted by a terror of me which alternated every now and then with defiance. She meditated continually how the incubus could be shaken off her life—how she could be freed from this hateful bond to a being whom she at once despised as an imbecile and dreaded as an inquisitor. For a long while she lived in the hope that my evident wretchedness would drive me to the commission of suicide; but suicide was not in my nature. I was too completely swayed by the sense that I was in the grasp of unknown forces to believe in my power of self-release. Toward my own destiny I had become entirely passive; for my one ardent desire had spent itself, and impulse no longer predominated over knowledge. For this reason, I never thought of taking any steps toward a complete separation, which would have made our alienation evident to the world. Why should I rush for help to a new course, when I was only suffering from the consequences of a deed which had been the act of my intensest will? That would have been the logic of one who had desires to gratify, and I had no desires. But Bertha and I lived more and more aloof from each other. The rich find it easy to live married and apart.

That course of our life which I have indi-

cated in a few sentences filled the space of years. So much misery—so slow and hideous a growth of hatred and sin, may be compressed into a sentence! And men judge of each other's lives through this summary medium. They epitomise the experience of their fellow-mortal, and pronounce judgment on him in neat syntax, and feel themselves wise and virtuous—conquerors over the temptations they define in well-selected predicates. Seven years of wretchedness glide glibly over the lips of the man who has never counted them out in moments of chill disappointment, of head and heart throbbings, of dread and vain wrestling, of remorse and despair. We learn *words* by rote, but not their meaning; *that* must be paid for with our life-blood, and printed in the subtle fibres of our nerves.

But I will hasten to finish my story. Brevity is justified at once to those who readily understand and to those who will never understand.

Some years after my father's death, I was sitting by the dim firelight in my library one January evening—sitting in the leathern chair that used to be my father's—when Bertha appeared at the door, with a candle in her hand, and advanced toward me. I knew the ball-dress she had on—the white ball-dress, with the green jewels, shone upon by the light of the wax candle which lit up the medallion of the dying Cleopatra on the mantelpiece. Why did she come to me before going out? I had not seen her in

the library, which was my habitual place, for months. Why did she stand before me with the candle in her hand, with her cruel, contemptuous eyes fixed on me, and the glittering serpent, like a familiar demon, on her breast. For a moment, I thought this fulfilment of my vision at Vienna marked some dreadful crisis in my fate, but I saw nothing in Bertha's mind, as she stood before me, except scorn for the look of overwhelming misery with which I sat before her. "Fool, idiot, why don't you kill yourself, then?"—that was her thought. But at length her thoughts reverted to her errand, and she spoke aloud. The apparently indifferent nature of the errand seemed to make a ridiculous anticlimax to my prevision and my agitation.

"I have to hire a new maid. Fletcher is going to be married, and she wants me to ask you to let her husband have the public-house and farm at Molton. I wish him to have it. You must give the promise now, because Fletcher is going to-morrow morning—and quickly, because I'm in a hurry."

"Very well; you may promise her," I said indifferently, and Bertha swept out of the library again.

I always shrank from the sight of a new person, and all the more when it was a person whose mental life was likely to weary my reluctant insight with worldly, ignorant trivialities. But I shrank especially from the sight of this new

maid, because her advent had been announced to me at a moment to which I could not cease to attach some fatality: I had a vague dread that I should find her mixed up with the dreary drama of my life—that some new sickening vision would reveal her to me as an evil genius. When at last I did unavoidably meet her, the vague dread was changed into definite disgust. She was a tall, wiry, dark-eyed woman, this Mrs. Archer, with a face handsome enough to give her coarse, hard nature the odious finish of bold, self-confident coquetry. That was enough to make me avoid her, quite apart from the contemptuous feeling with which she contemplated me. I seldom saw her; but I perceived that she rapidly became a favourite with her mistress, and, after the lapse of eight or nine months, I began to be aware that there had arisen in Bertha's mind toward this woman a mingled feeling of fear and dependence, and that this feeling was associated with ill-defined images of candle-light scenes in her dressing-room, and the locking-up of something in Bertha's cabinet. My interviews with my wife had become so brief and so rarely solitary that I had no opportunity of perceiving these images in her mind with more definiteness. The recollections of the past become contracted in the rapidity of thought till they sometimes bear hardly a more distinct resemblance to the external reality than the forms of an oriental alphabet to the objects that suggested them.

Besides, for the last year or more, a modification had been going forward in my mental condition, and was growing more and more marked. My insight into the minds of those around me was becoming dimmer and more fitful, and the ideas that crowded my double consciousness became less and less dependent on any personal contact. All that was personal in me seemed to be suffering a gradual death, so that I was losing the organ through which the personal agitations and projects of others could affect me. But, along with this relief from wearisome insight, there was a new development of what I concluded—as I have since found rightly—to be a prevision of external scenes. It was as if the relation between me and my fellow-men was more and more deadened, and my relation to what we call the inanimate was quickened into new life. The more I lived apart from society, and in proportion as my wretchedness subsided from the violent throb of agonised passion into the dulness of habitual pain, the more frequent and vivid became such visions as that I had had of Prague—of strange cities, of sandy plains, of gigantic ruins, of midnight skies with strange, bright constellations, of mountain passes, of grassy nooks flecked with the afternoon sunshine through the boughs: I was in the midst of such scenes, and, in all of them, one presence seemed to weigh on me in all these mighty shapes—the presence of something unknown and pitiless. For continual suffering

had annihilated religious faith within me: to the utterly miserable—the unloving and the unloved—there is no religion possible; no worship but a worship of devils. And beyond all these, and continually recurring, was the vision of my death—the pangs, the suffocation, the last struggle, when life would be grasped at in vain.

