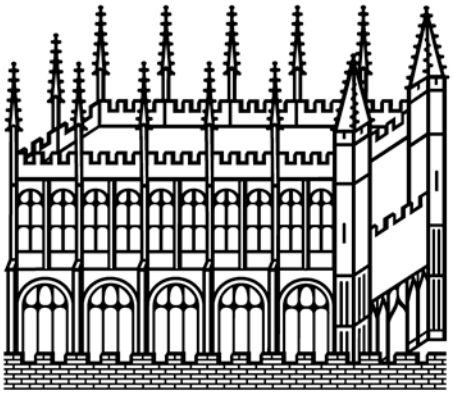

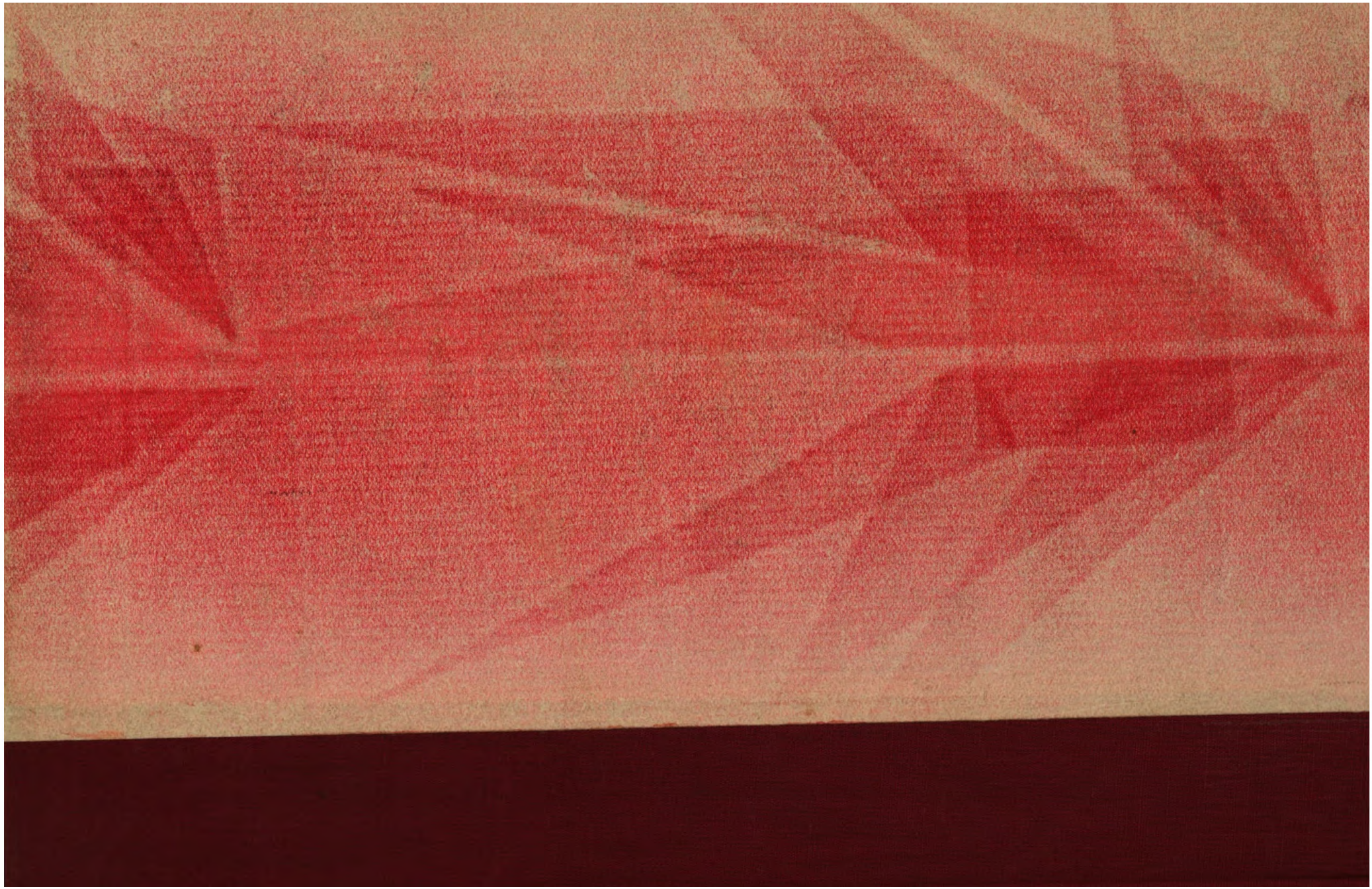

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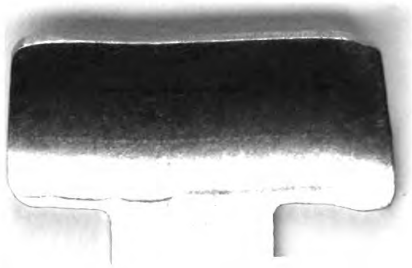

Florentine Nights

by

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by Frederick Carter

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To

H. Granville Fell

The First Night

IN THE ANTECHAMBER Maximilian came upon the doctor as he was about to put on his black gloves.

'I'm so pressed for time,' the doctor cried hurriedly. 'Signora Maria has been awake all day and she has just fallen asleep. I need hardly remind you not to make a sound; when she wakes on no account may she talk. She is to lie quietly without moving, she must not say a word; a little mental stimulation, however, may do her good. Tell her more of those fantastic tales of yours which she hears with such rapt attention.'

' Never fear, doctor,' said Maximilian with a melancholy smile. ' I have now trained myself to be a chatterbox and I won't let her get a word in. I'll tell her as much fantastic stuff as you could wish for. . . But how long do you give her? '

' I'm very much pressed for time,' answered the doctor as he slipped away.

Dark-skinned Deborah, quick of hearing as she was, had already recognized the newcomer by his footsteps, and softly opened the door. In answer to a nod she softly left the room and Maximilian found himself alone with his friend. To light the darkened room there was but a single lamp which cast fitful, tentative gleams over the face of the sick woman, who, clothed from head to foot in white muslin, lay on a green silk sofa, peacefully sleeping.

Silent and with folded arms Maximilian stood awhile before the sleeper and gazed at her lovely form, which the garments rather revealed than hid. When the lamp cast its light on the pallid face his heart was moved. ' Oh, God,' he said to himself softly, ' what is it? What chord of memory is touched within me? Ah, now I remember. That white image on the green ground, yes, now . . .'

At this moment the invalid awoke, and as if looking out from the depths of a dream, her soft and dark blue eyes rested on her friend, inquiring, entreating . . .

' What were you thinking just now, Maximilian? ' she said in that awe-inspiring, gentle voice

that one associates with the consumptive, a voice wherein the crooning of a child, the twittering of birds, and the hoarseness of death seem to blend. ' What were you thinking just now, Maximilian? ' she repeated, raising herself suddenly, so that her long locks shook around her like startled snakes of gold.

' Oh, Lord! ' cried Maximilian as he pressed her back on to the sofa, ' lie quietly and do not talk; I'll tell you all I was thinking, all I have felt, even to that which I myself know nothing of.

' Indeed,' he went on, ' I hardly know what I thought and felt. Twilight images of my youth came passing through my mind. I had glimpses of my mother's castle, of the deserted garden, of the lovely marble statue that lay in the green grass . . . My mother's castle, I said, but pray don't imagine anything splendid and magnificent. I had got used to that term: my father always put a peculiar emphasis on the word *castle*, smiling a strange smile as he said it. And the reason for his smile I did not gather till much later when, as a boy of twelve, I visited the castle in my mother's company.

' All day we travelled through a dense forest whose gloom appalled me. I have never been able to rid myself of the impression. Towards evening a long pole that separated us from a large meadow barred our way. We had to wait nearly half an hour before a boy came out of a mud hut close by and pushed aside the bar to let us through. I have

said " a boy ", for so old Martha still called her forty years old nephew. And in order to receive his gracious mistress worthily he had put on the livery of his late uncle. As he was obliged to brush it a little first, he kept us waiting. No doubt he would have put on his stockings besides, had he had time; still his long red bare legs were not altogether out of harmony with the shrill scarlet of his coat. I cannot remember whether he wore breeches beneath. Our man John, who also had heard the term *castle* often enough, stared in amazement when the boy led us to the small tumble-down building which his lamented master had inhabited. But he was really upset when my mother ordered him to carry in the beds. How could he guess that the *castle* was devoid of them! My mother's orders that bedding should be taken had been ignored entirely, or considered a superfluous trouble.

'The small house of but one storey had, at its best, contained only five habitable rooms; now it made a lamentable picture of the inroads of time. Smashed furniture, tattered wall-papers, not a single window-pane unbroken, here and there torn-up floors, everywhere the ugly traces of military wantonness. " The soldiers quartered here always had a very good time," said the boy with an idiotic smile. My mother gave him to understand by a sign that she wanted to be left alone, so, whilst the boy busied himself with John, I went to look round the garden. That too offered the most hopeless

spectacle of ruin. Of the large trees some were mutilated, some broken down, and scornful weeds flourished, hiding the fallen stems. Here and there the old paths were still to be recognized by clumps of box which had straggled aloft. Here and there still stood statues, most of whose heads, or noses at least, were missing. I well remember a Diana whose lower half was most ridiculously overgrown with dark ivy, also the Goddess of Plenty out of whose cornucopia blossomed a mass of evil-smelling weeds. A single statue had been saved, though God knows how, from the malice of man and time; it had of course been thrown down off its pedestal into the tall grass, but it lay there unmutilated, a marble goddess with fine and regular features and firm and noble breasts, and like a revelation of the Greek spirit it shone forth in the tall grass. I started back when I saw it, for the image filled me with a curious and oppressive timidity, and a secret inhibition kept me from lingering in the contemplation of its beauty.

'When I returned to my mother, she was standing at the window sunk in thought, leaning her head on her right arm whilst tears coursed ceaselessly down her cheeks. Never had I seen her weep so. She embraced me with tender haste and asked my pardon for not having a proper bed for me owing to John's carelessness. "Old Martha," she said, "is very ill and cannot give up her bed to you. But John must set out the carriage cushions

for you so that you may rest, and he can give you his cape to cover you. Myself, I shall sleep here on straw. This is my dear father's bedroom; at one time things looked better here. And now leave me! " and tears welled faster from her eyes.

' But I could not sleep, whether by reason of my unaccustomed resting place, or because of my excited state. The moonlight streamed unhampered through the broken window panes and it seemed as if it wished to draw me out into the bright summer night. Though I turned from side to side, though I closed my eyes and opened them again impatiently, I was always forced to think about the lovely marble statue which I had seen lying in the grass. I could not explain to myself the shyness which had overtaken me when I first saw it. I was vexed at my childish emotion. " To-morrow," I said to myself softly, " to-morrow I shall kiss you, you lovely marble face, I'll kiss you on the lovely corners of your mouth, there where they melt into a ravishing dimple! " Impatience such as I had never before felt coursed through all my limbs, I could no longer master the strange urge, and at last I rose hastily and said with daring: " What does it matter, beloved image, I'll kiss you this very night! " Softly, so that my mother should not hear my footsteps, I left the house, and this was all the easier, for though above the entrance there was still a large escutcheon, yet the door had gone.

' Hurriedly I worked my way through the shrub-

bery of the deserted garden. There was not a sound, and everything was solemn and silent in the still moonlight. The shadows of the trees seemed as if fastened to the ground. In the green grass the lovely goddess lay motionless, but it was not the petrifaction of death, but rather a marmoreal sleep which seemed to hold her lovely limbs in bond. As I approached I feared that my least movement might wake her from her slumber. I held my breath as I bent over her to gaze at the exquisite features; a shuddering fear repelled me, but adolescent passion drew me back, my heart beat as if I were about to commit a murder; and at last I kissed the lovely goddess with such desire and tenderness and desperation as I have never again known in my life. Nor have I ever forgotten the sweet and awful sensation which filled my soul when the blissful coolness of those marble lips touched my own. . . .

'And so you see, Maria, when I was just now standing here and saw you in your white muslin frock lying on the green sofa, it reminded me of the marble statue in the green grass. Had you slept longer, my lips could not have refrained . . .'

'Max! Max!' cried the woman from the depth of her soul, 'how appalling! You know that a kiss from your mouth . . .'

'Be silent, well I know that it would terrify you! Don't look at me so beseechingly, for I don't misunderstand your feelings, even though their ultimate

reasons are hidden from me. I never have been permitted to press my mouth on yours . . .'

But Maria would not let him go on; she had seized his hand and passionately pressed her lips on it, saying with a smile: ' Do please tell me about some more of your love affairs. How long were you enamoured of your marble beauty whom you kissed in that garden? '

' We left the next day,' answered Maximilian, ' and from that day to this I have never seen the lovely vision again. For nearly four years it had a place in my heart. An abounding passion for all marble statues has since developed in my soul, and even this morning I felt the ecstatic rapture.

' I was leaving the Laurentinian, that library of the Medicis, and chanced to enter the chapel, how I know not, where that splendid Italian family built itself a jewel-set resting place and slumbers peacefully. For a whole hour I stood deep in thought before the marble effigy of a woman whose mighty limbs witness the daring strength of Michelangelo, whilst the whole form is clothed with an ethereal softness which we do not generally expect to find in that master's work. The entire realm of dream with all its bliss lies imprisoned in this marble, exquisite repose dwells in its lovely limbs, soft moonlight seems to flow through its veins . . . it is Michelangelo Buonarroti's *Night*. Fain would I sleep an everlasting sleep in the arms of such a Night! . . .

'I have never been so poignantly fascinated by paintings of women as I have by statues. Once only have I been in love with a portrait. It was that of a beautiful Madonna whose acquaintance I made in church at Cologne. Then I became an ardent church-goer and my mind steeped itself in Catholic mysticism. Like a Spanish knight I would have battled day after day for the Immaculate Conception of Mary, Queen of Angels, the fairest of Heaven and Earth. Indeed the entire Holy Family interested me at that time and I always raised my hat in the friendliest fashion as I passed a picture of Saint Joseph. This state, however, did not last long, and, indeed, I deserted the Mother of God without much ado when, in a museum of antiquities, I had become acquainted with a Greek nymph who for quite a long while held me prisoner in her marble bonds.'

