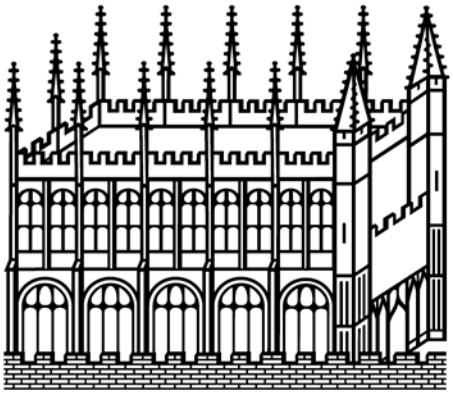

TALES · OF · HOFFMAN

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ILLUSTRATED BY

MARIO LABOCCETTA

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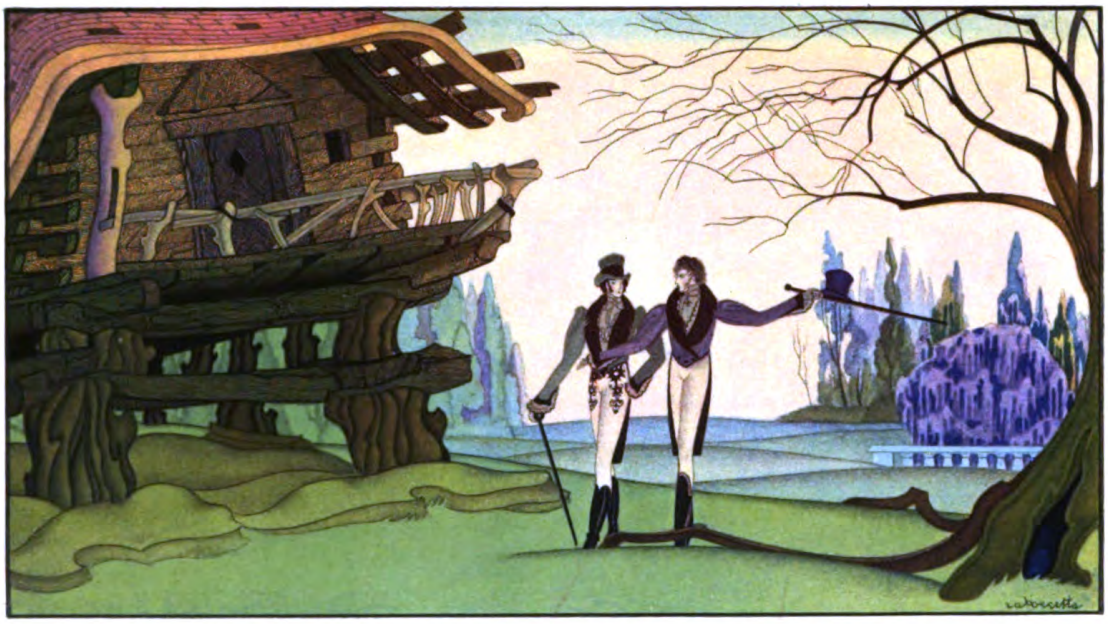


THE INTERDEPENDENCE OF THINGS

I

CLASPING his friend Euchar's arm, Ludwig exclaimed, "No! a thousand times *no*! I do not believe in chance; the whole machine of this vast universe is like a colossal clock; everything in it is put together by an intelligence that is wiser than the wisest of our *savants*; if an unskilful hand touches the springs of the clock, it stops. Even so would it be with this world if your blind chance were to take it into its head to derange something in it; the machine would speedily find itself out of action. There you have my opinion."

Euchar began to smile. "My poor friend," he said to Ludwig, "I am genuinely sorry to see you defending the

mechanical fatalism to which you attribute the guidance of matters here below. Why should you take a delight in deforming Goethe's beautiful idea : he shows us a red thread interwoven in the warp of our life, symbolizing for us, when we think calmly and wisely, the superior power that keeps watch over our destiny."

"I do not at all like your metaphor of the red thread," replied Ludwig; "it is borrowed from the English navy, and I abhor anything connected even remotely with perfidious Albion. And anyhow in Goethe's *Elective Affinities* I have read that the very smallest rope on English ships has twisted in it a red strand that marks it as the property of the State. Now for my own part I feel and see clearly that the events of life are linked together in an order foreseen from the foundation of things; the principle of life and movement is a real, a logical, an immutable force. And in fact, could you deny that at this very moment we are talking....?"

But is it not time, dear reader, to inform you that Ludwig and Euchar were walking and talking in this fashion under the magnificent shade of the great trees of the park at W....? It was a Sunday at evenfall; a cool breeze blew under the green leafy canopy and freshened the air that was still lukewarm with the oppressive heat of a long summer day. A host of strollers, small bourgeois, shopkeepers and artisans, in all their best, were giving themselves up to every kind of enjoyment; some were dancing no the flowery sward, others munching the provisions they had brought to make a rustic feast; the least epicurean were regaling themselves with the simple country wine under the arbours, where every Sunday the greater part of the week's wages was spent.