Things were in this state near the end of the seventh year. I had become entirely free from insight, from my abnormal cognisance of any other consciousness than my own, and, instead of intruding involuntarily into the world of other minds, was living continually in my own solitary future. Bertha was aware that I was greatly changed. To my surprise, she had of late seemed to seek opportunities of remaining in my society, and had cultivated that kind of distant yet familiar talk which is customary between a husband and wife who live in polite and irrevocable alienation. I bore this with languid submission, and without feeling enough interest in her motives to be roused into keen observation; yet I could not help perceiving something triumphant and excited in her carriage and the expression of her face—something too subtle to express itself in words or tones, but giving one the idea that she lived in a state of expectation or hopeful suspense. My chief feeling was satisfaction that her inner self was once more shut out from me; and I almost revelled for the moment in the absent melancholy

that made me answer her at cross-purposes, and betray utter ignorance of what she had been saying. I remember well the look and the smile with which she one day said, after a mistake of this kind on my part, "I used to think you were a clairvoyant, and that was the reason why you were so bitter against other clairvoyants, wanting to keep your monopoly; but I see now you have become rather duller than the rest of the world."

I said nothing in reply. It occurred to me that her recent obtrusion of herself upon me might have been prompted by the wish to test my power of detecting some of her secrets; but I let the thought drop again at once; her motives and her deeds had no interest for me, and whatever pleasures she might be seeking, I had no wish to balk her. There was still pity in my soul for every living thing, and Bertha was living—was surrounded with possibilities of misery.

Just at this time, there occurred an event which roused me somewhat from my inertia, and gave me an interest in the passing moment that I had thought impossible for me. It was a visit from Charles Meunier, who had written me word that he was coming to England for relaxation from too strenuous labour, and would like to see me. Meunier had now a European reputation; but his letter to me expressed that keen remembrance of an early regard, an early debt of sympathy, which is inseparable from nobility of character; and I, too, felt as if his

presence would be to me like a transient resurrection into a happier preëxistence.

He came, and, as far as possible, I renewed our old pleasure of making *tête-à-tête* excursions though, instead of mountains and glaciers and the wide blue lake, we had to content ourselves with mere slopes and ponds and artificial plantations. The years had changed us both, but with what different result! Meunier was now a brilliant figure in society to whom elegant women pretended to listen, and whose acquaintance was boasted of by noblemen ambitious of brains. He repressed with the utmost delicacy all betrayal of the shock which I am sure he must have received from our meeting, or of a desire to penetrate into my condition and circumstances, and sought, by the utmost exertion of his charming social powers, to make our reunion agreeable. Bertha was much struck by the unexpected fascinations of a visitor whom she had expected to find presentable only on the score of his celebrity, and put forth all her coquetries and accomplishments. Apparently, she succeeded in attracting his admiration, for his manner toward her was attentive and flattering. The effect of his presence on me was so benignant, especially in those renewals of our old *tête-à-tête* wanderings when he poured forth to me wonderful narratives of his professional experience, that more than once, when his talk turned on the psychological relations of disease, the thought crossed my mind that, if his stay

with me were long enough, I might possibly bring myself to tell this man the secrets of my lot. Might there not lie some remedy for *me*, too, in his science?

Might there not at least lie some comprehension and sympathy ready for me in his large and susceptible mind? But the thought only flickered feebly now and then; and died out before it could become a wish. The horror I had of again breaking in on the privacy of another soul made me, by an irrational instinct, draw the shroud of concealment more closely around my own, as we automatically perform the gesture we feel to be wanting in another.

When Meunier's visit was approaching its conclusion, there happened an event which caused some excitement in our household, owing to the surprisingly strong effect it appeared to produce on Bertha—on Bertha, the self-possessed, who usually seemed inaccessible to feminine agitations, and did even her hating in a self-restrained, hygienic manner. This event was the sudden severe illness of her maid, Mrs. Archer. I have reserved to this moment the mention of a circumstance which had forced itself on my notice shortly before Meunier's arrival; namely, that there had been some quarrel between Bertha and this maid, apparently during a visit to a distant family, on which she had accompanied her mistress. I had overheard Archer speaking in a tone of bitter insolence which I should have thought an adequate

reason for immediate dismissal. No dismissal followed; on the contrary, Bertha seemed to be silently putting up with personal inconveniences from the exhibitions of this woman's temper. I was the more astonished to observe that her illness seemed a cause of strong solicitude to Bertha; that she was at the bedside night and day, and would allow no one else to officiate as head nurse. It happened that our family doctor was out on a holiday, an accident which made Meunier's presence in the house doubly welcome; and he apparently entered into the case with an interest which seemed so much stronger than the ordinary professional feeling, that one day, when he had fallen into a long fit of silence after visiting her, I said to him:

"Is this a very peculiar case of disease, Meunier?"

"No," he answered; "it is an attack of peritonitis, which will be fatal, but which does not differ physically from many other cases that have come under my observation. But I'll tell you what I have on my mind. I want to make an experiment on this woman, if you will give me permission. It can do her no harm—will give her no pain—for I shall not make it until life is extinct to all purposes of sensation. I want to try the effect of transfusing blood into her arteries after the heart has ceased to beat for some minutes. I have tried the experiment again and again—with animals that have

died of this disease—with astounding results, and I want to try it on a human subject. I have the small tubes necessary, in a case I have with me, and the rest of the apparatus could be prepared readily. I should use my own blood—take it from my own arm. This woman won't live through the night, I'm convinced, and I want you to promise me your assistance in making the experiment. I can't do without another hand, but it would perhaps not be well to call in a medical assistant from among your provincial doctors. A disagreeable foolish version of the thing might get abroad."