'And so you loved only sculptured and painted women?' Maria giggled.

'Oh no, I have loved dead women too,' Maximilian answered, and his face assumed a serious expression. He did not notice how at these words Maria started and shrank. Quietly he proceeded:

'Yes, once, most strangely, I fell in love with a girl seven years after she had died. When I first made little Very's acquaintance I liked her particularly. Three whole days this young girl occupied my thoughts completely, and I was delighted with all she did and said, with every expression of her

charming and wayward nature; and yet I was never carried away by any over-tender emotion. Nor was I particularly moved some months later when I received news of her death as the result of a nervous fever. I entirely forgot her and I am sure that for years she never once crossed my mind.

'Seven whole years had passed and I chanced to be at Potsdam where I hoped to enjoy the fine summer in solitude and undisturbed. Not a soul did I know there and my society was confined to the statues which inhabit the gardens of Sansouci. And then it happened that certain features and a charming manner of speaking and moving came to my mind, without any ability, moreover, to remember to whom they belonged. Nothing is more annoying than much excavating amongst old memories, and I was pleasantly surprised when, after a few days, I recalled little Very to mind, and remarked that it was her dear forgotten image which had hovered so disconcertingly before me. Indeed, I was as delighted with this discovery as one who unexpectedly comes across a most intimate friend. The pale hues took colour gradually, and at last her sweet little person seemed to stand bodily before me, smiling, pouting, witty and more charming than ever. From that moment this fair image would leave me no more; it filled all my soul; wherever I walked and stood, it stood and walked at my side; it spoke to me, it laughed with me, gently and without passion. Moreover, from day to day, I became more

enthralled by this phantom, which daily grew in reality for me. To summon up spirits is easy, but to send them back into dark nothingness is more difficult; they look on us so beseechingly that our own hearts plead mightily for them. . . . I was unable to restrain myself and so I fell in love with little Very when she had been dead seven years. And thus, I lived on at Potsdam for six months absorbed in my love. More carefully than ever I avoided all contact with the world around me, and if anyone in the street brushed against me I felt most unpleasantly disturbed. Every contact filled me with that extreme horror such as afflicts, perhaps, the night-roaming spirits of the dead; for these, so they say, are as much in terror of the living as are the latter when they meet a ghost. But it chanced that a traveller was at that time passing through Potsdam, a traveller from whom I could not escape, for it was my brother. When I saw him and heard his account of recent happenings I awoke as from a deep dream, and I shuddered as I suddenly felt how I had lived in a frightful solitude. My condition had been such that I had failed to notice the changing of the seasons; with astonishment I now looked at the trees which stood leafless and covered with autumnal hoar-frost. At once I left Potsdam and little Very for another town where urgent business awaited me. These unpleasant conditions and circumstances soon brought me back to crude reality.

'Good heavens,' continued Maximilian as a

pained smile contracted his lips, ' and living women with whom I could not avoid contact bored me, gently bored me with their pouting, their petty jealousies, their everlasting sighs. How many dances did I not have to hop through, in how much gossip did I not have to take my share! What restless vanity, what joy in lies, what treachery in kisses, what poisoned flowers! These women knew how to sicken me of all love and pleasure, and for a time I became a misogynist who damned the entire sex. I felt very like the French officer who, with desperate exertion, had escaped the ice-pits of the Beresina in the Russian campaign, but who there acquired such a distaste for everything frozen that he rejected with disgust the most sugary and delicious ices of Tortoni. Indeed, the recollection of the amorous Beresina which I then crossed sickened me for a time of the most delectable ladies, women like angels, girls like vanilla sherbet.'

' Oh, pray now, you must not despise women! ' cried Maria. ' You are just indulging in hackneyed and commonplace man's talk. After all, you need women to make you happy.'

' Ah,' sighed Maximilian, ' that is certainly true. But women have only one method of making us happy, whilst they know thirty thousand ways of making us miserable.'

' Dear friend,' answered Maria, suppressing a little smile, ' but I am talking about the concord of two attuned souls. Have you never experienced that

joy? . . . But I see an unwonted blush pass over your cheeks. . . . Tell me . . . Max.'

'I admit it, Maria, but I feel confused like a boy when I am asked to confess the happy love which once filled me with infinite bliss. I have not yet forgotten the feeling, and often its cool shadow yet descends upon my soul when the burning dust and the heat of daily life become intolerable. Yet I feel quite unable to give you a true picture of my love. By nature she was so etheric that only dream could reveal her.

'I presume that you have no vulgar prejudice against dreams, Maria; these nightly visions have certainly as much reality as the coarser shapes of everyday life which we can touch with our hands and by which we are so often sullied. For it was in a dream that I saw the charming creature that gave me the greatest joy that I have experienced on this earth. I can tell you little about her outward appearance; neither her form nor her features lend themselves to exact description. Hers was a face such as I have never seen before or since in my life. But I do remember that it was not pink and white, but of rather a uniform creaminess suffused with rose and clear as crystal. The charm of this face depended neither on a strictly classic canon, nor on its vivacious interest; its character showed in the magic and ecstatic—one might almost say awe-inspiring—essence of truth. It was a face filled with conscious love and gracious goodness; it was rather

a soul than a face, and for that reason I have never quite succeeded in calling it up. Her eyes were soft as flowers, her lips rather pale but delicately curved. She wore a silken peignoir of cornflower blue, and this was all she wore, for her neck and feet were bare. Through this soft thin garment the slim delicacy of her limbs peeped stealthily at times. Nor can I remember any words which we exchanged; but I know that we were affianced and that our talk was gay and happy, open and full of confidences, like that of bridegroom and bride, perhaps even of brother and sister. At times we ceased to talk, gazing one at the other, and so for long eternities we remained enraptured. . . .

'And neither can I tell how I awoke, but I long revelled in the after-feeling of this bliss of love. Long was I drunk with unheard-of delight and the thirsty depths of my heart were filled with bliss; a joy which I had never known seemed as if poured out upon all my feelings, and I continued happy and gay though I never saw my love again in dream. Yet, had I not tasted whole eternities in beholding her? And she also knew me too well not to know that I abhorred repetition.'

'Really,' cried Maria, 'you are an *homme à bonnes fortunes*. . . . But tell me, was Mademoiselle Laurence a marble statue or a portrait? Was she dead, or a dream?'

'Perhaps she was all these things in one,' answered Maximilian very seriously.

'I should imagine that this love of yours was a very queer affair. And when will you tell me her history?'

'To-morrow. The story is long and to-day I am tired. I have just come from the Opera and my ears are full of music.'

'You are always going to the Opera, Max, and my idea is that you go rather to see than to hear.'

'You are not mistaken, Maria; my real reason for going to the Opera is to look at the faces of the fine Italian women. Certainly, outside the theatre they are beautiful enough, and a student of physiognomy could easily offer proof of the influence of the plastic arts on the loveliness of the Italian race by the ideality of their features. Nature has been repaid the capital which once she lent to the artists, and behold what exquisite interest she has gained. Nature who formerly furnished the artists with models now copies the very masterpieces which owe their origin to her. That sense of beauty has permeated the entire race, and spirit acts on matter as matter once did on the spirit. Nor before those lovely madonnas is devotion barren; those charming altar-pieces impress themselves on the minds of the bridegrooms, whilst the brides bear handsome saints in their ardent souls. And this affinity has created here a race that is even finer than the gracious soil whereon it flourishes and the bright skies which surround it like a golden halo. Men never greatly interest me unless they are painted or carved, and I

am ready to cede to you, Maria, all possible enthusiasm for those fine and supple Italians who have been thus endowed with their coal-black beards, their bold and noble noses, and their wise and gentle eyes. They say that the Lombards are the finest-looking specimens of the human race. I have never investigated the matter, but the women of Lombardy I have seriously considered, and they, as far as my personal experience goes, are really as lovely as report has it. Even in the Middle Ages they must have been tolerably so. Don't they say that Francis I was secretly urged to undertake his Italian campaign by reports of the beauty of the Milanese women? No doubt the chivalrous king was curious to discover whether his spiritual cousins, the kinsfolk of his godparent, were really as charming as report had it. . . . Poor fellow, at Pavia his curiosity cost him very dear!

'Ah, but when music lights up their faces, how much more lovely yet are these Italian women. I say *lights* advisedly, for the action of music, which I notice in the Opera on the faces of these lovely women, is not unlike that effect of light and shade which so astonishes us when we see statues by torch-light at night. . . . For these marble effigies then reveal to us with such affrighting truth an indwelling spirit and secrets both dumb and terrible. And so, too, are the entire lives of these Italian women revealed before us when we see them at the Opera. The changing melodies wake a series of feelings,

of desires and of dislikes; their souls become eloquent in the movement of their features, in their blushing and pallor, even in the expression of their eyes. He who knows how to read them can glean many delightful and interesting things from their lovely faces, stories as remarkable as the tales of Boccaccio, feelings as delicate as the sonnets of Petrarch, feelings as delicate as the *ottave rime* of Ariosto, sometimes even treachery as dreadful and malice as exalted as that revealed by the poetry of the great Dante's *Hell*.

'So it is worth while to gaze up at the boxes. If only the men did not meanwhile express their enthusiasm by making such a frightful din. This maddening clamour sometimes makes the Italian Opera hard to bear. But music is the soul of these people, their very existence, their national concern. Other countries certainly possess musicians whose reputation is on a level with that of the greatest of the Italians, but the whole people are not musical. Music here in Italy is not represented by individuals at all, it is revealed by the population at large. Music has become synonymous with the people. With us in the north it is quite different; there music has assumed a body and is called Mozart or Meyerbeer; and moreover if we examine the best which such northern music is able to offer, we find it suffused with sunshine and the perfume of orange flowers. It rather belongs to lovely Italy, the home of music, than to our German land. Truly Italy

will always be its home, even though her great masters descend young into the grave, or are smitten with dumbness, even though Bellini die and Rossini remain silent.'

'Yes, indeed,' remarked Maria. 'Rossini maintains a very persistent silence. If I am not mistaken he has been dumb for ten years.'

'That is perhaps an instance of his wit,' answered Maximilian. 'He has wanted to show that *The Swan of Pesaro*, the name by which he has been called, is altogether unsuited to him. Swans sing at the end, but Rossini has ceased to sing at the middle of his life. And I think that he has done well and shown thereby that he is a genius. An artist who has only talent maintains up to the end of his life the urge to use it; ambition stimulates him, he feels that he is constantly perfecting himself, and he is driven to strive towards the ultimate. A genius, however, achieves the ultimate, is content, and despises the world with its petty ambitions. A genius like William Shakespeare returns to his home at Stratford-on-Avon; or, like Joachim, Rossini walks laughing and joking on the Boulevard des Italiens in Paris. If a man of genius is not altogether broken in health, he goes on living in this way a long while after he has delivered his masterpieces, or as the saying goes, when he has fulfilled his mission. To think that a genius must perforce die young is a prejudice; I rather think that the period between the years of thirty and thirty-four has been considered

most dangerous for the man of genius. How often have I teased poor Bellini and jokingly prophesied that he in his quality of genius was bound to die soon, as he was approaching the danger zone. It is strange that in spite of my banter this prophecy gave him anxiety, and he called me his evil eye, and made the *jettatore* sign. How much he wanted to go on living! He had a passionate hatred for death and did not want to hear a word about dying; he feared death like a child that is afraid of sleeping in the dark. . . . He was a dear, good child, sometimes rather naughty; but then it was only necessary to threaten him with the approach of death, and he would become silent and entreating and make the *jettatore* sign with two uplifted fingers. . . . Poor Bellini.'

'Oh, so you knew him personally? Was he handsome?'

'He was not ugly. We men cannot answer quite in the affirmative, you see, to such a question about one of our own sex. He was tall and slim and his movements were elegant, one might almost say coquettish; he was fashionably dressed; his features were regular, his face was long and pale pink, his hair was fair, almost golden, and arranged in small curls; the forehead lofty and noble, the nose straight, the eyes pale blue, the mouth well-proportioned and the chin rounded. His features were somewhat vague and lacked a flavour of character, rather like milk. On this milk-face of his there

was often a pained expression, half-sour, half-sweet. This pained expression was the substitute for a lack of spirit in Bellini's face, but the pain was without depth; it glistened without poetry in his eyes and played passionless about the man's lips. And the young *maestro* seemed to want to manifest this flat and languid pain in all his person. So mildly enthusiastic was the curling of his hair, so languidly did his clothes fit his slender form, so idyllic was his manner of carrying his cane, that he always reminded one of the young shepherds whom we see tripping in our pastoral plays, with their beribboned staves and their bright-coloured jackets and hose. And his walk was so virginal, so elegiac, so etheric. The whole man looked like a sigh in slippers. Amongst women he was very popular, but I rather doubt whether he ever stirred a deep passion. For me his company had always something comic and unenjoyable, and the reason for this was undoubtedly his manner of speaking French, for although Bellini had lived in France for some long time, his French was perhaps worse than any English attempt has ever been. And yet it is hardly fair to call it bad, for bad in this case is much too good. One should rather say frightful, or incestuous, or savouring of the cataclysmic. Indeed, when one met him in society, and like a torturer he started to break French words on the wheel and poured forth unshaken his stupendous malapropisms, one was apt to think that the world must then and there inevitably end in a crash

of thunder. The silence of the grave reigned all through the room; mortal fear spread chalk or vermilion over every face; women could not make up their minds whether to faint or flee; men looked in confusion at their nether garments so as to be assured that they had not overlooked them in dressing. Yet, and worst of all, accompanying this shock, was the convulsive desire to laugh which overtook everybody and was so very hard to suppress.

