LITTLE MASTER PIECES

FICTION

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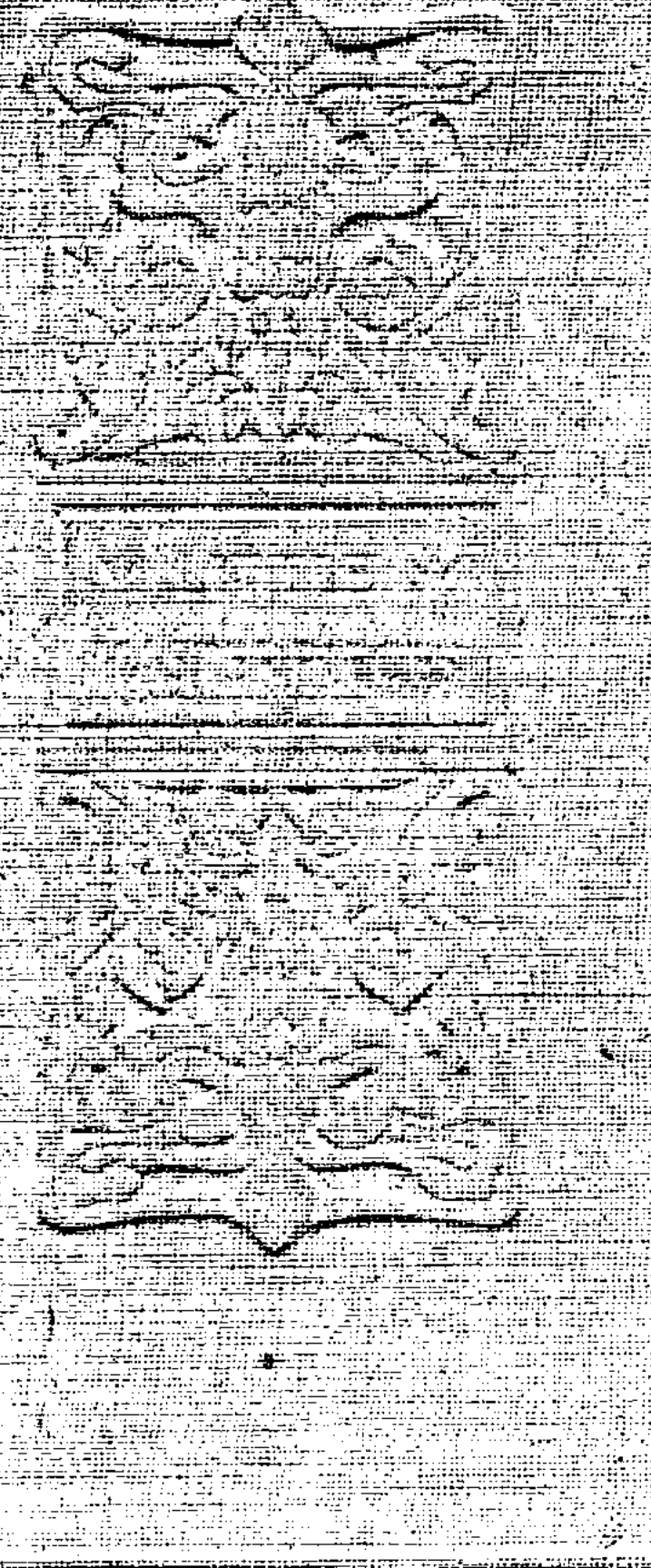

Library of
Little Masterpieces


Rudyard Kipling

Library of

Little Masterpieces

In Forty-four Volumes

FICTION

Edited by

HAMILTON W. MABIE

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Little Masterpieces

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING*

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

THE Law, as quoted, lays down a fair conduct of life, and one not easy to follow. I have been fellow to a beggar again and again under circumstances which prevented either of us finding out whether the other was worthy. I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King and was promised the reversion of a Kingdom — army, law-courts, revenue and policy all complete. But, to-day, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go and hunt it for myself.

The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir. There had been a deficit in the Budget, which necessitated travelling, not Second-class, which is only half as dear as First-class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population are either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty; or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronise refreshment rooms. They carry their

food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweetmeat-sellers, and drink the road-side water. That is why in the hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon.

My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt-sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for whisky. He told tales of things he had seen and done, of out-of-the-way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food. "If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying—it's seven hundred million," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to agree with him. We talked politics—the politics of Loaferdom that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off—and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning-off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. My friend had no money beyond eight annas which he wanted for dinner, and I had no money

at all, owing to the hitch in the Budget before mentioned. Further, I was going into a wilderness where, though I should resume touch with the Treasury, there were no telegraph offices. I was, therefore, unable to help him in any way.

"We might threaten a Station-master, and make him send a wire on tick," said my friend, "but that'd mean inquiries for you and for me, and I've got my hands full these days. Did you say you are travelling back along this line within any days?"

"Within ten," I said.

"Can't you make it eight?" said he. "Mine is rather urgent business."

"I can send your telegram within ten days if that will serve you," I said.

"I couldn't trust the wire to fetch him now I think of it. It's this way. He leaves Delhi on the 23d for Bombay. That means he'll be running through Ajmir about the night of the 23d."

"But I'm going into the Indian Desert," I explained.

"Well *and* good," said he. "You'll be changing at Marwar Junction to get into Jodhpore territory—you must do that—and he'll be coming through Marwar Junction in the early morning of the 24th by the Bombay Mail. Can you be at Marwar Junction on that time? 'Twon't be inconveniencing you because I know that there's precious few pickings to be

got out of these Central India States—even though you pretend to be correspondent of the *Backwoodsman.*"

"Have you ever tried that trick?" I asked.

"Again and again, but the Residents find you out, and then you get escorted to the Border before you've time to get your knife into them. But about my friend here. I *must* give him a word o' mouth to tell him what's come to me or else he won't know where to go. I would take it more than kind of you if you was to come out of Central India in time to catch him at Marwar Junction, and say to him—'He has gone South for the week.' He'll know what that means. He's a big man with a red beard, and a great swell he is. You'll find him sleeping like a gentleman with all his luggage round him in a second-class compartment. But don't you be afraid. Slip down the window, and say—'He has gone South for the week,' and he'll tumble. It's only cutting your time of stay in those parts by two days. I ask you as a stranger—going to the West," he said with emphasis.

"Where have *you* come from?" said I.

"From the East," said he, "and I am hoping that you will give him the message on the Square—for the sake of my Mother as well as your own."

Englishmen are not usually softened by appeals to the memory of their mothers, but for certain reasons, which will be fully apparent, I saw fit to agree.

"It's more than a little matter," said he, "and that's why I ask you to do it—and now I know that I can depend on you doing it. A second-class carriage at Marwar Junction, and a red-haired man asleep in it. You'll be sure to remember. I get out at the next station, and I must hold on there till he comes or sends me what I want."

"I'll give the message if I catch him," I said, "and for the sake of your Mother as well as mine I'll give you a word of advice. Don't try to run the Central India States just now as the correspondent of the *Backwoodsman*. There's a real one knocking about here, and it might lead to trouble."

"Thank you," said he simply, "and when will the swine be gone? I can't starve because he's ruining my work. I wanted to get hold of the Degumber Rajah down here about his father's widow, and give him a jump."

"What did he do to his father's widow, then?"

"Filled her up with red pepper and slippered her to death as she hung from a beam. I found that out myself and I'm the only man that would dare going into the State to get hush-money for it. They'll try to poison me, same as they did in Chortumna when I went on the loot there. But you'll give the man at Marwar Junction my message?"

He got out at a little roadside station, and I reflected. I had heard, more than once, of men personating correspondents of newspapers

and bleeding small Native States with threats of exposure, but I had never met any of the caste before. They lead a hard life, and generally die with great suddenness. The Native States have a wholesome horror of English newspapers, which may throw light on their peculiar methods of government, and do their best to choke correspondents with champagne, or drive them out of their mind with four-in-hand barouches. They do not understand that nobody cares a straw for the internal administration of Native States so long as oppression and crime are kept within decent limits, and the ruler is not drugged, drunk, or diseased from one end of the year to the other. Native States were created by Providence in order to supply picturesque scenery, tigers and tall-writing. They are the dark places of the earth, full of unimaginable cruelty, touching the Railway and the Telegraph on one side, and, on the other, the days of Harun-al-Raschid. When I left the train I did business with divers Kings, and in eight days passed through many changes of life. Sometimes I wore dress-clothes and consorted with Princes and Politicals, drinking from crystal and eating from silver. Sometimes I lay out upon the ground and devoured what I could get, from a plate made of a flapjack, and drank the running water, and slept under the same rug as my servant. It was all in a day's work.

Then I headed for the Great Indian Desert

upon the proper date, as I had promised, and the night Mail set me down at Marwar Junction, where a funny little, happy-go-lucky, native managed railway runs to Jodhpore. The Bombay Mail from Delhi makes a short halt at Marwar. She arrived as I got in, and I had just time to hurry to her platform and go down the carriages. There was only one second-class on the train. I slipped the window and looked down upon a flaming red beard, half covered by a railway rug. That was my man, fast asleep, and I dug him gently in the ribs. He woke with a grunt and I saw his face in the light of the lamps. It was a great and shining face.

"Tickets again?" said he.

"No," said I. "I am to tell you that he is gone South for the week. He is gone South for the week!"

The train had begun to move out. The red man rubbed his eyes. "He has gone South for the week," he repeated. "Now that's just like his impudence. Did he say that I was to give you anything? 'Cause I won't."

"He didn't," I said and dropped away, and watched the red lights die out in the dark. It was horribly cold because the wind was blowing off the sands. I climbed into my own train—not an Intermediate Carriage this time—and went to sleep.

If the man with the beard had given me a rupee I should have kept it as a memento of

a rather curious affair. But the consciousness of having done my duty was my only reward.

Later on I reflected that two gentlemen like my friends could not do any good if they foregathered and personated correspondents of newspapers, and might, if they "stuck up" one of the little rat-trap states of Central India or Southern Rajputana, get themselves into serious difficulties. I therefore took some trouble to describe them as accurately as I could remember to people who would be interested in deporting them; and succeeded, so I was later informed, in having them headed back from the Degumber borders.

Then I became respectable, and returned to an Office where there were no Kings and no incidents except the daily manufacture of a newspaper. A newspaper office seems to attract every conceivable sort of person, to the prejudice of discipline. Zenana-mission ladies arrive, and beg that the Editor will instantly abandon all his duties to describe a Christian prize-giving in a back-slum of a perfectly inaccessible village; Colonels who have been overpassed for commands sit down and sketch the outline of a series of ten, twelve, or twenty-four leading articles on Seniority *versus* Selection; missionaries wish to know why they have not been permitted to escape from their regular vehicles of abuse and swear at a brother-missionary under special patronage of the editorial We; stranded theatrical companies troop up to explain that they cannot

pay for their advertisements, but on their return from New Zealand or Tahiti will do so with interest; inventors of patent punkah-pulling machines, carriage couplings and unbreakable swords and axle-trees call with specifications in their pockets and hours at their disposal; tea-companies enter and elaborate their prospectuses with the office pens; secretaries of ball-committees clamour to have the glories of their last dance more fully expounded; strange ladies rustle in and say:—"I want a hundred lady's cards printed *at once*, please," which is manifestly part of an Editor's duty; and every dissolute ruffian that ever tramped the Grand Trunk Road makes it his business to ask for employment as a proof-reader. And, all the time, the telephone-bell is ringing madly, and Kings are being killed on the Continent, and Empires are saying, "You're another," and Mister Gladstone is calling down brimstone upon the British Dominions, and the little black copy-boys are whining, "*kaa-pi chayha-yeh*" (copy wanted) like tired bees, and most of the paper is as blank as Modred's shield.

But that is the amusing part of the year. There are other six months wherein none ever come to call, and the thermometer walks inch by inch up to the top of the glass, and the office is darkened to just above reading light, and the press machines are red-hot of touch, and nobody writes anything but accounts of amusements in the Hill-stations or obituary notices. Then the telephone becomes a tinkling terror, because it

tells you of the sudden deaths of men and women that you knew intimately, and the prickly-heat covers you as with a garment, and you sit down and write:—"A slight increase of sickness is reported from the Khuda Janta Khan district. The outbreak is purely sporadic in its nature, and, thanks to the energetic efforts of the District authorities, is now almost at an end. It is, however, with deep regret we record the death, etc."

Then the sickness really breaks out, and the less recording and reporting the better for the peace of the subscribers. But the Empires and the Kings continue to divert themselves as selfishly as before, and the foreman thinks that a daily paper really ought to come out once in twenty-four hours, and all the people at the Hill-stations in the middle of their amusements say:—"Good gracious! Why can't the paper be sparkling? I'm sure there's plenty going on up here."

That is the dark half of the moon, and, as the advertisements say, "must be experienced to be appreciated."

It was in that season, and a remarkably evil season, that the paper began running the last issue of the week on Saturday night, which is to say Sunday morning, after the custom of a London paper. This was a great convenience, for immediately after the paper was put to bed, the dawn would lower the thermometer from 96° to almost 84° for almost half an hour, and in

that chill—you have no idea how cold is 84° on the grass until you begin to pray for it—a very tired man could set off to sleep ere the heat roused him.

One Saturday night it was my pleasant duty to put the paper to bed alone. A King or courtier or a courtesan or a community was going to die or get a new Constitution, or do something that was important on the other side of the world, and the paper was to be held open till the latest possible minute in order to catch the telegram. It was a pitchy black night, as stifling as a June night can be, and the *loo*, the red-hot wind from the westward, was booming among the tinder-dry trees and pretending that the rain was on its heels. Now and again a spot of almost boiling water would fall on the dust with the flop of a frog, but all our weary world knew that was only pretence. It was a shade cooler in the press-room than the office, so I sat there, while the type ticked and clicked and the night-jars hooted at the windows, and the all but naked compositors wiped the sweat from their foreheads and called for water. The thing that was keeping us back, whatever it was, would not come off, though the *loo* dropped and the last type was set, and the whole round earth stood still in the choking heat, with its finger on its lip, to wait the event. I drowsed, and wondered whether the telegraph was a blessing, and whether this dying man, or struggling people, was aware of the inconvenience the delay

was causing. There was no special reason beyond the heat and worry to make tension, but as the clock-hands crept up to three o'clock and the machines spun their fly-wheels two and three times to see that all was in order, before I said the word that would set them off, I could have shrieked aloud.

Then the roar and rattle of the wheels shivered the quiet into little bits. I rose to go away, but two men in white clothes stood in front of me. The first one said: "It's him!" The second said: "So it is!" And they both laughed almost as loudly as the machinery roared, and mopped their foreheads. "We see there was a light burning across the road and we were sleeping in that ditch there for coolness, and I said to my friend here, "The office is open. Let's come along and speak to him as turned us back from the Degumber State," said the smaller of the two. He was the man I had met in the Mhow train, and his fellow was the red-bearded man of Marwar Junction. There was no mistaking the eyebrows of the one or the beard of the other.

I was not pleased, because I wished to go to sleep, not to squabble with loafers. "What do you want?" I asked.

"Half an hour's talk with you cool and comfortable, in the office," said the red-bearded man. "We'd *like* some drink — the Contrack doesn't begin yet, Peachey, so you needn't look—but what we really want is advice. We

don't want money. We ask you as a favour because you did us a bad turn about Degumber."

I led from the press-room to the stifling office with the maps on the walls, and the red-haired man rubbed his hands. "That's something like," said he. "This was the proper shop to come to. Now, Sir, let me introduce to you Brother Peachey Carnehan, that's him, and Brother Daniel Dravot, that is *me*, and the less said about our professions the better, for we have been most things in our time. Soldier, sailor, compositor, photographer, proof-reader, street-preacher, and correspondents of the *Backwoodsman* when we thought the paper wanted one. Carnehan is sober, and so am I. Look at us first and see that's sure. It will save you cutting into my talk. We'll take one of your cigars apiece, and you shall see us light."

I watched the test. The men were absolutely sober, so I gave them each a tepid peg.

"Well *and* good," said Carnehan of the eyebrows, wiping the froth from his moustache. "Let me talk now, Dan. We have been all over India, mostly on foot. We have been boiler-fitters, engine-drivers, petty contractors, and all that, and we have decided that India isn't big enough for such as us."

They certainly were too big for the office. Dravot's beard seemed to fill half the room and Carnehan's shoulders the other half, as they sat on the big table. Carnehan continued:—"The country isn't half worked out because

they that governs it won't let you touch it. They spend all their blessed time in governing it, and you can't lift a spade, nor chip a rock, nor look for oil, nor anything like that without all the Government saying—'Leave it alone and let us govern.' Therefore, such as it is, we will let it alone, and go away to some other place where a man isn't crowded and can come to his own. We are not little men, and there is nothing that we are afraid of except Drink, and we have signed a Contrack on that. *Therefore*, we are going away to be Kings."

"Kings in our own right," muttered Dravot.

"Yes, of course," I said. "You've been tramping in the sun, and it's a very warm night, and hadn't you better sleep over the notion? Come to-morrow."

"Neither drunk nor sunstruck," said Dravot. "We have slept over the notion half a year, and require to see Books and Atlases, and we have decided that there is only one place now in the world that two strong men can Sar-a-*whack*. They call it Kafiristan. By my reckoning its the top right-hand corner of Afghanistan, not more than three hundred miles from Peshawar. They have two and thirty heathen idols there, and we'll be the thirty-third. It's a mountainous country, and the women of those parts are very beautiful."

"But that is provided against in the Contrack," said Carnehan. "Neither Women nor Liqu-or, Daniel."

"And that's all we know, except that no one has gone there, and they fight, and in any place where they fight a man who knows how to drill men can always be a King. We shall go to those parts and say to any King we find—'D'you want to vanquish your foes?' and we will show him how to drill men; for that we know better than anything else. Then we will subvert that King and seize his Throne and establish a Dy-nasty."

"You'll be cut to pieces before you're fifty miles across the Border," I said. "You have to travel through Afghanistan to get to that country. It's one mass of mountains and peaks and glaciers, and no Englishman has been through it. The people are utter brutes, and even if you reached them you couldn't do anything."

"That's more like," said Carnehan. "If you could think us a little more mad we would be more pleased. We have come to you to know about this country, to read a book about it, and to be shown maps. We want you to tell us that we are fools and to show us your books." He turned to the book-cases.

"Are you at all in earnest?" I said.

"A little," said Dravot, sweetly. "As big a map as you have got, even if it's all blank where Kafiristan is, and any books you've got. We can read, though we aren't very educated."

I uncased the big thirty two-miles-to-the-inch map of India, and two smaller Frontier maps,

hauled down volume INF-KAN of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and the men consulted them.

"See here!" said Dravot, his thumb on the map. "Up to Jagdallak, Peachey and me know the road. We was there with Roberts's Army. We'll have to turn off to the right at Jagdallak through Laghmann territory. Then we get among the hills—fourteen thousand feet —fifteen thousand—it will be cold work there, but it don't look very far on the map."

I handed him Wood on the *Sources of the Oxus*. Carnehan was deep in the *Encyclopædia*.

"They're a mixed lot," said Dravot, reflectively; "and it won't help us to know the names of their tribes. The more tribes the more they'll fight, and the better for us. From Jagdallak to Ashang. H'mm!"

"But all the information about the country is as sketchy and inaccurate as can be," I protested. "No one knows anything about it really. Here's the file of the *United Services' Institute*. Read what Bellew says."

"Blow Bellew!" said Carnehan. "Dan, they're an all-fired lot of heathens, but this book here says they think they're related to us English."

I smoked while the men pored over *Raverty*, *Wood*, the maps and the *Encyclopædia*.

"There is no use your waiting," said Dravot, politely. "It's about four o'clock now. We'll go before six o'clock if you want to sleep and we won't steal any of the papers. Don't you sit up. We're two harmless lunatics, and if you come,

to-morrow evening, down to the Serai we'll say good-by to you."

"You *are* two fools," I answered. "You'll be turned back at the Frontier or cut up the minute you set foot in Afghanistan. Do you want any money or a recommendation down-country? I can help you to the chance of work next week."

"Next week we shall be hard at work ourselves, thank you," said Dravot. "It isn't so easy being a King as it looks. When we've got our Kingdom in going order we'll let you know, and you can come up and help us to govern it."

"Would two lunatics make a Contrack like that?" said Carnehan, with subdued pride, showing me a greasy half-sheet of note-paper on which was written the following. I copied it, then and there, as a curiosity:—

This Contract between me and you persuing witnesseth in the name of God—Amen and so forth.

(*One*) *That me and you will settle this matter together:* i.e., *to be Kings of Kafiristan.*

(*Two*) *That you and me will not while this matter is being settled, look at any Liquor, nor any Woman black, white or brown, so as to get mixed up with one or the other harmful.*

(*Three*) *That we conduct ourselves with Dignity and Discretion, and if one of us gets into trouble the other will stay by him.*

Signed by you and me this day.
Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan.
Daniel Dravot.
Both Gentlemen at Large.

"There was no need for the last article," said Carnehan, blushing modestly; "but it looks regular. Now you know the sort of men that loafers are—we *are* loafers, Dan, until we get out of India—and *do* you think that we could sign a Contrack like that unless we was in earnest? We have kept away from the two things that make life worth having."

"You won't enjoy your lives much longer if you are going to try this idiotic adventure. Don't set the office on fire," I said, "and go away before nine o'clock."

I left them still poring over the maps and making notes on the back of the "Contrack." "Be sure to come down to the Serai to-morrow," were their parting words.

The Kumharsen Serai is the great four-square sink of humanity where the strings of camels and horses from the North load and unload. All the nationalities of Central Asia may be found there, and most of the folk of India proper. Balkh and Bokhara there meet Bengal and Bombay, and try to draw eye-teeth. You can buy ponies, turquoises, Persian pussy-cats, saddle-bags, fat-tailed sheep, and musk in the Kumharsen Serai, and get many strange things for nothing. In the afternoon I went down there to see whether my friends intended to keep their word or were lying about drunk.

A priest attired in fragments of ribbons and rags stalked up to me, gravely twisting a child's paper whirligig. Behind him was his servant,

bending under the load of a crate of mud toys. The two were loading up two camels, and the inhabitants of the Serai watched them with shrieks of laughter.

"The priest is mad," said a horse-dealer to me. "He is going up to Kabul to sell toys to the Amir. He will either be raised to honour or have his head cut off. He came in here this morning and has been behaving madly ever since."

"The witless are under the protection of God," stammered a flat-cheeked Usbeg in broken Hindi. "They foretell future events."

"Would they could have foretold that my caravan would have been cut up by the Shinwaris almost within shadow of the Pass!" grunted the Eusufzai agent of a Rajputana trading-house whose goods had been feloniously diverted into the hands of other robbers just across the Border, and whose misfortunes were the laughing-stock of the bazaar. "Ohé, priest, whence come you and whither do you go?"

"From Roum have I come," shouted the priest, waving his whirligig; "from Roum, blown by the breath of a hundred devils across the sea! O thieves, robbers, liars, the blessing of Pir Khan on pigs, dogs, and perjurers! Who will take the Protected of God to the North to sell charms that are never still to the Amir? The camels shall not gall, the sons shall not fall sick, and the wives shall remain faithful while they are away, of the men who give me place in

their caravan. Who will assist me to slipper the King of the Roos with a golden slipper with a silver heel? The protection of Pir Kahn be upon his labours!" He spread out the skirts of his gaberdine and pirouetted between the lines of tethered horses.

"There starts a caravan from Peshawar to Kabul in twenty days, *Huzrut*," said the Eusufzai trader. "My camels go therewith. Do thou also go and bring us good luck."