"Have you spoken to my wife on the subject?" I said, "because she appears to be peculiarly sensitive about this woman: she has been a favourite maid."

"To tell you the truth," said Meunier, "I don't want her to know about it. There are always insuperable difficulties with women in these matters, and the effect on the supposed dead body may be startling. You and I will sit up together, and be in readiness. When certain symptoms appear I shall take you in, and, at the right moment, we must manage to get every one else out of the room."

I need not give our further conversation on the subject. He entered very fully into the details, and overcame my repulsion from them by exciting in me a mingled awe and curiosity concerning the possible results of his experiment.

We prepared everything, and he instructed me in my part as assistant. He had not told Bertha of his absolute conviction that Archer would not survive through the night, and endeavoured to persuade her to leave the patient and take a night's rest. But she was obstinate, suspecting the fact that death was at hand, and supposing that he wished merely to save her nerves. She refused to leave the sick-room. Meunier and I sat up together in the library, he making frequent visits to the sick-room, and returning with the information that the case was taking precisely the course he expected. Once he said to me, "Can you imagine any cause of ill-feeling this woman has against her mistress, who is so devoted to her?"

"I think there was some misunderstanding between them before her illness. Why do you ask?"

"Because I have observed for the last five or six hours—since, I fancy, she has lost all hope of recovery—there seems a strange prompting in her to say something which pain and failing strength forbid her to utter; and there is a look of hideous meaning in her eyes, which she turns continually toward her mistress. In this disease, the mind often remains singularly clear to the last."

"I am not surprised at an indication of malevolent feeling in her," I said. "She is a woman who has always inspired me with distrust and dislike, but she managed to insinuate herself

into her mistress's favour." He was silent after this, looking at the fire with an air of absorption, till he went upstairs again. He stayed away longer than usual, and, on returning, said to me quietly, "Come now."

I followed him to the chamber where death was hovering. The dark hangings of the large bed made a background that gave a strong relief to Bertha's pale face as I entered. She started forward as she saw me enter, and then looked at Meunier with an expression of angry inquiry; but he lifted up his hand as if to impose silence, while he fixed his glance on the dying woman, and felt her pulse. The face was pinched and ghastly, a cold perspiration was on the forehead, and the eyelids were lowered so as almost to conceal the large, dark eyes. After a minute or two, Meunier walked round to the other side of the bed where Bertha stood, and, with his usual air of gentle politeness toward her, begged her to leave the patient under our care—everything should be done for her—she was no longer in a state to be conscious of an affectionate presence. Bertha was hesitating, apparently almost willing to believe his assurance and to comply. She looked round at the ghastly dying face, as if to read the confirmation of that assurance, when for a moment the lowered eyelids were raised again, and it seemed as if the eyes were looking toward Bertha, but blankly. A shudder passed through Bertha's frame, and she returned to her station near the

pillow, tacitly implying that she would not leave the room.

The eyelids were lifted no more. Once I looked at Bertha as she watched the face of the dying one. She wore a rich *peignoir*, and her blonde hair was half covered by a lace cap: in her attire she was, as always, an elegant woman, fit to figure in a picture of modern aristocratic life: but I asked myself how that face of hers could ever have seemed to me the face of a woman born of woman, with memories of childhood, capable of pain, needing to be fondled? The features at that moment seemed so preternaturally sharp, the eyes were so hard and eager —she looked like a cruel immortal, finding her spiritual feast in the agonies of a dying race. For, across those hard features, there came something like a flash when the last hour had been breathed out, and we all felt that the dark veil had completely fallen. What secret was there between Bertha and this woman? I turned my eyes from her with a horrible dread lest my insight should return, and I should be obliged to see what had been breeding about two unloving women's hearts. I felt that Bertha had been watching for the moment of death as the sealing of her secret: I thanked Heaven it could remain sealed for me.

Meunier said quietly, "She is gone." He then gave his arm to Bertha, and she submitted to be led out of the room.

I suppose it was at her order that two female

attendants came into the room, and dismissed the younger one who had been present before. When they entered, Meunier had already opened the artery in the long, thin neck that lay rigid on the pillow, and I dismissed them, ordering them to remain at a distance till we rang: the doctor, I said, had an operation to perform—he was not sure about the death. For the next twenty minutes, I forgot everything but Meunier and the experiment in which he was so absorbed that I think his senses would have been closed against all sounds or sights which had no relation to it. It was my task at first to keep up the artificial respiration in the body after the transfusion had been effected, but presently Meunier relieved me, and I could see the wondrous slow return of life; the breast began to heave, the inspirations became stronger, the eyelids quivered, and the soul seemed to have returned beneath them. The artificial respiration was withdrawn: still the breathing continued, and there was a movement of the lips.

Just then I heard the handle of the door moving: I suppose Bertha had heard from the women that they had been dismissed: probably a vague fear had arisen in her mind, for she entered with a look of alarm. She came to the foot of the bed, and gave a stifled cry.

The dead woman's eyes were wide open, and met hers in full recognition—the recognition of hate. With a sudden, strong effort, the hand that Bertha had thought forever still was

pointed toward her, and the haggard face moved. The gasping, eager voice said—

"You mean to poison your husband——the poison is in the black cabinet——I got it for you——you laughed at me, and told lies about me behind my back, to make me disgusting ——because you were jealous——are you sorry ——now?"