'And thus, when one met him in company, his proximity was always bound to cause a sort of anxiety which fascinated and repelled by its gruesome charm. At times his unconscious puns were merely amusing, and in their droll lack of taste they reminded one of the castle of his fellow-countryman, the Prince of Pallagonia, which Goethe in his *Italian Journey* pictures as a museum of baroque distortions and deformities put together without rhyme or reason. And on such occasions Bellini's face offered the maddest contrast, for he always considered that he had said something harmless and quite serious. That which displeased me in his face then became still more acute. But it was not a lack of something I minded, and the quality it had was by no means a thing unpleasant to women. Bellini's face, as also his whole appearance, had a kind of physical freshness, a bloom on the skin, a rosiness, and that made a disagreeable impression on me, for I prefer things morbid, things marmoreal. Much

later, when I had known Bellini for some time, he gained an attraction for me; and it came about because I found that his character was really fine and had nobility. His soul certainly remained pure and unstained by any ugly contact. Nor was he without that harmless good nature and childlike simplicity which are the marks of genius, though they may not be perceived by everybody.

'Yes, I remember,' continued Maximilian, sitting down in the chair against the back of which he had so far leant, 'I remember the occasion when Bellini appeared to me in such an amiable light that I viewed him with genuine pleasure and decided to become better acquainted with him. Unfortunately it was the last occasion on which I was to see him alive. That was on an evening after we had dined together and become very gay at the house of the great lady who has the smallest feet in Paris. The piano gave forth its sweetest melodies. . . I still see good Bellini sink into a chair, finally exhausted by the multitude of mad Bellinisms which had fallen from his lips. . . The chair was very low, nearly a footstool, so that Bellini found himself sitting, as it were, at the feet of a lovely lady who reclined on a sofa opposite and who looked down with sweetest malice on Bellini, whilst he exerted himself in amusing her with French commonplaces. He was always compelled to comment on his own remarks in his Sicilian jargon, to prove to her that what he had said was not outrageous, but the most delicate flattery.

In my opinion the lady did not take much note of Bellini's conversation; for she had taken out of his hands the cane with which he attempted at times to reinforce his weak rhetoric, and she now calmly used it to destroy the elegant edifice of curls which adorned the temples of the youthful *maestro*. This wanton occupation was the reason for the smile which lent her face an expression such as I have rarely seen on a human visage. Never shall I forget that face. It was one that belongs rather to the dream realm of poetry than to the crude reality of life; its outline reminded one of Da Vinci; the distinguished oval shape with its naïve dimples of the cheeks, the sentimental pointed chin, was of the Lombard school; in colouring rather pale and Roman, like the dim radiance of pearls, a pallor of distinction, *morbidezza*. In short, it was a face such as is only found on some old Italian picture portraying one of those noble ladies of whom the artists of the sixteenth century were enamoured when they created their masterpieces, whom the poets of that period praised when they sang their immortal verses, and whom the French and German heroes desired when they girded on their swords and hurried across the Alps, burning to do deeds of valour. . . Such was the face on which a smile of sweetest malice and the most excessive petulancy played, whilst that lovely lady ravelled at the point of the cane the edifice of dear Bellini's fair locks. At that moment Bellini appeared to me as if touched by a magic wand, as if

transformed into a friendly spirit, and my heart opened to him. His face shone as it reflected the lady's smile, and it was, perhaps, the climax of his life. I shall never forget it. A fortnight later I read in the paper that Italy had lost one of her most celebrated sons!

'It is a curious fact that Paganini's death was announced at the same time. Not for a moment did I doubt the report, because wan old Paganini always looked like a man who is about to die; but the death of the young and rosy Bellini seemed to me incredible. And yet the report of the former was but a mistake on the part of the Press; Paganini lives hale and hearty at Genoa, and Bellini lies buried in Paris.'

'Do you like Paganini?' asked Maria.

'That man,' answered Maximilian, 'is one of the glories of his country, and must be given a very particular mention in discussing the great musicians of Italy.'

'I have never seen him,' remarked Maria, 'but according to repute his exterior does not altogether satisfy one's ideal of beauty. I have seen portraits of him . . .'

'None of which at all resemble him,' Maximilian interrupted her. 'They either make him uglier than he is or they idealize him, but they never depict his true character. One person alone has succeeded in rendering Paganini's real physiognomy; he is a deaf artist, Lyser by name, who in a mad

humour managed in a few chalk strokes to draw Paganini's head, so that one knows not whether to laugh or to be shocked at the vitality of the drawing. " The devil himself guided my hand," said the deaf artist, chuckling mysteriously and nodding his head with ironic good nature, as he was accustomed to do after some prank of genius. He was a strange old fellow and, in spite of his deafness, had a passion for music; he is said to have been able to follow music from the faces of the musicians when he was close enough to the orchestra, and to judge the quality of the rendering from the movements of their fingers; he even wrote critiques of operas for a reputable Hamburg journal. And is this at all surprising? This deaf artist could see the sounds in their visible signature. For are there not people who regard sounds as invisible signatures wherein they hear colours and shapes? '

' That is the sort of person you are! ' cried Maria.

' I regret that I no longer possess Lyser's little sketch, for it might give you an impression of Paganini's appearance. Only in black, glaring and rapid strokes could those strange features have been caught, which appear to belong rather to the sulphurous realms than to everyday life. " Indeed, the devil guided my hand," the deaf artist assured me, as we were standing in front of the Alster pavilion on the day when Paganini was to give his first concert there. " Yes, my friend," he continued, " what all the world asserts is perfectly true, he did sell

himself to the devil, body and soul, in order to be the greatest violinist, and to gain millions by fiddling, but chiefly it was to get away from the damned galleys where he languished so long. For you see, my friend, when he was the conductor of an orchestra at Lucca, he fell in love with a princess of the boards; perhaps she became false to him; he was jealous of one of those little *abbés*; he stabbed his faithless *amata* like a good Italian, was sent to the galleys and finally, as I have said, sold himself to the devil, so as to get away and to be the greatest violinist and able to make each of us contribute two thalers this evening. . . But look! and may all good souls pray to God! Look! for here he comes in the flesh, walking down the avenue with his highly suspect familiar! "

'And, indeed, it was Paganini himself who came into view. He was wearing a dark grey overcoat which reached to his feet and made him look very tall. His long black hair fell in tangled locks over his shoulders and made a sort of frame around the pale cadaverous face on which sorrow, genius and hell had furrowed their ineradicable lines. Beside him tripped a short and portly figure, dressy and prosaic, his face pink and wrinkled, his jacket light grey with bright steel buttons, acknowledging salutations on all sides in a manner unbearably pleasant, squinting up at times, timidly apprehensive, at the gloomy figure that strolled pensive and serious beside him. It called to my mind Retsch's picture

showing Faust and Wagner walking outside the gates of Leipzig. The deaf artist commented upon the two in his maddest vein and drew my attention chiefly to the firm and measured tread of Paganini. "Is it not," said he, "as if he still wore the iron bar between his legs? He has become accustomed to that manner in walking and he won't get rid of it to his dying day. Just see with what contempt and irony he sometimes looks down on his companion when the prosaic questions of the latter weary him; and yet he cannot dispense with his services; a contract written in blood binds him to this servant who, really, is no other than Satan himself. Ignorant people imagine that his companion is Harrys of Hanover, author of comedies and anecdotes, whom Paganini has taken with him to manage the financial part of his concerts. These people don't know that the Old Gentleman has merely borrowed Mr George Harrys's shape, and that the unfortunate soul of the poor man is locked up in a chest at Hanover together with other odds and ends, until the devil gives him back his physical envelope and accompanies his master Paganini on his travels in a worthier guise, namely as a black poodle."

'And though Paganini had seemed incredible and romantic enough when he wandered in bright daylight under the green trees of the Jungfernsteig at Hamburg, how much more was I surprised by his awe-inspiring and bizarre appearance at the concert that night! The Hamburg theatre was the

scene of this concert, and the art-loving public had arrived early and in such numbers that I was hard put to fight for a little corner in the orchestra. Although it was mail-day, I recognized in the first row of boxes the whole of the commercial world, the whole Olympus of bankers and other sorts of millionaires, the gods of coffee and sugar beside their divinely fat spouses, the Junos of the Wandrahm and the Aphrodites of the Dreckwall. There was a religious silence throughout the theatre. Every eye was levelled at the stage. Every ear armed itself to hear. My neighbour, an old furrier, took some dirty cottonwool out of his ears, so as to drink in more effectually the costly sounds, for which he had paid two thalers admission. At last a dark form which seemed to have ascended from the infernal regions appeared on the stage. It was Paganini in his black dress suit, a black tail coat, a black waistcoat of fearful cut, such as is possibly prescribed by infernal etiquette at the court of Proserpine, with black trousers that flapped anxiously around his thin shanks. His long arms seemed still longer, for, while he held his violin hanging nearly to the ground in one hand and his bow in the other, he offered the public incredible obeisances. There was a horrible woodenness in the angular contortions of his body, and at the same time something so absurdly animal that these bows caused a curious desire to laugh. But his face, which seemed still more deathly in the glare of the orchestra lights,

had about it something so imploring, humble and simple that a heart-rending compassion drove away one's desire to laugh. Had he learnt this manner of bowing from an automaton or from a dog? Was this the entreating look of a man sick to death, or was it to hide the mockery of a crafty miser? Was it a live man on the point of dying, who had to make sport for the public in the arena of the arts like a gladiator about to die, with convulsive movements? Or was it a corpse that had risen from the grave, a vampire with a violin, who, though he might not suck the blood out of our hearts, did at least extract the money from our pockets?

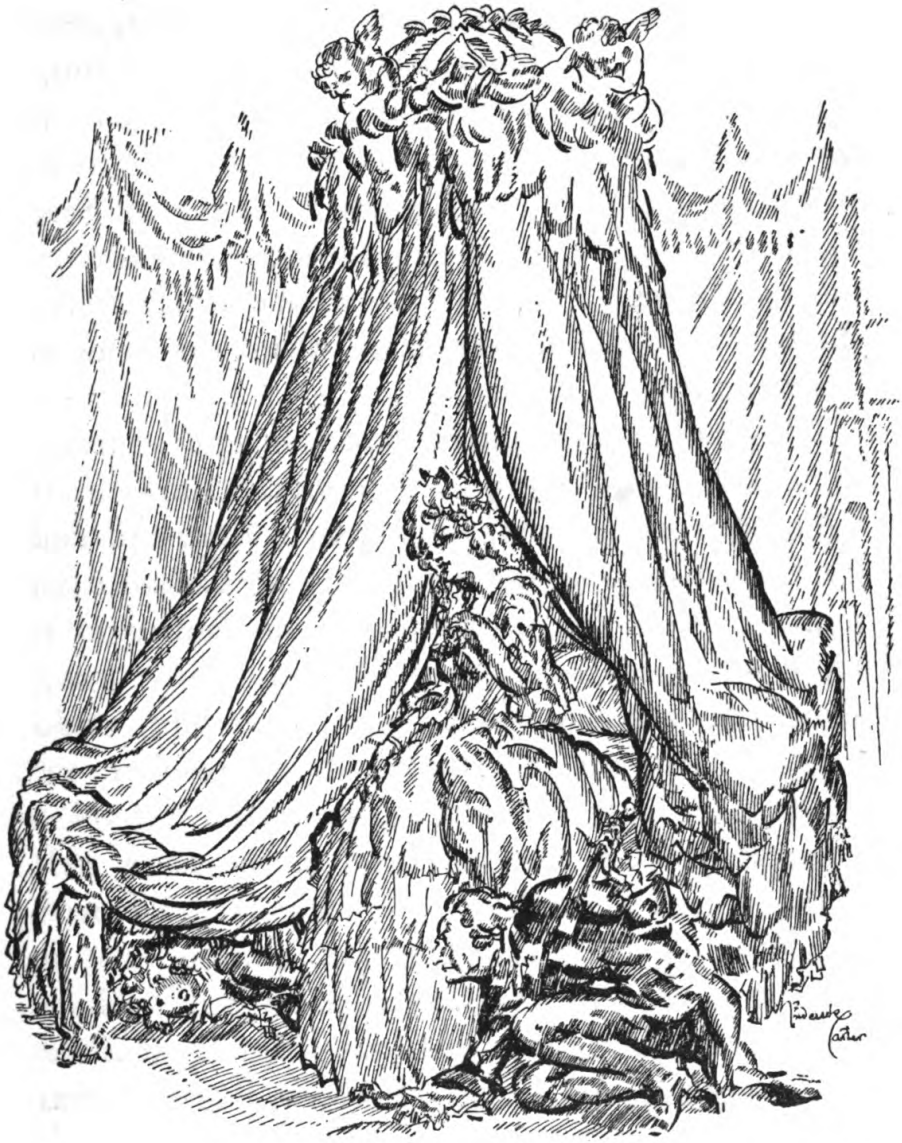
'Such questions crossed our minds whilst Paganini went on performing his bows; but all such thoughts suddenly ceased when the astounding master placed the violin under his chin and began to play. As far as I am concerned, you are aware of my peculiar musical second-sight; how, when I hear a note, I immediately see an equivalent sound-form; and it came about that with every movement of his bow, visible shapes and situations came before my eyes, so that he told me in resounding picture-writing all sorts of marvellous tales, unfolded before me as it were a coloured shadow drama, wherein he, in his playing, always assumed the chief character. No sooner had his bow swept over his violin than the scenery around him changed. Suddenly he stood at his music-stand in the centre of a cheerfully lighted room. The decoration was gay and fantastic,

and the over-ornate furniture was in the Pompadour style; everywhere there were small mirrors, gilded Cupids, Chinese porcelain and a charming chaos of ribbons, garlands of flowers, white gloves, tattered silk lace, sham pearls, diadems of brass foil and tinsel finery such as one finds in the room which a *prima donna* occupies. Paganini's appearance had also changed in a very favourable manner; he wore short breeches of watered satin, lilac in colour, a white waistcoat embroidered with silver, a coat of light blue satin with buttons covered with thread of gold, and his hair, carefully arranged in tiny curls, set off his face, which had a young and fresh complexion and shone with charming tenderness when he ogled the delicious little lady who stood beside him at the music-stand while he was playing.