"I will go even now!" shouted the priest. "I will depart upon my winged camels, and be at Peshawar in a day! Ho! Hazar Mir Khan," he yelled to his servant, "drive out the camels, but let me first mount my own."

He leaped on the back of his beast as it knelt, and turning round to me, cried:—

"Come thou also, Sahib, a little along the road, and I will sell thee a charm—an amulet that shall make thee King of Kafiristan."

Then the light broke upon me, and I followed the two camels out of the Serai till we reached open road and the priest halted.

"What d' you think o' that?" said he in English. "Carnehan can't talk their patter, so I've made him my servant. He makes a handsome servant. 'Tisn't for nothing that I've been knocking about the country for fourteen years. Didn't I do that talk neat? We'll hitch on to a caravan at Peshawar till we get to Jagdallak, and then we'll see if we can get donkeys for our camels, and strike into

Kafiristan. Whirligigs for the Amir, O Lor! Put your hand under the camel-bags and tell me what you feel."

I felt the butt of a Martini, and another and another.

"Twenty of 'em," said Dravot, placidly.

"Twenty of 'em, and ammunition to correspond, under the whirligigs and the mud dolls."

"Heaven help you if you are caught with those things!" I said. "A Martini is worth her weight in silver among the Pathans."

"Fifteen hundred rupees of capital—every rupee we could beg, borrow, or steal—are invested on these two camels," said Dravot. "We won't get caught. We're going through the Khaiber with a regular caravan. Who'd touch a poor mad priest?"

"Have you got everything you want?" I asked, overcome with astonishment.

"Not yet, but we shall soon. Give us a momento of your kindness, *Brother*. You did me a service yesterday, and that time in Marwar. Half my Kingdom shall you have, as the saying is." I slipped a small charm compass from my watch-chain and handed it up to the priest.

"Good-bye," said Dravot, giving me his hand cautiously. "It's the last time we'll shake hands with an Englishman these many days. Shake hands with him, Carnehan," he cried, as the second camel passed me.

Carnehan looked down and shook hands. Then the camels passed away along the dusty

road, and I was left alone to wonder. My eye could detect no failure in the disguises. The scene in the Serai attested that they were complete to the native mind. There was just the chance, therefore, that Carnehan and Dravot would be able to wander through Afghanistan without detection. But, beyond, they would find death, certain and awful death.

Ten days later a native friend of mine, giving me the news of the day from Peshawar, wound up his letter with:—"There has been much laughter here on account of a certain mad priest who is going in his estimation to sell petty gauds and insignificant trinkets which he ascribes as great charms to H. H. the Amir of Bokhara. He passed through Peshawar and associated himself to the Second Summer caravan that goes to Kabul. The merchants are pleased because through superstition they imagine that such mad fellows bring good-fortune."

The two then, were beyond the Border. I would have prayed for them, but, that night, a real King died in Europe, and demanded an obituary notice.

. . . . . .

The wheel of the world swings through the same phases again and again. Summer passed and winter thereafter, and came and passed again. The daily paper continued and I with it, and upon the third summer there fell a hot night, a night-issue, and a strained waiting for some-

thing to be telegraphed from the other side of the world, exactly as had happened before. A few great men had died in the past two years, the machines worked with more clatter, and some of the trees in the Office garden were a few feet taller. But that was all the difference.

I passed over to the press-room, and went through just such a scene as I have already described. The nervous tension was stronger than it had been two years before, and I felt the heat more acutely. At three o'clock I cried, "Print off," and turned to go, when there crept to my chair what was left of a man. He was bent into a circle, his head was sunk between his shoulders, and he moved his feet one over the other like a bear. I could hardly see whether he walked or crawled—this rag-wrapped, whining cripple who addressed me by name, crying that he was come back. "Can you give me a drink?" he whimpered. "For the Lord's sake, give me a drink!"

I went back to the office, the man following with groans of pain, and I turned up the lamp.

"Don't you know me?" he gasped, dropping into a chair, and he turned his drawn face, surmounted by a shock of gray hair, to the light.

I looked at him intently. Once before had I seen eyebrows that met over the nose in an inch-broad black band, but for the life of me I could not tell where.

"I don't know you," I said, handing him the whisky. "What can I do for you?"

He took a gulp of the spirit raw, and shivered in spite of the suffocating heat.

"I've come back," he repeated; "and I was the King of Kafiristan—me and Dravot—crowned Kings we was! In this office we settled it—you setting there and giving us the books. I am Peachey—Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan, and you've been setting here ever since—O Lord!"

I was more than a little astonished, and expressed my feelings accordingly.

"It's true," said Carnehan, with a dry cackle, nursing his feet which were wrapped in rags. "True as gospel. Kings we were, with crowns upon our heads—me and Dravot—poor Dan—oh, poor, poor Dan, that would never take advice, not though I begged of him!"

"Take the whisky," I said, "and take your own time. Tell me all you can recollect of everything from beginning to end. You got across the border on your camels, Dravot dressed as a mad priest and you his servant. Do you remember that?"

"I ain't mad—yet, but I will be that way soon. Of course I remember. Keep looking at me, or maybe my words will go all to pieces. Keep looking at me in my eyes and don't say anything."

I leaned forward and looked into his face as steadily as I could. He dropped one hand upon the table and I grasped it by the wrist. It was twisted like a bird's claw, and upon

the back was a ragged, red, diamond-shaped scar.

"No, don't look there. Look at *me*, said Carnehan.

"That comes afterwards, but for the Lord's sake don't distrack me. We left with that caravan, me and Dravot, playing all sorts of antics to amuse the people we were with. Dravot used to make us laugh in the evenings when all the people was cooking their dinners—cooking their dinners, and . . . what did they do then? They lit little fires with sparks that went into Dravot's beard, and we all laughed—fit to die. Little red fires they was, going into Dravot's big red beard—so funny." His eyes left mine and he smiled foolishly.

"You went as far as Jagdallak with that caravan," I said at a venture, "after you had lit those fires. To Jagdallak, where you turned off to try to get into Kafiristan."

"No, we didn't neither. What are you talking about? We turned off before Jagdallak, because we heard the roads was good. But they wasn't good enough for our two camels—mine and Dravot's. When we left the caravan, Dravot took off all his clothes and mine too, and said we would be heathen, because the Kafirs didn't allow Mohammedans to talk to them. So we dressed betwixt and between, and such a sight as Daniel Dravot I never saw yet nor expect to see again. He burned half his beard, and slung a sheep-skin over his shoulder, and shaved his

head into patterns. He shaved mine, too, and made me wear outrageous things to look like a heathen. That was in a most mountainous country, and our camels couldn't go along any more because of the mountains. They were tall and black, and coming home I saw them fight like wild goats—there are lots of goats in Kafiristan. And these mountains, they never keep still, no more than the goats. Always fighting they are, and don't let you sleep at night.

"Take some more whisky," I said, very slowly. "What did you and Daniel Dravot do when the camels could go no farther because of the rough roads that led into Kafiristan?"

"What did which do?" There was a party called Peachey Taliaferro Carnehan that was with Dravot. Shall I tell you about him? He died out there in the cold. Slap from the bridge fell old Peachey, turning and twisting in the air like a penny whirligig that you can sell to the Amir—No; they was two for three ha'pence, those whirligigs, or I am much mistaken and woful sore. And then these camels were no use, and Peachey said to Dravot—'For the Lord's sake, let's get out of this before our heads are chopped off,' and with that they killed the camels all among the mountains, not having anything in particular to eat, but first they took off the boxes with the guns and the ammunition, till two men came along driving four mules. Dravot up and dances in front of them, singing, 'Sell me four mules.' Says the first man,

'If you are rich enough to buy, you are rich enough to rob;' but before ever he could put his hand to his knife, Dravot breaks his neck over his knee, and the other party runs away. So Carnehan loaded the mules with the rifles that was taken off the camels, and together we starts forward into those bitter cold mountainous parts, and never a road broader than the back of your hand."

He paused for a moment, while I asked him if he could remember the nature of the country through which he had journeyed.

"I am telling you as straight as I can, but my head isn't as good as it might be. They drove nails through it to make me hear better how Dravot died. The country was mountainous and the mules were most contrary, and the inhabitants was dispersed and solitary. They went up and up, and down and down, and that other party Carnehan, was imploring of Dravot not to sing and whistle so loud, for fear of bringing down the tremenjus avalanches. But Dravot says that if a King couldn't sing it wasn't worth being King, and whacked the mules over the rump, and never took no heed for ten cold days. We came to a big level valley all among the mountains, and the mules were near dead, so we killed them, not having anything in special for them or us to eat. We sat upon the boxes, and played odd and even with the cartridges that was jolted out.

"Then ten men with bows and arrows ran

down that valley, chasing twenty men with bows and arrows, and the row was tremenjus. They was fair men—fairer than you or me—with yellow hair and remarkable well built. Says Dravot, unpacking the guns—'This is the beginning of the business. We'll fight for the ten men,' and with that he fires two rifles at the twenty men, and drops one of them at two hundred yards from the rock where we was sitting. The other men began to run, but Carnehan and Dravot sits on the boxes picking them off at all ranges, up and down the valley. Then we goes up to the ten men that had run across the snow too, and they fires a footy little arrow at us. Dravot he shoots above their heads and they all falls down flat. Then he walks over them and kicks them, and then he lifts them up and shakes hands all around to make them friendly like. He calls them and gives them the boxes to carry, and waves his hand for all the world as though he was King already. They takes the boxes and him across the valley and up the hill into a pine wood on the top, where there was half a dozen big stone idols. Dravot he goes to the biggest—a fellow they call Imbra—and lays a rifle and a cartridge at his feet, rubbing his nose respectful with his own nose, patting him on the head, and saluting in front of it. He turns round to the men and nods his head, and says:—'That's all right. I'm in the know too, and these old jim-jams are my friends.' Then he opens his mouth and points

down it, and when the first man brings him food, he says—'No'; and when the second man brings him food, he says—'No'; but when one of the old priests and the boss of the village brings him food, he says—'Yes'; very haughty, and eats it slow. That was how we came to our first village, without any trouble, just as though we had tumbled from the skies. But we tumbled from one of those damned rope-bridges, you see, and you couldn't expect a man to laugh much after that."

"Take some more whisky and go on," I said. "That was the first village you came into. How did you get to be King?"

"I wasn't King," said Carnehan. "Dravot he was the King, and a handsome man he looked with the gold crown on his head and all. Him and the other party stayed in that village, and every morning Dravot sat by the side of old Imbra, and the people came and worshipped. That was Dravot's order. Then a lot of men came into the valley, and Carnehan and Dravot picks them off with the rifles before they knew where they was, and runs down into the valley and up again the other side, and finds another village, same as the first one, and the people all falls down flat on their faces, and Dravot says: —'Now what is the trouble between you two villages?' and the people points to a woman, as fair as you or me, that was carried off, and Dravot takes her back to the first village and counts up the dead—eight there was. For each

dead man Dravot pours a little milk on the ground and waves his arms like a whirligig and, 'That's all right,' says he. Then he and Carnehan takes the big boss of each village by the arm and walks them down into the valley, and shows them how to scratch a line with a spear right down the valley, and gives each a sod of turf from both sides o' the line. Then all the people comes down and shouts like the devil and all, and Dravot says, 'Go and dig the land, and be fruitful and multiply,' which they did, though they didn't understand. Then we asks the names of things in their lingo—bread and water and fire and idols and such, and Dravot leads the priest of each village up to the idol, and says he must sit there and judge the people, and if anything goes wrong he is to be shot.

"Next week they was all turning up the land in the valley as quiet as bees and much prettier, and the priests heard all the complaints and told Dravot in dumb show what it was about. 'That's just the beginning,' says Dravot. 'They think we're gods.' He and Carnehan picks out twenty good men and shows them how to click off a rifle, and form fours, and advance in line, and they was very pleased to do so, and clever to see the hang of it. Then he takes out his pipe and his baccy-pouch and leaves one at one village, and one at the other, and off we two goes to see what was to be done in the next valley. That was all rock, and there was a

little village there, and Carnehan says, 'Send 'em to the old valley to plant,' and takes 'em there and gives 'em some land that wasn't took before. They were a poor lot, and we blooded 'em with a kid before letting 'em into the new Kingdom. That was to impress the people, and then they settled down quiet, and Carnehan went back to Dravot who had got into another valley, all snow and ice and most mountainous. There was no people there and the Army got afraid, so Dravot shoots one of them, and goes on till he finds some people in a village, and the Army explains that unless the people wants to be killed they had better not shoot their little matchlocks, for they had matchlocks. We makes friends with the priest, and I stays there alone with two of the Army, teaching the men how to drill, and a thundering big Chief comes across the snow with kettledrums and horns twanging, because he heard there was a new god kicking about. Carnehan sights for the brown of the men half a mile across the snow and wings one of them. Then he sends a message to the Chief that, unless he wished to be killed, he must come and shake hands with me and leave his arms behind. The Chief comes alone first, and Carnehan shakes hands with him and whirls his arms about, same as Dravot used, and very much surprised that Chief was, and strokes my eyebrows. Then Carnehan goes alone to the Chief, and asks him in dumb show if he had an enemy he hated. 'I have,' says the

Chief. So Carnehan weeds out the pick of his men, and sets the two of the Army to show them drill and at the end of two weeks the men can manœuvre about as well as Volunteers. So he marches with the Chief to a great big plain on the top of a mountain, and the Chief's men rushes into a village and takes it; we three Martinis firing into the brown of the enemy. So we took that village too, and I gives the Chief a rag from my coat and says, 'Occupy till I come': which was scriptural. By way of a reminder, when me and the Army was eighteen hundred yards away, I drops a bullet near him standing on the snow, and all the people falls flat on their faces. Then I sends a letter to Dravot, where he be by land or by sea."

At the risk of throwing the creature out of train I interrupted, "How could you write a letter up yonder?"

"The letter?—Oh!—The letter! Keep looking at me between the eyes, please. It was a string-talk letter, that we'd learned the way of it from a blind beggar in the Punjab."

I remember that there had once come to the office a blind man with a knotted twig and a piece of string which he wound round the twig according to some cypher of his own. He could, after the lapse of days or hours, repeat the sentence which he had reeled up. He had reduced the alphabet to eleven primitive sounds; and tried to teach me his method, but failed.

"I sent that letter to Dravot," said Carnehan;

"and told him to come back because this Kingdom was growing too big for me to handle, and then I struck for the first valley, to see how the priests were working. They called the village we took along with the Chief, Bashkai, and the first village we took, Er-Heb. The priest at Er-Heb was doing all right, but they had a lot of pending cases about land to show me, and some men from another village had been firing arrows at night. I went out and looked for that village and fired four rounds at it from a thousand yards. That used all the cartridges I cared to spend, and I waited for Dravot, who had been away two or three months, and I kept my people quiet.

"One morning I heard the devil's own noise of drums and horns, and Dan Dravot marches down the hill with his Army and a tail of hundreds of men, and, which was the most amazing—a great gold crown on his head. 'My Gord, Carnehan,' says Daniel, 'this is a tremenjus business, and we've got the whole country as far as it's worth having. I am the son of Alexander by Queen Semiramis, and you're my younger brother and a god too! It's the biggest thing we've ever seen. I've been marching and fighting for six weeks with the Army, and every footy little village for fifty miles has come in rejoiceful; and more than that, I've got the key of the whole show, as you'll see, and I've got a crown for you! I told 'em to make two of 'em at a place called Shu, where the gold lies in the

rock like suet in mutton. Gold I've seen, and turquoise I've kicked out of the cliffs, and there's garnets in the sands of the river, and here's a chunk of amber that a man brought me. Call up all the priests and, here, take your crown.'

"One of the men opens a black hair bag and I slips the crown on. It was too small and too heavy, but I wore it for the glory. Hammered gold it was—five pound weight, like a hoop of a barrel.

"'Peachey,' says Dravot, 'we don't want to fight no more. The Craft's the trick so help me!' and he brings forward that same Chief that I left at Bashkai—Billy Fish we called him afterwards, because he was so like Billy Fish that drove the big tank-engine at Mach on the Bolan in the old days. 'Shake hands with him,' says Dravot, and I shook hands and nearly dropped, for Billy Fish gave me the Grip. I said nothing, but tried him with the Fellow Craft Grip. He answers, all right, and I tried the Master's Grip, but that was a slip. 'A Fellow Craft he is!' I says to Dan. 'Does he know the word?' 'He does,' says Dan, 'and all the priests know. It's a miracle! The Chiefs and the priest can work a Fellow Craft Lodge in a way that's very like ours, and they've cut the marks on the rocks, but they don't know the Third Degree, and they've come to find out. It's Gord's Truth. I've known these long years that the Afghans knew up to the Fellow Craft Degree, but this is a miracle

A god and a Grand-Master of the Craft am I, and a Lodge in the Third Degree I will open, and we'll raise the head priests and the Chiefs of the villages.'

"'It's against all the law,' I says, 'holding a Lodge without warrant from any one; and we never held office in any lodge.'

"'It's a master-stroke of policy,' says Dravot. 'It means running the country as easy as a four-wheeled bogy on a down grade. We can't stop to inquire now, or they'll turn against us. I've forty Chiefs at my heel, and passed and raised according to their merit they shall be. Billet these men on the villages and see that we run up a Lodge of some kind. The temple of Imbra will do for the Lodge-room. The women must make aprons as you show them. I'll hold a levee of Chiefs to-night and Lodge to-morrow.'

"I was fair run off my legs, but I wasn't such a fool as not to see what a pull this Craft business gave us. I showed the priests' families how to make aprons of the degrees, but for Dravot's apron the blue border and marks was made of turquoise lumps on white hide, not cloth. We took a great square stone in the temple for the Master's chair, and little stones for the officers' chairs, and painted the black pavement with white squares, and did what we could to make things regular.

"At the levee which was held that night on the hillside with big bonfires, Dravot gives out

that him and me were gods and sons of Alexander, and Past Grand-Masters in the Craft, and was come to make Kafiristan a country where every man should eat in peace and drink in quiet, and specially obey us. Then the Chiefs come round to shake hands, and they was so hairy and white and fair it was just shaking hands with old friends. We gave them names according as they was like men we had known in India—Billy Fish, Holly Dilworth, Pikky Kergan that was Bazaar-master when I was at Mhow, and so on, and so on.

"*The* most amazing miracle was at Lodge next night. One of the old priests was watching us continuous, and I felt uneasy, for I knew we'd have to fudge the Ritual, and I didn't know what the men knew. The old priest was a stranger come in from beyond the village of Bashkai. The minute Dravot puts on the Master's apron that the girls had made for him, the priest fetches a whoop and a howl, and tries to overturn the stone that Dravot was sitting on 'It's all up now,' I says. 'That comes of meddling with the Craft without warrant!' Dravot never winked an eye, not when ten priests took and tilted over the Grand-Master's chair—which was to say the stone of Imbra. The priest begins rubbing the bottom end of it to clear away the black dirt, and presently he shows all the other priests the Master's Mark, same as was on Dravot's apron, cut into the stone. Not even the priests of the temple of

Imbra knew it was there. The old chap falls flat on his face at Dravot's feet and kisses 'em. 'Luck again,' says Dravot, across the Lodge to me, 'they say it's the missing Mark that no one could understand the why of. We're more than safe now.' Then he bangs the butt of his gun for a gavel and says—'By virtue of the authority vested in me by my own right hand and the help of Peachey, I declare myself Grand-Master of all Freemasonry in Kafiristan in this the Mother Lodge o' the country, and King of Kafiristan equally with Peachey!' At that he puts on his crown and I puts on mine—I was doing Senior Warden—and we opens the Lodge in most ample form. It was a amazing miracle! The priests moved in Lodge through the first two degrees almost without telling, as if the memory was coming back to them. After that, Peachey and Dravot raised such as was worthy—high priests and Chiefs of far-off villages. Billy Fish was the first, and I can tell you we scared the soul out of him. It was not in any way according to Ritual, but it served our turn. We didn't raise more than ten of the biggest men because we didn't want to make the Degree common. And they was clamouring to be raised.

"'In another six months,' says Dravot, 'we'll hold another Communication and see how you are working.' Then he asks them about their villages, and learns that they was fighting one against the other and were fair

sick and tired of it. And when they wasn't doing that they was fighting with the Mohammedans. 'You can fight those when they come into our country,' says Dravot. 'Tell off every tenth man of your tribes for a Frontier guard, and send two hundred at a time to this valley to be drilled. Nobody is going to be shot or speared any more so long as he does well, and I know that you won't cheat me because you're white people—sons of Alexander—and not like common, black Mohammedans. You are *my* people and by God,' says he, running off into English at the end—'I'll make a damned fine Nation of you, or I'll die in the making!'

"I can't tell all we did for the next six months because Dravot did a lot I couldn't see the hang of, and he learned their lingo in a way I never could. My work was to help the people plough, and now and again to go out with some of the Army and see what the other villages were doing, and make 'em throw rope-bridges across the ravines which cut up the country horrid. Dravot was very kind to me, but when he walked up and down in the pine wood pulling that bloody red beard of his with both fists I knew he was thinking plans I could not advise him about, and I just waited for orders.

"But Dravot never showed me disrespect before the people. They were afraid of me and the Army, but they loved Dan. He was the best of friends with the priests and the Chiefs, but any one could come across the hills

with a complaint and Dravot would hear him out fair, and call four priests together and say what was to be done. He used to call in Billy Fish from Bashkai, and Pikky Kergan from Shu, and an old Chief we called Kafuzelum—it was like enough to his real name—and hold councils with 'em when there was any fighting to be done in small villages. That was his Council of War, and the four priests of Bashkai, Shu, Khawak, and Madora was his Privy Council. Between the lot of 'em they sent me, with forty men and twenty rifles, and sixty men carrying turquoises, into the Ghorband country to buy those hand-made Martini rifles, that come out of the Amir's workshops at Kabul, from one of the Amir's Herati regiments that would have sold the very teeth out of their mouths for turquoises.

"I stayed in Ghorband a month, and gave the Governor the pick of my baskets for hush-money, and bribed the colonel of the regiment some more, and, between the two and the tribes-people, we got more than a hundred hand-made Martinis, a hundred good Kohat Jezails that'll throw to six hundred yards, and forty manloads of very bad ammunition for the rifles. I came back with what I had, and distributed 'em among the men that the Chiefs sent in to me to drill. Dravot was too busy to attend to those things, but the old Army that we first made helped me, and we turned out five hundred men that could drill, and two hundred that knew

how to hold arms pretty straight. Even those cork-screwed, hand-made guns was a miracle to them. Dravot talked big about powder-shops and factories, walking up and down in the pine wood when the winter was coming on.

"'I won't make a Nation,' says he. 'I'll make an Empire! These men aren't niggers; they're English! Look at their eyes—look at their mouths. Look at the way they stand up. They sit on chairs in their own houses. They're the Lost Tribes, or something like it, and they've grown to be English. I'll take a census in the spring if the priests don't get frightened. There must be a fair two million of 'em in these hills. The villages are full o' little children. Two million people—two hundred and fifty thousand fighting men—and all English! They only want the rifles and a little drilling. Two hundred and fifty thousand men, ready to cut in on Russia's right flank when she tries for India! Peachey, man,' he says, chewing his beard in great hunks, 'we shall be Emperors—Emperors of the Earth! Rajah Brooke will be a suckling to us. I'll treat with the Viceroy on equal terms. I'll ask him to send me twelve picked English—twelve that I know of—to help us govern a bit. There's Mackray, Sergeant-pensioner at Segowli—many's the good dinner he's given me, and his wife a pair of trousers. There's Donkin, the Warder of Tounghoo Jail; there's hundreds that I could lay my hand on if I was in India. The Viceroy shall do it

for me. I'll send a man through in the spring for those men, and I'll write for a dispensation from the Grand Lodge for what I've done as Grand-Master. That—and all the Sniders that'll he thrown out when the native troops in India take up the Martini. They'll be worn smooth, but they'll do for fighting in these hills. Twelve English, a hundred thousand Sniders run through the Amir's country in driblets—I'd be content with twenty thousand in one year—and we'd be an Empire. When everything was ship-shape, I'd hand over the crown—this crown I'm wearing now—to Queen Victoria on my knees, and she'd say—"Rise up, Sir Daniel Dravot." Oh, it's big! It's big, I tell you! But there's so much to be done in every place—Bashkai, Khawak, Shu, and everywhere else.'