The lips continued to murmur, but the sounds were no longer distinct. Soon there was no sound—only a slight movement: the flame had leaped out, and was being extinguished the faster. The wretched woman's heart-strings had been set to hatred and vengeance; the spirit of life had swept the chords for an instant, and was gone again forever. Great God! Is this what it is to live again—to wake up with our unstilled thirst upon us, with our unuttered curses rising to our lips, with our muscles ready to act out their half-committed sins?

Bertha stood pale at the foot of the bed, quivering and helpless, despairing of devices, like a cunning animal whose hiding-places are surrounded by swift-advancing flame. Even Meunier looked paralysed; life for that moment ceased to be a scientific problem to him. As for me, this scene seemed of one texture with the rest of my existence: horror was my familiar, and this new revelation was only like an old pain recurring with new circumstances.

Since then, Bertha and I have lived apart—she in her own neighbourhood, the mistress of

half our wealth; I as a wanderer in foreign countries, until I came to this Devonshire nest to die. Bertha lives pitied and admired; for what had I against that charming woman, whom every one but myself could have been happy with? There had been no witness of the scene in the dying-room except Meunier; and, while Meunier lived, his lips were sealed by a promise to me.

Once or twice, weary of wandering, I rested in a favourite spot, and my heart went out toward the men and women and children whose faces were becoming familiar to me: but I was driven away again in terror at the approach of my old insight—driven away to live continually with the one Unknown Presence revealed and yet hidden by the moving curtain of the earth and sky. Till at last disease took hold of me, and forced me to rest here—forced me to live in dependence on my servants. And then the curse of insight—of my double consciousness—came again, and has never left me. I know all their narrow thoughts, their feeble regard, their half-wearied pity.

It is the twentieth of September, 1850. I know these figures I have just written as if they were a long-familiar inscription. I have seen them on this page in my desk unnumbered times, when the scene of my dying struggle has opened upon me.

THE COMET

BY

ÉMILE ERCKMANN AND ALEXANDRE CHATRIAN

LAST year, before the festivities of the carnival, the news reached Hunebourg that the world was coming to an end. The unpleasant information was first spread by Dr. Zacharias Piper, of Colmar. He had read it in the "Lame Messenger," in the "Perfect Christian," and in half a hundred other almanacs.

The doctor's calculations amounted to this: that on Shrove Tuesday a comet would descend from heaven; that it would have a tail consisting of boiling water, thirty-five millions of leagues in length, with which it would sweep the earth, causing the snow on the mountain-tops to be melted, the trees to be dried up, and the people to be consumed.

A worthy scholar of Paris, M. Popinot, it is true, affirmed a little later that, though the comet would undoubtedly come, its tail would be composed of such thin and harmless vapours that it would trouble no one; so that every one could go quietly about his business. For the truth of this assertion he made himself answerable, and, indeed, it calmed all fears. But, unfortunately, we have living at Hunebourg,

in the Three-Pots Lane, an old wool-spinner, named Maria Finck. She is a small, wrinkled, white-haired old woman, whom people consult in all the delicate affairs of life. She lives in a low room, the ceiling of which is hung with painted eggs, little chains of red, blue, and gilded nuts, and a thousand other curious things. She wears old-fashioned furbelows, and lives on buns—facts which give her a great reputation throughout the country.

Maria Finck, instead of approving the opinion of good, honest M. Popinot, took sides with Dr. Zacharias Piper, saying:

"Pray and repent of your sins; make your peace with Heaven. For the end is near; the end is near!"

At one end of her room you may see a picture of hell, whither people descend upon a road strewn with roses. Not one suspects the real direction of the road; but some go dancing and swinging a bottle, and others hold a ham or a string of sausages, while a fiddler, in beribboned hat, plays a tune to make the journey merrier. Some of these people are joyfully embracing, and all are carelessly approaching a flaming chimney, into which the foremost are already falling, with arms extended and legs in air.

Imagine the reflections of all reasonable beings on seeing this representation. Not one of us is so virtuous but he has a certain number of sins on his conscience, and no one can flatter himself that he will be placed immediately at

the right hand of the Lord. No, it would be very presumptuous to imagine that things will turn out like that; it would be a sign of very condemnable pride. So most people said, "We will have no carnival, but spend Shrove Tuesday in acts of contrition."

Never was the like seen before. The adjutant and the captain of the place, as well as the sergeants and corporals of the Third Company of the —th, in garrison at Hunebourg, were really in despair. All the preparations for the feast such as the great town-hall, that had been decorated with plants and with military trophies, the stage that had been raised for the orchestra, the beer, the Kirschwasser, the Bischoffs, which had been ordered for the refreshment hall—in a word, all the good things would be entirely lost, simply because the girls of the town would not hear of dancing.

"I am not wicked," said Sergeant Duchêne, "but if I had hold of that Dr. Zacharias Piper of yours, it would fare ill with him."

But the most disappointed mortals were Daniel Spitz, the secretary of the mayoralty, Jérôme Bertha, the post-master's son, the tax-collector Dujardin, and myself. We had travelled to Strasbourg a week before to get costumes. In order that nothing should be wanting, Uncle Toby had given me fifty francs out of his own pocket. I had chosen my get-up as Pierrot at Mlle. Dardenai's in the arcades. This costume consisted of a shirt with large folds and huge

sleeves. The latter were adorned with onion-shaped buttons as large as one's fist, and one could toss them from chin to thigh. One covered his head with a black cap, whitened his face with powder, and, provided one had a long nose, cheeks hollowed, and well-shaded eyes, it was admirable.