'For, indeed, beside him I saw a charming young person, dressed in an old-world fashion with its white satin pannier full below the hips, making her exquisite waist look all the smaller, crowned with a raised and powdered headdress which brought her pretty rounded face with its sparkling eyes, its little rouged cheeks, its beauty spots and its delicately sweet impertinent nose still more into relief. In her hand she carried a roll of white paper, and judging by the motion of her lips and the coquettish balancing of her slight body, she appeared to be singing, but not a single trill reached me, for it was only from the rejuvenated Paganini's playing, to accompany the dear child, that I guessed what she

was singing and all that he felt in his soul the while. Ah, here were melodies such as the nightingale pours forth when dusk descends, when fragrant roses fill her yearning heart with springtime intoxication. Oh, here was melting, sensuous, languid bliss! And sounds there were that kissed and then fled one another, pouting, laughing, and in embrace again, uniting finally until they died right away in ecstatic unison. Yes, these sounds played a merry game, like butterflies when one playfully evades the other, hides behind a flower, is caught, and then with care-free joy flutters up into the golden sunlight. Yet a spider, a spider can sometimes prepare a sudden tragic fate for such a couple of butterflies in love. And did the young and inexperienced heart anticipate such things? A sighing and a melancholy note, as if foreboding approaching doom, stole softly through the most enraptured melodies which radiated from Paganini's violin. . . . His eyes fill with tears. . . . Adoringly he kneels before his *amata*. . . . He is stooping to kiss her feet, when oh! under the bed he sees a little *abbé*. I cannot tell you how the poor man had offended him, but the Genoese turns as pale as death, he drags out the little fellow with furious hands, boxes his ears, kicks him again and again, and at last flings him out. Then he draws a long stiletto from its sheath and plunges it into the breast of the lovely young girl. . . .

'At that moment there was an outburst of



" Bravo! Bravo! " on all sides. Hamburg's enthusiastic sons and daughters paid their most ardent tribute to the great artist who had just completed the first part of his concert, and his bowing became more angular and contorted than ever. On his countenance there seemed to me a still more entreating humility than before. His eyes were fixed with anxiety and fright like those of an unfortunate evildoer. " Heavenly! " cried my neighbour, the furrier, scratching his ears, " that piece alone is worth a couple of thalers."

' When Paganini started to play again everything went dark before my eyes. The sounds turned into light-forms and colours; the master's shape enfolded itself with deep shadows from whose darkness his music moaned in piercing tones of lamentation. Only at times, when a small lamp which hung above him threw its feeble light upon him, could I see his pallid face; his youth had, nevertheless, not yet departed. How curious was his costume, divided into two colours, one side yellow, the other red. Heavy chains fettered his feet. Behind him moved a face whose frolic character was goatlike, and it seemed to me that the slender hairy hands which appeared to belong to it at times, helpfully touched the strings of the violin on which Paganini was playing. Sometimes they guided the hand in which he held the bow, and then a bleating laugh of approbation mingled with the sounds that poured forth from his instrument ever more painfully and

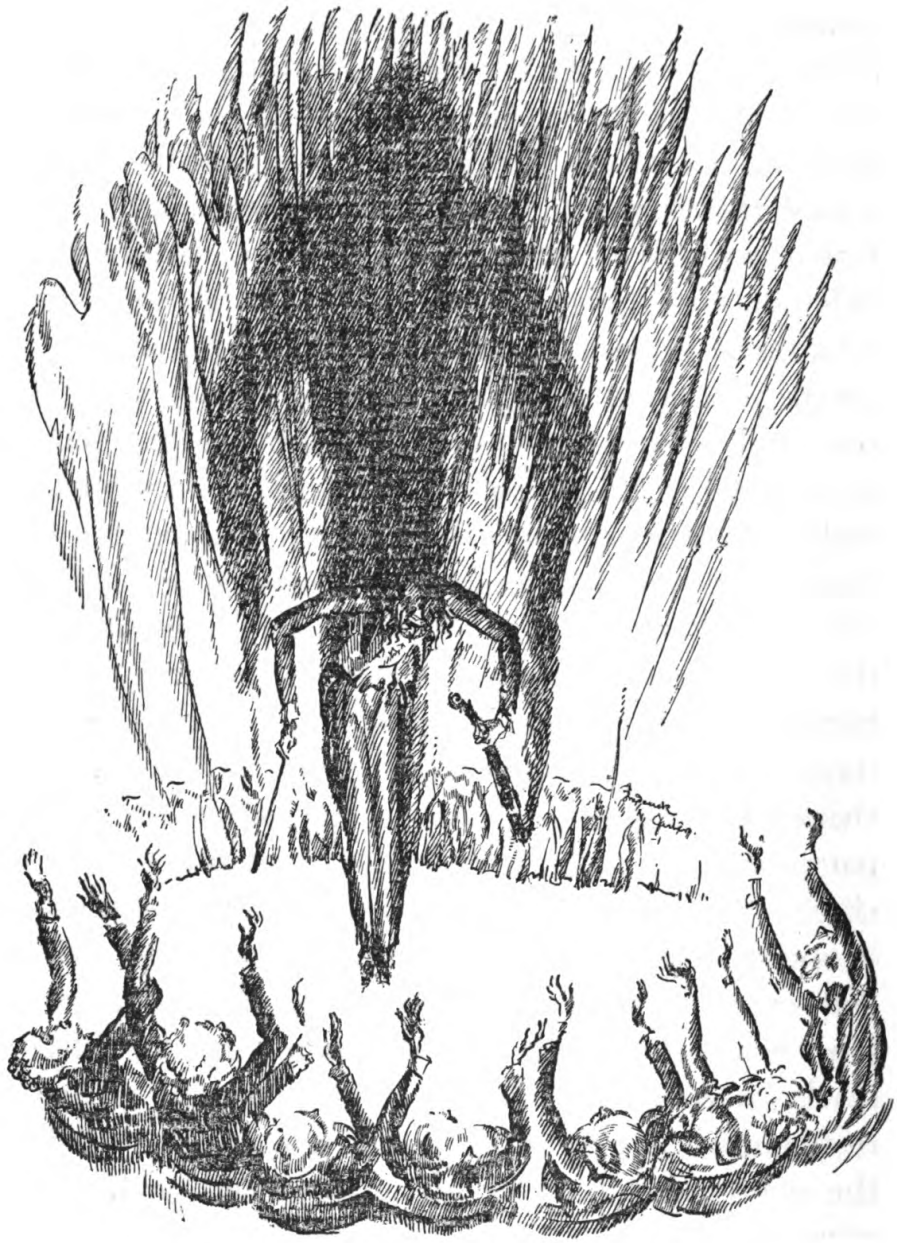
brokenhearted. They were melodies like the chants of fallen angels who, for wantoning with earth's daughters, had been cast forth from the realms of the blessed and had fallen into the nether regions, their faces fiery with shame: melodies, in whose unfathomable depths there glowed no jot of comfort nor of hope. When saints in heaven hear such sounds, the praise of God dies on their bloodless lips and tearfully they hide their pious faces. Yet, now and then, when the *obbligato* of the goat's laughter interwove its bleatings with the tortured melody, I saw in the background a host of female forms that nodded their vile heads with lively malice, teasing, jeering, and full of spite. Then cries of terror and a ghastly sighing and weeping forced their way out of the instrument, such as had never yet been heard upon this earth, nor ever will again, save in that valley of Jehoshaphat perhaps, when the dread trumpets of the Last Judgment sound, and the bare corpses, in sad expectation of their fate, creep from their graves. . . . And then the violinist in agony drew his bow suddenly across the strings, drew it so madly and despairingly, that his chains burst asunder and his dread helper and the foul and mocking forms all vanished straightway.

'At that moment my neighbour the furrier said: "What a pity, what a pity, one of his strings has broken; that's the result of so much *pizzicato*!" But was the string really broken? I cannot tell. I noticed only an alteration in the sounds; Paganini

and his surroundings seemed suddenly transformed. He was hardly recognizable in the monk's brown garb, which rather concealed than clothed him. His face was that of a savage, half hidden by a cowl; a cord was round his waist, his feet were bare, and Paganini stood a lonely and defiant figure on a bold rocky promontory by the sea, and played. It seemed to me to be the time of twilight, and a red glow of sunset spread over the broad expanses of the sea, whose crimson deepened and resounded with yet more majesty, attuned most mysteriously to the music of his violin. And as the sea assumed a darker hue of red, the heavens became more pale and wan, till finally the tossing waves looked like a crimsoned lake of scarlet blood, and like a lurid ghost the heavens paled, wan like a corpse, and there appeared great menacing stars . . . and black were they, black like great lumps of shining coal. But the sounds of the violin grew ever stormier and still more defiant; in the eyes of the dread performer sparkled such a jeering lust of destruction, and his thin lips moved so hastily, that it seemed as if he murmured ancient and accursed spells wherewith the storm is called up and evil spirits are unchained that lie in fetters in the abysses of the sea. Sometimes when his long sinewy arm projected uncovered from the sleeve of his monk's robe, waving his bow in the air, he appeared more than ever like a wizard commanding the elements. Then the depths of the sea moaned madly, then the horror-stricken waves

of blood leaped up so mightily that they nearly splashed the pallid sky and the black stars with their red foam. There was a howling, screeching and crashing, as though the world were about to fall in ruins, and yet the monk persisted in dragging his bow across the strings. Through the power of his furious will the seven seals were broken, wherewith Solomon had sealed the seven vessels of iron in which the demons he had vanquished lay imprisoned. The wise king had thrown them into the sea, and it was the voices of the spirits there imprisoned that I thought I heard while Paganini's violin growled its angry bass notes. But at last I heard as it were the jubilations of deliverance, and out of the red waves of blood I saw the heads of the unchained demons rise: monsters of fabled horror, crocodiles with wings of bats, serpents with stags' antlers, apes whose heads were made of shells shaped like funnels, seals with the long beards of patriarchs, women's faces having breasts for their cheeks, camels with green heads, hermaphrodites of incomprehensible composition, all with their cold and crafty eyes staring, with their long fin-like paws reaching towards the fiddling monk. . . . His cowl, moreover, fell back in the furious zeal of his conjuration, and ringlets of his hair fluttering in the wind formed round his head a halo of black serpents.

'And so confusing to the senses was this vision that I, to avoid losing my reason, closed both my eyes



and stopped my ears. And thereupon the phantoms vanished, and when I again looked up I saw the Genoese in his normal shape cutting his usual complimentary capers, whilst the public applauded with the utmost enthusiasm. " Ah, so that is the famous performance on the G string," remarked my neighbour, " I myself play the violin and I know quite well how difficult it is to master the instrument." Very fortunately the pause was not long, otherwise the musical furrier would have enmeshed me in a long dissertation on art. Paganini quietly placed the violin against his chin, and at the first touch of his bow the marvellous transformations of sound began again. However, they were no longer so highly coloured and well-defined. The melody developed calmly, moving majestically and increasing in volume like an organ chorale in a cathedral; everything had widened and grown in height to make a vast space such as spiritual vision alone might comprehend, for the human eye has its limitations. In the centre of this space there floated a shining sphere on which, gigantic and proudly erect, stood a man who played on a violin. Was that sphere the sun? I know not. But by the features of the man I recognized Paganini, ideally handsome, celestially splendid, smiling and reconciled. His body radiated the perfection of manhood, a light blue garment enwrapped his noble limbs, and on his shoulders floated the shining locks of his black hair. As he stood there, firm and secure, an exalted and divine

image, playing upon his violin, it seemed as if an entire creation obeyed his melodies. He was Man as planet, round whom the universe revolved, moving with measured stateliness and sounding with celestial rhythms. And those great lights that, calmly shining, moved about him, they were the stars of heaven. And the resounding harmony which they occasioned, was that the music of the spheres whereof the poets and seers have told us the enchantment? At times I tried hard to discern in the twilighted distance what I thought was a host of white robes, clothing pilgrims who wandered muffled and enormous, grasping in their hands white staves. And behold, the golden heads of these same staves were those great lights which I at first had taken to be stars. In wide circles those pilgrims moved around the great musician, the music of his violin making the golden heads of their staves shine ever more and more brilliantly, and the chorales resounding from their lips, which I had taken for the music of the spheres, were really dying echoes of the melodies that he played upon his violin. There was a sacred and unspeakable ardour dwelling within those sounds, that quivered, sometimes scarcely audible, like a mysterious whispering on the water, and yet again at times swelled with a shuddering sweetness like the sound of horns by moonlight, rushing at last unrestrained and jubilant onward, as if a thousand bards were plucking the strings of harps and, with their voices raised, were chanting victory.

Sounds that never fall on human ear were they, sounds that the heart alone can dream when it lies pressed at night against the heart of the beloved. . . And yet, the heart perchance may comprehend them in clear daylight when with exultant contemplation the lines and curves of a Greek masterpiece . . .'

'Or when one has drunk a bottle of champagne more than is good for him!' a laughing voice was suddenly heard to say, which awoke our story-teller out of the dream. He turned and saw the doctor, who had quite softly entered the room accompanied by dark-skinned Deborah, in order to inquire whether the medicine had any effect on the patient.

'I don't like that sleep at all,' he said, pointing to the sofa.

Maximilian, absorbed in the phantasms he was describing, had not noticed that Maria had long ago dropped off to sleep, and bit his lip.

'This sleep,' the doctor continued, 'already lends her the character of death. Does it not resemble those death masks, those white plaster casts, in which we attempt to preserve the features of the departed?'

'I should like to have such a cast of our friend's face,' Maximilian whispered to him. 'Even as a corpse she will still be very beautiful.'