"'What is it?' I says. 'There are no more men coming in to be drilled this autumn. Look at those fat, black clouds. They're bringing the snow.'

"'It isn't that,' says Daniel, putting his hand very hard on my shoulder; 'and I don't wish to say anything that's against you, for no other living man would have followed me and made me what I am as you have done. You're a first-class Commander-in-Chief, and the people know you; but—it's a big country, and somehow you can't help me, Peachey, in the way I want to be helped.'

"'Go to your blasted priests, then!' I said, and I was sorry when I made that remark,

but it did hurt me sore to find Daniel talking so superior when I'd drilled all the men, and done all he told me.

"'Don't let's quarrel, Peachey,' says Daniel without cursing. 'You're a King too, and the half of this Kingdom is yours; but can't you see, Peachey, we want cleverer men than us now—three or four of 'em that we can scatter about for our Deputies? It's a hugeous great State, and I can't always tell the right thing to do, and I haven't time for all I want to do, and here's the winter coming on and all.' He put half his beard into his mouth, and it was as red as the gold of his crown.

"'I'm sorry, Daniel,' says I. 'I've done all I could. I've drilled the men, and shown the people how to stack their oats better, and I've brought in those tinware rifles from Ghorband—but I know what you're driving at. I take it Kings always feel oppressed that way.'

"'There's another thing too,' says Dravot, walking up and down. 'The winter's coming and these people won't be giving much trouble, and if they do we can't move about. I want a wife.'

"'For Gord's sake leave the women alone!' I says. 'We've both got all the work we can, though I *am* a fool. Remember the Contrack, and keep clear o' women.'

"'The Contrack only lasted till such time as we was Kings; and Kings we have been these months past,' says Dravot, weighing his crown

in his hand. 'You go get a wife too, Peachey—a nice, strappin', plump girl that'll keep you warm in the winter. They're prettier than English girls, and we can take the pick of 'em. Boil 'em once or twice in hot water, and they'll come as fair as chicken and ham.'

"'Don't tempt me!' I says. 'I will not have any dealings with a woman not till we are a dam' side more settled than we are now. I've been doing the work o' two men, and you've been doing the work o' three. Let's lie off a bit, and see if we can get some better tobacco from Afghan country and run in some good liquor; but no women.'

"'Who's talking o' *women?*' says Dravot. 'I said *wife*—a Queen to breed a King's son for the King. A Queen out of the strongest tribe, that'll make them your blood-brothers, and that'll lie by your side and tell you all the people thinks about you and their own affairs. That's what I want.'

"'Do you remember that Bengali woman I kept at Mogul Serai when I was plate-layer?' says I. 'A fat lot o' good she was to me. She taught me the lingo and one or two other things; but what happened? She ran away with the Station Master's servant and half my month's pay. Then she turned up at Dadur Junction in tow of a half-caste, and had the impidence to say I was her husband—all among the drivers of the running-shed!'

"'We've done with that,' says Dravot. 'These

women are whiter than you or me, and a Queen I will have for the winter months.'

"'For the last time o' asking, Dan, do *not*,' I says. 'It'll only bring us harm. The Bible says that Kings ain't to waste their strength on women, 'specially when they've got a new, raw Kingdom to work over.

"'For the last time of answering, I will,' said Dravot, and he went away through the pine-trees looking like a big red devil. The low sun hit his crown and beard on one side, and the two blazed like hot coals.

"But getting a wife was not as easy as Dan thought. He put it before the Council, and there was no answer till Billy Fish said that he'd better ask the girls. Dravot damned them all round. 'What's wrong with me?' he shouts, standing by the idol Imbra. 'Am I a dog or am I not enough of a man for your wenches? Haven't I put the shadow of my hand over this country? Who stopped the last Afghan raid?' It was me really, but Dravot was too angry to remember. 'Who bought your guns? Who repaired the bridges? Who's the Grand-Master of the sign cut in the stone?' and he thumped his hand on the block that he used to sit on in Lodge, and at Council, which opened like Lodge always. Billy Fish said nothing and no more did the others. 'Keep your hair on, Dan,' said I; 'and ask the girls. That's how it's done at home, and these people are quite English.'

"'The marriage of a King is a matter of State,' says Dan, in a white-hot rage, for he could feel, I hope, that he was going against his better mind. He walked out of the Council-room, and the others sat still, looking at the ground.

"'Billy Fish,' says I to the Chief of Bashkai, 'what's the difficulty here? A straight answer to a true friend.' 'You know,' says Billy Fish. 'How should a man tell you who know everything? How can daughters of men marry gods or devils? It's not proper.'

"I remembered something like that in the Bible; but if, after seeing us as long as they had, they still believed we were gods, it wasn't for me to undeceive them.

"'A god can do anything,' says I. 'If the King is fond of a girl he'll not let her die.' 'She'll have to,' said Billy Fish. 'There are all sorts of gods and devils in these mountains, and now and again a girl marries one of them and isn't seen any more. Besides, you two know the Mark cut in the stone. Only the gods know that. We thought you were men till you showed the sign of the Master.'

"'I wished then that we had explained about the loss of the genuine secrets of a Master-Mason at the first go-off; but I said nothing. All that night there was a blowing of horns in a little dark temple half-way down the hill, and I heard a girl crying fit to die. One of the priests told us that she was being prepared to marry the King.

"'I'll have no nonsense of that kind,' says Dan. 'I don't want to interfere with your customs, but I'll take my own wife.' 'The girl's a little bit afraid,' says the priest. 'She thinks she's going to die, and they are a-heartening of her up down in the temple.'

"'Hearten her very tender, then,' says Dravot, 'or I'll hearten you with the butt of a gun so that you'll never want to be heartened again.' He licked his lips, did Dan, and stayed up walking about more than half the night, thinking of the wife that he was going to get in the morning. I wasn't any means comfortable, for I knew that dealings with a woman in foreign parts, though you was a crowned King twenty times over, could not but be risky. I got up very early in the morning while Dravot was asleep, and I saw the priests talking together in whispers, and the Chiefs talking together too, and they looked at me out of the corners of their eyes.

"'What is up, Fish?' I says to the Bashkai man, who was wrapped up in his furs and looking splendid to behold.

"'I can't rightly say,' says he; 'but if you can induce the King to drop all this nonsense about marriage, you'll be doing him and me and yourself a great service.'

"'That I do believe,' says I. 'But sure, you know, Billy, as well as me, having fought against and for us, that the King and me are nothing more than two of the finest men that God

Almighty ever made. Nothing more, I do assure you.'

"'That may be,' says Billy Fish, 'and yet I should be sorry if it was.' He sinks his head upon his great fur cloak for a minute and thinks. 'King' says he, 'be you man or god or devil, I'll stick by you to-day. I have twenty of my men with me, and they will follow me. We'll go to Bashkai until the storm blows over.'

"A little snow had fallen in the night, and everything was white except the greasy fat clouds that blew down and down from the north. Dravot came out with his crown on his head, swinging his arms and stamping his feet, and looking more pleased than Punch.

"'For the last time, drop it, Dan,' says I in a whisper. 'Billy Fish says that there will be a row.'

"'A row among my people!' says Dravot. 'Not much. Peachey, you're a fool not to get a wife, too. Where's the girl?' says he with a voice as loud as the braying of a jackass. 'Call up all the Chiefs and priests, and let the Emperor see if his wife suits him.'

"There was no need to call any one. They were all there leaning on their guns and spears round the clearing in the centre of the pine wood. A deputation of priests went down to the little temple to bring up the girl, and the horns blew up fit to wake the dead. Billy Fish saunters round and gets as close to Daniel as he could, and behind him stood his twenty men

with matchlocks. Not a man of them under six feet. I was next to Dravot, and behind me was twenty men of the regular Army. Up comes the girl, and a strapping wench she was, covered with silver and turquoises but white as death, and looking back every minute at the priests.

"'She'll do,' said Dan, looking her over. 'What's to be afraid of, lass? Come and kiss me.' He puts his arm round her. She shuts her eyes, gives a bit of a squeak, and down goes her face in the side of Dan's flaming red beard.

"'The slut's bitten me!' says he, clapping his hand to his neck, and, sure enough, his hand was red with blood. Billy Fish and two of his matchlock-men catches hold of Dan by the shoulders and drags him into the Bashkai lot, while the priests howls in their lingo,—'Neither god nor devil but a man!' I was all taken aback, for a priest cut at me in front, and the Army behind began firing into the Bashkai men.

"'God A-mighty!' says Dan. 'What is the meaning o' this?'

"'Come back! Come away!' says Billy Fish. 'Ruin and Mutiny is the matter. We'll break for Bashkai if we can.'

"I tried to give some sort of orders to my men—the men o' the regular Army—but it was no use, so I fired into the brown of 'em with an English Martini and drilled three beggars in a line. The valley was full of shout-

ing, howling creatures, and every soul was shrieking, 'Not a god nor a devil but only a man!' The Bashkai troops stuck to Billy Fish all they were worth, but their matchlocks wasn't half as good as the Kabul breech-loaders, and four of them dropped. Dan was bellowing like a bull, for he was very wrathy; and Billy Fish had a hard job to prevent him running out at the crowd.

"'We can't stand,' says Billy Fish. 'Make a run for it down the valley! The whole place is against us.' The matchlock-men ran, and we went down the valley in spite of Dravot's protestations. He was swearing horribly and crying out that he was a King. The priests rolled great stones on us, and the regular Army fired hard, and there wasn't more than six men, not counting Dan, Billy Fish, and Me, that came down to the bottom of the valley alive.

"'Then they stopped firing and the horns in the temple blew again. 'Come away—for Gord's sake come away!' says Billy Fish. 'They'll send runners out to all the villages before ever we get to Bashkai. I can protect you there, but I can't do anything now.'

"My own notion is that Dan began to go mad in his head that hour. He stared up and down like a stuck pig. Then he was all for walking back alone and killing the priests with his bare hands; which he could have done. 'An Emperor am I,' says Daniel, 'and next year I shall be a Knight of the Queen.'

"'All right, Dan,' says I; 'but come along now while there's time.'

"'It's your fault,' says he, 'for not looking after your Army better. There was mutiny in the midst, and you didn't know—you damned engine-driving, plate-laying, missionary's-pass-hunting hound!' He sat upon a rock and called me every foul name he could lay tongue to. I was too heartsick to care, though it was all his foolishness that brought the smash.

"'I'm sorry, Dan,' says I, 'but there's no accounting for natives. This business is our Fifty-Seven. Maybe we'll make something out of it yet, when we've got to Bashkai.'

"'Let's get to Bashkai, then,' says Dan, 'and, by God, when I come back here again I'll sweep the valley so there isn't a bug in a blanket left!'

"We walked all that day, and all that night Dan was stumping up and down on the snow, chewing his beard and muttering to himself.

"'There's no hope o' getting clear,' said Billy Fish. 'The priests will have sent runners to the villages to say that you are only men. Why didn't you stick on as gods till things was more settled? I'm a dead man,' says Billy Fish, and he throws himself down on the snow and begins to pray to his gods.

"Next morning we was in a cruel bad country —all up and down, no level ground at all, and no food either. The six Bashkai men looked at Billy Fish hungry-wise as if they wanted to

ask something, but they said never a word. At noon we came to the top of a flat mountain all covered with snow, and when we climbed up into it, behold, there was an army in position waiting in the middle!

"'The runners have been very quick,' says Billy Fish, with a little bit of a laugh. 'They are waiting for us.'

"Three or four men began to fire from the enemy's side, and a chance shot took Daniel in the calf of the leg. That brought him to his senses. He looks across the snow at the Army, and sees the rifles that we had brought into the country.

"'We're done for,' says he. 'They are Englishmen, these people—and it's my blasted nonsense that has brought you to this. Get back, Billy Fish, and take your men away; you've done what you could, and now cut for it. Carnehan,' says he, 'shake hands with me and go along with Billy. Maybe they won't kill you. I'll go and meet 'em alone. It's me that did it. Me, the King!'

"'Go!' says I. 'Go to Hell, Dan. I'm with you here. Billy Fish, you clear out, and we two will meet those folk.'

"'I'm a Chief,' says Billy Fish, quite quiet. 'I stay with you. My men can go.'

"The Bashkai fellows didn't wait for a second word, but ran off, and Dan and Me and Billy Fish walked across to where the drums were drumming and the horns were horning. It was

cold—awful cold. I've got that cold in the back of my head now. There's a lump of it there."

The punkah-coolies had gone to sleep. Two kerosene lamps were blazing in the office, and the perspiration poured down my face and splashed on the blotter as I leaned forward. Carnehan was shivering, and I feared that his mind might go. I wiped my face, took a fresh grip of the piteously mangled hands, and said:—"What happened after that?"

The momentary shift of my eyes had broken the clear current.

"What was you pleased to say?" whined Carnehan. "They took them without any sound. Not a little whisper all along the snow, not though the King knocked down the first man that set hand on him—not though old Peachey fired his last cartridge into the brown of 'em. Not a single solitary sound did those swines make. They just closed up tight, and I tell you their furs stunk. There was a man called Billy Fish, a good friend of us all, and they cut his throat, Sir, then and there, like a pig; and the King kicks up the bloody snow and says:—'We've had a dashed fine run for our money. What's coming next?' But Peachey, Peachey Taliaferro, I tell you, Sir, in confidence as betwixt two friends, he lost his head, Sir. No, he didn't neither. The King lost his head, so he did, all along o' one of those cunning rope-bridges. Kindly let me have the

paper-cutter, Sir. It tilted this way. They marched him a mile across that snow to a rope-bridge over a ravine with a river at the bottom. You may have seen such. They prodded him behind like an ox. 'Damn your eyes!' says the King. 'D'you suppose I can't die like a gentleman?' He turns to Peachey—Peachey that was crying like a child. 'I've brought you to this, Peachey,' says he. 'Brought you out of your happy life to be killed in Kafiristan, where you was late Commander-in-Chief of the Emperor's forces. Say you forgive me, Peachey.' 'I do,' says Peachey. 'Fully and freely do I forgive you, Dan.' 'Shake hands, Peachey,' says he. 'I'm going now.' Out he goes, looking neither right nor left, and when he was plumb in the middle of those dizzy dancing ropes, 'Cut, you beggars,' he shouts; and they cut, and old Dan fell, turning round and round and round, twenty thousand miles, for he took half an hour to fall till he struck the water, and I could see his body caught on a rock with the gold crown close beside.

"But do you know what they did to Peachey between two pine-trees? They crucified him, sir, as Peachey's hands will show. They used wooden pegs for his hands and his feet; and he didn't die. He hung there and screamed, and they took him down next day, and said it was a miracle that he wasn't dead. They took him down—poor, old Peachey that hadn't done them any harm—that hadn't done them any . . ."

He rocked to and fro and wept bitterly, wiping his eyes with the back of his scarred hands and moaning like a child for some ten minutes.

"They was cruel enough to feed him up in the temple, because they said he was more of a god than old Daniel that was a man. Then they turned him out on the snow, and told him to go home, and Peachey came home in about a year, begging along the roads quite safe; for Daniel Dravot he walked before and said:—'Come along, Peachey. It's a big thing we're doing.' The mountains they danced at night, and the mountains they tried to fall on Peachey's head, but Dan he held up his hand, and Peachey came along bent double. He never let go of Dan's hand, and he never let go of Dan's head. They gave it to him as a present in the temple, to remind him not to come again, and though the crown was pure gold, and Peachey was starving, never would Peachey sell the same. You knew Dravot, sir! You knew Right Worshipful Brother Dravot! Look at him now!"

He fumbled in the mass of rags round his bent waist; brought out a black horsehair bag embroidered with silver thread; and shook therefrom on to my table—the dried, withered head of Daniel Dravot! The morning sun that had long been paling the lamps struck the red beard and blind, sunken eyes; struck, too, a heavy circlet of gold studded with raw turquoises,

that Carnehan placed tenderly on the battered temples.

"You behold now," said Carnehan, "the Emperor in his habit as he lived—the King of Kafiristan with his crown upon his head. Poor old Daniel that was a monarch once!"

I shuddered, for, in spite of defacements manifold, I recognised the head of the man of Marwar Junction. Carnehan rose to go. I attempted to stop him. He was not fit to walk abroad. "Let me take away the whisky, and give me a little money," he gasped. "I was a King once. I'll go to the Deputy Commissioner and ask to set in the Poorhouse till I get my health. No, thank you, I can't wait till you get a carriage for me. I've urgent private affairs—in the south—at Marwar."

He shambled out of the office and departed in the direction of the Deputy Commissioner's house. That day at noon I had occasion to go down the blinding hot Mall, and I saw a crooked man crawling along the white dust of the roadside, his hat in his hand, quavering dolorously after the fashion of street-singers at Home. There was not a soul in sight, and he was out of all possible earshot of the houses. And he sang through his nose, turning his head from right to left:

"The Son of Man goes forth to war,
A golden crown to gain;
His blood-red banner streams afar—
Who follows in his train?"

I waited to hear no more, but put the poor wretch into my carriage and drove him off to the nearest missionary for eventual transfer to the Asylum. He repeated the hymn twice while he was with me whom he did not in the least recognise, and I left him singing to the missionary.

Two days later I inquired after his welfare of the Superintendent of the Asylum.

"He was admitted suffering from sunstroke. He died early yesterday morning," said the Superintendent. "Is it true that he was half an hour bareheaded in the sun at midday?"

"Yes," said I, "but do you happen to know if he had anything upon him by any chance when he died?"

"Not to my knowledge," said the Superintendent.

And there the matter rests.

THE PIECE OF STRING

BY

HENRI RENÉ ALBERT GUY DE MAUPASSANT

ON all the roads leading to Goderville, the peasants and their wives were coming to town for market-day. The men shambled along at an easy-going gait, with bodies bent forward. Their long legs were deformed and twisted through hard work—from the weight of the plough, which at the same time throws the left shoulder too high, and ruins the figure; from mowing the grain, which effort causes the knees to spread too far apart; and from all the other slow and painful labours of country life. Their blue blouses, starched to a sheenlike varnish and finished at collar and wristbands with little designs in white stitching, stood from their bony bodies like balloons ready for flight, with a head, two arms, and two feet protruding.

Some of the men had a cow or calf in tow at the end of a rope, while their wives followed close behind the animal, switching it over the haunches with a leafy branch to hasten its pace.

The women carried large baskets, out of which stuck the heads of chickens and ducks. They took much shorter and quicker steps than the men. Their lanky, spare figures were decorated

with mean little shawls pinned across their flat breasts. Each head bore a white linen cover, bound close to the hair and surmounted by a cap.

Now and then, there went by a waggonette drawn by a pony on a jerky trot, which jostled the two men on the seat in a ludicrous manner, and made the woman at the end of the cart hold the sides firmly for ease from the rough jolting.

In the Goderville market-place was a great crowd of men and animals. The horns of the cattle, the high, long-napped hats of the well-to-do peasants, and the head-dresses of women bobbed above the level of that crowd. Noisy voices, sharp and shrill, kept up a wild and ceaseless clamour, only outdone now and then by a great guffaw of laughter from the strong lungs of a jolly bumpkin, or a prolonged *moo* from a cow tied to the wall of some house.

Everywhere it smelled of stables, of milk and manure, of hay and sweat. The air was redolent with that sourish, disagreeable odour savouring of man and beast which is peculiar to the labourers of the fields.

Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté, had just arrived at Goderville, and was directing his steps to the square when he observed on the ground a little bit of string. Economical, like all true Normans, Master Hauchecorne considered that anything useful was worth picking up, and he bent down painfully, for he suffered from rheumatism. He picked up the scrap of twine from

the ground, and was preparing to wind it up carefully when he noticed Master Malandain, the harness-maker, looking at him from his doorway. Once they had a quarrel over a halter and had kept angry ever since, both of them holding spite. Master Hauchecorne was smitten with a certain sense of shame at being seen thus by his enemy searching in the dirt for a mere bit of string. He hastily hid his find under his blouse, then in the pocket of his breeches—after which he pretended to be still looking at his feet for something which he had not yet found. At length, he started toward the market-place, his body almost bent double by his chronic pains.

He lost himself at once in the slow, clamorous throng, which was agitated by perpetual bickerings. The prospective buyers, after looking the cows over, would go away only to return perplexed; always fearing to be taken in; never reaching a decision, but narrowly watching the seller's eyes, seeking in the end to detect the deceit of the man and the defect in his animal.

The women, having put their big baskets at their feet, had pulled out the poultry, which lay on the ground with legs tied, with frightened eyes and scarlet combs.

They listened to offers, maintaining their prices with a sharp air and impassive face, or else at a sweep accepting a reduced price, crying after the customer who left reluctantly, "It's settled, Anthime; I'll let you have them!"

Then, by degrees, the square emptied, and, as the Angelus struck noon, those living at a distance flocked to the inns.

At Jourdain's, the dining-room was filled with guests, as full as the great courtyard was with vehicles of every description—carts, gigs, waggonettes, tilburies, nondescript jaunting-cars, yellow with mud, misshapen, patched up, lifting their shafts to heaven like two arms, or else in a sorry plight with nose in the mud and back in the air.

Right opposite to where the diners were at table, the immense fireplace, all brightly aflame, imparted a genial warmth to the backs of the people ranged on the right. Three spits were turning, loaded with chickens, with pigeons, and with legs of mutton; and a delicious odour of roast meat and of gravy gushing over roast brown skin took wing from the hearth, kindled good humour, and made mouths water.

All the aristocracy of the plough were eating there at Jourdain's, the innkeeper who dealt in horses—a shrewd fellow, who had a goodish penny put by.

The dishes were passed and emptied, as were likewise huge jugs of yellow cider. Every one recounted his dealings—his buying and selling. They gave news of the crops. The weather was good for greens, but somewhat wet for wheat.

All at once, a drum rolled in the court before the house. Almost everybody, save the too

indifferent, immediately sprang to their feet and ran to the door, or to the windows, with mouth still full and napkin in hand.

After the public crier had stopped his racket, he launched forth in a jerky voice, making his pauses at the wrong time:

"Be it known to the inhabitants of Goderville, and in general to all persons present at the market, that there was lost this morning on the Beuzeville road, between nine and ten o'clock, a black leather pocket-book containing five hundred francs and business papers. You are requested to return it to the mayor's office, at once, or to Master Fortuné Houlbrèque, of Manneville. There will be twenty francs reward."

Then the man went away. They heard once more from afar the dull drum-beats and the fading voice of the crier.

After that, they began to discuss this event, counting the chances Master Houlbrèque yet had of recovering or not recovering his pocket-book.

And the meal went on.

They were finishing their coffee when the corporal of police appeared on the threshold.

He asked:

"Master Hauchecorne, of Bréauté—is he here?"

Hauchecorne, seated at the other end of the table, answered:

"Here I am."

And the corporal resumed:

"Master Hauchecorne, will you have the kindness to come with me to the mayor's office? The mayor would like to speak to you."

The peasant, surprised and disturbed, tossed off his drink and arose, worse bent than in the morning, because the first steps after a rest were always especially difficult. He started off, repeating:

"Here I am; here I am."

And he followed the corporal.