Dujardin, because of his large paunch, had chosen a Turk's costume embroidered at all the seams. Spitz had a Punch's coat made up of a thousand bits of red, green, and yellow, a hump in front, another behind, and a big policeman's hat, set well back on his head—you never saw anything handsomer. Jérôme Bertha was to be a savage, with parrot feathers. We were sure, first of all, that the girls would desert the soldiers for us, and, when one has gone to such expense, to see everything going to the deuce on account of an old fool like Dr. Zacharias Piper—why, it's enough to make one hate one's kind. But, then, what can you expect? People have always been the same, and the fools always have the best of it.

Shrove Tuesday came, with a sky full of snow. People gazed to the right, to the left, above, below—no comet! The girls looked confused, the boys ran to their cousins, aunts, or god-mothers, to all the houses: "Do you see now that old woman Finck is crazy," they cried, "and all your ideas about the comet mere folly? Do comets ever come in winter? Don't they always appear in vintage-time? Come,

come, we must decide something, and, the deuce there is still time enough!"

As for the sergeant and corporals, they went into the kitchens, exhorted the servants, and loaded them with reproaches, so that a few recovered their courage. Old men and women came to see the great hall of the mayoralty, and to admire the suns between the windows, made of sabres and daggers, and little tri-coloured flags. There came a change. All remembered that it was Shrove Tuesday. The young girls hastened to get their frocks out of their wardrobes, and waxed their little shoes. At ten o'clock, the great town-hall was thronged. We had won the battle, and not a young girl in all the town was missing at that roll-call. The clarionets, the trombones, and the big drum resounded, the high windows shone out into the night, the waltzers spun round like mad, and the country dances went on merrily. The girls and boys were jubilant beyond words, and the old grandmothers sat comfortably near the stove, and laughed with all their hearts. They jostled each other in the refreshment hall; enough could hardly be provided, and Father Zimmer, who had been permitted to furnish all these good things, could boast of having made that night worth his while. Along the whole length of the outer staircase, you could see people who had partaken too freely of the liquid refreshments, and who now came stumbling out. Out-of-doors, the snow was falling steadily.

Uncle Toby had given me his latch-key, so that I might go home when I wished. I had not missed a single waltz up to two o'clock, but then I had enough. Besides, I was beginning to feel the effects of all the good beverages. Once out in the street, I felt better, and debated with myself whether I should go back, or home and to bed. I should have enjoyed another dance, but I was sleepy. So I decided to go home, and started for the Rue Saint Sylvestre. I helped myself along by the wall, turning over many matters in my mind.

I had been proceeding in this way for about ten minutes, and was about to turn the corner by the fountain, when, raising my nose by chance, I saw on the ramparts behind the trees a moon, red as coal, that was coming through the air. Though it was still millions of miles away, it was going so fast that it was bound to reach us within a quarter of an hour. The sight upset me utterly; the hair of my head stood on end, and I said to myself: "It's the comet! Zacharias Piper was right!" And, hardly knowing what I was about, I started back to the mayoralty at a run. I rushed up the staircase, overturned those who were coming down, and cried in a terrified voice: "The comet! The comet!"

The ball was just at its height. The big drum was thundering away, the boys were stamping their feet, kicking up their legs, when they turned—the girls were red as poppies.

But, when they heard the voice in the hall, "The comet! The comet!" a sudden silence invaded the place, and the people, looking about, saw each other pale, with drawn cheeks and sharp noses.

Sergeant Duchêne darted to the door, stopped me, and put his hand over my mouth, saying:

"Are you mad? Will you hold your tongue?" But I threw myself back, and continued to repeat in a voice of despair, "The comet!"

Footsteps were already thumping down the stairs; people rushed out; the women groaned; the tumult was frightful. Some old women, put off their guard by Shrove Tuesday, raised their hands to Heaven, and stammered out, "Jesus, Maria, Joseph!"

In a few seconds the hall was empty. Duchêne left me leaning quite exhausted against a window-sill. I looked out at the people running up the street, and I was nearly crazy with fright. Passing through the refreshment room, I saw the sutler, Catherine Lagoutte, and Corporal Bouquet finishing off the last of a bowl of punch.

"Since all is to end," they said, "let it end well!" Below on the staircase many sat and confessed to each other. One said, "I have practised usury!" Another, "I have used false weights!" Another, "I have cheated at cards!" They all talked at once, except now and then when they stopped short, and cried out together, "Lord, have mercy on us!" I recognised Fèvre, the old baker, and Mme. Lauritz. They

were beating their breasts like miserable sinners. But these things did not interest me, who had sins of my own to account for.

Soon I reached some who were running toward the fountain. You should have heard their groans. All recognised the comet, and I saw that it had doubled in size.

The crowd stood in the dark, and wailed:

"It is all over! Oh, Lord, it is all over, and we are lost!"

And the women invoked St. Joseph, and St. Christopher, and St. Nicholas—in short, all the saints in the calendar.

At this moment, I passed in review all the sins I had committed since coming to years of discretion, and I felt horrified at myself. I grew cold under my tongue, thinking that we were all going to be burned up, and, as the old beggar Balthazar was standing near me, leaning on his crutch, I embraced him, saying,

"Balthazar, when you rest in Abraham's bosom, you will take pity on me, won't you?"

Then he replied, sobbing:

"I am a great sinner, Monsieur Christian. These thirty years I have deceived the community from my love of idleness; for I am not nearly so lame as I seem."

"And I, Balthazar," lamented I, "I am the greatest sinner in Hunebourg!"

We wept on each other's necks.