'Let me dissuade you,' replied the doctor. 'Such masks mar our recollections of our loved ones. We think that the plaster retains something of the living, but what we have really preserved is death

itself. Regular and lovely features acquire something rigid and ghastly, mocking and fatal, which affrights us rather than pleases. But more, casts of faces whose charm is of a spiritual nature, whose features are more interesting than regular, become caricatures. For as soon as the grace of life has departed, the actual deviations from ideal beauty are no longer compensated by spiritual charm. All such plaster casts have in common a certain mysterious trait which makes our souls shiver when we spend time in contemplation; they all look like persons who are about to set forth on a long journey.'

'Where to?' asked Maximilian as the doctor gripped his arm and drew him out of the room.

The Second Night

'AND WHY do you go on worrying me with this horrible medicine when I'm to die so soon anyhow? '

Maria had spoken these words just as Maximilian entered the room. The doctor stood in front of her, in one hand a medicine bottle, in the other a small cup containing a nauseous brown and frothing liquid.

' My dear friend,' he said, turning to the newcomer, ' your arrival is particularly welcome. Do try to induce Signora to drink these few drops. I am pressed for time.'

' Maria, I implore you,' whispered Maximilian in a pleading voice, a voice that people seldom heard him use and which came from so sad a heart that

the invalid, strangely moved, almost forgot her own affliction and took the cup. But before she put it to her lips she said, smiling: ' As a reward you'll tell me the story of Laurentia, won't you? '

' I'll do anything you wish,' Maximilian assented.

The anaemic patient at once drank the contents of the cup, half smiling, half shuddering.

' Now, I'm in a great hurry,' said the doctor, putting on his black gloves. ' Lie down quietly, Signora, and move as little as possible. I must make haste.'

Accompanied by brown Deborah, who bore a light, he left the room. Now that the two friends were alone, they looked at one another silently for a long while. Thoughts formed in their minds which each strove to conceal from the other. Suddenly the woman seized the man's hand and imprinted burning kisses upon it.

' For heaven's sake,' said Maximilian, ' don't get excited ; just lie down quietly on the sofa.'

Maria obeyed him, and he covered her feet carefully with a shawl which he had first quietly pressed to his lips. She had probably noticed this, for her eyes sparkled with contentment like a happy child's.

' Was Mademoiselle Laurence very beautiful? '

' If you will not interrupt me once, dear friend, and promise to listen quite calmly and in complete silence, I will tell you circumstantially everything that you can wish to hear.'


Hanek Cortes
'53

Smiling cheerfully as Maria nodded her head, Maximilian seated himself on the chair which stood before the sofa, and began his tale.

'Eight years ago I travelled to London in order to become acquainted with the language and the people. The devil take the people and their language too. They like to take a dozen monosyllables into their mouths, chew them, turn them over, spit them out again, and that's what they call talking. Fortunately they are by nature rather taciturn, and although they always gape at one open-mouthed, they spare one lengthy conversations. Woe to any of us, however, if we fall into the hands of one of Albion's sons who has made the Grand Tour, who has learnt French abroad! He will use the opportunity to practise the language he has acquired, he will overwhelm us with questions concerning all sorts of subjects. And no sooner has one question been answered, than he will come along with a new one, either about our age, our home, or the length of our stay, and with this incessant questioning he thinks he is being most entertaining. A Parisian friend of mine was no doubt right when he asserted that the English learn French conversation at the passport office. But their conversation is most significant at meals, when, carving their enormous joints of beef with serious countenances, they ask us which piece we should prefer, well-done or under-done, inside or brown, fat or lean? Joints of beef and mutton are, moreover, the only good things they have.

Heaven protect every good Christian from their sauces, which consist of one part of flour to two of butter, or, in order to vary the mixture, one part of butter to two of flour! And heaven preserve everyone from their native vegetables, which appear on the table boiled in water just as God has created them!

'But still more dire than English cookery are their toasts and customary after-dinner speeches. When the meal is ended and the ladies leave the room, in their stead just as many bottles of port are placed. For this they consider to be the best compensation for the absence of the fair sex. I say the fair sex, and really Englishwoman deserve the epithet. Their bodies are lovely, fair and slim. It is only the excessive space between nose and mouth, found quite as often amongst the women as amongst the men, that has marred for me the loveliest of English faces. This deviation from the standard type of beauty becomes still more painful to me in Italy, when I see English people with their skimpy noses and wide expanse of lip stretching down to their mouths. How great is their contrast with the faces of the Italians, whose features show more of classical regularity, and whose noses, whether curved like the Roman or straight like the Greek, sometimes degenerate into excessive length. There is much truth in the observation of a German traveller that the English, when they wander here amongst Italians, all look as if they were statues with the ends of their noses knocked off.

'Indeed, to meet English people abroad is to see

their deficiences more clear-cut by contrast. They are the gods of boredom, chasing post-haste through all lands in their brightly lacquered coaches, leaving behind them everywhere a grey dust-cloud of mournfulness. Add to this their inquisitiveness without interest, their dressy clumsiness, their insolent diffidence, their awkward egoism, and their sterile joy in all melancholy matters. For three weeks past you could have seen an Englishman standing by the hour on the Piazza del Gran Duca gaping open-mouthed at the quack sitting there on horseback and drawing people's teeth. Maybe this performance compensates the noble son of Albion for the executions which he misses seeing in his own dear native land. For, apart from boxing and cock-fighting there is nothing dearer to the heart of a Briton than the mortal terror of some poor devil who has stolen a sheep or forged a signature, and who is exhibited for an hour in front of the Old Bailey with a rope round his neck before they cast him into eternity. I am not exaggerating when I assert that sheep stealing and forgery are punished in that barbarous and cruel country with the same severity as the most heinous of crimes, parricide and incest. Through pure mischance I happened in London to come upon the hanging of a man because he had stolen a sheep: since then I have lost all pleasure in eating roast mutton. Its fat always reminds me of the poor sinner's white cap. Next to him they had hanged an Irishman who had forged the signature

of a rich banker; I can still see the naïve fear of death of poor Paddy, who was unable to realize at the assizes why he should be punished so severely on account of a forgery—he who would allow anybody and everybody to forge his own handwriting! And these people still go on talking about Christianity, and they never miss church on Sundays, and flood all the world with Bibles.

'I must confess to you, Maria, that though everything left an unpleasant taste in my mouth, both the people and the cookery, the fundamental fault, in part, was mine. I had arrived from my native land with a good store of ill-humour, and I sought distraction among a people who can only kill their boredom in the whirlpool of political and commercial activity. The perfection of the machinery which is everywhere in use, which has taken over so many of the human functions, struck me as uncanny; this artificial activity of wheels, rods, cylinders, and a thousand little hooks, pins, teeth, which move with spontaneous urge as it were, fills me with dread. And the precision and exactitude, the calculation and punctuality, in the lives of the English, is not any more reassuring, for if their machines give one the impression of being human, the people on the other hand appear to be machines. Indeed, wood, iron and brass seem to have usurped the spirit of the people and to have become nearly mad in absorbing it, whilst the spiritless human quite mechanically and like a hollow ghost performs his daily functions,

eats his steaks at the appointed moment, makes his parliamentary speeches, cleans his nails, gets into his stage-coach, or hangs himself.

'You may imagine how my discomfort in this country grew from day to day. But nothing could equal the gloomy mood which came over me when, towards evening one day, I stood on Waterloo Bridge and gazed at the water of the Thames. It seemed to me that my soul was mirrored there, as if, with all its scars, it looked at me from out of the water. The most piteous tales came into my mind . . . I thought of the rose that was watered with vinegar, forfeiting thus its sweetest perfume, wilting long before its time . . . I thought of the straying butterfly fluttering lost between walls of crevasses and seen by a naturalist ascending Mont Blanc . . . I thought of the tame monkey who was on such good terms with human beings that she played and had her meals with them. Once, at table, however, she recognized her own offspring in the food which lay on the dish; she hastily seized it, hurried away into the woods, and was never seen again amongst her friends the human beings. Ah, I was so sick in mind that scalding tears fell from my eyes! . . . They fell into the Thames and were swept away into the open sea which has swallowed unconsciously many such human tears.

'At that moment it so befell that a strange music awoke me from my murky dreams, and as I looked around I noticed that on the strand a crowd of

people had formed a circle about some amusing spectacle. I drew near and saw a family of performers consisting of the following four persons:

'First, there was a short and thick-set woman dressed all in black, with a very small head and an enormously fat and protruding belly. Over this belly hung an immense drum on which she drummed most unmercifully. Secondly, a dwarf wearing a broidered costume like that of an old-time French marquis; his head was large and he had powdered hair, but otherwise his limbs were thin and insignificant. He was dancing to and fro, striking a triangle. Thirdly, there was a young girl of about fifteen years wearing a short tight-fitting jacket of blue-striped silk and wide pantaloons also striped with blue. She had a fairy-like and charming figure. Her face was Grecian in its loveliness. A noble straight nose, delicately curved lips, a soft and pensive rounded chin, a sunny complexion with shining black hair coiled about her temples; so she stood, slim and serious, sullen indeed, looking at the fourth person of the company who was just performing his tricks.

'This fourth person was a learned dog, a very promising poodle, and to the intense delight of the English public he had just composed the name of the Duke of Wellington with wooden letters which lay before him, adding a very flattering epithet, namely *Hero*. As the dog was not an English animal —this could be easily seen from the witty expres-

sion of his eyes—but had come over from France with the other three persons—the sons of Albion were delighted to think that their great general found approval with French dogs at least, seeing that the rest of French living creatures so contemptuously withheld their recognition.

'For indeed, the company was French, and the dwarf, who thereupon announced himself as Monsieur Turlutu, began to bluster in French with such lively gestures that the poor English people opened their mouths and noses wider than ever. Sometimes, after a long sentence, he crowed like a cock, and these cock-a-doodle-dos, as also the names of many emperors, kings and princes who were mixed up in his discourse, were perhaps all that the poor spectators understood. For he extolled these emperors, kings and princes as his patrons and friends. Already as a boy of eight, so he assured them, he had had a long interview with His Majesty Louis XVI of most blessed memory, who subsequently had always consulted him on matters of importance. Like so many others he had escaped the storms of the Revolution by flight, and not before the advent of the Empire had he returned to his beloved native land to play his own part in the glory of that great nation. Napoleon, said he, had never loved him, but His Holiness Pope Pius VII, on the other hand, had almost idolized him. The Emperor Alexander had given him sweets and the Princess William of Kyritz always sat him on her

knee. His Highness Duke Charles of Brunswick sometimes made him ride on the backs of his dogs, and His Majesty King Ludwig of Bavaria had read to him some of his sublime poems. The Princes of Reuss-Schleiz-Kreuz and of Schwarzburg-Sondershausen loved him as a brother and had always shared their pipes with him. From childhood, he said, he had always lived amongst rulers; the monarchs of the present time had grown up in his company. He considered them his equals and always put on mourning when one of them bid farewell to temporal things and passed away. After these weighty words he crowed like a cock.

' And to be sure, Monsieur Turlutu was one of the strangest dwarfs I have ever seen; his old and wrinkled face set off so amusingly his childish and slender body, and the whole of him contrasted so ridiculously with the tricks he performed. For he assumed the most impertinent attitudes, stabbing at nothing, left and right, with an enormously long rapier, swearing by his honour that not a soul could parry his quartes and tierces, that no living mortal could break through his defence, and that he invited one and all in the audience to take up his challenge in the noble art of fencing. When the dwarf had carried on this performance for some time and had found no one prepared to enter the lists with him, he bowed with old French grace, returned thanks for the applause which had been awarded to him, and took the liberty of announcing to his highly

esteemed audience the most extraordinary performance that had ever been admired on English soil. " Look at this person," he cried, when he had put on a pair of soiled kid gloves and conducted to the centre of the circle, with respectful gallantry, the young girl who was a member of the company, " this person is Mademoiselle Laurence, the only daughter of the honourable Christian lady with the big drum, whom you see there, who is still in mourning for her dearly beloved spouse, the greatest ventriloquist in Europe. Mademoiselle Laurence will now dance! Pray admire the dancing of Mademoiselle Laurence! " And thereupon he crowed once more like a cock.

' The young girl appeared to pay no attention either to this discourse or to the audience; sullen and absorbed, she waited until the dwarf had spread a large carpet at her feet and had begun again to accompany the big drum with his triangle. It was strange music, a mixture of ill-tempered clumsiness and wanton titillation. I perceived a melody foolishly pathetic, melancholy, insolent and bizarre, and yet it had the most singular simplicity. But the music went out of my mind when the young girl began to dance.

' Dance and dancer forced themselves on my attention. It was not classic dancing such as we find in our great ballets, where, as in classical tragedy, the complacent unities and artificialities dominate; it was not a dancing of alexandrines, filled with the

declamatory leaps and antithetical capers of a refined passion which pirouettes, whirling on one foot, so that there is nothing to be seen except heaven and tights, nothing but ideality and lies. For, in truth, there is nothing I detest more than the ballet at the Grand Opera in Paris, where the tradition of classical dancing has maintained itself in its purest form, whilst in the other arts, in poetry, in music and in painting, the French have overturned the classical system. However, they will find it hard to achieve a similar revolution in the art of dancing. Unless, perhaps, after the model of the political, they take refuge in terrorism and guillotine the legs of the obdurate dancers of the old regime.

' Mademoiselle Laurence was no great dancer; the tips of her toes were not very supple, her legs were not accustomed to all sorts of dislocations, she knew nothing of the art of dancing as it is taught by Vestris, but she danced as nature bids us dance. Her entire nature was in harmony with her steps; not only her feet but her body danced, her face danced. . . . Sometimes she grew pale, pale as death, her eyes opened as as if she had seen a ghost and her lips quivered with desire and pain, and her black hair, lying in a smooth oval shape around her temples, moved like the wings of a fluttering raven. Indeed it was no classical dance, nor yet was it a romantic dance in the meaning of the school of the young Frenchman, Eugène Renduel. This dance had neither anything medieval, nor Venetian, nor

humpbacked, nor macabre. It had no moonlight, nor anything incestuous. . . . It was the sort of dancing which did not seek to amuse through outward forms of movement, but the outward forms seemed words of a particular language which had something particular to convey. What was it that this dancing had to say? I could not understand it, however passionately the speech was uttered. Only at times did I guess that the subject was full of dread and pain. I, who as a rule divine the significance of all appearances so easily, could not resolve this danced riddle. It was probably the fault of the music, which purposely led me along false tracks and cunningly attempted to mislead and disconcert me, so that I always groped in vain to unravel the meaning. Monsieur Turlutu's triangle sometimes tittered with much malice. But Madame her mother beat so wrathfully upon her drum that her face glowed forth from the black cloud of her cap like blood-red northern lights.