The mayor was awaiting him, seated in his official chair. He was the notary of the place, a large, grave man of pompous speech.

"Master Hauchecorne," he said, "you were seen this morning, on the Beuzeville road, to pick up the pocket-book lost by Master Houlbrèque, of Manneville."

The countryman, confused, stared at the mayor, already frightened by this suspicion attaching to him—why he could not understand.

"I—I—I picked up that pocket-book?"

"Yes, you."

"On my word of honour, I didn't even know nothing about it."

"You were seen."

"They saw me—me? Who's they what saw me?"

"Master Malandain, the harness-maker."

Then the old man remembered, understood, and reddened with anger.

"Ah! he saw me, did he, the rascal? He saw

me pick up this here string. Look, your worship."

And, rummaging at the bottom of his pocket, he pulled out the little piece of string.

But the incredulous mayor shook his head.

"You will not make me believe, Master Hauchecorne, that Master Malandain, who is a man worthy of all respect, has taken this bit of cord for a pocket-book."

The peasant, furious, raised his hand, and spit at his side to bear witness to his honour, repeating,

"F'r all that, it's God's truth, holy truth, your worship. There! My soul and my salvation knows it's true!"

The mayor resumed:

"After having picked the article up, you even searched also a long while in the mud to make sure if any money had fallen out of it."

The good man choked with rage and terror.

"If them can say—if them can say—such lies as that to take away an honest man's name! If them can say——"

However he might protest, he was not believed.

He was confronted by Master Malandain, who repeated and supported his statement. They railed at each other for an hour. Master Hauchecorne demanded that they search his pockets. Nothing was found upon him.

Finally, the mayor, very much perplexed, let

him go with the warning that he would inform the public prosecutor, and ask for orders.

The news had spread abroad. When he came out of the mayor's office, the old man was the centre of curiosity and questioning, both serious and jeering, but into which not the least resentment entered. And he began recounting the long rigmarole of the string. They did not believe him. They grinned.

He went along, stopped by every one, or accosting his acquaintances, going over and over his story and his protestations, pointing to his pockets turned inside out to prove he had nothing.

They said to him:

"Come now, you old rascal!"

And he became angry, exasperated, feverish, disconsolate at being doubted, and forever telling his story.

Night fell. It became time to go home. He started out with three of his neighbours, to whom he pointed out the spot where he had picked up the bit of string; and, all along the road, he recited his adventure.

That evening, he made a round of the village of Bréauté so as to tell everyone. He found only unbelievers.

He was ill of it all through the night.

The next day about one in the afternoon, Marius Paumelle, a farm helper of Master Breton, the market-gardener at Ymauville, re-

turned the pocket-book and its contents to Master Houlbrèque of Manneville.

This man maintained he had found it on the road, but, not knowing how to read, had carried it home, and turned it over to his master.

The news spread to the suburbs. Master Hauchecorne was informed. Immediately, he set himself the task of going about relating his story, capping it with this climax. He was triumphant.

"What hurt me the mostest," he said, "was not the thing itself, don't you see, but the lies. Nothing hurts so as when's lies told about you."

All day long he talked of his adventure. He told it on the roads to the people passing, at the tavern to people who were drinking, and then to the people coming out of church the next Sunday. He even stopped strangers to tell them the tale. He felt relieved by this time, yet something troubled him without his knowing just what it was. People had a mocking manner as they listened. They did not appear convinced. He almost felt their tattle behind his back.

Tuesday of the next week, he went to the Goderville market, solely impelled by the need of recounting his affair.

Malandain, standing in his doorway, began to laugh as he saw him pass. For what?

He accosted a farmer of Criquetot who did not permit him to finish, but, landing him a thump in the pit of the stomach, cried in his

face, "Get out, you great rogue!" Then he turned on his heel.

Master Hauchecorne, altogether abashed, grew more and more disturbed. Why had he been dubbed "a great rogue"?

When seated at table in Jourdain's tavern, he again began to explain the particulars.

A Montvilliers horse-dealer yelled at him:

"Don't tell me, you old fox! I know your piece of string yarn!"

Hauchecorne stammered, "B—b—but it's found, the pocket-book!"

To which the other retorted:

"That'll do, daddy! There's one who finds, and another who gives up. Neither is no one the wiser."

The peasant was choked off. At last, he understood. They accused him of having had the pocket-book returned by a crony—by an accomplice.

He tried to protest. The whole table started to laugh.

He could not finish his meal, and took his leave amidst their mocking and derision.

He returned to his home, ashamed and indignant, stifled with rage, with confusion; all the more dejected because, with his Norman cunning, he was capable of having done what they accused him of, and even of bragging of it as a good trick. His innocence vaguely appeared to him as impossible to prove; his roguery was too well known. And he felt

struck to the heart by the injustice of the suspicion.

Again he commenced to tell of his adventure; every day its recital lengthened, each time containing new proofs, more energetic protestations, and more solemn oaths which he prepared in his solitary hours. His mind was altogether occupied by the story of the piece of string. He was believed all the less as his defence grew more complicated and his arguments more artful.

"Now, those are the proofs of a liar," they said behind his back.

He felt this. It consumed his strength. He exhausted himself in useless efforts.

He went into a visible decline.

The jokers now made him detail the story of "The Piece of String" to amuse them, just as you persuade a soldier who has come through a campaign to tell his version of a battle. At last, his mind began to give way.

Near the end of December he took to his bed.

He died the first week in January, and, in the delirium of the throes of death, he protested his innocence, repeating, "A little piece of string —little piece of string—see, here it is, your worship."

THE SPECTRE BRIDEGROOM

BY

WASHINGTON IRVING

ON the summit of one of the heights of the Odenwald, a wild and romantic tract of upper Germany that lies not far from the confluence of the Main and the Rhine, there stood many, many years since the castle of the Baron von Landshort. It is now quite fallen to decay, and almost buried among beech trees and dark firs; above which, however, its old watch-tower may still be seen struggling, like the feudal possessor I have mentioned, to carry a high head and look down upon the neighbouring country.

The baron was a dry branch of the great family of Katzenellenbogen, and inherited the relics of the property and all the pride of his ancestors. Though the warlike disposition of his predecessors had much impaired the family possessions, yet the baron still endeavoured to keep up some show of former state. The times were peaceable, and the German nobles in general had abandoned their inconvenient old castles, perched like eagles' nests among the mountains, and had built more convenient residences in the valleys; still, the baron remained proudly drawn up in his little fortress, cherishing with hereditary

inveteracy all the old family feuds, so that he was on ill terms with some of his nearest neighbours, on account of disputes that had happened between their great-great-grandfathers.

The baron had but one child, a daughter, but Nature, when she grants but one child, always compensates by making it a prodigy; and so it was with the daughter of the baron. All the nurses, gossips, and country cousins assured her father that she had not her equal for beauty in all Germany; and who should know better than they? She had, moreover, been brought up with great care under the superintendence of two maiden aunts, who had spent some years of their early life at one of the little German courts, and were skilled in all the branches of knowledge necessary to the education of a fine lady. Under their instructions, she became a miracle of accomplishments. By the time she was eighteen, she could embroider to admiration, and had worked whole histories of the saints in tapestry with such strength of expression in their countenances that they looked like so many souls in purgatory. She could read without great difficulty, and had spelled her way through several Church legends and almost all the chivalric wonders of the *Heldenbuch*. She had even made considerable proficiency in writing; could sign her own name without missing a letter, and so legibly that her aunts could read it without spectacles. She excelled in making little elegant, good-for-nothing ladylike nicknacks of all kinds, was versed in the

most abstruse dancing of the day, played a number of airs on the harp and guitar, and knew all the tender ballads of the *Minnelieder* by heart.

Her aunts, too, having been great flirts and coquettes in their younger days, were admirably calculated to be vigilant guardians and strict censors of the conduct of their niece; for there is no duenna so rigidly prudent and inexorably decorous as a superannuated coquette. She was rarely suffered out of their sight; never went beyond the domains of the castle unless well attended, or, rather, well watched; had continual lectures read to her about strict decorum and implicit obedience; and, as to the men—pah!—she was taught to hold them at such a distance and in such absolute distrust that, unless properly authorised, she would not have cast a glance upon the handsomest cavalier in the world—no, not if he were even dying at her feet.

The good effects of this system were wonderfully apparent. The young lady was a pattern of docility and correctness. While others were wasting their sweetness in the glare of the world, and liable to be plucked and thrown aside by every hand, she was coyly blooming into fresh and lovely womanhood under the protection of those immaculate spinsters, like a rosebud blushing forth among guardian thorns. Her aunts looked upon her with pride and exultation, and vaunted that, though all the other young ladies in the world might go astray, yet, thank Heaven,

nothing of the kind could happen to the heiress of Katzenellenbogen.

But, however scantily the Baron von Landshort might be provided with children, his household was by no means a small one; for Providence had enriched him with abundance of poor relations. They, one and all, possessed the affectionate disposition common to humble relatives—were wonderfully attached to the baron, and took every possible occasion to come in swarms and enliven the castle. All family festivals were commemorated by these good people at the baron's expense; and, when they were filled with good cheer, they would declare that there was nothing on earth so delightful as these family meetings, these jubilees of the heart.

The baron, though a small man, had a large soul, and it swelled with satisfaction at the consciousness of being the greatest man in the little world about him. He loved to tell long stories about the stark old warriors whose portraits looked grimly down from the walls around, and he found no listeners equal to those who fed at his expense. He was much given to the marvellous, and a firm believer in all those supernatural tales with which every mountain and valley in Germany abounds. The faith of his guests exceeded even his own: they listened to every tale of wonder with open eyes and mouth, and never failed to be astonished, even though repeated for the hundredth time. Thus lived the Baron von Landshort, the oracle of his table, the absolute

monarch of his little territory, and happy, above all things, in the persuasion that he was the wisest man of the age.

At the time of which my story treats, there was a great family gathering at the castle on an affair of the utmost importance: it was to receive the destined bridegroom of the baron's daughter. A negotiation had been carried on between the father and an old nobleman of Bavaria to unite the dignity of their houses by the marriage of their children. The preliminaries had been conducted with proper punctilio. The young people were betrothed without seeing each other, and the time was appointed for the marriage ceremony. The young Count von Altenburg had been recalled from the army for the purpose, and was actually on his way to the baron's to receive his bride. Missives had even been received from Würtzburg, where he was accidently detained, mentioning the day and hour when he might be expected to arrive.

The castle was in a tumult of preparation to give him a suitable welcome. The fair bride had been decked out with uncommon care. The two aunts had superintended her toilet, and quarrelled the whole morning about every article of her dress. The young lady had taken advantage of their contest to follow the bent of her own taste; and, fortunately, it was a good one. She looked as lovely as youthful bridegroom could desire, and the flutter of expectation heightened the lustre of her charms.

The suffusions that mantled her face and neck, the gentle heaving of the bosom, the eye now and then lost in reverie, all betrayed the soft tumult that was going on in her little heart. The aunts were continually hovering around her, for maiden aunts are apt to take great interest in affairs of this nature. They were giving her a world of staid counsel how to deport herself, what to say, and in what manner to receive the expected lover.

The baron was no less busied in preparations. He had, in truth, nothing exactly to do; but he was naturally a fuming, bustling little man, and could not remain passive when all the world was in a hurry. He worried from top to bottom of the castle with an air of infinite anxiety; he continually called the servants from their work to exhort them to be diligent; and buzzed about every hall and chamber, as idly restless and importunate as a blue-bottle fly on a warm summer's day.

In the meantime, the fatted calf had been killed; the forests had rung with the clamour of the huntsmen; the kitchen was crowded with good cheer; the cellars had yielded up whole oceans of *Rheinwein* and *Fernewein;* and even the great Heidelberg tun had been laid under contribution. Everything was ready to receive the distinguished guest with *Saus und Braus* in the true spirit of German hospitality; but the guest delayed to make his appearance. Hour rolled after hour. The sun, that had poured his downward rays upon the rich forest of the Oden-

wald, now just gleamed along the summits of the mountains. The baron mounted the highest tower, and strained his eyes in hopes of catching a distant sight of the count and his attendants. Once he thought he beheld them; the sound of horns came floating from the valley, prolonged by the mountain echoes. A number of horsemen were seen far below slowly advancing along the road; but, when they had nearly reached the foot of the mountain, they suddenly struck off in a different direction. The last ray of sunshine departed, the bats began to flit by in the twilight, the road grew dimmer and dimmer to the view, and nothing appeared stirring in it but now and then a peasant lagging homeward from his labour.

While the old castle of Landshort was in this state of perplexity a very interesting scene was transacting in a different part of the Odenwald.

The young Count von Altenburg was tranquilly pursuing his route in that sober, jog-trot way in which a man travels toward matrimony when his friends have taken all the trouble and uncertainty of courtship off his hands, and a bride is waiting as certainly as a dinner at the end of his journey. He had encountered at Würtzburg a youthful companion-in-arms with whom he had seen some service on the frontiers—Hermann von Starkenfaust, one of the stoutest hands and worthiest hearts of German chivalry—who was now returning from the army. His father's castle was not far distant from the old fortress of Landshort, although a hereditary feud rendered

the families hostile and strangers to each other.

In the warm-hearted moment of recognition, the young friends related all their past adventures and fortunes, and the count gave the whole history of his intended nuptials with a young lady whom he had never seen, but of whose charms he had received the most enrapturing descriptions.

As the route of the friends lay in the same direction, they agreed to perform the rest of their journey together, and, that they might do it the more leisurely, set off from Würtzburg at an early hour, the count having given directions for his retinue to follow and overtake him.

They beguiled their wayfaring with recollections of their military scenes and adventures; but the count was apt to be a little tedious now and then about the reputed charms of his bride and the felicity that awaited him.

In this way they had entered among the mountains of the Odenwald, and were traversing one of its most lonely and thickly wooded passes. It is well known that the forests of Germany have always been as much infested by robbers as its castles by spectres; and at this time the former were particularly numerous, from the hordes of disbanded soldiers wandering about the country. It will not appear extraordinary, therefore, that the cavaliers were attacked by a gang of these stragglers in the midst of the forest. They defended themselves with bravery, but were nearly

overpowered when the count's retinue arrived to their assistance. At sight of them, the robbers fled, but not until the count had received a mortal wound. He was slowly and carefully conveyed back to the city of Würtzburg, and a friar summoned from a neighbouring convent who was famous for his skill in administering to both soul and body; but half of his skill was superfluous: the moments of the unfortunate count were numbered.

With his dying breath, he entreated his friend to repair instantly to the castle of Landshort and explain the fatal cause of his not keeping his appointment with his bride. Though not the most ardent of lovers, he was one of the most punctilious of men, and appeared earnestly solicitous that his mission should be speedily and courteously executed. "Unless this is done," said he, "I shall not sleep quietly in my grave." He repeated these last words with peculiar solemnity. A request at a moment so impressive admitted no hesitation. Starkenfaust endeavoured to soothe him to calmness, promised faithfully to execute his wish, and gave him his hand in solemn pledge. The dying man pressed it in acknowledgment, but soon lapsed into delirium—raved about his bride, his engagements, his plighted word—ordered his horse, that he might ride to the castle of Landshort, and expired in the fancied act of vaulting into the saddle.

Starkenfaust bestowed a sigh and a soldier's

tear on the untimely fate of his comrade, and then pondered on the awkward mission he had undertaken. His heart was heavy, and his head perplexed; for he was to present himself an unbidden guest among hostile people, and to damp their festivity with tidings fatal to their hopes. Still, there were certain whisperings of curiosity in his bosom to see this far-famed beauty of Katzenellenbogen, so cautiously shut up from the world; for he was a passionate admirer of the sex, and there was a dash of eccentricity and enterprise in his character that made him fond of all singular adventure.

Previous to his departure, he made all due arrangements with the holy fraternity of the convent for the funeral solemnities of his friend, who was to be buried in the cathedral of Würtzburg near some of his illustrious relatives, and the mourning retinue of the count took charge of his remains.

It is now high time that we should return to the ancient family of Katzenellenbogen, who were impatient for their guest, and still more for their dinner, and to the worthy little baron, whom we left airing himself on the watch-tower.

Night closed in, but still no guest arrived. The baron descended from the tower in despair. The banquet, which had been delayed from hour to hour, could no longer be postponed. The meats were already overdone, the cook in an agony, and the whole household had the look of a garrison that had been reduced by famine. The

baron was obliged reluctantly to give orders for the feast without the presence of the guest. All were seated at table, and just on the point of commencing, when the sound of a horn from without the gate gave notice of the approach of a stranger. Another long blast filled the old courts of the castle with its echoes, and was answered by the warder from the walls. The baron hastened to receive his future son-in-law.

The drawbridge had been let down, and the stranger was before the gate. He was a tall, gallant cavalier, mounted on a black steed. His countenance was pale, but he had a beaming, romantic eye and an air of stately melancholy. The baron was a little mortified that he should have come in this simple, solitary style. His dignity for a moment was ruffled, and he felt disposed to consider it a want of proper respect for the important occasion and the important family with which he was to be connected. He pacified himself, however, with the conclusion that it must have been youthful impatience which had induced him thus to spur on sooner than his attendants.

"I am sorry," said the stranger, "to break in upon you thus unseasonably——"

Here the baron interrupted him with a world of compliments and greetings, for, to tell the truth, he prided himself upon his courtesy and eloquence. The stranger attempted once or twice to stem the torrent of words, but in vain; so he bowed his head, and suffered it to flow on

By the time the baron had come to a pause, they had reached the inner court of the castle, and the stranger was again about to speak, when he was once more interrupted by the appearance of the female part of the family leading forth the shrinking and blushing bride. He gazed on her for a moment as one entranced; it seemed as if his whole soul beamed forth in the gaze, and rested upon that lovely form. One of the maiden aunts whispered something in her ear; she made an effort to speak; her moist blue eye was timidly raised, gave a shy glance of inquiry on the stranger, and was cast again to the ground. The words died away, but there was a sweet smile playing about her lips, and a soft dimpling of the cheek that showed her glance had not been unsatisfactory. It was impossible for a girl of the fond age of eighteen, highly predisposed for love and matrimony, not to be pleased with so gallant a cavalier.

The late hour at which the guest had arrived left no time for parley. The baron was peremptory, and deferred all particular conversation until the morning, and led the way to the untasted banquet.

It was served up in the great hall of the castle. Around the walls hung the hard-favoured portraits of the heroes of the house of Katzenellenbogen, and the trophies which they had gained in the field and in the chase. Hacked corslets, splintered jousting-spears, and tattered banners were mingled with the spoils of sylvan warfare;

the jaws of the wolf and the tusks of the boar grinned horribly among cross-bows and battle-axes, and a huge pair of antlers branched immediately over the head of the youthful bridegroom.

The cavalier took but little notice of the company or the entertainment. He scarcely tasted the banquet, but seemed absorbed in admiration of his bride. He conversed in a low tone that could not be overheard, for the language of love is never loud; but where is the female ear so dull that it cannot catch the softest whisper of the lover? There was a mingled tenderness and gravity in his manner that appeared to have a powerful effect upon the young lady. Her colour came and went as she listened with deep attention. Now and then she made some blushing reply, and, when his eye was turned away, she would steal a sidelong glance at his romantic countenance, and heave a gentle sigh of tender happiness. It was evident that the young couple were completely enamoured. The aunts, who were deeply versed in the mysteries of the heart, declared that they had fallen in love with each other at first sight.

The feast went on merrily, or at least noisily, for the guests were all blessed with those keen appetites that attend upon light purses and mountain air. The baron told his best and longest stories, and never had he told them so well or with such great effect. If there was anything marvellous, his auditors were lost in astonishment; and if anything facetious, they were

sure to laugh exactly in the right place. The baron, it is true, like most great men, was too dignified to utter any joke but a dull one; it was always enforced, however, by a bumper of excellent *Hochheimer*, and even a dull joke at one's own table, served up with jolly old wine, is irresistible. Many good things were said by poorer and keener wits that would not bear repeating, except on similar occasions; many sly speeches whispered in ladies' ears that almost convulsed them with suppressed laughter; and a song or two roared out by a poor but merry and broad-faced cousin of the baron that absolutely made the maiden aunts hold up their fans.

Amidst all this revelry, the stranger guest maintained a most singular and unseasonable gravity. His countenance assumed a deeper cast of dejection as the evening advanced, and, strange as it may appear, even the baron's jokes seemed only to render him the more melancholy. At times he was lost in thought, and at times there was a perturbed and restless wandering of the eye that bespoke a mind but ill at ease. His conversations with the bride became more and more earnest and mysterious. Lowering clouds began to steal over the fair serenity of her brow, and tremors to run through her tender frame.

All this could not escape the notice of the company. Their gayety was chilled by the unaccountable gloom of the bridegroom; their spirits were infected; whispers and glances were interchanged, accompanied by shrugs and dubious

shakes of the head. The song and the laugh grew less and less frequent; there were dreary pauses in the conversation, which were at length succeeded by wild tales and supernatural legends. One dismal story produced another still more dismal, and the baron nearly frightened some of the ladies into hysterics with the history of the goblin horseman that carried away the fair Leonora—a dreadful story which has since been put into excellent verse, and is read and believed by all the world.

The bridegroom listened to this tale with profound attention. He kept his eyes steadily fixed on the baron, and, as the story drew to a close, began gradually to rise from his seat, growing taller and taller, until, in the baron's entranced eye, he seemed almost to tower into a giant. The moment the tale was finished, he heaved a deep sigh, and took a solemn farewell of the company. They were all amazement. The baron was perfectly thunderstruck.

"What! going to leave the castle at midnight? Why, everything was prepared for his reception; a chamber was ready for him if he wished to retire."

The stranger shook his head mournfully and mysteriously: "I must lay my head in a different chamber to-night."

There was something in this reply and the tone in which it was uttered that made the baron's heart misgive him; but he rallied his forces, and repeated his hospitable entreaties.

The stranger shook his head silently, but positively, at every offer, and, waving his farewell to the company, stalked slowly out of the hall. The maiden aunts were absolutely petrified; the bride hung her head, and a tear stole to her eye.

The baron followed the stranger to the great court of the castle, where the black charger stood pawing the earth and snorting with impatience. When they had reached the portal, whose deep archway was dimly lighted by a cresset, the stranger paused, and addressed the baron in a hollow tone of voice, which the vaulted roof rendered still more sepulchral.

"Now that we are alone," said he, "I will impart to you the reason of my going. I have a solemn, an indispensable engagement——"

"Why," said the baron, "cannot you send some one in your place?"

"It admits of no substitute—I must attend it in person; I must away to Würtzburg cathedral——"

"Ay," said the baron, plucking up spirit, "but not until to-morrow—to-morrow you shall take your bride there."

"No! no!" replied the stranger, with tenfold solemnity, "my engagement is with no bride—the worms! the worms expect me! I am a dead man—I have been slain by robbers—my body lies at Würtzburg—at midnight I am to be buried—the grave is waiting for me—I must keep my appointment!"

He sprang on his black charger, dashed over the drawbridge, and the clattering of his horse's hoofs was lost in the whistling of the night-blast.

The baron returned to the hall in the utmost consternation, and related what had passed. Two ladies fainted outright; others sickened at the idea of having banqueted with a spectre. It was the opinion of some that this might be the Wild Huntsman, famous in German legend. Some talked of mountain-sprites, of wood-demons, and of other supernatural beings with which the good people of Germany have been so grievously harassed since time immemorial. One of the poor relations ventured to suggest that it might be some sportive evasion of the young cavalier, and that the very gloominess of the caprice seemed to accord with so melancholy a personage. This, however, drew on him the indignation of the whole company, and especially of the baron, who looked upon him as little better than an infidel; so that he was fain to abjure his heresy as speedily as possible, and come into the faith of the true believers.