You see, that is how people will be at the judgment; kings with boot-blacks, good citizens

with barefoot ragamuffins. They will no longer be ashamed of one another, but call one another brothers; and, because fire purifies everything, the newly shaven will not shrink from embracing the stubble-bearded, for the fear of being burned makes your heart tender. Oh, if there were no hell, we should not see so many good Christians! That is the best part of our holy religion.

At last, when we had all been on our knees for a quarter of an hour, Sergeant Duchêne arrived all out of breath. He had run first to the arsenal, and, seeing nothing there, had come back by the Rue des Capucins.

"Well," said he, "what have you been making such a fuss about?" Then, perceiving the comet: "The devil! What is that?"

"It's the end of the world, sergeant," said Balthazar.

"The end of the world?"

"Yes; the comet!"

Then he began to swear like the devil, and exclaimed, "Now, if the adjutant were here, they might know the countersign!"

Then, all at once, drawing his sword and marching along the wall, he cried: "Forward! I don't care what it is! It must be investigated!"

Every one admired his courage, and, inspired by his example, I followed him. We went gently, ever so gently, staring at the comet, which became plainer every second, seemingly moving at the rate of thousands of miles an

hour. Finally, we came to the corner of the old Capuchin convent. The comet seemed to be rising; and the farther we advanced, the higher it rose. We had to raise our heads, so that, at last, Duchêne's neck was almost broken with gazing into the air. Twenty paces farther, I saw the comet, a little to one side. I questioned the prudence of advancing, when the sergeant stopped: "I'll be d——d," muttered he; "it's the reflector."

"The reflector," said I, coming up; "is it possible?" And I looked very much astonished.

It was really the old reflector of the Capuchin convent. Since the Capuchins had gone in 1798, it had never been lighted, and at Hunebourg every one went to bed with the chickens. But the nightwatchman, Burrhus, foreseeing that a good many people would be drunk that night, had charitably put a candle into it, to prevent them from rolling into the ditch that runs around the old cloister; and then he had gone home to the wife of his bosom.

We distinguished the parts of the lantern very well. The wick was as big as your thumb, and, when the wind blew a little, the wick would flare up and flash, and that is why it moved like a comet. Seeing this, I was going to call out to the others, when the sergeant said to me: "Will you be quiet! They would make fun of us, if they knew we had charged on a lantern. Attention!"

He unhooked the rusty chain, and, with a

tremendous crash, down came the reflector. Then we both ran away. The others waited a long time. But, finding the comet extinguished, they took heart, and went to bed.

Next day, the report spread that the prayers of Maria Finck had moved the comet to put itself out; so, since that day, she has been regarded as a holier saint than ever.

Such things happen occasionally in the good little town of Hunebourg.

THE GOOSEHERD

BY

HERMANN SUDERMANN

THE tendencies of the democratic temperament play unpleasant tricks on the intellect. Idealistic self-deception in regard to the inner life of men, assuming all to possess equal depth and delicacy of feeling—this, especially, sets at naught honest endeavour to see things as they really are. You may affirm that between the emotional attitudes of the various social classes toward life there is no profound difference. Life contradicts you with daily instances. Ah, if we were actually all alike in these fundamental respects, then would life have the fairness of a dream! All your ideals of equality and brotherhood—mere mental cobwebs to the confirmed aristocrat—would come true; nay, they would be true even now, for a little more or less of knowledge could hardly separate the natures of men by a distance so measureless.

But, as a fact, it is precisely this very real chasm between their modes of feeling which, more effectually than all differences of wealth, or rank, or knowledge, forever divides the cultured few from the masses. They pass through life side by side, yet with as little comprehension

of each other as though they inhabited different stars. And woe unto whoever seeks to span the abyss.

It is so easy to doubt this fact without having had a real, and perhaps bitter, experience of it. Let me relate the story of my first love. My first love! He was a gooseherd—a live gooseherd of flesh and blood. No, I am not jesting, for the sorrow that he caused me wrung bitter tears from me, although I was then long grown up—a highly respectable young lady.

It is true that, in the days when he first set my heart afire, I was still in that period of life when one's highest felicity consists in going barefoot. I was eight years old, he was ten; I was the little daughter of the manor-house, he was the blacksmith's son.

Of a morning, when with my mother and my grown brother I was taking coffee on the veranda, he would drive his geese past us, and then vanish in the direction of the heath. At first he merely stared at us in simple astonishment. It would never have occurred to him to lift his cap, had my brother not impressed it upon him that it was becoming to offer us a morning salutation. From that time on he waved his cap in a large semicircle, and cried out a mechanical "Good-morning to ye," which he seemed to have learned by rote.

Whenever my brother was in a good humour, I was permitted to bring the gooseherd a buttered bun, to show our appreciation of his

urbanity. He always tore the bun from my hand with a certain greedy fear, as if there were some danger of my retracting the gift.

I remember just how he looked. The picture is very clear to me. His straight, fair hair hung down over his sunburned cheeks like the edges of a straw roof, and from under it his blue eyes peeped out sly and merry at once. He had turned up his tattered trousers at the knee, and in his hand he held a slender willow switch, into the green rind of which he had skilfully cut a spiral succession of white rings.

My childish desire first fixed itself upon this switch. I thought it infinitely desirable to be able to hold in my hand this wondrous thing that was fashioned so differently from all my playthings. And when I went on to imagine what it would be to drive the geese with it, and to go barefoot, I had built up my perfect ideal of earthly bliss. It was this switch, too, that brought us nearer to each other. One morning when I was drinking my coffee, and saw him going by so merrily, I could restrain myself no longer. I took up the honey sandwich that I was to eat, slipped away, and ran after him.