'When the troupe had passed on, for a long time I stood rooted to the spot revolving in my mind the meaning of the dance. Was it a national dance from the south of France or from Spain? The violence with which the dancer tossed her body to and fro, the abandon with which she threw her head backwards like the wilful and daring bacchantes whom we see with amazement on the reliefs of antique vases, seemed to lend colour to this supposition. Then her dancing had an involuntary and intoxi-

cated quality—something darkly inevitable, something fatalistic, she danced like fate. Were they fragments of an age-old and forgotten pantomime? Or was it the danced expression of a personal history? Sometimes the girl would bend towards the ground with listening ear, it seemed, as if she heard a voice that spoke to her from down below . . . and then she quivered like an aspen, quickly bent aside and performed the wildest and most unrestrained of bounds. Again her listening ear approached the ground; she seemed more anxious than before, nodding her head, blushing at first, then turning pale and shuddering: as if benumbed awhile she waited bolt upright, and finally made motions as one who washed her hands. Was it of blood she cleansed her hands so long and carefully, so carefully and with so much dread? And sidelong then she cast her glance, appealing, supplicating, melting the soul . . . and her glance chanced to fall on me.

'During the whole of the subsequent night I thought about that glance and about the adventure that had accompanied it. Next day when, as usual, I sauntered about the streets of London, I felt the most ardent desire to meet the charming dancer again, and I continually pricked up my ears in case I should hear any drum-and-triangle music. At last I had found something in London which interested me, and no longer did I wander aimless through its yawning streets.

' I had just left the Tower after carefully examining the axe with which Anne Boleyn's head had been cut off, as also the English crown jewels and the lions, when, in the square outside the Tower, I noticed Madame with her big drum, and heard Monsieur Turlutu crowing like a cock in the centre of a large crowd. The learned dog was again scraping together the heroism of the Duke of Wellington, the dwarf again exhibited his tierces and quartes which could not be parried, and Mademoiselle Laurence began again her wonderful dancing. Again there were the same enigmatic movements in the same language which said things I could not understand, the same violent throwing back of her lovely head, the same leaning towards the ground, the dread which demands to be soothed by madder and madder leaps; and again the listening with ear turned towards the ground, the shivering, turning pale, becoming rigid, and then the dread and secret washing of the hands; finally the appealing and supplicating side-glance which this time rested longer on me.

' Yes, women, and young girls as well as women, at once notice when they have excited the curiosity of a man. Although Mademoiselle Laurence always kept her gaze fixed motionless and sullenly as she danced, and often glanced once only at the audience, after this it was not simply a coincidence that her glance always fell on me. The oftener I saw her dance the more significantly it sparkled and the

more incomprehensible I found it. I was fascinated, and for three weeks from early morning till late at night I passed my time in the streets of London, stopping wherever Mademoiselle Laurence was dancing. In spite of the noise of human bustle I could recognize from afar the sounds of drum and triangle, and Monsieur Turlutu raised his friendly crowing as soon as he saw me hurrying towards them. Although I had never exchanged a word with either Mademoiselle Laurence or with Madame her mother or with the learned dog, I appeared finally to be one of their company. When Monsieur Turlutu collected money he always behaved with the most exquisite tact on approaching me, and he invariably looked the other way as I threw a small coin into his three-cornered hat. Truly his demeanour was most distinguished and his good manners a reminder of the past. One could tell that the little man had grown up with monarchs, and it was, therefore, all the stranger that he crowed at times like a cock, quite oblivious of his dignity.

'I cannot describe to you how ill-humoured I became when, after searching for the little troupe three days in vain, I realized at last that they had left the town. Boredom again took me into her leaden arms and pressed upon my heart. At last I could stand it no longer. I said farewell to the mob, the blackguards, the gentlemen, the dandies of England, the four estates of the realm, and returned

to the civilized Continent, where I knelt in adoration before the white apron of the first chef I met. Here I could again eat my lunch like a reasonable being and refresh my soul in gazing at good-natured and unselfish faces. But I could never get Mademoiselle Laurence out of my head; long she danced in my memory; in solitary hours I had often to think over the enigmatic pantomimes of the charming child, particularly her action of bending and listening towards the ground. And it was a good while before the echoes of the romantic drum-and-triangle melodies faded from my mind.'

'And is that all the story?' cried Maria passionately, starting up.

Maximilian pressed her down gently, significantly placed his finger on his lips and whispered: 'Be quiet, don't say a word! Lie down nicely and I will tell you the conclusion of the story. Only don't interrupt me!'

Maximilian leant back more comfortably in his chair and resumed his story:

'Five years after this adventure I went to Paris for the first time, and, indeed, that was a strange period. The French had just produced their July revolution and all the world was applauding. This drama was not as horrible as those earlier tragedies of the Republic and the Empire. Only a few thousand corpses were left on the stage. Also, the political romanticists were not too well pleased, and announced a forthcoming piece in which more blood

should flow and the hangman would have more to do.

'Paris delighted me with the gaiety that it manifests in all things and which exercises its influence over the most sombre minds. It is strange, for Paris is the scene against which the greatest tragedies of the world's history are enacted, tragedies whose memory causes hearts to shudder, eyes to start with tears, in far-lying countries. But the spectators of these great tragedies have somewhat the same experience as I once had at the Porte Saint Martin Theatre when I saw the *Tour de Nesle* performed. I found myself behind a lady who wore a hat of rose-coloured gauze, and this hat was so large that it completely covered my view of the stage, so that I saw all the action through the gauze of her hat and all the horrors of the *Tour de Nesle* appeared in a most cheerful and rose-coloured light. Yes, Paris has just that rose-coloured light which cheers all tragedies for the near beholder so that his joy may not be marred. Even the terrifying things which we bring to Paris in our own hearts lose their gnawing dread. Our sorrows are curiously toned down. In the atmosphere of Paris all such wounds heal more quickly than elsewhere; in the very air there is something as generous, as kindly, as charming, as there is amongst the people themselves.

'What I liked best about the people of Paris was their polite bearing and their easy manners. Champagne delicacy of politeness, how balmily did you

refresh my ailing soul, which had swallowed so much tobacco smoke, coarse behaviour, and the smell of so much sauerkraut! The mannerly expression of apology from a Frenchman, when on the day of my arrival he had pushed passed me gently in the street, sounded to my ears like the melodies of Rossini. I was nearly startled by the charm of his politeness, I who had grown accustomed to receiving digs in the ribs without apology from German clowns. During the first week of my stay in Paris I went out of my way to be jostled to enjoy the music of their apologies. Not only on account of their politeness, but by reason of their language, the French people have for me a certain touch of distinction. For as you know, with us in the north the French language is one of the attributes of the aristocracy. Since my childhood I have connected the speaking of French with nobility. And any of the dames of the Paris Market Halls spoke better French than a German titled lady with four-and-sixty ancestors.

'Because of their language which lends them this distinction the French people have, in my eyes, something fabulous. This derives its origin from another reminiscence of my childhood, for the first book from which I learnt to read French was the Fables of La Fontaine. His simple and sensible means of expression had stamped themselves ineradicably on my memory, and when I went to Paris and heard French spoken all round me I was reminded constantly of La Fontaine's Fables and I thought I

recognized the well-remembered voices of the animals. I heard the Lion, and then again the Wolf, the Lamb, or the Stork, or the Dove. Often enough I thought I heard the Fox, and in my recollection awoke the words:

Eh! bonjour, monsieur du Corbeau!
Que vous êtes joli! que vous me semblez beau!

' But these fabulous reminiscences revived oftener still when I reached those higher regions in Paris which are called Society. It was that society which furnished the late lamented La Fontaine with the characters of his animal types. The winter season began soon after my arrival in Paris and I frequented the drawing-rooms where Society moves more or less joyously. What struck me as being of the greatest interest was not only the level of their polished manners but also the variety of the elements of this Society. Sometimes, when I regarded the people who were peaceably collected in a large drawing-room, I had the impression of being in an old curiosity shop where the relics of all periods are to be found higgledy-piggledy; a Greek Apollo side by side with a Chinese pagoda, a Mexican Vizipuzli beside a Gothic *Ecce Homo*, or dog-headed Egyptian idols, sacred masks in wood, ivory, metal and so on. There I saw old musketeers who had danced with Marie Antoinette, republicans in less esteem who had been idolized at the National Assembly, Montagnards without charity but without reproach, former leaders of the Directoire who had ruled in

Luxembourg, dignitaries of the Empire before whom all Europe had quailed, Jesuits who had governed during the Restoration; in short, a lot of faded and mutilated idols of past times in whom no one now believed. The names jar when they touch, but one sees the people stand side by side peaceably and in friendly fashion, just like the antiques in the shops of the Quai Voltaire. In Teutonic countries, where the passions are less easily disciplined, such a heterogeneous mass of people could not possibly maintain a social relationship. And with us in the cold north the conversational urge is not so strong as in sunny France; there the greatest enemies cannot long maintain a gloomy silence when they meet in a drawing-room. Further, in France, the desire to please is so great that every one is anxious to be amiable not only to his friends but to his foes. There is a perpetual subtlety and affectation in manners, so that women are hard put to excel the men in coquetry; but they do succeed.

'I do not wish it to be thought that I am malicious, certainly in regard to French women, and least of all where those of Paris are concerned. For I am their most ardent admirer and I honour them far more on account of their shortcomings than their virtues. I know nothing more pertinent than the legend that the Parisian woman is born with every sort of failing, but that a good fairy takes pity on her and sets a spell on each one of her faults so that it acts as a charm. Are Parisian women beauti-

ful? Who can tell! Who can see through all the devices of their toilet, who can decipher whether that which the gauze betrays be genuine or that which the swelling silk conceals be false? And when the eye has succeeded in penetrating the husk and we are on the point of examining the kernel, at once it enfolds itself in a new husk and again in another, and by means of the incessant change of fashion they mock at masculine astuteness. Are their faces beautiful? Even this would be hard to discover. For all their features are in a constant state of flux, and every Parisian woman has a thousand expressions, each one wittier, more laughing and lovelier than the other. How confusing for him who has to select the most beautiful or even the true face! Are their eyes large? How can I tell! We do not go on with investigating the calibre of a gun when the projectile carries away our heads. Even if they do not hit the mark, nevertheless they blind us with their flashes and we are glad enough to keep out of range. Is the space between their noses and their mouths broad or narrow? Sometimes it is broad when they turn up their noses; sometimes it is narrow when they pout insolently. Are their mouths large or small? Who can tell where their mouths end and their smiles begin? In order to come to a just conclusion the judge and the subject of his judgment must be in a state of repose.

'But who can be at rest in the presence of a

Parisian woman and what *Parisienne* is ever at rest? There are people who think they can observe a butterfly more accurately when they have pinned it down to a piece of paper. That is as foolish as it is cruel. The motionless and transfixed butterfly is a butterfly no longer. For a butterfly can only be observed when it is flitting round flowers . . . and a Parisian woman must be seen, not in her household to which she is attached with a pin through her breast, but in drawing-rooms, at soirées and dances when she flutters about with her silk and gauze wings under the sparkling and joyful crystal chandeliers. Then their ardent joy in life is revealed and, too, their longing for a sweet narcotic poison that adds a shudder to their beauty and gives them that charm which intoxicates and thrills.

'This thirst for the enjoyment of life, as if in the next hour death were to summon them from the bubbling fountain of enjoyment, or the fountain were to run dry; this haste, this fury, this madness of Parisian women, reveals itself most clearly at their balls, and reminds me always of the legend of the dead dancers who with us are called *Willis*. These are young girls who have died before their marriage-day, having the unsatisfied passion to dance so firmly implanted in their hearts, that, nightly, they leave their graves and assemble in bands on the highways where during the midnight hour they give themselves up to the wildest dances. Adorned in bridal robes, with wreaths of flowers on

their heads, with sparkling rings on their pale hands and laughing terribly, and of a loveliness that is irresistible, they Willis-dance in moonlight ever more madly and wildly as they feel that the short hour granted them is coming to an end and they must now descend again to lie in icy graves.

'It was at a soirée in the Chausée d'Antin where this consideration profoundly moved my soul. None of the traditional ingredients of social pleasure were lacking. It was a brilliant soirée; the illumination was satisfactory, there were sufficient mirrors to see ourselves in, people enough to raise the temperature of the crush, and enough sugar-water and ice to cool us down. There was music to begin with. Franz Liszt had allowed himself to be pushed to the piano; he stroked his hair back from his majestic forehead and achieved one of his most brilliant victories. The keys seemed to be covered with gore. If I am not mistaken he played a passage from the *Palingenesis* of Ballanche, whose ideas he translated into music, a thing which is very useful to those who are unable to read the works of this distinguished writer in the original. After that he played Berlioz's *La Marche au Supplice*, an admirable piece which that young musician composed on the morning of his wedding-day, if I am not mistaken. Throughout the room people were turning pale, breasts began to heave; during the pauses they hardly dared breathe—and then, thunderous applause. Women seem always as if intoxicated when Liszt has played.

'With renewed enthusiasm the Willis of this drawing-room now abandoned themselves to dancing and I had great trouble to extricate myself from the confusion and reach the adjoining room. Here cards were being played, and in large chairs reclined some of the ladies who watched the players, or who, at least, pretended that they were interested in the game. And as I brushed past one of these and her dress touched my arm, I felt a tingling from my hand to my shoulder as if I had had a slight electric shock. But the shock I received nearly brought my heart to a standstill when I saw the lady's face. Is it she, or is it not? It was the same face, resembling an antique in shape and sunny colouring, but it was not so marble-pure and smooth as once upon a time. For the acute observer there were to be seen on the forehead and cheeks small flaws, marks that reminded one of the delicate weathering found on the faces of statues which have been subjected to rain for a time. The black hair and the smooth oval of the raven's wings covering the temples were as before. But when the eyes met mine with that well-remembered sidelong glance whose swift lightning always struck my soul so enigmatically, my doubts were stilled—it was Mademoiselle Laurence.