At the very moment when master Ludwig was about to put to his sceptical friend a conclusive argument in favour of the

interdependence of the things of this world, he tripped over a tree-root he had failed to notice, and executed the most masterly head-over-heels that any student ever indulged in. "Good!" said Euchar with a coolness that would have done honour to an ancient philosopher, "this fall was foreseen from all eternity in the chain of human destiny; had it not come in this very spot at this precise moment, the world would have crumbled." With these words, as it was doubtless equally foreordained that friends owe each other help in their tribulations, Euchar picked up Ludwig's stick and hat, and then held out his hand to assist him to get up.

The poor devil in his tumble had taken a nasty bruise that made him limp in a rather ungainly fashion; and besides he was bleeding at the nose like the most common and vulgar of mortals. Our two friends, the one supporting the other along, made for the nearest pleasure gardens. They came then to a sort of clearing framed about by a green trellis. Diners and dancers were vying in hearty enjoyment to the sound of a rather poor guitar and a deafening tambourine. Ludwig asked the landlady to let him have a little water and some salt to bathe his slight hurts; Euchar, attracted by the concert that was entertaining the clientele of the gardens, slipped in among the crowd of spectators, and by dint of using his elbows on his neighbours he managed to get into the best place.

In the centre of the ring formed by the spectators a handsome girl, in gipsy costume spangled all over with gold, was dancing blindfolded, playing a tambourine, among eggs placed symmetrically by threes on the newly-swept ground. Close beside her squatted a sort of deformed dwarf who scraped at a guitar to the admiring wonder of the peasants. The two performers were doing their utmost to amuse the crowd; and certainly their talent was not to be disdained: the girl handled her

tambourine with quite charming dexterity, and the dwarf drew highly original harmonies from his guitar. The gipsy turned and twisted among the eggs without touching them, letting her black voluptuous tresses float in the light breeze; she was very beautiful! When she seemed tired from her exertions, her companion, whose eyes never left her, gave a signal. At once she brought the eggs together with the toe of a little foot, crowned the display with a somersault that earned her prolonged applause, then twirled about with the speed of a top flogged by a schoolboy expert, and finally stopped dead, motionless as a statue under a spell.

The dance was at an end : the little dwarf went to the girl anxiously and untied the handkerchief that covered her eyes; she smoothed her fine, slightly disordered hair, took up the tambourine again and went round the ring making play with her eyes and sweet smiles to evoke the bystanders' generosity. Everyone threw his coin into the tambourine that served the nomad artists as a money-box. But when the girl passed in front of Euchar, she refused his contribution. "Why do you refuse, my dear child?" said the young man, with heightened colour. "The old man has bidden me do so, sir," answered the dancer, "you only came as the dance was ending, and therefore I cannot accept anything. You may reward my labours, but I do not take alms." With these words she made a little pirouette, finished her tour of the ring, and went back to the dwarf, whom she led off to a table isolated from all the others. Euchar, while he followed her with the corner of his eye, perceived our friend Ludwig completely consoled for his mishap, for he was seated gravely between two stout burgers of venerable aspect, and had a huge pot of beer in front of him. "What!" he exclaimed, "my poor friend, can you drink this vulgar drink?" Ludwig made no other answer than to swallow

down a number of good gulps; then he bowed and thanked the burgers, who showed a lively interest in him because of his tumble. When they had gone away, Ludwig said to his friend, "You need not have attacked me like that in front of those two honest citizens; you know perfectly well that for me to drink beer I must have been forced to it by good and sufficient reasons. Those lads are foremen who have no use or liking for what they call young bloods; if I had looked like despising the beer they offered me to pull me together after my accident, they would very likely have fastened a quarrel on me." "Good!" answered Euchar laughing loudly. "Supposing you had been driven away and even pummelled just a trifle, would not that have been the outcome of the *interdependence of things*? But I owe a charming show to your tripping over the root of a tree, a fall foreknown in the macrocosm from all eternity." And Euchar described the egg-dance so gracefully performed by the young Spanish maiden. "Mignon!" cried Ludwig enthusiastically, "ravishing, divine Mignon!"

The little guitar-player, sitting some way off, was counting his takings. The girl was standing at the table and squeezing an orange into a glass of water. At length the old man picked up the money, and with eyes beaming made a sign of satisfaction to the girl. She gave him the refreshing beverage, and passed a caressing hand over his wrinkled cheeks. The old man let out a bleat of laughter; then he swallowed his orange drink at a draught, with many grimaces. The girl sat down beside him and began to sing softly to the guitar. "O Mignon!" cried Ludwig once more, "ravishing, divine Mignon! Yes, I will save her from the harsh slavery in which that wretch is keeping her." "How do you know," said Euchar very coolly, "that the little hunchback is a wretch?" "Cold creature that nothing moves, that nothing strikes, who have no feeling for

what is strange or fantastic!" replied Ludwig. "Do you not realize, do you not see what malicious irony, what a low and envious spirit are displayed in this gipsy abortion, with his little green eyes and his wrinkled face? Yes, I will save her, I will deliver her, the heavenly child! If only I could speak to her!"