But, whatever may have been the doubts entertained, they were completely put to an end by the arrival next day of regular missives confirming the intelligence of the young count's murder and his interment in Würtzburg cathedral.

The dismay at the castle may well be imagined. The baron shut himself up in his chamber. The guests, who had come to rejoice with him, could

not think of abandoning him in his distress. They wandered about the courts or collected in groups in the hall, shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders at the troubles of so good a man, and sat longer than ever at the table, and ate and drank more stoutly than ever, by way of keeping up their spirits. But the situation of the widowed bride was the most pitiable. To have lost a husband before she had even embraced him—and such a husband! If the very spectre could be so gracious and noble, what must have been the living man? She filled the house with lamentations.

On the night of the second day of her widowhood, she had retired to her chamber, accompanied by one of her aunts, who insisted on sleeping with her. The aunt, who was one of the best tellers of ghost-stories in all Germany, had just been recounting one of her longest, and had fallen asleep in the very midst of it. The chamber was remote, and overlooked a small garden. The niece lay pensively gazing at the beams of the rising moon as they trembled on the leaves of an aspen tree before the lattice. The castle clock had just tolled midnight, when a soft strain of music stole up from the garden. She rose hastily from her bed and stepped lightly to the window. A tall figure stood among the shadows of the trees. As it raised its head, a beam of moonlight fell upon the countenance. Heaven and earth! she beheld the Spectre Bridegroom! A loud shriek at that moment burst

upon her ear, and her aunt, who had been awakened by the music, and had followed her silently to the window, fell into her arms. When she looked again, the spectre had disappeared.

Of the two females, the aunt now required the most soothing, for she was perfectly beside herself with terror. As to the young lady, there was something even in the spectre of her lover that seemed endearing. There was still the semblance of manly beauty, and, though the shadow of a man is but little calculated to satisfy the affections of a lovesick girl, yet, where the substance is not to be had, even that is consoling. The aunt declared she would never sleep in that chamber again; the niece, for once, was refractory, and declared as strongly that she would sleep in no other in the castle; the consequence was that she had to sleep in it alone; but she drew a promise from her aunt not to relate the story of the spectre, lest she should be denied the only melancholy pleasure left her on earth—that of inhabiting the chamber over which the guardian shade of her lover kept its nightly vigils.

How long the good old lady would have observed this promise is uncertain, for she dearly loved to talk of the marvellous, and there is a triumph in being the first to tell a frightful story; it is, however, still quoted in the neighbourhood as a memorable instance of female secrecy that she kept it to herself for a whole week, when she was suddenly absolved from all further restraint by intelligence brought to the breakfast-table one

morning that the young lady was not to be found. Her room was empty—the bed had not been slept in—the window was open, and the bird had flown!

The astonishment and concern with which the intelligence was received can be imagined only by those who have witnessed the agitation which the mishaps of a great man cause among his friends. Even the poor relations paused for a moment from the indefatigable labours of the trencher, when the aunt, who had at first been struck speechless, wrung her hands and shrieked out, "The goblin! the goblin! she's carried away by the goblin!"

In a few words, she related the fearful scene of the garden, and concluded that the spectre must have carried off his bride. Two of the domestics corroborated the opinion, for they had heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs down the mountain about midnight, and had no doubt that it was the spectre on his black charger bearing her away to the tomb. All present were struck with the direful probability, for events of the kind are extremely common in Germany, as many well-authenticated histories bear witness.

What a lamentable situation was that of the poor baron! What a heartrending dilemma for a fond father and a member of the great family of Katzenellenbogen! His only daughter had either been rapt away to the grave, or he was to have some wood-demon for a son-in-law, and perchance a troop of goblin grandchildren. As usual, he was completely bewildered, and all the

castle in an uproar. The men were ordered to take horse, and scour every road and path and glen of the Odenwald. The baron himself had just drawn on his jack-boots, girded on his sword, and was about to mount his steed to sally forth on the doubtful quest, when he was brought to a pause by a new apparition. A lady was seen approaching the castle mounted on a palfrey, attended by a cavalier on horseback. She galloped up to the gate, sprang from her horse, and, falling at the baron's feet, embraced his knees. It was his lost daughter, and her companion—the Spectre Bridegroom! The baron was astounded. He looked at his daughter, then at the spectre, and almost doubted the evidence of his senses. The latter, too, was wonderfully improved in his appearance since his visit to the world of spirits. His dress was splendid, and set off a noble figure of manly symmetry. He was no longer pale and melancholy. His fine countenance was flushed with the glow of youth, and joy rioted in his large dark eye.

The mystery was soon cleared up. The cavalier (for, in truth, as you must have known all the while, he was no goblin) announced himself as Sir Hermann von Starkenfaust. He related his adventure with the young count. He told how he had hastened to the castle to deliver the unwelcome tidings, but that the eloquence of the baron had interrupted him in every attempt to tell his tale; how the sight of the bride had completely captivated him; and that,

to pass a few hours near her, he had tacitly suffered the mistake to continue. How he had been sorely perplexed in what way to make a decent retreat, until the baron's goblin stories had suggested his eccentric exit. How, fearing the feudal hostility of the family, he had repeated his visits by stealth—had haunted the garden beneath the young lady's window—had wooed—had won—had borne away in triumph—and, in a word, had wedded the fair.

Under any other circumstances, the baron would have been inflexible, for he was tenacious of paternal authority and devoutly obstinate in all family feuds; but he loved his daughter; he had lamented her as lost; he rejoiced to find her still alive; and, though her husband was of a hostile house, yet, thank Heaven! he was not a goblin. There was something, it must be acknowledged, that did not exactly accord with his notions of strict veracity in the joke the knight had passed upon him of his being a dead man; but several old friends present, who had served in the wars, assured him that every stratagem was excusable in love, and that the cavalier was entitled to especial privilege, having lately served as a trooper.

Matters, therefore, were happily arranged. The baron pardoned the young couple on the spot. The revels at the castle were resumed. The poor relations overwhelmed this new member of the family with loving kindness; he was so gallant, so generous—and so rich. The aunts,

it is true, were somewhat scandalised that their system of strict seclusion and passive obedience should be so badly exemplified, but attributed it all to their negligence in not having the windows grated. One of them was particularly mortified at having her marvellous story marred, and that the only spectre she had ever seen should turn out a counterfeit; but the niece seemed perfectly happy at having found him substantial flesh and blood. And so the story ends.

A FIGHT FOR THE TSARINA

BY

MAURUS JOKAI

IN the reign of the Tsar Peter III., there existed at St. Petersburg a secret society which was known as "The Nameless." Its members were accustomed to meet at the house of a Russian nobleman, Yelagin by name, who alone knew the identity of his visitors, most of whom were strangers to each other. Distinguished personages of every walk of life, including priests, court ladies, officers of the Guard, Cossacks, young business men, musicians, street-singers, actors and actresses, scientists, clergymen, and statesmen, used to gather there. The only qualifications needed for entrance into the Society, the members of which were chosen by Yelagin, were beauty and wit. The only forms of address used were "thee" and "thou," and by Christian name, such as Anne, Alexandra, Katherine, Olga, Peter, Alexis, and Ivan. Their purpose in thus assembling was solely to amuse themselves at their ease. All met here on equal terms; even those who, under the conventions of caste and rank, occupied the relative positions of master and slave, broke the chains of prejudice for the moment. It is not

unlikely that he with whom the grenadier private is now playing chess is a general who might order him a hundred lashes to-morrow should he take a false step on parade! Yet now he strives with him to make a queen out of a pawn. It is possible, too, that the pretty woman who is singing sprightly French songs to the accompaniment of an instrument which she plays with her left hand is a lady in the court of the Tsarina, who probably is much more accustomed to throwing coins from her carriage to street players! Perhaps she is a princess, possibly the wife of the Lord Chamberlain, or perhaps of even higher rank than this?

Russian society of every class, high and low, met in Yelagin's castle, and there enjoyed fraternity in the broadest sense of the word. Curious phenomenon, that this should happen in Russia of all countries, where so much is thought of aristocracy, officialdom, and pomp; where an inferior must dismount from his horse when meeting a superior, where non-commissioned officers take off their coats in token of salute when they meet those of higher rank, and where generals kiss priests' hands, and the noblest in the land fall on their faces before the Tsar! Here they laugh, and dance, and are familiar together, ridicule the Government, and gossip about the high dignitaries of the church—all without fear or the stiffness of society. Was merely love of amusement and novelty at the bottom of this? The existence of the secret

society was frequently made known to the police, who certainly could not be reproached for not having attempted to quash it; but, when proceedings were begun, they usually came to nothing. The investigating official either never discovered anything suspicious, or, if he did, the case was postponed. Those who were arrested in connection with the matter were set at liberty, all papers concerning the case were either destroyed or disappeared, and countless reams of writing were converted into plain white paper. If some influential official saw fit to conduct the prosecution of "The Nameless" energetically, he usually soon found himself journeying to some foreign country on an important mission, from which he was unlikely to return for a considerable period. "The Nameless Society" was evidently under the protection of powerful influences.

At the close of one of these entertainments, a young Cossack officer remained behind the other guests, and, when quite alone with his host, he said to him,

"Yelagin, did you see the pretty woman with whom I danced the mazurka to-night?"

"Yes, I saw her. Have you fallen in love with her, as the others have done?"

"I must make that woman my wife."

Yelagin clapped the Cossack on the shoulders and looked into his eyes.

"That you will not do! That woman will never be your wife, friend Yemelyan."

Yelagin clapped the Cossack on the shoulders.

"I will marry her—I have determined to do so."

"You will not marry her, for she will not accept you."

"If she does not come with me, I shall carry her off by force."

"You cannot marry her, because she has a husband."

"Then I shall carry off her husband with her."

"You cannot carry her off, for she lives in a palace, guarded by many soldiers, and, when she drives, her carriage is accompanied by many outriders."

"I shall take her away with her palace, her soldiers, and her carriage. By St. Gregory, I swear it!"

Yelagin laughed scornfully.

"My good Yemelyan, go home and sleep it off. That pretty woman is the Tsarina!"

The Cossack turned pale, and his breath came in gasps; but, the next moment, his eyes flashed, and he said to Yelagin:

"Nevertheless, what I have said, I have said."

Yelagin ceremoniously bowed out his guest. But, unlikely as it may appear, Yemelyan was not intoxicated, unless, indeed, it were with the wine of a woman's eyes.

Several years passed. The society of "The Nameless" was broken up and scattered. The Tsar had been assassinated, and Katherine, his

wife, had ascended the throne. Some people alleged that she had brought about his death; others defended her. It was stated that she had known what was going to happen, but had been unable to prevent it; that she had pretended, after a struggle with her conscience, to know nothing of the poison administered to her husband. Moreover, it was even asserted that she had done well, and that the fate which had overtaken the Tsar was a just one, as he was a wicked man; and, finally, the whole matter was denied, and it was said that Tsar Peter had not been assassinated at all, but had died a natural death from acute inflammation of the stomach. According to the immortal Voltaire, he was too much addicted to brandy. However, the Tsar was buried; but, for the Tsarina Katherine, he belonged to that army of the dead who do not sleep in peace, who rise from their graves, and, stretching out clammy hands from their shrouds, lay gruesome touch on those who have forgotten them. And, when they turn over in their graves, the earth seems to tremble under the feet of those that walk over them!

Among the many diverse rumours that circulated, one difficult to believe, but which was generally credited among the populace, and which caused much loss of life before it faded from memory, was to the effect that Tsar Peter had neither died a natural death nor had been assassinated, but that he still lived. It was said that a common soldier, resembling the Tsar even

to his pock-marked face, had been shown to the public on the Tsar's death-bed in St. Petersburg, and that the Tsar himself had escaped from prison in the soldier's clothes, and would return to recapture his throne, subdue his wife, and destroy his enemies! Five pretenders rose, one after the other, in all parts of the Russian Empire, the rallying-cry of each being "Revenge on the faithless!" The usurpers conquered sometimes a northern, sometimes a southern province, assembled an army, captured towns, and generally conducted themselves in such a manner that it was necessary to despatch forces to defeat them. No sooner was one of these pretenders driven into the northern deserts, or captured and hanged, than another Tsar Peter would rise up and instigate another rebellion, interrupting the enjoyment of the Court circle until it seemed as if these things would never end. The murdered husband remained unburied, for, at any moment, he might rise up in some part of the country, exclaiming, "I am still alive!" He seemed to have a hundred lives, for, no matter how many times he was killed, he would again appear with the statement that he still lived. After five of these pretenders of Peter had followed the real Tsar to the grave, a sixth made his appearance. The name of this usurper, who was the most daring and the most feared of all, will be inscribed for all time in the history of the Russian people as a horrible example to all who swerve from the paths of

rectitude. His name was Yemelyan Pugascheff. Born and bred a Cossack in the province of the Don, he took part in the Prussian campaign, first as a soldier of Prussia, later as a follower of the Tsar. At the siege of Bender, he had become a Cossack hetman. On account of his superb physical strength, and his natural shrewdness and adaptability, he soon became a leader among men; but his advancement was cut short by the peace which was proclaimed. He was sent, with many other discharged soldiers, back to the Don province, where there was nothing else to do but to attend to farming matters. Pugascheff, however, had no idea of devoting the rest of his life to the making of cheese, which had been his original occupation. He hated the Tsarina—and adored her. He hated the proud woman who dared to place her yoke upon the Russian people, and he adored the woman sair enough to ensnare the heart of every Russian! He became obsessed with the mad thought that he must fold that woman in his arms, even if he had to wrest her from her throne to do so. To this end, he prepared his plans. He journeyed to the Volga, to the land of the Roskolniks—the descendants of the persecuted fanatics who, in past days, had been executed by hanging, on trees or on scaffolds, for the sole reason that they crossed themselves downwards, and not upwards, as one does in Moscow. The Roskolniks were always ready for an uprising, and required only a leader.

Pugascheff tried to work his purpose with these, but his plans miscarried, and he fell into the hands of the police, and was thrown into prison at Kazan.

And so he might dream on! He dreamed one night that he freed his limbs from their chains, cut his way through the prison wall, swam across the surrounding trench, which was filled with sharp spikes, and, finally, reached the desert plains of the Ural Sorodok, without food and with his clothing in rags! The Yakics Cossacks, the most dreaded people in Russia, inhabit the plain of Uralsk, one of those border countries of which only the outline is seen on the map. This tribe has no intercourse with the neighbouring peoples, and changes its location from year to year. One winter, a Cossack band will make a raid in the land of the Kirghese, and burn down their huts; next year, the Kirghese will retaliate on the Cossacks! Fighting is good sport in the winter. In the summer, however, one sleeps in the open, and there are no houses to destroy! These Cossacks are Roskolniks by faith. Not long since, they had amused themselves by putting to death the Russian Commissioner-General Traubenberg, together with his followers, who had come to make regulations in regard to the fishing rights in the River Yaik; and, by this act, they considered as demonstrated the fact that the Government had nothing to say about their fish. At the time that Pugascheff arrived there,

they had just finished dividing the weapons of the Russian soldiers among themselves, and were planning as to what they should next do. One beautiful autumn night, the escaped prisoner, having lost himself in the valley of Yeremina Kuriza, situated in the most lonely part of the Ural Mountains, reached the tumbledown village of Yaicskoi, and knocked at the door of the first house he saw, saying that he was a refugee, and requesting admittance. He was received with open arms, and was given supper. The owner of the house was himself poor, the Kirghese having stolen his sheep. One of his sons, a Roskolnik priest, had been forced to work in the lead mines; another had been taken to serve as a soldier, and had subsequently died; the third had been involved in a rebellion and been hanged. The old man remained at home alone. Pugascheff listened to the lament of his host, and said,

"These things can be alleviated."

"Who can raise my dead sons to life again?" said the old man bitterly.

"He who himself rose in order that he might slay."

"Of whom do you speak?"

"Of the Tsar."

"What! the murdered Tsar!" exclaimed the old soldier, with astonishment.

"He has already been killed six times, yet still he lives. Such people as I met on my journey here all asked me, 'Is it true that the

Tsar is alive, and that he has escaped his captors?' I answered them that it was true, that he was on his way here, and that, before long, he would show himself to them."

"That is all very well, but how can the Tsar get here?"

"He is already here."

"Where is he?"

"I am he."

"Well, well!" replied Kocsenikoff. "Now I understand what you wish me to do. I shall be ready whenever you say the word. It is all the same to me, so that I have a leader. But who is to believe that you are the Tsar? Hundreds of people have seen him face to face. The face of the Tsar was horribly pockmarked as everyone knows, while yours is smooth."

"We can soon arrange that. Has there not recently been a death from the black-pox in this neighbourhood?"

"We have such a death every day. My last labourer died two days ago."

"Very well; I shall sleep in his bed, and I shall leave it like Tsar Peter."

He kept his word. He lay on the infected couch. Two days later, he was down with the black-pox, and, six weeks afterward, he rose with the pale and afflicted countenance of the unhappy Tsar.

Kocsenikoff felt that a man who could so carelessly set his life at stake was one to be counted on. In this region, nine out of every

ten men have some hidden plan of personal revenge, for the consummation of which they await only a suitable opportunity. Among the first ten people to whom Kocsenikoff confided the scheme, he found nine who were willing to take part in the daring undertaking, even to the extent of their heads; but the tenth was a traitor. He betrayed the plot to Colonel Simonoff, the commander of the Yaicskoi, who at once put Kocsenikoff under arrest. Pugascheff, however, succeeded in escaping on the very horse which had been sent with the Cossack who was assigned to arrest him—even carrying off the Cossack himself!

For the enlightenment of future generations, the name of the Cossack whom Pugascheff carried off is chronicled in the history of the nation. Czika was the name of this faint-hearted individual. The event took place on September 15th. When, two days later, Pugascheff approached the town of Yaicskoi, he was arrayed in a scarlet, fur-trimmed tunic, and had three hundred bold troopers at his back. As he neared the town, he ordered that trumpets be blown, and demanded that Colonel Simonoff surrender, and kiss the hand of his lord and master, Tsar Peter III. Simonoff opposed him with 5,800 troops, of whom 800 were regular Russian soldiers, and they soon succeeded in surrounding Pugascheff. At a moment when all seemed lost, he extracted a letter from his bosom, and read out to the troops that con-

fronted him a proclamation in which he besought the Cossacks faithful to Peter III. to assist him to regain his crown and to oust pretenders, threatening with death those who might dispute his authority. This spread consternation among the Cossacks, and the cry was echoed from lip to lip, "The Tsar lives! This is the Tsar!" The officers tried to preserve order, but to no purpose. They began to fight among themselves, and the struggle went on until far into the night. The end of the matter was that, instead of Simonoff's capturing Pugascheff, the latter made prisoners of eleven of his officers; and, when he retired from the scene, his three hundred men had been increased to eight hundred. Only with great difficulty was Colonel Simonoff able to retain command over the remainder of his men. Pugascheff encamped on the outskirts of the town, in the grounds of a Russian nobleman, and on the wide-spreading trees he hung the eleven captured officers. His adversary feared to attack him, but entrenched himself under the shelter of cannon, awaiting attack in his turn. But our bold friend was not quite such a fool as to give him battle. He must first gain more adherents, more guns, and win more important battles. He turned his attention to the small towns that had been built by the Government along the Yaik. The Roskolniks greeted the pseudo-Tsar with wild enthusiasm. They believed that he had risen from his grave to punish the arrogance of the Moscow clergy, and

that he intended to substitute their own persecuted faith for the Court religion. By the third day, 3,000 men had flocked to his standards. The fortress of Ilecska was his first stopping-place. It is distant about seventy versts from Yaicskoi. The gates were opened for him, and he was received with enthusiasm, the town-guard joining his troops. The arms and ammunition he secured at Ilecska enabled him to extend his campaign. The stronghold of Kazizna, to which he next turned his attention, did not, however, give up so easily, and Pugascheff was forced to lay siege to it. In the heat of battle, Pugascheff's Cossacks called out to those within the town, whereupon the latter immediately turned their guns upon their own officers. All who opposed them were summarily executed, and the Colonel himself was taken prisoner by Pugascheff, who had an aversion to any one who wore his hair long, as was then the fashion among the Russian officers. For this reason, the Colonel was hanged. Then, well furnished with implements of war, Pugascheff marched to the fortress of Nisnaya Osfernaya, which he also captured after a short siege. All those who would not take up his cause, he killed.

Pugascheff now commanded 4,000 men, and was therefore in a position to attack the stronghold of Talitseva, the defenders of which were led by two brave men, Bilof and Yelagin by name. The Russians entrenched themselves well in face of the rebels, and, in all probability,

would have been victorious if their stores of hay had not been burned up. The light of this fire was of much assistance to the rebels. Bilof and Yelagin were driven out of the gates, and killed. When the pseudo-Tsar entered the town, a wonderfully beautiful woman came to him in the market-place, and fell at his feet, crying for mercy. The woman was very fair, and the grief and excitement under which she was labouring made her still more attractive.

"For whom do you ask pardon?"

"For my husband, who was wounded while fighting against you."

"What is your husband's name?"

"Captain Chaloff, the commander of the fort."

A noble-hearted man would undoubtedly have made both husband and wife happy by the gift of their freedom. A profligate would have killed the husband and taken the wife for himself. Pugascheff hanged them both. He knew perfectly well that there were many still living who remembered that Peter III. was not a lover of women, and he acted his part consistently to the end.

The rebels seemed to move on wings. The taking of Talicseva was followed by the capture of Czernoyecinskaya. The commander of the latter place fled at the approach of the rebel leader, and gave over the defence of the fortress to Captain Nilsayeff, who surrendered out of hand. Pugascheff, who did not approve of officers who deserted to the enemy, hanged him

without saying "Thank you." The soldiers of the rank and file he spared, but he had their hair clipped, so that if, by any chance, they should escape, he would know them again. Finally, the last fortress in the district, Presistenska, situated not far from the capital, Orenburg, surrendered to the rebels, and in the evening of the same day Pugascheff encamped outside the walls of Orenburg with thirty cannon and a well-disciplined army. These things all happened within a fortnight. In that time, he had captured six forts, cut a whole regiment to pieces, and created one of his own, with which he now attacked the capital of the province.

The Russian Empire is a land of great distances, and Pugascheff might have conquered half of it before anything could be done at St. Petersburg. He was nicknamed "the Marquis" by Katherine, who often in the Court circles laughed heartily about her extraordinary husband, on the way to reconquer his wife, the Tsarina. The gallows was to be his nuptial bed when he arrived.

On the announcement of Pugascheff's approach, Reinsburg, the Governor of Orenburg, despatched a part of his army to attack the rebel. Colonel Biloff was in command, but he fared no better than many other hunters after big game do. His quarry was too much for him, and he never returned to Orenburg; instead, Pugascheff's army appeared before its walls. Reinsburg then sent his most formidable regiment, under the command of Major Naumoff,

to the attack. The pseudo-Tsar did not oppose it until it neared the mountains outside Orenburg, when, with masked guns, he opened such a destructive fire upon the Russians that they were utterly defeated and forced to retire under cover of the town. Pugascheff then left his position in the mountains, and encamped on the plain before the walls of the fortress. The idea of both armies was to tire each other out by procrastination. Although it was but October, the plains on which Pugascheff had pitched his camp were covered with snow, so that, instead of tents, he had huts made of oak branches. Each army had an ally of nature—the one, frost, and the other, hunger. Hunger eventually proved the stronger. Naumoff marched out of the fort, and made for the mountains which had shortly before been the camping-ground of his opponent. His infantry charged upon the rebel troops, but Pugascheff suddenly changed his tactics, and flung his Cossacks upon the enemy's flank, compelling him to seek safety in flight. Naumoff himself cut his way, at the head of his artillery, sword in hand, through the Cossack lines. Then Pugascheff besieged the town. With his forty-eight guns, he commenced a bombardment which lasted until November 9th, when he attempted to take the town by assault. The attack was repulsed, however, the Russians making a stubborn defence. Pugascheff decided, therefore, to starve his enemy into submission. The

face of the country shone white with snow, the trees of the forests were silvered with icicles, and, throughout the long nights, the desert was transformed by the cold radiance of the moon into an enchanting background for Pugascheff's dream. For Pugascheff dreamed that one day he should be the spouse of Katherine, the Tsarina of All the Russias.