'Reclining in her chair with an air of distinction, holding in one hand a bunch of flowers and resting the other on the arm of the chair, Mademoiselle Laurence sat near a card-table, and appeared to devote her entire attention to the playing of the cards. Her

dress of white watered satin was distinguished and elegant, yet quite simple. She wore no jewellery except bracelets and breastpins of pearls. An abundance of lace covered her youthful bosom, covered it puritanically as it were, up to the neck, and the simplicity and restraint of her dress made a touching and charming contrast with some of the older ladies who sat beside her, gaudily adorned and sparkling with diamonds, who exposed to view the ruins of their former magnificence, the naked melancholy site whereon Troy once stood. She still looked wondrous lovely and enchantingly ill-humoured; and, being irresistibly drawn towards her, I found myself behind her chair burning with the desire to speak with her, yet restrained by timorous delicacy.

'For some time I had already been standing silently behind her, when suddenly she drew a flower from her bouquet and, without turning, offered it to me over her shoulder. Strange was the scent of this flower and it exercised a peculiar enchantment over me. I felt I had transcended all social formalities and was as in a dream wherein one does and says all manner of things that move one to astonishment, and in which our words assume a childlike, simple and confiding character. Calm, indifferent and careless, as if between friends of long standing, I leant over the back of her chair and whispered in the young lady's ear: "Mademoiselle Laurence, where is your mother with the drum?"

' " She is dead," she answered, in the same tone, just as calm, indifferent and careless.

' After a short pause I leant again over the back of her chair and whispered in her ear: " Mademoiselle Laurence, where is the learned dog? "

' " He has run away into the wide world," she answered once more in her calm, indifferent and careless tone.

' And again after a short pause I leant over the back of the chair and whispered in the young lady's ear: " Mademoiselle Laurence, where is Monsieur Turlutu, the dwarf? "

' " He is with the giants on the Boulevard du Temple," she answered. Hardly had she spoken these words, again using the same calm, indifferent and careless tone, when a tall and serious-looking old man of military aspect approached and informed her that her carriage was at the door. Rising slowly from her seat, she took his arm, and without casting a glance behind her, left the company at his side.

' When I asked the lady of the house, who had stood all the evening at the main entrance presenting her smile to all who came and went, to tell me the name of the young lady who had just left accompanied by an old man, she laughed at me and cried: " *Mon dieu!* who can know everybody! I know him just as little . . ." She stopped, for she was just about to say she knew him as little as myself, whom she had seen for the first time that evening. " Per-

haps," I suggested, " your husband can give me some information? "

"'He's hunting at Saint Germain," she answered, laughing louder. " He left this morning and does not get back until to-morrow night. . . . But wait, I know someone who spent a considerable time talking to the lady in question. I don't know his name, but you can easily find out if you ask for the young man who was kicked by Monsieur Casimir Périer—I don't quite know where."

' And though it may be difficult to recognize a man by the fact that he has been kicked by a Minister, I did nevertheless soon find my man, to ask him for more definite information about the strange creature who interested me so much and whose description I was able to furnish clearly. " Yes," said the young man, " I know her very well, we have conversed at several soirées "—and he repeated a lot of meaningless stuff with which he had entertained her. What had particularly struck him was her serious look every time he paid her a compliment. He was also not a little surprised that she should always have rejected his invitation to dance a quadrille, assuring him that she did not know how to dance. Her name and circumstances he did not know. And neither could anybody else whom I asked give me further particulars. In vain did I frequent all sorts of soirées; nowhere could I find Mademoiselle Laurence again.'

' And that's the end of the story? ' cried Maria,

turning over slowly and yawning sleepily. ' That's the whole of this remarkable story? And so you've never seen either Mademoiselle Laurence, or the mother with the drum, or the dwarf Turlutu, or even the learned dog? '

' Rest quietly,' replied Maximilian. ' I saw them all again, even the learned dog. The poor fellow was indeed in a sad state of distress when I came across him in Paris. It was in the Quartier Latin. I was just passing the Sorbonne when out of its portals dashed a dog and behind him a dozen students with sticks. Soon they were joined by a couple of dozen old women and all cried in chorus: " The dog is mad! " The unhappy beast looked nearly human in his agony of fear, tears flowed like water from his eyes. As he passed me, panting, and his moist eyes rested an instant on me, I recognized my old friend the learned dog, the panegyrist of the Duke of Wellington, who had once filled the people of England with astonishment. Was he perhaps really mad? Had the weight of his learning, when he continued his studies in the Quartier Latin, caused something to snap inside him? Or had he perhaps given vent to his distaste for the puff-cheeked charlatanism of some professor in the Sorbonne by scratching and growling, and had the latter sought to rid himself of his unfavourable hearer by declaring him mad? Alas, youth does not always take the trouble to investigate whether it was wounded professorial vanity or even envy that first cried: The dog

is mad! Youth hits out with thoughtless sticks and all the old women are ready to howl and to drown the voice of innocence and of reason. My poor friend was doomed to succumb; before my eyes he was miserably beaten to death, reviled and finally flung on a dung-heap! Poor martyr of learning!

'Not much more cheering was the condition of the dwarf Monsieur Turlutu when I found him again on the Boulevard du Temple. Although Mademoiselle Laurence had told me that he had betaken himself there, whether it be that I did not seriously think of searching for him or that the bustle of the crowd prevented me, it was not till later that I noticed the booth where the giants were to be seen. When I entered I found two tall and good-for-nothing fellows who lay idling on benches, and who jumped up quickly to take their giant postures. Really they were not so tall as they boasted on their posters. They were two worthless fellows, clothed in pink tights with very black, no doubt false, beards, who brandished wooden clubs over their heads. When I asked them for information about the dwarf, who was also advertised on their poster, they answered that he had not been exhibited during the last four weeks on account of his increasing infirmity, but that I could see him nevertheless on paying twice the ordinary price of admission. How glad one is to pay double the admission fee to see an old friend again! But alas, it was a friend who lay on his deathbed. This deathbed was in reality

a child's cradle, and in it lay the poor dwarf with his yellow and wrinkled old face. A small girl of about four years of age sat by his side, rocking the cradle with her foot and singing in a laughing and roguish tone: " Sleep, little Turlutu, sleep! "

' When the little fellow saw me he opened wide his pale and glassy eyes, and a melancholy smile played round his white lips; he seemed to recognize me at once, stretched out his shrunken hand, and croaked: " Old friend! "

' Indeed it was a distressing condition in which I found the man who in his eighth year had had a long conversation with Louis XVI, whom the Czar Alexander had fed with sweets, whom the Princess of Kyritz had held on her knee, who had ridden on the Prince of Brunswick's dogs, to whom the King of Bavaria had read his verses, who had smoked out of the same pipe as German princes, whom the Pope had idolized, and whom Napoleon had never loved. The last circumstance troubled the poor fellow on his deathbed, or, as I said, his death cradle, and he cried over the tragic fate of the great Emperor who had never loved him but who had ended his life in such lamentable circumstances at Saint Helena —" just as I now end my life," he added, " forlorn, misunderstood, and deserted by all the kings and princes; what a caricature of former splendour! "

' Although I was unable to understand quite how a dwarf who dies among giants can compare himself with a giant who died among dwarfs, the words of

Turlutu nevertheless moved me, and more particularly his forlorn condition in the hour of death. I could not but voice my astonishment that Mademoiselle Laurence, who was now in such easy circumstances, did not trouble about him. Scarcely had I mentioned her name when the dwarf in the cradle was seized with most fearful spasms, and with his white lips he whined: " Ungrateful child! whom I brought up, whom I wished to raise to be fit to become my spouse, whom I taught how to behave and move amongst the exalted of the earth, how to smile, how to bow at Court, how to perform! . . . You have taken advantage of my teaching and are now a great lady, you have now a carriage and lackeys, and plenty of money and much pride, and you are heartless! You would leave me to die here in misery and alone, just like Napoleon at Saint Helena! O, Napoleon, you never loved me! . . ." I could not understand what he added, for he raised his head and moved his hands as if he were fighting against someone; perhaps it was against Death. But no man can resist the scythe of that antagonist, neither a Napoleon, nor a Turlutu. Here no defence is of any avail. Tired, as if overcome, the dwarf allowed his head to sink again. For a long while he looked at me with an indescribably unearthly look. Then he suddenly crowed like a cock and expired.

' His death pained me, more particularly as he might have been able to give me further particulars about Mademoiselle Laurence. Where should

I now turn for information? I was neither in love with her nor did I feel greatly attracted towards her, yet a secret desire spurred me on to seek her everywhere. When I had entered a drawing-room and had examined the company without finding the face I knew so well, I soon lost all peace of mind and was forced to leave.

'Reflecting on this feeling, I once stood at midnight at one of the remote entrances of the Grand Opera waiting for a carriage, and waiting with considerable annoyance because it was raining hard. But no carriage passed, or rather, only carriages belonging to other people who got in cheerfully. Gradually my surroundings grew deserted. "Then you will have to come with me," said a lady wrapped in a black mantilla, who had been standing for some time waiting and who was now on the point of entering her carriage. Her voice stabbed me to the heart, and the sidelong glance I so well remembered exercised its magical charm. I was as in a dream when I found myself side by side with Mademoiselle Laurence in her warm and cosy carriage. We spoke no word, and indeed we could not have made ourselves understood, because the carriage was for some time rattling along the streets of Paris with a reverberating roar until it stopped in front of a large gateway.

'Servants in gorgeous livery lighted us up a staircase and through a number of rooms. A sleepy-looking lady's maid came to meet us and stammered

with a great many excuses that there was no fire in any but the red room. Laurence, motioning to the woman to leave us, said, laughing: "Fate is taking you far to-day, my bedroom alone is warmed. . . ."

'In this bedroom, where soon we found ourselves alone, there was a large open fire, and this was all the pleasanter as the room was of immense size and height. In this vast bedroom, which by rights should have been called a sleeping-hall, there was something curiously desolate. All the furniture and decoration bore the impress of a period whose brilliance now appears so dust-laden and whose sublimity so empty that its remains cause a certain misgiving in us, if not a hidden smile. I am speaking of the Empire period, of the time of golden eagles, of high-flying plumes, of Greek coiffures, of glory, of the great drum-majors, of military masses, of official immortality as decreed by the *Moniteur*, of continental coffee made of chicory, and of bad sugar manufactured from sugar-beet, of princes and dukes made out of nothing at all. But that period of pathetic materialism always had its charm. . . Talma declaimed, Gros painted, Bigottini danced, Grassini sang, Maury preached, Rovigo was in charge of the police, the Emperor read Ossian, Pauline Borghese allowed herself to be moulded as Venus, and with nothing on, for the room was well heated, just like the bedroom in which I found myself with Mademoiselle Laurence.

'We sat in front of the fire chatting confiden-

tially, and with a sigh she told me that she was married to one of Bonaparte's heroes, who enlivened her every evening before going to bed with the description of his battles; a few days ago, before his departure, he had fought the battle of Jena for her; his health was very indifferent, and he probably would hardly survive the account of the Russian campaign.

' When I asked her how long her father had been dead, she laughed and confessed that she had never known a father, and that her so-called mother had never been married. " Not married! " I exclaimed, " why I myself have seen her in London in deepest mourning for her husband! "

' " Oh," cried Laurence, " for twelve years she was always dressed in black so as to excite people's compassion as a poor widow, and besides, she wished to snare some ass eager to get married. She thought that she would reach the marriage haven more quickly by sailing under a black flag. But death alone had pity on her and she died of a broken blood-vessel. I never loved her, because she beat me too much and gave me too little to eat. I should have starved if Monsieur Turlutu had not sometimes secretly handed me a crust of bread. But the dwarf demanded in exchange that I should marry him. Then, when his hopes foundered, he joined forces with my mother. I say *mother* as a matter of habit, for they both tormented me in unison. They always said I was a superfluous creature, and that

the learned dog was worth a thousand times more than I with my bad dancing. They praised the dog at my expense, extolled him to the skies, stroked him, fed him with cakes, and threw the crumbs to me. The dog, they said, was their best support; he delighted the public which was not in the least interested in me. The dog had to keep me with his labours; I lived on the alms he provided. That damned dog! "

' " Oh, don't curse him any more! " I interrupted her passionate outburst. " He is dead now. I saw him die. . . ." " Is the beast dead? " cried Laurence, jumping up, and her face glowed with pleasure. " And the dwarf also is dead," I added. " Monsieur Turlutu? " cried Laurence, again with pleasure. But the pleasure gradually vanished from her face, and with a milder, almost melancholy, voice she said after a while: " Poor Turlutu! "

' As I did not conceal from her that the dwarf on his deathbed had complained very bitterly about her, she became most agitated. With many protestations she assured me that she had intended to provide for him to the best of her ability, and indeed, she had offered him an annuity if he would lead a quiet and modest life somewhere in the country. " But," she continued, " ambitious as he was, he demanded to stay in Paris and even to live in my house; then, he thought, through my influence he would be able to renew his erstwhile connexions in the Faubourg Saint Germain and to resume his brilliant

position in Society. When I categorically refused he sent me a message to say that I was an accursed ghost, a vampire, a child of death. . . . "

' Laurence suddenly stopped, shuddered violently and heaved a deep sigh. " Ah," she said, " how I wish they had left me in the tomb with my mother! " When I pressed her to explain these mysterious words, tears streamed from her eyes, and trembling and sobbing, she admitted that the black-robed woman with the drum who professed to be her mother had herself once declared the rumour connected with the birth of Laurence to be no idle fiction. " For in the town which we inhabited," continued Laurence, " they always called me the Child of Death. The old spinning-women asserted that I was really the daughter of a count, who always ill-treated his wife but buried her with great pomp when she died. She, they said, was about to be confined and was in a trance, so that when graveyard robbers opened her tomb to rob the richly adorned corpse they found the countess alive and in the throes of childbirth. She died immediately after delivery, and the thieves had put her back quietly into the tomb, taking the child with them and handing it over to their receiver, the mistress of the ventriloquist, to be brought up.