When he saw me coming toward him, he stopped, and looked at me in astonishment. But when he saw the honey sandwich in my hand, his eyes gleamed with perfect comprehension.

"Will you give me your switch?" I asked.

"No; why?" he asked in his turn. He balanced himself on one leg, which he scratched with the other foot.

"Because I want it!" I answered defiantly, and then added in a milder tone, "You see, I'll give you my honey sandwich."

For a moment his eye was fixed covetously on the dainty, but at last he thought better of it. "No; I've got to drive the geese with it. But I'll make you another like it."

"Can you do that yourself?" I asked, full of admiration.

"Oh, that's nothing much," and he laughed contemptuously. "I can make flutes and dancing men."

I was so ravished by these accomplishments that I gave him the honey sandwich without more ado. He took a hearty bite from it, and, without considering me worthy of another glance, drove on his feathery folk.

With a heart full of envy, I looked after him. He could drive the geese, while I had to go up-stairs to Mademoiselle and memorise French words. How unevenly happiness is distributed in this world, I thought to myself. That evening, he brought me the promised switch, whose beauty surpassed the imaginings of my boldest dreams. It had not only the white rings of its prototype with which I had been so taken, but on its lower end there was a round knob, upon which, by means of two points, one vertical and one horizontal line, a human face

was delineated—whether mine or his I could not guess. But oh, I was happy!

From that time on we were friends. I shared with him all the dainty morsels that were my portion at home; he, in return, gave me the various works of art which his nimble fingers fashioned. There were flutes, and little boxes, houses, dolls' furniture, but, above all, those famous dancing men of his, with which I soon became a terror to every one in the house.

Our meetings took place every evening behind the goose-stall. There we exchanged our gifts. The whole day I lived in anticipation of this moment, and my thoughts were busy with my young hero. I saw him lying in the grass on the sunny heath, blowing his flute, while I was tortured with wretched French lessons, and ever stronger grew my yearning to partake of the bliss which consisted in watching geese. When I communicated my feelings to him, he laughed out loud and said:

"Why don't you come with me?"

That was decisive, and without taking further thought I answered, "I'll come to-morrow!"

"But don't forget to bring something to eat!" my friend admonished me.

All circumstances were favourable. Mademoiselle was afflicted with a nervous headache at the propitious moment, and postponed our lesson. I sat at the breakfast-table, feverish with joy and fear, and waited for him to pass

by. My pockets were stuffed with all manner of sweet things that I had begged from the housekeeper, and next to me lay the switch which should to-day be employed in the duties of its natural office. And then he came! He blinked slyly at me while he cried out his "Good morning to ye!" As soon as I could escape, without being noticed, I was after him.

"What have you brought with you?" was his first question.

"Two jam cakes, three sandwiches, a bun, and a gooseberry tart," I answered, as I revealed these good things. He immediately began to eat, while I, with scarcely suppressed cries of joy, proudly drove the geese before us. From the fir woods, whose borders I knew from my walks, we came into unfamiliar regions: dwarfed underbrush that formed an uncanny thicket on either side of the road arose, till suddenly the wide heath rolled out its endless expanse before me. Ah, how beautiful that was, how beautiful! Far as the eye could reach, a sea of grass and many-coloured flowers. The grassy mole-hills stretched along like frozen waves. The hot air quivered and danced over the airy heath. The bees hummed their music, and high in the dark-blue heaven stood the golden sun. At the edge of the wood lay a morass dotted with puddles of thick, grayish-yellow water that shimmered dimly. Weeds floated on it, and all around upon the earth, that was so moist that bubbles of water oozed from

the grass, were delicate traceries made by the feet of the geese, so that the ground was like a patterned carpet.

Here was the flock's paradise. Here we halted, and, while the geese wallowed comfortably in the puddles, we chased each other on the heath, caught yellow butterflies, and picked bilberries.

Then we played at being man and wife. "Elise," the gentlest of the geese, was our child. For hours we alternately caressed and whipped the poor bird, until at last its exertions succeeded, and it freed itself. Then I prepared a meal for my husband. I untied my white apron, spread it like a table-cloth on the grass, and arranged on it the remnants of our supplies. He sat down with dignity, and it made me half mad with delight to see with what rapidity he despatched one morsel after another.

As in a dream, the hours ran by. The sun rose higher and higher, until its glowing beams slanted no longer, but burned straight down upon us. My head felt confused, and a dull weariness overcame me. I also felt considerable hunger, because my "husband" had left nothing for me. My mouth was dry; my lips burned as if I had a fever. To cool them, I plucked moist grass and pressed it against my mouth.

All at once from far, far beyond the wood came the faint sound of bells. It was the dinner-hour at home, and I, too, was called to table by the ringing. And if I were missed—oh,

Lord, what would become of me! I threw myself on the grass, and sobbed bitterly, while my companion, trying to comfort me, passed his rough hands over my face and neck. Suddenly I jumped up, and ran, as if driven by furies, in the direction of the wood. Weeping, I wandered about in the thicket for perhaps two hours. Then I heard voices calling my name, and in a moment I was in my brother's arms.

Next morning, my poor friend appeared as seducer before the severe tribunal of his overlords. He took it as a matter of course that the punishment should fall on him, and made no effort to roll from his shoulders the full burden of guilt. With entire equanimity, he received the punishment that my brother applied. Then, with a wistful smile, he rubbed his aching back against a post on the veranda, and hurried away. Sobbing aloud, I threw myself on the ground.