Katherine II. was an inveterate player of tarok, and was especially fond of that species of the game which afterward took its name from a famous Russian general, "Paskevics." This game required four players. One evening, the quartet was made up of the Tsarina, Princess Dashkoff, Prince Orloff, and General Karr. The last-named was (prospectively) a celebrated soldier, and as a tarok-player he was without a rival. He rose from the table always victorious. No one ever had seen him lose money, and, for that reason, he fell into the good graces of the Tsarina. She was reported to have said that, if she could only once succeed in winning a rouble from Karr, she would wear it on a chain suspended from her neck. It is not unlikely that General Karr's success depended as much upon the errors of his opponents as upon his own skill. The attention of the ladies was divided between the game and Orloff's beautiful eyes, while Orloff's success with the fair sex was so great that he could hardly be expected to have equal luck at cards. At one point of the game, while the cards were

being shuffled, the remark was made that it was disgraceful that an escaped Cossack like Pugascheff should be able to subdue a fourth part of European Russia, to defeat the flower of the Russian troops times without number, to execute Russian officers like criminals, and, finally, to make terms for the surrender of Orenburg like a prince of the blood.

"I know the fellow very well," said Karr. "While His Majesty was living, I used to play cards with Pugascheff at Oranienbaum. But he was a dull-witted chap. Whenever I called for *carreau*, he would give me *cœur*."

"His play has evidently not improved much since then," said the Tsarina; "for now he throws *pique* after *cœur*."

It was at that time the custom at the Russian court to interlard conversation with French phrases. The French word *cœur* means heart, and *piquer* to prick or annoy.

"No wonder, when our generals are so incompetent. Now, if I were only there!"

"Perhaps you will do us the favour of going?" said Orloff, with a smile.

"I am at Her Majesty's service," replied General Karr.

"But what would become of our tarok parties if you were not here," laughingly put in the Tsarina.

"Well, your Majesty might console yourself with a hunting party now and then at Peterhof."

The suggestion found favour with Katherine,

for it was at Peterhof that she had become acquainted with Orloff, and she had passed many pleasant hours there. She smilingly nodded to the General.

"Very well, then, but you must be back in a fortnight."

"A fortnight is, indeed, a short time," returned Karr; "but if your Majesty wishes, I shall take sledge within the hour, and on the third day shall be in Bugulminska. On the fourth day, I shall arrange my cards, and, on the fifth, I shall send word to this fellow that I challenge him to a game. On the sixth day, I shall defeat him at every point, and, on the seventh and eighth days, by playing my last trick, I shall take him prisoner, and bring him in chains to your Majesty's feet."

The odd way in which the card-playing general expressed himself was too much for Katherine's gravity, but she instructed Orloff to take the necessary steps to see that Karr was furnished with everything he required. An imperial *ukase* was issued by which Karr was entrusted with the command of the South Russian troops. The forces under him comprised 20,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry under General Freyman at Bugulminska, 15,000 troops under Colonel Czernicseff, Governor of Zinbirsk, and two detachments of the Life Guard under Colonel Naumann, the latter being generally considered the flower of the Russian army.

General Karr left that night for the scene of action. Although he prided himself on the celerity of his movements, he omitted to take into consideration one important point in such tactics. His illustrious models, Alexander the Great, Frederick the Great, Hannibal, etc., were also in the habit of moving quickly, but they took their troops with them, while Karr thought it more expedient to travel alone. But, even so, he did not go fast enough. A Cossack horseman who left St. Petersburg at the same time as he did arrived a day and a half ahead of him, informed Pugascheff of his coming, and acquainted him with the disposition of General Karr's troops. Pugascheff at once sent a body of Cossacks to attack the General's rear, and thus prevent his meeting with the Life Guard.

General Karr did not allow any one at Bugulminska to interfere with his plans. They were absolutely settled, and nothing that his colleague Freyman might suggest could alter them. He said it was not so much a matter of war as of the chase. This wild animal must be captured alive, if possible. Czernicseff, with 1,200 troopers and twelve guns, must already be near at hand, as he had been instructed by Karr to cross the river Szakmara and oppose Pugascheff's retreat. In the meantime, Karr himself, with picked men, would attack him in the van. Thus, Pugascheff would be caught between two fires. Czernicseff hardly thought his superior ignorant

enough to allow him to be attacked by the overwhelming force of his antagonist, nor did he think that Pugascheff would show such a lack of tactical knowledge as to bring all his troops to bear on a small detachment, while before him lay a powerful army. But, in point of fact, both these things happened. Pugascheff calmly allowed the enemy to cross the frozen river, and then attacked him on both flanks, taking the precaution to break the ice in his rear. The entire force was destroyed, and twelve guns captured. Czernicseff and thirty-five officers who were taken prisoners were hanged on trees along the roadside. Then Pugascheff, intoxicated with his success, hurled his entire army against Karr. The two forces met at a Cossack village about thirty-six miles from Bugulminska. To General Karr's astonishment, instead of meeting an undisciplined mob, he had to contend with a veteran army, well furnished with cannon. Freyman advised him, now that he was deprived of the services of Czernicseff's squadron, not to begin operations with the cavalry, but to entrench himself in the village and await the enemy's attack. A series of surprises then befell Karr. He saw the supposed mob advancing with drawn swords; saw that they did not flinch before the hottest fire. He blanched at the intrepid bravery with which they charged the position he had fancied secure. These men that he had considered bandits were heroes. But what irritated him most of all was that

these Cossacks knew how to serve their guns. In St. Petersburg, Cossacks are not enlisted in the artillery, in order that they may not learn how to use cannon Yet here the guns, but recently captured, were served as if their gunners had been a lifetime at the work, and their balls had already set the village on fire in several places. General Karr ordered his entire force to the charge, while, with his reserves, he attacked the enemy's flank, driving it in. But, among the 1,500 horsemen under his command, 300 were Cossacks, and these took advantage of the thick of the battle to desert to the enemy. When General Karr saw this, his consternation was so great that he wavered, and fled. Throwing discipline to the winds, his soldiers abandoned their comrades at the firing line, and retreated in disorder.

Pugascheff's Cossacks pursued the Russians for a distance of thirty miles, but did not succeed in capturing the General, whose fear had lent him wings. When he arrived at Bugulminska, he learned that Czernicseff's cavalry had been cut to pieces, that the Life Guard had been taken prisoners, and that twenty-one guns had fallen into the hands of the rebels. These untoward tidings gave him such a bad cold in the head that he was sent back to St. Petersburg, where the tarok party awaited him. That very evening he was unlucky enough to lose his twenty-first card, which caused the Tsarina to remark that it was not the first loss of a similar

number (referring to the twenty-one guns) that he had incurred, an observation which provoked much laughter at the Russian court.

This victory marked the zenith of Pugascheff's success. Perhaps he might have gone on further still, had he remained true to the two tremendous passions which had been the cause of his rapid rise—the one being to marry the Tsarina, the other to grind the nobility under his feet. Which of these two purposes was the bolder? From their realisation, he was prevented only by the merest circumstance. The defeat of General Karr had given him an open path to Moscow, where 100,000 serfs were only awaiting his coming to revolt against the tyranny of the aristocracy and to form a new Russian Empire. Forty million slaves awaited their liberator in the person of the Cossack pretender. But he suddenly lost the firmness, the ideals and the ambitions that had theretofore possessed him—and all through a pair of beautiful eyes.

The victory of Bugulminska was the signal for the coming of a number of envoys from the Bashkirs with promises of allegiance. One of these envoys brought him a young girl to be his wife. The name of this girl was Uliyanka, and, from the moment that Pugascheff set eyes on her, his heart no longer belonged to the Tsarina. The Cossack now had such faith in the virtue of his star that he did not act with his usual strictness. Uliyanka became his favourite, and he appointed Salavke, her father, to be ruler of

the Bashkirs. Then he gathered about his person all manner of pomp and ceremony. He clothed himself in the finest court costumes, and decorated his companions with medals taken from the bodies of the Russian officers he had slain. He created them generals, colonels, counts, and princes. The Cossack Czika, his prime adherent, was appointed generalissimo, and to this man he gave over the command of half his army. He made an issue of roubles bearing his portrait under the title of Tsar Peter III., and published a circular with the words, "*Redivivus et ultor.*" Having no silver mines, he ordered the coins to be struck from copper, which was plentiful. This example, by the way, was also followed by the Russians, who issued copper roubles by the million, and made generous use of them in the payment of debts.

Pugascheff now substituted for the comedy of a rebellion the farce of a reign. Instead of marching against the unprotected cities of the Empire, he besieged its fortresses, and, forgetting the fair ideal of his dreams, he consoled himself with the sordidness of a woman of the people.

Czika, the generalissimo, was ordered to take the fortress of Ufa with the troops under his command. It was now the month of January 1774, and the winter was the coldest ever known in the country's history. The forest trees split with a noise like thunder, and the birds of the air were frozen as they flew. To engage in

siege operations under such conditions was impossible. The earth hardened to such a depth that trenches could not be dug, and it was almost impossible to live in tents on the open plain.

The neighbouring towns had already been occupied by the rebel leaders, who thus cut off all supplies from the Russians. In Orenburg, they had already eaten the garrison horses, and the commissary, Kicshoff by name, was seized with the idea of boiling the skins of the slaughtered animals, cutting them into slices, and mixing them with paste. This food, so-called, was given out to the soldiers, and caused the ravage of a disease among the garrison that incapacitated half the troops. On January 13th, Colonel Vallenstiern endeavoured to cut his way through the enemy's lines. He took with him 2,500 men, but returned with less than seventy. The remainder were left on the field. Certainly, they required no more food. A few hundred hussars, however, succeeded in breaking through, and these men carried to St. Petersburg the news of what Tsar Peter III. (who was now enjoying his seventh resurrection) was doing. The Tsarina began to tire of the homage of her admirers, so she called together her generals, and asked which of them was willing to head an expedition, in the depth of winter, into the wilderness of snows. This meant no game at war; it meant attempting the subjection of a powerful force, which, if not checked, would soon

be a match for the most efficient troops of Europe. Four men replied that in Russia nothing was impossible. The names of these four men were Prince Galiczin, General Bibikoff, Colonel Larionoff, and Michelson, a Swedish officer. But their number was soon reduced to two. The first battle of Bozal proved too much for Larionoff, who returned home, defeated. The hardships of the campaign spelt the end of Bibikoff's usefulness, for he died on the snow-swept plain.

Only Galiczin and Michelson were left. The Swede had already become famous by reason of his prowess in the Turkish wars, but, when he marched from the fortress of Bozal against the rebels, his troops consisted of no more than 400 cavalry and 600 infantry, with four guns. With this small force, he attempted the relief of the fortress of Ufa. But, though his movements were speedy, those of Czika's spies were speedier still, and the rebel chieftain was apprised not only of the approach of the enemy, but also of their numerical weakness. He anticipated that they merely intended to reinforce the garrison of Ufa, so he despatched against them only 3,000 men, with nine guns, ordering them to hold the mountain passes which blocked the way to Ufa. But Michelson chose another route. His men travelled on sledges, and so fast did they proceed that, when they reached Czika's camp and attacked his vanguard, nobody opposed them. The panic-stricken rebels fled, leaving two guns in Michelson's

possession. The Swede knew well that the sound of the guns would act as a signal for the arrival of the enemy's 3,000 men who occupied the passes, and that he was in danger of being caught between two fires; so he hurriedly entrenched 200 of his men beneath their sledges, while, with the remainder of his troops, he advanced to the town of Czernakuka, the destination of Czika's fleeing forces. Losing no time, Michelson threw himself in the forefront of his hussars, and charged the main body of the enemy. This bold and unexpected attack was demoralising in its effect; the centre of the camp broke, and, in a few moments, Michelson found himself in possession of a battery of cannon. He then directed his attention to the right and left wings. The result of the surprise was that Czika's troops were utterly routed, leaving behind them fifty-six guns. The victor then retraced his steps to the spot where he had left his 200 men entrenched beneath their sledges, and, with this addition to his forces, entirely surrounded the enemy, who surrendered after leaving many dead on the field. The conquering Swede notified the commander of the Ufa garrison that the road was clear, and that he would soon receive the cannon captured from the enemy. When about a hundred and twenty versts distant from Ufa, he came up with Czika, who, with forty-two of his officers, was endeavouring to escape. Michelson captured them all, and that they were not all

hanged was due only to the fact that the plain was destitute of trees.

Prince Galiczin, in the meantime, was pursuing Pugascheff. The Russian general had with him 6,000 men, but he did not catch up with the pretender until the first days of March. Pugascheff awaited his enemy at Taticseva. This so-called fortress, which was surrounded by wooden walls, may have been sufficient to protect sheep from robbers, but it was certainly not fit for warlike defence. The rebel leader, however, did not lose his head, and proved himself no mean opponent. He covered the fences surrounding the fort with snow, on which he poured water, rendering them almost as solid as stone, and at the same time so slippery that no one could surmount them. Here he awaited Galiczin with a part of his army, the main body of which occupied Orenburg. The Russian general approached cautiously. The fog was so thick that the opposing bodies perceived each other only when they were within firing distance. A fierce hand-to-hand combat followed. Pugascheff, at the head of the flower of his troops, was always to be found where danger threatened, but his efforts were fruitless. The Russians finally succeeded in crossing the ice walls, capturing his cannon, and driving him out of the stronghold. The victory was complete, but it was attained at the cost of the lives of a thousand Russians. Pugascheff retreated with 4,000 men and seven guns, but with the loss of his prestige

and of his belief in his star. The Tsar, who but yesterday had proclaimed his campaign of revenge, was now compelled to go back to the desert, which did not receive him kindly. Only now did the real terrors of the campaign begin. It was a war such as can be carried on only in Russia, where, in the thousands and thousands of acres of desert, bands of wild marauders wander, all haters of the Empire and all eager for revenge. Pugascheff took refuge among these tribes. Again he attacked Galiczin at Kargozki, and again he was defeated, this time losing his last gun. Here Uliyanka, his favourite, was captured, if, indeed, she did not betray him to the enemy. He himself managed to escape only by fording the river Myaes on horseback.

This is the border of Asia, and it is here that Russia ends and Siberia begins. There are no longer any villages, but only military outposts, a day's march distant from each other, and, along the ranges of the Ural Mountains, the so-called "factories." The Wozkrezenzki factory, which is situated at a point about a day's march from the mountains, is separated from the Zimski factory by virgin forests. In both of these factories, cinnamon and paints are made. Near at hand are the powder factory of Uzizka and the bomb factory of Zatkin, whose labourers are Russian convicts. At the junction of the rivers are several small towns, guarded by native Cossacks, while other towns are occupied by regular

Russian detachments that have fallen into disgrace. To this region came Pugascheff with what was left of his army. Galiczin followed him for some time, but finally decided that, in a country whose roads are marked only by trenches, the pursuit of an enemy whose only object was to get away as fast and as far as possible was hopeless. Pugascheff reinforced his meagre army from the tribes of the Ural district, who deserted their huts, and rallied to his standard.

Suddenly the winter came to an end, and was followed by those soft, mellow April days which are seen only in Siberia, when at night the temperature sinks below the freezing point, while in the daytime the melting snow covers everything with water, every brook becomes a river, and every river a vast ocean. The pursued might still make progress in his sledge, but the pursuer would have a hard task confronting him in the wilderness of fathomless morasses. Yet the intrepid Michelson dared to follow Pugascheff under these almost hopeless conditions. Even as the Siberian wolf who has tasted the blood of his victim never leaves his track until he has run him down, so this bold Swede held to the pursuit of his opponent. All told, cavalry, gunners, and infantry, his forces consisted of no more than a thousand men. Each man had to carry provisions for a fortnight and 100 cartridges. The cavalry had guns as well as sabres, so that they would be in a position to fight on foot, and the gunners added axes to

their equipment, so that they might also do duty as sappers. All were prepared to swim if the occasion arose. With this force, Michelson pursued Pugascheff through innumerable hostile tribes, people who knew no mercy and whose language he did not understand. Yet he faced the danger intrepidly, even as the sailor smiles at the terrors of the deep. On May 7th, he was attacked near the Zimski factory by the father of the girl, Uliyanka, who was leading 2,000 Bashkirs to Pugascheff's support. Michelson defeated them, and captured their cannon. From one of his prisoners, he learned that Beloborodoff, one of the dukes created by Pugascheff, was in the neighbourhood with a large force of Russian soldiers who had deserted from the regular ranks. Michelson surprised them near the river Yeresen, and forced them to take refuge in the Zatkin factory. He rode along to the walls of the factory, and, when he was so near that his voice could be distinctly heard, he began to rebuke them for their desertion, and urged them to return to their old allegiance. More than two thousand shots were directed at him from the windows of the factory, but, when the soldiers saw that he remained unharmed, they believed him to be invulnerable, threw open the gates, and joined his army. From these men, Michelson learned Pugascheff's plans—that he had captured three fortresses, Magitnaya, Stepnaya, and Petroluskaya, and was at that moment laying siege to Troiczka.

But Michelson arrived too late to save the last-named stronghold. When he arrived there, he found nothing but ruins, dead bodies, and the remains of Russian officers hanging from trees. Pugascheff, who had heard of his opponent's approach, laid a cunning trap to capture his pursuer. He decked out some of his own soldiers in the uniforms of the dead Russians, and sent them as messengers to Michelson conveying word that Colonel Colon would meet him near Varlamora. It was not until he was attacked, and two of his guns captured, that Michelson perceived the ruse by which he had been deceived. But, although surrounded on all sides, he at once charged Pugascheff's centre, cut his opponent's forces in two, and turned seeming defeat into victory. Pugascheff fled with only a few hundred followers, and escaped into the interior of Siberia.

But Michelson's troubles were not yet over. He suddenly found Zalavatka in his rear with a Bashkir force, he having already reduced the Zatkin factory and slaughtered all its inmates, including women and children. The Bashkirs held a strong position near the river Aie. They had destroyed the bridges, and confidently awaited Michelson's advance. At dawn, Michelson ordered forty of his cavalry, each man taking besides a rifleman behind him, to swim the river and hold the opposite bank until the rest of the troops joined them. In this way, the Russians crossed the river without a bridge,

dragging after them their cannon tied to trees. The Bashkirs fled, but, while Michelson was chasing them with his cavalry, his artillery was attacked by a fresh force, and he was compelled to return to their help. It was Pugascheff himself who, backed by well-equipped troops, was his new opponent. The fight went on for many hours, but late at night the rebels retreated, and marched, under cover of darkness, to the fortress of Ufa. But Michelson learned their destination, cut his way through the forest, and again met Pugascheff before the walls of Ufa. Michelson again won the battle, but his soldiers were in a lamentable condition. Hardly a whole piece of clothing or an intact boot could be found among them, and their ammunition had declined to two charges apiece. So he retreated to Ufa to replenish his equipment.

After Michelson had driven Pugascheff away from Ufa, the pretender utterly routed the Russian leaders who had been sent against him from other directions. The forces of London, Melgunoff, Duve, and Jacubovics melted before him, and, in their very presence, he set fire to the town of Birsk. He reduced the fortress of Ossa, where he found guns and ammunition, and then advanced with remarkable speed upon Kazan. Kazan is the seat of an archbishop, and there is kept the crown used by the Tsars at coronation. If Pugascheff could get the Archbishop of Kazan to place this crown on his head, who could deny that he was the Tsar of All the

Russias? The defenders of Kazan consisted of only 1,500 riflemen, under Generals Brand and Banner, but the citizens of the town rallied vigorously to the walls. The day before the siege began, General Potemkin, accompanied by General Larionoff, arrived at Kazan. The Russian camp was overrun with generals, but, nevertheless, the rebel troops carried the place. Pugascheff himself was the first to scale the walls. Larinoff fled to Nijni Novgorod, and the other generals took refuge in the citadel.

Pugascheff gave up the town to the tender mercy of his soldiers. The Archbishop of Kazan received him at the cathedral, and made him a gift of half a million roubles in gold. The crown had been carried off to the citadel, but the archbishop promised to crown him with it as soon as it was obtainable. Pugascheff set fire to all quarters of the town, hoping thereby to instil terror into the hearts of those in the citadel. But Michelson was still to be reckoned with. He was now on his way to Kazan, hardly allowing his troops time to sleep en route. He sent no news, but where he marched he left his mark. At Burnova, he dispersed a force of rebels who attacked him. At Brayevana, he defeated another detachment. At the fortress of Ossa, he learned that Pugascheff had crossed the river Kuma. Then he knew that he would find the pseudo-Tsar at Kazan. He found no boats on the river Kuma, so he swam it. Two other rivers were crossed in the same way.

When he arrived at Arkz, he heard the noise of cannon in the direction of Kazan. Giving his men time for only one hour's sleep, he marched through the night, and at dawn he saw by the smoke on the horizon that Kazan was in flames. When Pugascheff's outposts sent word to their leader that Michelson was approaching, he cursed. Was this man a devil, that he should be at his very walls when he believed him to be 300 miles away? He decided at all cost to keep the news from the garrison in the citadel. He stationed a portion of his men in the town of Tazicsin, seven miles out of Kazan, to obstruct the onward march of his hated foe.

He then proclaimed himself Tsar Peter III. But, in the middle of the ceremony, which was held in the market-place of Tazicsin, a haggard woman rushed to his feet and covered him with kisses. It was Pugascheff's wife, who had thought her husband long since dead. They had married very young, and Pugascheff himself believed her in her grave; but the poor woman recognised him by his voice. Pugascheff remained calm. He lifted the woman to her feet, and said to an officer standing by: "This woman's husband was a dear and valued friend of mine. See that she is cared for." But every one suspected that he himself was the husband of Marianka, and the incident made a profound impression on the rebel forces. The next morning, Michelson sent word into the town that he was coming, and requested the assistance

of all loyal troops. Pugascheff attacked him with fury, and for a time it seemed as if fortune had again favoured him. On the third day of the conflict, when Michelson was entirely surrounded, he put himself at the head of his small force, and charged Pugascheff's army with the impetuosity born of despair. The rebels' line was broken, and they fled, leaving 3,000 dead on the field, and 5,000 men taken prisoners.

Kazan was free, but Russia was still in danger. After his defeat at Kazan, Pugascheff fled, but not toward Siberia. This time, he marched straight toward Moscow, the heart of the Russian Empire. As soon as he had crossed the Volga, the people began to join his standard, and the old revolt of the peasantry against the nobility was enflamed into new vigour. One after another, the towns opened their gates to Pugascheff, and every castle within a radius of one hundred miles was burned to the ground. The farther he advanced, the larger his army became. Forts were occupied, towns burned and looted, and the troops which gave the rebels battle routed. In the battle of Zariczin, every Russian officer was killed, and the entire force captured. Pugascheff now had under his command 25,000 men and a large number of cannon, and the way to Moscow would have been open to him if the dreaded Michelson had not been in his rear. This remarkable man feared no enemy, however formidable, and he actually drove before him Pugascheff's large force, as the tiger chases a

herd of boars. The pretender felt that this man was his evil star. Just beyond the town of Sarepta, he found a convenient battle-ground, and there he disposed his army. It was on a hill which is divided by a steep foot-path, this path being intersected by another. Pugascheff stationed his best men on the ascending path while the remainder he sent to cover his flanks. If Michelson used his ordinary method of attack, he would advance up the little path leading to the steeper one, and, if he then succeeded, his opponents could advance from both ends of the intersecting road, and so cut him to pieces. But Michelson was not to be caught so easily. While he bombarded the position with his artillery, he himself, with Colonel Melin, attacked both flanks of the enemy. Pugascheff saw that he was spitted on his own toasting-fork. His retreating flanks were harried by the fire intended for his opponent's troops, and, in order to escape, he had to cut his way through the ranks of his own men. He fled with only sixty men, crossed the Volga, and secreted himself in the forests. His last battle had been fought.