' " That poor child who had been buried was now known everywhere as the Child of Death. Ah, you cannot realize how much I was pained even as a small girl when they called me by that name.

While the great ventriloquist was still alive, when he—and that not infrequently—was dissatisfied with me, he would shout: ' Accursed child of death, how I wish I had never taken you from the tomb! ' Being a clever ventriloquist, he knew how to modulate his voice so that I would think it came from the ground, and with these tricks he induced me to believe that I heard the voice of my dead mother telling of her fate. And he was in a position to know this dreadful fate, for he had been the count's valet. What a cruel pleasure to take, throwing a poor little child into a state of terror with words that seemed to come up out of the ground! Those words related fearful tales, tales I never fully understood, which later I gradually forgot but which came into my mind vividly when I was dancing. Indeed when I danced certain recollections took possession of me; I forgot myself and became quite another person; it seemed as if all the secrets and sorrows of this other tormented me . . . and when I ceased to dance they were again wiped from my memory."

' Laurence spoke thus, slowly and as if in doubt, as she stood by the fireplace in which the flames leaped more pleasantly than before, and I sat in the armchair which was probably her husband's seat, when at night, before retiring, he recalled his battles. She looked at me with wide-open eyes as if asking me for advice; with such melancholy reflection she moved her head from side to side that I was filled with compassion; she was so slim, so young, so lovely, this

lily that had grown from the tomb, the daughter of death, the phantom with the face of an angel and the body of a dancing-girl! I don't know how it came about—perhaps it was the influence of the chair on which I sat—but suddenly it seemed to me as if I were the old general who, the day before on this very spot, had described the battle of Jena and must continue the recital, for I found myself saying: " After the battle of Jena, within a couple of weeks all the Prussian fortifications surrendered with scarcely a blow being struck. First there was Magdeburg which was strongly fortified and which had three hundred guns. Wasn't that disgraceful? "

' But Mademoiselle Laurence would not allow me to go on talking. All the moodiness had vanished from her charming face. She laughed like a child, and cried: " Yes, it was disgraceful, more than disgraceful! If I were a fortress and had three hundred guns I should never yield! " Mademoiselle Laurence, however, was no fortress and had not three hundred guns. . . .'

When he had spoken these words Maximilian suddenly stopped, and after a short pause he asked softly: ' Are you asleep, Maria? '

' I am asleep,' answered Maria.

' All the better,' said Maximilian with a subtle smile. ' Then I need not fear to weary you by describing in detail, as do our novelists, the furniture of the room.'

' Pray, don't forget the bed, dear friend! '

'Indeed it was a most magnificent bed,' answered Maximilian. 'The feet, as in all Empire beds, were in the form of caryatids and sphinxes; it glittered with rich gilding; gilt eagles billed like turtle doves, illustrating perhaps love under the Empire. The curtains of the bed were of red silk, and as the flames from the fireplace shone brightly through them, Laurence and I found ourselves lighted with a fiery red. I seemed like the god Pluto surrounded by the fires of hell holding the sleeping Proserpine in his arms. She was asleep, and I gazed at her lovely face at rest, and sought in her features for comprehension of the sympathy which my soul felt for her. What meant this woman? What sense lurked under the symbolism of these fair forms? I now held this charming enigma in my arms as my very own, and yet could I find no solution.

'But is it not foolish to attempt to discover the inner meaning of some external phenomenon while we are unable to solve the riddle of our souls! We do not know exactly whether external phenomena really exist. For sometimes we are unable to distinguish reality from dream apparitions. Was it an image of my fantasy, or was it horrible reality that I heard and saw that night? I am unable to tell. I only remember that while my heart was flooded with the wildest thoughts, a curious sound reached my ears. It was a mad melody, strangely soft. It seemed quite familiar, and at last I distinguished the sounds of a triangle and a drum. This music, whirr-

ing and humming, seemed to sound from a great distance and yet, when I looked up, I saw quite close, in the middle of the room, a performance that I knew well: it was Monsieur Turlutu the dwarf who played on the triangle, and Madame beating the big drum, while the learned dog scratched on the floor as if he were trying again to collect his wooden letters. The dog was moving with difficulty and his coat was stained with blood. Madame still wore her black mourning; her belly did not protrude so ridiculously, though it hung down repulsively, also her face was no longer red, but pale. The dwarf, who was still wearing the broidered dress of a French marquis of the old regime and had a powdered wig, seemed to have grown somewhat, perhaps because he had become so dreadfully thin. He was again demonstrating the art of fencing, and appeared to be rattling off his old-time boasts; but he spoke so softly that I could not understand a word, and only from the movement of his lips did I gather at times that he was again crowing like a cock.

'While these ridiculous and ghostly caricatures were moving like shadow pictures in their uncanny haste, I felt that Mademoiselle Laurence was beginning to breathe more and more restlessly. A cold shudder passed over her and her lovely limbs quivered as with unbearable pain. At last, however, sinuous as an eel, she glided from my arms, and standing suddenly in the middle of the room, she began to dance, whilst, muffled and soft, the woman

beat her drum and the dwarf his triangle. She danced, just as she had once danced at Waterloo Bridge and in the London squares. It was the same mysterious pantomime, with the same outbursts of passionate leaping, the same bacchantic tossing backward of her head, and sometimes the same leaning towards the ground as if she were listening to what was said below; then the trembling, the pallor, the rigidity, and again the listening with her ear turned towards the ground. And again she rubbed her hands as if she were washing them. At last she seemed once more to cast at me her supplicating glance, deep and painful . . . but only in the features of her deathly-pale face did I recognize her glance, not in her eyes, for those were tightly closed. The sounds of the music grew fainter and fainter; the drumming mother and the dwarf gradually dissolving and whirling like mist, altogether disappeared, but Mademoiselle Laurence still stood there and danced with her eyes shut. This dancing with closed eyes in the room during the silent night gave the lovely creature such a ghostly appearance that an uncanny mood came over me; I occasionally shuddered, and I was heartily pleased when her dancing ended and she again glided into my arms just as sinuously as she had slipped away.

'Truly it was an unpleasant scene to me. But one becomes accustomed to everything. Possibly that uncanniness lent the woman an added charm, bringing a thrilling tenderness to my feelings. . .

In any case, after a few weeks I was not in the least astonished when at night I heard again the low sounds of drum and triangle, and my dear Laurence suddenly rose and, with closed eyes, danced alone. The old Bonapartist, her husband, had a command in the neighbourhood of Paris, the duties of which permitted him to spend only the day in town. It is self-evident that he should become my most intimate friend, and he wept copiously when later he took leave of me for a considerable time. With his wife he was going to Sicily, and I have seen neither of them since.'

When Maximilian had finished this story he seized his hat and hastily left the room.

Epilogue

UPON COMPLETING the drawings for this story of Heinrich Heine's, it seems of interest to offer an explanation of the motives that led to making an illustrated translation of this particular work. Obviously, of course, one sufficient reason was its high reputation as an admirable piece of writing, a masterpiece in small by one of the world's greatest writers. But more, it is probably the best and most characteristic example of Romantic story-telling. Forsaking the older canons of form, it would seem, at first sight, merely to be a set of gossiping anecdotes about his past life told by Heine's protagonist, a young man of the world, beside the couch of an invalid lady, doomed soon to die.

But a critical reading shows plainly how this very means makes intensely moving the many contrasting elements in the whole tale. Like all Romantic stories it is, plainly, preoccupied with some kind of introspection. In that day authors and readers both were consumed by the urge to assertion or enhancement of the personality of the individual. Heine's story gives the history of his hero's obsession for a statue—of some marble, white, unliving perfection. For him, too, the statue is the symbol of art with its

poised, complete perfection in the pure, passionless form of its life beyond movement.

All through it, too, one remarks Heine's political symbolism. He allegorizes the way of the world in the various characters: the old regime in the dwarf, playing the triangle and demonstrating his sword play and telling of the royalties he has intimately known. The new Romantic world of liberty, that is yet married to the old Napoleonic memories and relics like Heine himself, is imaged in Mademoiselle Laurence, the child of death. The learned dog is the classical school of learning, hounded to death by the mob about the Sorbonne.

So, in his hands for a brief term the standards of pure form were upheld ere they fell beneath the onrush of the bourgeois culture which, with Louis Philippe, rose up to drench everything under its wash of false values and sentimental distortions. Romance, called upon too often to perform at full burst of passion, became melodramatic. But Heine strove for his time to keep in his art a structural severity, escaping from contemporary weaknesses through his passion for sculpturesque form and its marmoreal serene.

For similar reasons he had been, and remained, Bonapartist in his admiration for Napoleon's universality of genius and for his endeavour to consolidate Europe into one grand system. It had appealed to Heine as the way towards his adored Liberty. Possibly it all depended, in the main, on his admiration

for the great revolutionary cry of Brotherhood set up by the French people, whom he always loved for it.

Romantic violence had come as the inevitable and obvious result of the long-endured weight of a close system of authority. On every hand knowledge was increasing with prodigious swiftness, and the spirit of man aspired to launch upon a new venture in art, finding other paths to expression, having new thoughts, declaring fresh feelings. Extravagances were inevitable, as the greatly contrasting types of William Blake and Horace Walpole would indicate. Strange pair of heralds for the fresh order of approach.

The new school saw in nature the measure of its thought. Babylons upon earth and clouds and lightnings above were both existent in their hearts. Forasmuch as they discerned the soul of nature within their minds, they sought the eternal spirit within the darkest sanctuary of the self. Whether they cried out in blasphemy or rage, or wept in sorrow and fear, they were seekers of the divine within, bursting in the effort the very bounds of the imagination. The thought of all times and places, whether orthodox or heretical, they drew forth and seized upon with devouring joy. Magician or priest might equally well be the teacher. Good and evil, knowledge and life, the two forbidden fruits, were all their desire. In their eyes the alchemist strove to resolve in matter the same transmutation as they aspired to perform in thought.

Romance had existed in other quarters of the world before in the last century it found again its home in northern Europe. The *Thousand and One Nights* of the Arabs told of the same world of passion and wonder as the Histories of the Knights of King Arthur, or the songs of the Troubadours. But for a latinized world, modelled on old Rome, all this was unthinkable and childish extravagance. The cold classical sneer was always directed at the obvious enthusiasm and wild delight of the romantic.

With the poem of *Kubla Khan*, Coleridge gave the new movement a consummate example of transmutation from the reality of history through the opiate and the dream. He was the first who consciously entered into those charmed gardens, called by Baudelaire the False Paradises. Opium or hashish opened the gate to the Edens of dream for both. There were two gardens in *Kubla Khan*—one, as the title reveals, of China; but the other was that castle of the Old Man of the Mountain in nearer Asia, whence hashish-drugged devotees set out at his bidding to assassinate his foes: ' Weave a circle round him thrice and close your eyes in holy dread, for he on honey-dew hath fed and drunk the milk of Paradise.' From the same roots that earlier flowered to beauty in Gothic architecture and Arthurian legend sprang these dream-enchanted stories.

Adventurers of these Western lands had already sailed the widest seas of the world ere the Romantic generation burst once again into the vast unknown

ocean of the soul. They committed themselves to an expanse and intricacy of thought that no classical exemplar could enable them to compass. Yet so soon as the first tentative fumblings were over, Coleridge, Heine, and Baudelaire gave the new vision a powerful precision and a form which brought it into the full sphere of literature, to match with the utmost that the Latin genius could produce.

Byron, too, for England, had made the whole world resound with romantic exploits, whether in life or in verse; Gérard de Nerval and Amadeus Hoffman, in France and Germany, forwarded, with work of extraordinary imaginative quality, the same quest of enchantment in thought and the mysteries hidden in the mind. Each saw new marvels of vision, each strove with life and suffered defeat, living greatly and dying tragically; so they ended nobly in that war with the innate perversity of things which seems to be the inevitable fate of seekers for new paths in human thought.

Besides Edgar Allan Poe, of those who reveal the Romantic influence in chief, is that voluminous genius Honoré de Balzac, who expounded the new complexity of civilization in vast cities lorded over by finance. Afterwards came Gobineau with his explosion of ideas upon the Inequality of Human Races. His view in history is plainly Romantic (this in no way concerns its soundness or its accuracy; it defines an outlook and a kind); and his influence brought forth later the formidable Nietzschean Transvalua-

tion of Values, as a significantly titled contribution to its philosophy in operation.

The later Romantics strove, not always successfully, to maintain that sense of form which would hold the new revelation. Perhaps it escaped them, though Heine had fabled the essential need in his dream of sculpturesque clarity. But the onrush of naturalism obscured the true issue for some generations. In pictorial art the same problems were in question. Yet it was not for a century that the severity suggested in the work of David, in the time of the Revolution, came to grips with technical practice, although Ingres' drawings displayed reminiscences of it.

To-day, insistence upon structural form in coordination with massive design, rather than the effort to produce imitation of natural things, is with us, urging the problem to its issue. The power to imitate by hand-skill and cunning disposition of forms and colours is no longer the dominating objective of the artist. Representation begins to have a far wider significance in art. Presentation of a purposive selection from the more significant shapes, instead of unselective imitation, is the avowed aim of our day.

The drawings here reproduced as illustrations have been made with this technical end in view; one, it seems to me, which would have been acceptable to the German poet. Heine's vision saw even the wanderings of the disthroned gods with a good-natured, exquisite charm in satire that depended

wholly upon the purity of his mode of expression for its temper. A satirist and so great a writer was he, that he would combine it with passion and sentiment, looking on them and the world with the serene gaze of an early Greek sculptor.

Frederick Carter

June 1933

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