From that day forth, I loved him. I invented a thousand means by which to hold my secret meetings with him; I was as greedy as a magpie, that he might refresh himself with the results of my thieving. I smothered him with caresses, to make up for the blows of that terrible horsewhip. He accepted my love calmly, and showed his gratitude by a touching faithfulness and a healthy appetite.

Six months later, fate separated us.

My poor mother, who had long been ill, was

advised by her physicians to go south. She placed her affairs entirely in my brother's hands, and went to the Riviera, whither I accompanied her.

. . . . . .

Nine years passed before I saw my home again. The return was sadder than I had ever thought possible. In Berlin, where I had lived since my mother's death, a stubborn brain fever had attacked me, and kept me on my sickbed for many weeks. Although the skill of my physician had kept death from me, I had, from a blooming young girl, become a frail and pallid shadow. I was told to seek strength in country air and amid the firs; and so I was put into the train and transported to my brother's estate. I must have been a pitiful sight enough, for when I was lifted from the carriage I saw bright tears in the eyes of our old tenants.

It is a strange feeling to be at home once more after long wanderings, and all the stranger if one has suffered much out in the world. An exquisite balm comes over the soul. We try to efface all traces left by the joys or sorrows that the world has offered us. We strive to become children once more, and to conjure from its grave the magic of perished days. Sitting in my arm-chair, and letting my tired eyes rest upon the familiar fields, one shadow after another seemed to come to life again, but first amid that motley crowd stood—my dear, sunny-haired gooseherd.

"What has become of him?" I asked my brother, and received the pleasant answer that he had grown up to be a handsome, busy young fellow, well fitted to take the place of his old father, the smith.

I felt my heart beat quickly. I tried to be angry at my own folly, but without success. The dear old memories would not be quieted. So at last I submitted to their sway, and pictured our first meeting to myself with all the magic of an old romance.

A few days after my arrival, I was permitted to drive out for the first time. I was then lifted from my carriage, and put down out in the wood, in a quiet place on the soft moss. I had chosen the spot with care, for from it one could see the smithy where the playmate of my youth lived. My brother wished to remain with me, but I begged him not to put himself out, for the little servant girl who accompanied me would be protection enough from any annoyances. And who, indeed, was to molest me in the peaceful woods of my home?

So my brother drove away, promising to come for me within two hours. Then I sent my little maid away, too. She was to pick wild strawberries, but to remain near by. She ran off in high glee.

I was alone, thank Heaven! Now I could dream to my heart's content. The fir-trees murmured over my head, and from the smithy rung the resonant strokes of the hammer.

The fire glowed in the forge, and from time to time a dark figure glided before it. It must be he. I did not weary of following the movements of his arms. I admired his strength, but trembled for him when the red iron-shavings flew about him.

The time sped on. In the midst of my dreamy observations I was aroused by my brother. He had come to take me home.

"Well, are you tired of waiting?" he asked kindly.

Smiling, I shook my head, and tried to rise a little, but sank back again.

"Hm, hm," he said thoughtfully; "I left the coachman at home, because I thought that I should be able to lift you into the carriage alone. But the seat is high, and I can hardly get you there without hurting you. You, Grete," and he turned to the little girl, who had promptly put in an appearance at the sound of the carriage, "run over to the smith —the young one; you know him—and tell him to come and help me."

He threw a copper coin on the ground, which the little one picked up joyfully before she ran away.

I felt the hot blood rising to my cheeks. I was to see him again—at this very moment—and he was to be my good Samaritan. I pressed my hand to my throbbing heart, and waited until—until——

Yes, there he was! How strong and hand-

some he had grown to be! His thick, fair hair blew about his smoke-stained face, and on his strong chin grew a silky young beard. Thus the young Siegfried must have looked when he was apprenticed to the evil Mime. Awkwardly he grasped his little cap which sat pertly on the back of his head. But with a smile I offered him my hand, and asked, "How are you?"

"How should I be? Well!" he answered with an embarrassed laugh, and carefully wiped his blackened hand on his leather apron before taking mine.

"Help me lift the young lady into the carriage," said my brother.

He wiped his hands again, and seized me, not very gently, under my arms. My brother lifted my feet, and in a moment I lay upon the cushions of the carriage.

"Thank you; thank you," I said, and nodded to him with a smile.

He remained standing by the carriage, and kept turning his cap in his hands, quite embarrassed. With uncertain looks he gazed, now at me, now at my brother.

There is something in him striving for utterance, I said to myself. Why, indeed, should it not be so? At the sight of me, all his old memories have awakened. He would speak with me of those happy times when, in the innocence of our childhood, we drove the geese together. Ah, he dares not speak! The presence of his

master weighs on him — I must help him a little.

"Well, what are you thinking of?" I asked, and looked kindly and encouragingly into his eyes.

My brother, who had been busy with the horses, turned round, and scanned the smith's face.

"To be sure, you want something for your trouble!" he said, and put his hand into his pocket.

I felt as if I had been struck across the face with a whip. "For Heaven's sake, Max!" I stammered, while I felt myself growing hot and cold by turns.

My brother did not hear me, and handed him—yes, he dared to do it—a silver Mark.

I seemed to see the friend of my youth hurl back the coin. I gathered all my strength to rise, to stretch out my hands, to prevent the misfortune from happening. But — what was that? No—impossible—and yet I saw it with my own eyes: he took the coin—he said "Thank you"—he nodded—he turned on his heel—he went——

And I? I stared after him as if he had been a vile spectre. Wearily sighing, I sank back into the cushions.

And thus I said farewell to the dream of my youth.