The Russian troops surrounded the forest in which Pugascheff and his men were hiding. Yet his dreams were still of glory. In the wilderness, he pictured the shining dome of the Kremlin, and the Tsarina reclining at his feet. For days and nights, his food consisted of horse-flesh, eaten with meadow-grass instead of salt. One night, as he was preparing his frugal meal

before the fire, one of the three Cossacks who were all his remaining army, said to him, "Your comedy is played out, Pugascheff!" The pretender leaped to his feet with the words, "Fool, I am your Tsar!" At the same time, he cut the speaker to the ground. The two others rushed at him, bound him hand and foot, tied him to the back of a horse, took him to Ural Sorodok, and gave him up to General Zuvaroff. This was the very Ural Sorodok from which he had set out on his self-appointed mission. He was taken to Moscow, where he was condemned to be sliced in pieces while still alive. The sentence was confirmed by the Tsarina, although her beautiful eyes were the cause of the adventurer's terrible end. But the executioner was more merciful. There was no clause in the sentence stating where the process of slicing should begin, so be began with the head—for which bit of tenderness he was exiled to Siberia. It was just about this time that Katherine changed her favourite. Potemkin, quite a handsome man, took Orloff's place.

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

"WHAT a frightful exhibition!" she exclaimed, as we were leaving the menagerie of M. Martin, where she had just been watching that intrepid performer—to use the expression of the advertisement—"working" with his hyena.

"By what means," she continued, "can he have trained his animals so well that he is sufficiently certain of their affection to——?"

"Why," I interrupted, "what seems such an enigma to you is really very natural."

"Oh!" she exclaimed with an incredulous smile.

"Do you consider beasts entirely without passions?" I asked. "If so, let me assure you it is in our power to teach them all the vices which belong to our own state of civilisation."

She looked at me in astonishment.

"However," I resumed, "when I saw M. Martin for the first time, I confess that I, like you, uttered an exclamation of surprise. I was standing at the time beside an old soldier who had come in with me, and whose appearance I found very interesting. His right leg had been amputated; his head, with its fearless poise,

was marked with the scars of war, and told of Napoleon's battles. There was a certain frankness and good humour about this old veteran which prejudiced me at once in his favour. No doubt, he was one of those troopers whom nothing can surprise; who find something amusing even in the dying spasms of a comrade, and shroud him or strip him with equal want of compunction; who are proof against bullets, quick to reach conclusions, and who hold fellowship with the Devil. He had watched the proprietor of the menagerie very attentively, and, as the latter was leaving the cage, my companion's face assumed an expression of mocking disdain such as the wise assume to distinguish themselves from ordinary fools.

"When I made a remark about the courage of M. Martin, he smiled in a knowing way, and answered with a toss of his head:

"'Oh, that is a well-known trick.'

"'How is that? I should be much obliged, indeed, to have you explain the secret of it,' I rejoined.

"After a few minutes spent in getting acquainted, we went to dine at the first restaurant we found. A bottle of champagne with the dessert brought back past events to the mind of this curious old soldier with wonderful clearness, and he told me his story. I understood then why he could say 'a well-known trick.'"

When we reached her home, she coaxed me so much, and made so many promises, that I

consented to write the tale of the old soldier, and the next day she received the following episode from an epic which might properly be entitled, "The French in Egypt."

. . . . . .

At the time of the explorating tour of General Desaix into upper Egypt, a Provencal soldier had fallen into the hands of the Maugrabins, and was carried off by these Arabs into the desert beyond the Falls of the Nile. In order to put a safe distance between themselves and the French army, the Maugrabins proceeded by forced marches, and did not stop until evening. They pitched their camp about a well, surrounded by a fringe of palm-trees, near which they had previously buried some provisions. As they suspected no plans of escape on the part of their prisoner, they contented themselves with tying his hands, and, after having eaten some dried dates and given fodder to the horses, they went to sleep.

However, when the brave fellow saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he secured a scimetar with the aid of his teeth, and, holding the blade between his knees, he cut the cords depriving him of the use of his hands, and was free. He lost no time in taking possession of a rifle and a dagger, and providing himself with a hatchet, a supply of dried dates, a small sack of fodder, some powder and balls, he mounted a horse and spurred away in the direction of the French camp. His horse, however, was weary

from the day's travel, and, as the Frenchman was anxious to be once more safe in camp, he urged the poor animal on until, with its flanks torn by the spurs, it fell dead from exhaustion, leaving its rider in the midst of the desert.

For some time he proceeded on foot through the sand with all the desperation of a galley slave seeking freedom, but was obliged to stop as darkness was coming on, and notwithstanding the splendour of the oriental heavens at night, he was too tired to go on. Fortunately, he had been able to reach a hillock at the summit of which grew a number of palms, the foliage of which had been visible a long way off, and had awakened in the heart of the weary traveller the most pleasant anticipations. His exhaustion was so great that he threw himself down on a stone, shaped by capricious nature into the form of a camp-bed, and went to sleep without precautions of any kind for self-defence. He had risked his life, but his last thought was one of regret. He already repented of leaving the Maugrabins, whose wandering life began to appeal to him, now that he was helpless and far away from them.

He was awakened by the sun, its rays falling perpendicularly on the stone and heating it to an intolerable degree. Unfortunately, the soldier had taken his position on the side of the palms opposite to that on which the shadow of the foliage fell. He looked at those solitary trees, and was struck by their familiar appearance:

they recalled to his mind the elegant shafts and crowns, the long leaves, characteristic of the cathedral of Arles.

Having counted the trees, he began to look about him, and the deepest despondency took possession of his soul. He saw before him a boundless ocean. In every direction, as far as the eye could reach, the sands of the desert glittered like the blade of a lance in a strong light. He could not teil whether it was a sea of glass, or a thousand lakes smooth like a mirror. Carried along in waves, a fiery vapour whirled over the shifting sand. The oriental sky shone in its hopeless brazenness; nothing was left for the imagination to supply. Heaven and earth were on fire.

The silence was fearful in its weird and terrible majesty. The infinity and boundlessness of the whole oppressed the soul on every side. Not a cloud in the sky; not a breath in the air; not an incident to break the monotony on the wide expanse of those still, rippled sands. The horizon, like that of the open sea in fair weather, was marked by a line of light as straight and thin as if cut with the blade of a sword. The soldier embraced the trunk of one of the palms as if it were the body of a friend. Then, in the shelter of the straight, slender shadow which the tree cast upon the rock, he wept. Thus he remained for a time, looking with deep sadness upon the inexorable scene presented to his view. He called aloud as if to

sound the solitude, but his voice, almost lost in the hollows of the hillock, came back with hardly an echo. The echo was in his own heart. The man was only twenty years old, yet he loaded his rifle——

"There is always time enough for that," he said to himself, as he replaced the weapon of deliverance on the ground beside him.

Looking about, now at the dusky earth and now at the blue sky, the soldier began to dream of France. He recalled with almost a sense of pleasure the ill-smelling gutters of Paris; he saw again the towns through which they had passed, the faces of his comrades, and the most trifling incidents of his life.

His southern imagination represented to him the stones of his beloved Provence in the waves of heat, undulating over what seemed to be a cloth spread in the desert. Fearing the dangers of a mirage to his reason, he descended the hillock upon the side opposite the one he had climbed the evening before. Here he made a discovery which made him rejoice. It was a sort of cave, formed by nature among the immense fragments of rock composing the hillock. The remnants of a mat told that this place of refuge had been made use of at some time. Furthermore, he perceived some date-palms, loaded with fruit, only a short distance away. Then the instinct which causes a human being to cling to life began to assert itself. He found himself hoping that he would live

until some band of Maugrabins should pass that way, or perhaps he would hear the roar of cannon, for at that very hour Napoleon was on his march through Egypt.

Cheered by this thought, the Frenchman proceeded to bring down some of the clusters of ripe fruit under the weight of which the date-palms seemed to bend. The flavour of this unhoped-for manna convinced him that the former occupant of the cave had cultivated the palms, the fresh, luscious pulp proclaiming his predecessor's skill.

The Frenchman's state of mind was suddenly changed from abject despair to almost silly joy He once more climbed the hill, and, during the remainder of the day, busied himself with cutting down one of the sterile trees which had afforded him shelter the night before. A vague reminiscence brought to his mind the thought of wild beasts of the desert, and, surmising the probability of their coming to drink from the spring which issued from the rock on which he lived, but which was soon swallowed up by the desert sand, he determined to insure himself against their visits by placing a barrier across the entrance to his hermitage. In spite of his industry, however, and the strength which fear of being devoured by wild animals, during sleep, gave him, he found it impossible to cut the tree into several pieces that day; but he did succeed in felling it. When, toward evening, this king of the sand tumbled down, the noise

of its fall resounded in the distance, and the very solitude seemed to groan. The soldier trembled as if he had heard a voice pronouncing a curse upon him, but, like the heir who does not long mourn the death of a relative, he cut away from the splendid tree the great, green fronds which are its picturesque ornament, and made use of them in repairing the mat upon which he intended to spend the night. Fatigued by the heat and labour of the day, he was soon sleeping soundly beneath the reddish ceiling of the damp cave.

In the middle of the night, his sleep was broken by a peculiar sound. He sat upright, and the profound stillness enabled him to recognise the sound of breathing—but too deep and powerful to come from the chest of a human being.

Profound fear, further augmented by the darkness, the silence and the working of his imagination, chilled his heart. He felt his hair stand on end. By straining his eyes until they almost started from their sockets, he perceived in the darkness two faint yellow lights. At first, he attributed these to the reflection of the fruit he had gathered, but soon the remarkable brilliancy of the night aided him by degrees to distinguish the objects about him in the cave, and he saw an enormous animal, lying on the ground a couple of feet away.

Was it a lion—a tiger—a crocodile?

The Frenchman's education was not sufficient to help him determine to what species his enemy

belonged, but his fear was only the greater as his ignorance allowed him to imagine all kinds of combined evils. He endured the torture of listening to the breath of the animal coming and going, not losing a sound, and not daring to make the least movement.

An odour like that of a fox, only much more penetrating, heavier so to speak, filled the cave, and, when the Frenchman had blown it from his nostrils, his terror was supreme, for he could then no longer question the reality of that terrible companion's presence, in whose royal dwelling he had encamped. Soon the reflection of the light, breaking in the east, illuminated the den, and produced an almost imperceptible lustre on the resplendent and spotted skin of a panther. This specimen of the Egyptian lion slept rolled up like a great dog occupying a comfortable berth at the door of his master's house. Its face was turned toward the Frenchman; its eyes opened for a moment, then closed again.

A thousand confused thoughts passed through the mind of the panther's prisoner. First, he wanted to kill it with a shot from his rifle, but he saw that there was not enough space between them to enable him to use this means, as the muzzle of the gun would reach beyond the animal. And if it should awaken! That thought rendered him motionless.

He could hear the beating of his heart in the midst of the silence, and cursed the pulsation

caused by the rush of blood through his veins, dreading to disturb the sleep which afforded him an opportunity to plan an escape. He put both his hands on the scimetar with the idea of severing the head of his enemy, but the difficulty of cutting that tough skin, covered with dense hair, led him to give up the idea. To attempt flight would be certain death, he thought.

He preferred the chances of a fight, and decided to wait until daylight. He did not have long to wait. The Frenchman was now able to examine the panther more closely, and noticed that its muzzle was covered with blood.

"She has just eaten," he thought, not taking the pains to consider whether the feast had been human flesh or not. "She won't be hungry when she wakes."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and thighs was glistening white, and several velvet-like spots formed pretty bracelets about her paws. The muscular tail was of the same whiteness, but had a series of black rings encircling the end. The upper skin, yellow like unburnished gold, and very sleek and soft, bore the characteristic spots, shaded in the form of rosettes, which distinguish the panther from other branches of the cat family.

His calm, formidable hostess was snoring away as contentedly as a household puss asleep on an ottoman. Her bloody paws, sinewy and well armed, were stretched out in front of

her, and her head, with its straight parted beard like threads of gold, rested upon them.

If she had appeared thus in a cage, the Frenchman would certainly have admired the grace of the brute and the marked contrast of pronounced colours, which gave a royal splendour to her robe; but at that moment his appreciation of these points was marred by the threatening prospect.

At the presence of the panther, even though she slept, he experienced the effect which the magnetic eyes of a serpent are said to produce upon a nightingale.

The soldier's courage failed him before this peril, though it would doubtless have been roused by cannon belching forth fire and shell. After all, a single courageous idea filled his mind, and dried the cold perspiration rolling down his forehead. As in the case of men whom misfortune drives to a point where they defy death, he saw, without being conscious of it, a tragedy in this adventure, and determined to play his rôle with honour to the end.

"The day before yesterday, the Arabs might have killed me," he soliloquised, and, considering himself as dead, he awaited bravely, but with lively curiosity, the awakening of his enemy.

When the sun rose, the panther suddenly opened her eyes, stretched out her legs as if to dissipate the cramp, and yawned—by this last operation displaying a formidable set of teeth and a grooved, rasp-like tongue.

"Why, she acts like a coquette," thought the Frenchman, as he watched her rolling about, performing the prettiest and daintiest movements imaginable. She licked the blood-stains from her paws and muzzle, and stroked her head several times very gently.

"Well, I suppose I might make my toilet, too," said the Frenchman to himself, as his reviving courage somewhat restored his sense of humour. "We are going to wish each other good morning." With this remark, he possessed himself of the dagger stolen from the Maugrabins.

At this moment, the panther turned her head toward the Frenchman, and looked at him steadily. The fixedness of those steely eyes and their almost intolerable glare made the man shudder the more so as the animal began to approach him. But he looked at her affectionately, and, fixing his eyes upon her, as if he wished to mesmerise her, he permitted her to come very close; then he passed his hand along her body from head to tail, stroking her as gently and lovingly as if he were caressing a beautiful woman. He could feel the projections which marked the vertebræ of her supple spine; the animal raised her tail at the agreeable sensation, and the expression of her eyes became more gentle. When the Frenchman repeated this interesting blandishment for the third time, she began to purr as our cats do when expressing pleasure. But the sound coming from the

throat of this animal was so deep and strong that it reverberated through the cave like the low notes of a church organ. The soldier, understanding the value of his caresses, redoubled them in his efforts to intoxicate this exacting courtesan.

When he felt sure of having allayed the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been satisfied the night before, he arose and left the cave. The panther permitted his departure, to be sure, but, when he had climbed the hill, she bounded after him with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from branch to branch, and rubbed herself against his legs, at the same time curving her back like a cat. She looked at her visitor with a much less savage expression, and uttered that peculiar sound which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw. "She certainly is exacting," thought the Frenchman, with a smile.

He tried playing with her ears, stroked her belly, and scratched her head briskly with his nails, and, perceiving his success, even pricked her skull with the point of his dagger, intending to kill her at once. But the hardness of the bone caused him to doubt the success of such an attempt.

This sultana of the desert gave evidence of her appreciation of the efforts of her slave by raising her head and stretching her neck, giving further proof of her pleasure by the contented attitude she assumed. It suddenly occurred

to the Frenchman that, in order to slay this savage princess with a single blow, he must stab her in the throat, and he raised his arm accordingly. Then the panther, doubtless satiated with his caresses, laid herself gently at his feet, giving him a glance now and then which, in spite of her natural ferocity of expression, bore a certain amount of good-will. The poor fellow ate his dates, leaning against a tree, looking now across the desert in search of a deliverer, and then again at the panther to assure himself of her uncertain clemency. The panther looked suspiciously at the ground where the date stones fell, as he dropped them one by one. She watched the movements of the Frenchman with businesslike care. The conclusion reached as the result of her observation of him must have been favourable. When he had finished his meal, she began licking his shoes, completely removing the dust caked in the wrinkles of the leather, with her long, rough tongue.

"Ah, but when she gets hungry!" thought the soldier. In spite of the uneasiness which this thought gave him, he became absorbed in measuring the proportions of the panther with his eyes. She was certainly one of the finest specimens of her class, being not less than three feet in height and five in length, not counting her tail. This powerful member was fully three feet long, and rounded like a cudgel. Her head, as large as that of a lioness, gave

indications of great shrewdness, and, although the cold cruelty characteristic of the tiger family dominated its expression, there was in the effect of it something which made him think of a clever woman. The whole appearance of this solitary queen suggested the gayety of a drunken Nero. She had quenched her thirst with blood, and now wished to be amused.

The soldier tried walking back and forth, which the panther allowed, contenting herself with following him with her eyes. She seemed less like a faithful dog, however, than a great angora, suspicious of everything, even her master's movements. In looking about, he saw the carcass of his horse beside the spring, whither the panther had dragged it. About two-thirds of it was eaten. This discovery somewhat reassured the Frenchman; it was no trouble now to explain the absence of the panther on the evening before and the respect she had shown for him during his sleep.

Fortune having so far favoured him, he resolved to take his chances for the future. His purpose was to remain peaceably with the panther for the rest of the day, neglecting no opportunity of taming her and winning her favour.

Having decided upon his plan, he returned to her, and had the great satisfaction of seeing her wag her tail slightly. He sat down beside her, and began to play with her, holding her paws and her muzzle, turning back her ears,

rolling her over on her back, and rubbing her soft, warm sides. She evidently enjoyed these attentions, and, when he stroked the fur on her paws, she carefully drew in her curved claws.

The Frenchman, who throughout this performance had kept one hand on his dagger, still thought of plunging it into the side of the overconfident panther, but feared being killed by her during her death-struggle. On the other hand, he was conscious of a touch of pity moving him to spare such a harmless creature.

It seemed as though he had found a friend in that boundless desert. He thought of his first mistress, whom he had called "Mignon," by way of antithesis, for she was of such an atrociously jealous disposition that, during all the time that their passion lasted, he had lived in constant fear of the knife with which she threatened him. This reminiscence of his youth suggested the idea of naming the panther whose agility, grace, and gentleness he admired in proportion as his fear decreased.

By evening, he had become accustomed to his perilous position, and almost liked the danger of it. The education of his companion meanwhile had so far progressed that she would look at him when he called "Mignon" in a falsetto voice. At sunset, Mignon uttered a strangely melancholy cry, which she repeated several times.

"She has been well brought up," thought the soldier. "She is saying her prayers." This

mental pleasantry, however, only occurred to him at the sight of the peaceful attitude his companion had resumed.

"Come now, my little blonde, I am going to let you retire first," said he, trusting to the nimbleness of his legs to get as far away as possible and to seek another place of shelter when she should be asleep.

Impatiently he awaited the time for flight, and, when it came, he ran away rapidly in the direction of the Nile. But he had not gone half a mile before he heard the panther bounding along behind him, giving forth that saw-like cry already described, which seemed even more fearful than the sound of her feet.

"Ah!" he said, "she's in love with me. She never met any one before, and it is most flattering to be her first love."

At that moment, the Frenchman struck one of those treacherous quicksands so dangerous to travellers, and from which it is impossible to escape. Upon finding himself trapped, he cried out in terror, but the panther seized him by the collar, and, quickly leaping backward, she pulled him out of the sandy whirlpool as if by magic.

"Ah, Mignon," cried the soldier, caressing the panther enthusiastically, "we will stick together now, come what will, and no more tricks."

From that time forth, the desert seemed inhabited. It held a being to which the Frenchman could speak, whose ferocity he had quelled,

yet not knowing the secret of its strange affection for him. However great his desire to remain awake and on his guard, sleep soon overcame him, and held him until morning.

When he awoke, Mignon was gone. He climbed the hill, and saw her in the distance, bounding along in the characteristic manner of animals whose extremely supple vertebral column prevents their running in the usual way. Mignon came up with her mouth covered with blood. She received the caresses of her companion with supreme satisfaction, betrayed by her deep purring. Her eyes were quite softened now as she turned them with even more gentleness than on the preceding evening to the Frenchman; and he spoke to her as if she were a domestic animal.

"Aha, young lady, you really are a fine girl, aren't you, now? Are you not ashamed of yourself? Have you eaten some poor Maugrabin this morning? Well, never mind; they are only brutes like yourself. But you are not going to eat up the French? If you do, I shall not love you any more."

She played with him just as a puppy plays with its master, allowing him to roll her over, to beat her or pat her in turn; and she even solicited his attention by putting out her paw to him.

Several days passed thus. The character of his associate permitted the Frenchman to admire the sublime beauties of the desert

without interruption. Here he had experienced hours of trouble as well as hours of rest, had found food and a creature to think about, and the variety of his impressions called forth conflicting emotions. He discovered beauties, unknown to the world at large, in the rising and setting of the sun. He knew the thrill experienced at the whir produced by the wings of a passing bird—though such visitors were rare. He had watched the beauty of the colours blending in the clouds which at rare intervals passed over his place of refuge. At night, he studied the effect of the moonlight on the sand, as the simoon made undulating, rapidly changing waves. He admired the wonderful brilliancy of the oriental day, yet, after witnessing the terrible sight of a hurricane upon those wide plains where the shifting sands formed dry mists and fatal storms, he hailed with delight the advent of the evening and the refreshing softness of the starlight. Solitude led him to open the storehouses of dreams. He spent whole hours thinking of mere nothings, or comparing his past mode of life with the present. He became very fond of the panther, as his nature demanded some object upon which to lavish his affection.

Whether the influence of the rational mind through the effort of his will had subdued the savage nature of his associate, or whether she found plenty of victims in the desert to satisfy her hunger, she respected the life of the Frenchman, whose suspicions of her waned as she

of his became tamer. He spent the greater part of the time sleeping, but was obliged to keep a lookout, like a spider watching her web, lest he should allow any opportunity of deliverance to pass by. He utilised his shirt as a flag of distress, hoisting it to the top of a palm-tree stripped of its foliage; but he was obliged to stretch it by means of sticks, for fear the breeze might not be sufficiently strong to unfurl it when a traveller should look in his direction.

During the long hours when hope deserted him, he amused himself with the panther. He learned to understand the inflections of her voice and to interpret the significance of her glance. He studied the curiously designed spots which covered her skin and gave it the appearance of rippling gold. Mignon no longer even growled when he took the end of her tail in his hand to count the black and white rings which surrounded it, and which appeared at a distance like an ornament of precious stones. It gave him pleasure to watch the graceful lines of her form, the snowy whiteness of her belly, and the handsomely shaped head. But he was especially fond of following her motions when she was at play, ever surprised at the ease and youthfulness of her movements. He admired the supple grace with which she bounded, squatted, rolled, crawled along, and suddenly leaped as though attacking an enemy. Yet, no matter how great her speed or how slippery the

block of granite underfoot, she would stop short at the call of "Mignon."

One day, a great bird was circling about in the sunlight overhead. When the soldier left his panther to examine this new guest, the deserted sultana voiced her displeasure in a low growl.

"The deuce! I believe she is jealous," thought the Frenchman, as he saw her eyes become fixed and glaring. "Certainly, the soul of Virginia might have passed into that body."

The eagle disappeared in the ether, while the soldier stood admiring the crouching figure of the panther. How much grace and youth there was in every line of her body! She was as beautiful as a woman. The light yellow of her fur gradually paled on each side until, on the inner surface of her thighs, it was blended into a dull white, and the sunlight falling full upon her changed the brown rosettes to a golden hue infinitely beautiful in effect.

The man and the panther exchanged a look which seemed to be one of mutual understanding. The coquette trembled with delight when she felt the nails of her lover scratching her head. Her eyes became luminous, and then closed.

"I believe she has a soul, after all," said the soldier, studying the calmness of this queen of the desert, the colour of whose yellow and white

sands she wore, whose intense heat and solitude she personified.

. . . . . .

"Well," she told me, "I have read your plea in favour of animals. Those two seemed to understand each other so well; how did their friendship end?"

"Like all great passions—in a misunderstanding. One suspects the other. One is too proud to ask for an explanation, and the other too stubborn to offer it."

"And to think sometimes a mere look or exclamation at the proper time is sufficient. But finish your story."

"It is exceedingly difficult, but I will tell it as the old warrior told it to me. When he had finished the bottle of champagne, he exclaimed:

"'I don't know what I had done, but she turned about as if enraged, and with her sharp teeth scratched my thigh, very slightly to be sure; but I, thinking she was about to devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over with a cry which froze my very heart. In her death-struggle, she turned her eyes toward me. They showed no trace of anger. I would have given the world at that moment, had it been mine, or my cross, which I did not yet possess, to restore her to life. I felt as if I had murdered a human being—a friend. The soldiers who had seen my flag of distress, and had come to my rescue, found me in tears.

"'Well,' he continued, after a moment's silence, 'I have fought in Germany, Spain, Russia, and France, and have seen a great deal of the world, but nothing like the desert. Ah! that is beautiful—beyond compare!'

"'Could you be contented there?'

"'Oh! that doesn't follow, young man. I do not always mourn the loss of my group of palms and my panther, but I must think of them at times, and thinking makes me sad. You see, in the desert there is everything and nothing.'

"'What do you mean?'

"'Well,' he answered, with an impatient gesture, 'God is there—man is not.'"

THE SNOWSTORM

BY

ALEXANDER SERGEIVITCH PUSHKIN

TOWARD the end of the year 1811, a memorable period for us, the good Gavril Gavrilovitch R—— was living on his domain of Nenaradova. He was celebrated throughout the district for his hospitality and kind-heartedness. The neighbours were constantly visiting him: some to eat and drink; some to play at five copeck "Boston" with his wife, Praskovia Petrovna; and some to look at their daughter, Maria Gavrilovna, a pale, slender girl of seventeen. She was considered a wealthy match, and many desired her for themselves or for their sons.

Maria Gavrilovna had been brought up on French novels, and, consequently, was in love. The object of her choice was a poor sublieutenant in the army, who was then on leave of absence in his village. It need scarcely be mentioned that the young man returned her passion with equal ardour, and that the parents of his beloved one, observing their mutual inclination, forbade their daughter to think of him, and received him worse than a discharged assessor.

Our lovers corresponded with each other, and, in the little pine wood or near the old chapel,

daily saw each other alone. There they exchanged vows of eternal love, lamented their cruel fate, and formed various plans. Corresponding and conversing in this way, they arrived quite naturally at the following conclusion:

If we cannot exist without each other, and the will of hard-hearted parents stands in the way of our happiness, why cannot we do without them?

Needless to mention that this happy idea originated in the mind of the young man, and that it was very congenial to the romantic imagination of Maria Gavrilovna.

The winter came and put a stop to their meetings, but their correspondence became all the more active. Vladimir Nikolaievitch in every letter implored her to give herself up to him, to get married secretly, to hide for some time, and then throw themselves at the feet of their parents, who would, without any doubt, be touched at last by the heroic constancy and unhappiness of the lovers, and would infallibly say to them, "Children, come to our arms!"

Maria Gavrilovna hesitated for a long time, and several plans for a flight were rejected. At last, she consented: on the appointed day, she was not to take supper, but was to retire to her room under the pretext of a headache. Her maid was in the plot; they were both to go into the garden by the back stairs, and, behind the garden, they would find ready a sledge, into which they were to get, and then drive straight to the church of Jadrino, a village about five versts from

Nenaradova, where Vladimir would be waiting for them.

On the eve of the decisive day, Maria Gavrilovna did not sleep the whole night; she packed and tied up her linen and other articles of apparel, wrote a long letter to a sentimental young lady, a friend of hers, and another to her parents. She took leave of them in the most touching terms, urged the invincible strength of passion as an excuse for the step she was taking, and wound up with the assurance that she should consider it the happiest moment of her life when she should be allowed to throw herself at the feet of her dear parents.

After having sealed both letters with a Toula seal, upon which were engraved two flaming hearts with a suitable inscription, she threw herself upon her bed just before daybreak, and dozed off; but, even then, she was constantly being awakened by terrible dreams. First, it seemed to her that, at the very moment when she seated herself in the sledge, in order to go and get married, her father stopped her, dragged her over the snow with fearful rapidity, and threw her into a dark, bottomless abyss, down which she fell headlong with an indescribable sinking of the heart. Then she saw Vladimir lying on the grass, pale and blood-stained. With his dying breath, he implored her in a piercing voice to make haste and marry him. Other wild and fantastic visions floated before her, one after another. At last, she arose, paler than usual, and with a genuine

headache. Her father and mother observed her uneasiness; their tender solicitude and incessant inquiries, "What is the matter with you, Masha? Are you ill, Masha?" cut her to the heart. She tried to reassure them and to appear cheerful; but in vain.

The evening came. The thought that this was the last day she would pass in the bosom of her family weighed upon her heart. She was more dead than alive. In secret she took leave of everybody, of all the objects that surrounded her.

Supper was served; her heart began to beat violently. In a trembling voice, she declared that she did not want any supper, and then took leave of her father and mother. They kissed her and blessed her as usual, and she could hardly restrain herself from weeping.

On reaching her own room, she threw herself into a chair and burst into tears. Her maid urged her to be calm and to take courage. Everything was ready. In half an hour, Masha would leave forever her parents' house, her room, and her peaceful girlish life.

Out in the courtyard, the snow was falling heavily; the wind howled, the shutters shook and rattled, and everything seemed to her to portend misfortune.

Soon all was quiet in the house: every one was asleep. Masha wrapped herself in a shawl, put on a warm cloak, took her small box in her hand, and went down the back staircase. Her maid

followed her with two bundles. They descended into the garden. The snowstorm had not subsided; the wind blew in their faces, as if trying to stop the young criminal. With difficulty, they reached the end of the garden. In the road, a sledge awaited them. The horses, half-frozen with the cold, would not keep still; Vladimir's coachman was walking up and down in front of them, trying to restrain their impatience. He helped the young lady and her maid into the sledge, placed the box and the bundles in the vehicle, seized the reins, and the horses dashed off.

Having intrusted the young lady to the care of fate and to the skill of Tereshka, the coachman, we will return to our young lover.

Vladimir had spent the whole of the day in driving about. In the morning, he paid a visit to the priest of Jadrino, and, having come to an agreement with him after a great deal of difficulty, he then set out to seek for witnesses among the neighbouring land-owners. The first to whom he presented himself, a retired cornet of about forty years of age, and whose name was Dravin, consented with pleasure. The adventure, he declared, reminded him of his young days and his pranks in the hussars. He persuaded Vladimir to stay to dinner with him, and assured him that he would have no difficulty in finding the other two witnesses. And, indeed, immediately after dinner appeared the surveyor Schmidt, with moustache and spurs, and the son of the

captain of police, a lad of sixteen years of age, who had recently entered the lancers. They not only accepted Vladimir's proposal, but even vowed that they were ready to sacrifice their lives for him. Vladimir embraced them with rapture, and returned home to get everything ready.

It had been dark for some time. He despatched his faithful Tereshka to Nenaradova with his sledge and with detailed instructions, and ordered for himself the small sledge with one horse, and set out alone, without any coachman, for Jadrino, where Maria Gavrilovna ought to arrive in about a couple of hours. He knew the road well, and the journey would only occupy about twenty minutes altogether.

But scarcely had Vladimir issued from the paddock into the open field, when the wind rose, and such a snowstorm came on that he could see nothing. In one minute the road was completely hidden; all surrounding objects disappeared in a thick yellow fog, through which fell the white flakes of snow; earth and sky became confounded. Vladimir found himself in the middle of the field, and tried in vain to find the road again. His horse went on at random, and at every moment kept either stepping into a snowdrift or stumbling into a hole, so that the sledge was constantly being overturned. Vladimir endeavoured not to lose the right direction. But it seemed to him that more than half an hour had already passed, and he had not yet reached the

Jadrino wood. Another ten minutes elapsed—still no wood was to be seen. Vladimir drove across a field intersected by deep ditches. The snowstorm did not abate; the sky did not become any clearer. The horse began to grow tired, and the perspiration rolled from him in great drops, in spite of the fact that he was constantly being half-buried in the snow.

At last, Vladimir perceived that he was going in the wrong direction. He stopped, began to think, to recollect, and compare, and he felt convinced that he ought to have turned to the right. He turned to the right now. His horse could scarcely move forward. He had now been on the road for more than an hour. Jadrino could not be far off. But on and on he went, and still no end to the field—nothing but snowdrifts and ditches. The sledge was constantly being overturned, and as constantly being set right again. The time was passing: Vladimir began to grow seriously uneasy.

At last, something dark appeared in the distance. Vladimir directed his course toward it. On drawing near, he perceived that it was a wood.

"Thank Heaven!" he thought, "I am not far off now."

He drove along by the edge of the wood, hoping by-and-by to fall upon the well-known road or to pass round the wood: Jadrino was situated just behind it. He soon found the road, and plunged into the darkness of the wood, now denuded of

leaves by the winter. The wind could not rage here; the road was smooth; the horse recovered courage, and Vladimir felt reassured.

But he drove on and on, and Jadrino was not to be seen; there was no end to the wood. Vladimir discovered with horror that he had entered an unknown forest. Despair took possession of him. He whipped the horse; the poor animal broke into a trot, but it soon slackened its pace, and in about a quarter of an hour it was scarcely able to drag one leg after the other, in spite of all the exertions of the unfortunate Vladimir.

Gradually the trees began to get sparser, and Vladimir emerged from the forest; but Jadrino was not to be seen. It must now have been about midnight. Tears gushed from his eyes; he drove on at random. Meanwhile, the storm had subsided, the clouds dispersed, and before him lay a level plain covered with a white, undulating carpet. The night was tolerably clear. He saw, not far off, a little village, consisting of four or five houses. Vladimir drove toward it. At the first cottage, he jumped out of the sledge, ran to the window, and began to knock. After a few minutes the wooden shutter was raised and an old man thrust out his grey beard.

"What do you want?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Is Jadrino far from here?"

"Yes, yes! Is it far?"

"Not far; about ten versts."

At this reply, Vladimir grasped his hair, and stood motionless like a man condemned to death.

"Where do you come from?" continued the old man.

Vladimir had not the courage to answer the question.

"Listen, old man," said he; "can you procure me horses to take me to Jadrino?"

"How should we have such things as horses?" replied the peasant.

"Can I obtain a guide? I will pay him whatever he pleases."

"Wait," said the old man, closing the shutter; "I will send my son out to you; he will guide you."

Vladimir waited. But a minute had scarcely elapsed when he began knocking again. The shutter was raised, and the beard again appeared.

"What do you want?"

"What about your son?"

"He'll be out presently; he is putting on his boots. Are you cold? Come in and warm yourself."

"Thank you; send your son out quickly."

The door creaked: a lad came out with a cudgel and went on in front, at one time pointing out the road, at another searching for it among the drifted snow.

"What is the time?" Vladimir asked him.

"It will soon be daylight," replied the young peasant. Vladimir spoke not another word.

The cocks were crowing and it was already

light when they reached Jadrino. The church was closed. Vladimir paid the guide, and drove into the priest's courtyard. His sledge was not there. What news awaited him!

But let us return to the worthy proprietors of Nenaradova, and see what is happening there.

Nothing.

The old people awoke, and went into the parlour, Gavril Gavrilovitch in a night-cap and flannel doublet, Praskovia Petrovna in a wadded dressing-gown. The tea-urn was brought in, and Gavril Gavrilovitch sent a servant to ask Maria Gavrilovna how she was and how she had passed the night. The servant returned, saying that the young lady had not slept very well, but that she felt better now, and that she would come down presently into the parlour. And, indeed, the door opened, and Maria Gavrilovna entered the room, and wished her father and mother good morning.

"How is your head, Masha?" asked Gavril Gavrilovitch.

"Better, papa," replied Masha.

"Very likely you inhaled the fumes from the charcoal yesterday," said Praskovia Petrovna.

"Very likely, mamma," replied Masha.

The day passed happily enough, but in the night Masha was taken ill. A doctor was sent for from the town. He arrived in the evening, and found the sick girl delirious. A violent fever ensued, and for two weeks the poor patient hovered on the brink of the grave.

Nobody in the house knew anything about her flight. The letters written by her the evening before had been burnt; and her maid, dreading the wrath of her master, had not whispered a word about it to anybody. The priest, the retired cornet, the moustached surveyor, and the little lancer were discreet, and not without reason. Tereshka, the coachman, never uttered one word too much about it, even when he was drunk. Thus the secret was kept by more than half-a-dozen conspirators.

But Maria Gavrilovna herself divulged her secret during her delirious ravings. But her words were so disconnected that her mother, who never left her bedside, could understand from them only that her daughter was deeply in love with Vladimir Nikolaievitch, and that, probably, love was the cause of her illness. She consulted her husband and some of her neighbours, and at last it was unanimously decided that such was evidently Maria Gavrilovna's fate, that a woman cannot ride away from the man who is destined to be her husband, that poverty is not a crime, that one does not marry wealth, but a man, etc. Moral proverbs are wonderfully useful in those cases where we can invent little in our own justification.

In the meantime, the young lady began to recover. Vladimir had not been seen for a long time in the house of Gavril Gavrilovitch. He was afraid of the usual reception. It was resolved to send and announce to him an unex-

pected piece of good news: the consent of Maria's parents to his marriage with their daughter. But what was the astonishment of the proprietor of Nenaradova, when, in reply to their invitation, they received from him a half-insane letter. He informed them that he would never set foot in their house again, and begged them to forget an unhappy creature whose only hope was in death. A few days afterward they heard that Vladimir had joined the army again. This was in the year 1812.

For a long time, they did not dare to announce this to Masha, who was now convalescent. She never mentioned the name of Vladimir. Some months afterward, finding his name in the list of those who had distinguished themselves and been severely wounded at Borodino, she fainted away, and it was feared that she would have another attack of fever. But, Heaven be thanked! the fainting fit had no serious consequences.

Another misfortune fell upon her: Gavril Gavrilovitch died, leaving her the heiress to all his property. But the inheritance did not console her; she shared sincerely the grief of poor Praskovia Petrovna, vowing that she would never leave her. They both quitted Nenaradova, the scene of so many sad recollections, and went to live on another estate.

Suitors crowded round the young and wealthy heiress, but she gave not the slightest hope to any of them. Her mother sometimes exhorted her to make a choice; but Maria Gavrilovna shook

her head, and became pensive. Vladimir no longer existed: he had died in Moscow on the eve of the entry of the French. His memory seemed to be held sacred by Masha; at least, she treasured up everything that could remind her of him —books that he had once read, his drawings, his notes and verses of poetry that he had copied out for her. The neighbours, hearing of all this, were astonished at her constancy, and awaited with curiosity the hero who should at last triumph over the melancholy fidelity of this virgin Artemisia.

Meanwhile, the war had ended gloriously. Our regiments returned from abroad, and the people went out to meet them. The bands played the conquering song, "*Vive Henri-Quatre*," Tyrolese waltzes, and airs from "*Joconde*." Officers, who had set out for the war almost mere lads, returned grown men, with martial air, and breasts decorated with crosses. The soldiers chatted gayly among themselves, constantly mingling French and German words in their speech. Time never to be forgotten! Time of glory and enthusiasm! How throbbed the Russian heart at the word "Fatherland!" How sweet were the tears of meeting! With what unanimity did we commingle feelings of national pride with love for the Czar! And for him—what a moment!

The women, the Russian women, were then incomparable. Their usual coldness disappeared. Their enthusiasm was truly intoxicating,

when, welcoming the conquerors, they cried "Hurrah!"

What officer of that time does not confess that, to the Russian women, he was indebted for his best and most precious reward?

At this brilliant period, Maria Gavrilovna was living with her mother in the province of —— and did not see how both capitals celebrated the return of the troops. But, in the districts and villages, the general enthusiasm was, if possible, even still greater. The appearance of an officer in those places was for him a veritable triumph, and the lover in a plain coat felt very ill at ease in his vicinity.

We have already said that, in spite of her coldness, Maria Gavrilovna was, as before, surrounded by suitors. But all had to retire into the background when the wounded Colonel Bourmin of the hussars, with the order of St. George in his button-hole, and with an "interesting pallor," as the young ladies of the neighbourhood observed, appeared at the castle. He was about twenty-six years of age. He had obtained leave of absence to visit his estate, which was contiguous to that of Maria Gavrilovna. Maria bestowed special attention upon him. In his presence, her habitual pensiveness disappeared. It cannot be said that she coquetted with him, but a poet, observing her behaviour, would have said:

"*Se amor non è, che dunque?*"

Bourmin was indeed a very charming young

man. He possessed that spirit which is eminently pleasing to women: a spirit of decorum and observation, without any pretensions, and yet not without a slight tendency toward careless satire. His behaviour toward Maria Gavrilovna was simple and frank, but whatever she said or did, his soul and eyes followed her. He seemed to be of a quiet and modest disposition, though report said that he had once been a terrible rake but this did not injure him in the opinion of Maria Gavrilovna, who—like all young ladies in general—excused with pleasure follies that gave indication of boldness and ardour of temperament.

But more than everything else—more than his tenderness, more than his agreeable conversation, more than his interesting pallor, more than his arm in a sling—the silence of the young hussar excited her curiosity and imagination. She could not but confess that he pleased her very much; probably he, too, with his perception and experience, had already observed that she made a distinction between him and others; how was it then that she had not yet seen him at her feet or heard his declaration? What restrained him? Was it timidity, inseparable from true love, or pride, or the coquetry of a crafty wooer? It was an enigma to her. After long reflection, she came to the conclusion that timidity alone was the cause of it, and she resolved to encourage him by greater attention and, if circumstances should render it necessary, even by an exhibition of

tenderness. She prepared a most unexpected *dénouement*, and waited with impatience for the moment of the romantic explanation A secret of whatever nature it may be always presses heavily upon the female heart. Her stratagem had the desired success; at least, Bourmin fell into such a reverie, and his black eyes rested with such fire upon her, that the decisive moment seemed close at hand. The neighbours spoke about the marriage as if it were a matter already decided upon, and good Praskovia Petrovna rejoiced that her daughter had at last found a lover worthy of her.

On one occasion, the old lady was sitting alone in the parlour, amusing herself with a pack of cards, when Bourmin entered the room, and immediately inquired for Maria Gavrilovna.

"She is in the garden," replied the old lady; "go out to her, and I will wait here for you."

Bourmin went, and the old lady made the sign of the cross and thought, "Perhaps the business will be settled to-day!"

Bourmin found Maria Gavrilovna near the pond, under a willow tree, with a book in her hands, and in white dress—a veritable heroine of romance. After the first few questions and observations, Maria Gavrilovna purposely allowed the conversation to drop, thereby increasing their mutual embarrassment, from which there was no possible way of escape except only by a sudden and decisive declaration.

And this is what happened: Bourmin, feeling

the difficulty of his position, declared that he had long sought for an opportunity to open his heart to her, and requested a moment's attention. Maria Gavrilovna closed her book and cast down her eyes, as a sign of compliance with his request.

"I love you," said Bourmin : "I love you passionately."

Maria Gavrilovna blushed, and lowered her head still more. "I have acted imprudently in accustoming myself to the sweet pleasure of seeing and hearing you daily,"—Maria Gavrilovna recalled to mind the first letter of St. Preux—"but it is now too late to resist my fate; the remembrance of you, your dear incomparable image, will henceforth be the torment and the consolation of my life, but there still remains a grave duty for me to perform—to reveal to you a terrible secret which will place between us an insurmountable barrier."

"That barrier has always existed," interrupted Maria Gavrilovna hastily: "I could never be your wife."

"I know," replied he calmly, "I know that you once loved, but death and three years of mourning—— Dear, kind Maria Gavrilovna, do not try to deprive me of my last consolation: the thought that you would have consented to make me happy if——"

"Don't speak, for Heaven's sake, don't speak. You torture me."

"Yes, I know, I feel that you would have been

mine, but—I am the most miserable creature under the sun—I am already married!"

Maria Gavrilovna looked at him in astonishment.

"I am already married," continued Bourmin; "I have been married four years, but I do not know who is my wife, or where she is, or whether I shall ever see her again!"

"What do you say?" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "How very strange! Continue: I will relate to you afterward—— But continue, I beg of you."

"At the beginning of the year 1812," said Bourmin, "I was hastening to Vilna, where my regiment was stationed. Arriving late one evening at one of the post-stations, I ordered the horses to be got ready as quickly as possible, when suddenly a terrible snowstorm came on, and the postmaster and drivers advised me to wait till it had passed over. I followed their advice, but an unaccountable uneasiness took possession of me: it seemed as if some one were pushing me forward. Meanwhile, the snowstorm did not subside; I could endure it no longer, and again ordering out the horses, I started off in the midst of the storm. The driver conceived the idea of following the course of the river, which would shorten our journey by three versts. The banks were covered with snow: the driver drove past the place where we should have come out upon the road, and so we found ourselves in an unknown part of the country.

The storm did not cease; I saw a light in the distance, and I ordered the driver to proceed toward it. We reached a village; in the wooden church, there was a light. The church was open. Outside the railings stood several sledges, and people were passing in and out through the porch.

"'This way! this way!' cried several voices.

"I ordered the driver to proceed.

"'In the name of Heaven, where have you been loitering?' said somebody to me. 'The bride has fainted away; the pope does not know what to do, and we were just getting ready to go back. Get out as quickly as you can.'

"I got out of the sledge without saying a word, and went into the church, which was feebly lit up by two or three tapers. A young girl was sitting on a bench in a dark corner of the church; another girl was rubbing her temples.

"'Thank God!' said the latter, 'you have come at last. You have almost killed the young lady.'

"The old priest advanced toward me, and said,

"'Do you wish me to begin?'

"'Begin, begin, father,' replied I, absently.

"The young girl was raised up. She seemed to me not at all bad-looking. Impelled by an incomprehensible, unpardonable levity, I placed myself by her side in front of the pulpit; the priest hurried on; three men and a chambermaid supported the bride, and occupied themselves only with her. We were married.

"'Kiss each other!' said the witness to us.

"My wife turned her pale face toward me. I

was about to kiss her, when she exclaimed: 'Oh! it is not he! it is not he!' and fell senseless.

"The witnesses gazed at me in alarm. I turned round, and left the church without the least hindrance, flung myself into the *kibitka*, and cried, 'Drive off!' "

"My God!" exclaimed Maria Gavrilovna. "And you do not know what became of your poor wife?"

"I do not know," replied Bourmin; "neither do I know the name of the village where I was married, nor the post-station where I set out from. At that time, I attached so little importance to my wicked prank that, on leaving the church, I fell asleep, and did not awake till the next morning, after reaching the third station. The servant who was then with me died during the campaign, so that I have no hope of ever discovering the woman upon whom I played such a cruel joke, and who is now so cruelly avenged."

"My God! my God!" cried Maria Gavrilovna, seizing him by the hand: "then it was you! And you do not recognise me?"

Bourmin turned pale—and threw himself at her feet.