"Nothing could be easier," said Euchar, and beckoned for the girl to come over. She put her instrument down on the table at once, came forward and made a curtsy with downcast eyes. "Mignon!" repeated Ludwig yet again, as though beside himself, "charming, delicious Mignon!" "They call me Emmanuela!" said the girl. "And this horrible rogue," went on Ludwig, "where did he kidnap you, my poor little thing? How did he get you to fall into his satanic snares?" "I do not understand you, sir," replied the girl, raising her eyes and fixing upon Ludwig a grave and penetrating look; "I do not know what you mean, nor what your questions are aiming at." "You are Spanish, my child?" said Euchar. "Yes indeed," replied the girl in a feeling voice, "and I have no thought of denying it." "And so," continued Euchar, "you play the guitar, and you know a song or two as well?" The girl put a hand before her eyes and murmured in an almost unintelligible voice, "Ah, gentlemen, I would be glad to play and sing something for you: but the songs I know are of fire, and it is so cold here!" "Well," said Euchar, speaking Spanish and raising his voice, "do you know this song, *Láurea inmortal*?..."

The girl put her hands together, raised her eyes to heaven, and the tears glistened in her eyes. She ran hastily to pick up the guitar from the table, and placing herself face to face with Euchar she began:

"Láurea inmortal al gran Palafox,
Gloria de España, de Francia terror!" etc.

She sang the whole dithyramb with infectious ardour. Ludwig was entranced. He interrupted the singing with a thousand cries of *Brava! bravissima!* "Take pity on me, my worthy master," said Euchar, "and restrain your tongue a little, I beseech you." "Oh, I know very well," said Ludwig peevishly, "that even music has no power to move you, prosaic fellow that you are!" All the same he complied with Euchar's injunctions.

When the song was at an end, the girl, exhausted with fatigue, leaned against a tree close by; as she accompanied the last chords she drew from the instrument in a low voice, great tears welled from her eyes. Euchar said in tones of deep emotion, "You are in need, my poor child; if I did not see your dance from the start, your song makes up for it amply, and you cannot now refuse to accept something from me." He had taken out a little purse in which gleaming ducats could be seen shining through the meshes. He held it out to the girl who had drawn near. Her eye fixed on Euchar's hand, then she caught it in hers, and falling on her knees she covered it with a thousand burning kisses, exclaiming "*Oh, Dios!*" "Aye," cried Ludwig, carried away, "those soft little fingers should touch nothing but gold." And he thereupon asked Euchar if he could not change a thaler for him, as he had no small money about him.

Meanwhile the little hunchback had hobbled over to them; he took up the guitar that Emmanuela had let fall; then he bowed with a smile many times over before Euchar. "Rogue! rascal!" growled Ludwig, addressing him. The old man recoiled in consternation, and said with a most woeful air : "Ah, my good sir! for pity's sake, do not curse poor good Biagio Cubas! Do not consider the colour of my face or my ugliness. I was born at Lorca, and I am no less a good Christian than yourself."

The girl stood up quickly and said in Spanish to the old man : "Oh, let us go, let us go immediately, little father!" And the pair departed. Emmanuela turned her beautiful eyes to Euchar with a most expressive look, while old Cubas almost fell over himself with grotesque bowings.

Already the trees were hiding the strange pair from view, when Euchar said, "Do you not see, Ludwig, that you were too hasty in condemning the poor dwarf? He has indeed something of the gitano about him; he is from Lorca, as he says himself. You must know that Lorca is an old Moorish city, and it would be impossible for its inhabitants, who are in any case generally very good folk, to dissemble their origin. But they are excessively hurt by any allusion to it, and that is why they constantly protest their long-standing Christianity. Just as our little friend did not fail to do, though his grotesque physiognomy, it is true, bears the Arab imprint clearly upon it."

"No!" cried Ludwig, "I persist in my opinion. The fellow is an arrant rascal, and I shall use every means to rescue my sweet, my chaste Mignon from his clutches!"

"You may stick to it obstinately that the little man is a rascal," rejoined Euchar; "for my part, I have no great confidence in your sweet chaste Mignon either." "What do you mean, Euchar?" cried Ludwig impetuously. "You don't trust that dear heavenly child whose eyes reflect the most candid innocence!... Icy and prosaic creature, who, far from being allured by that touching grace, conceive insulting suspicions about everything that does not come within the commonplace limits of your vulgar sensations!"

"There! there!" replied Euchar, "don't get so hot, my dear enthusiast. No doubt you will reproach me for suspecting your white-souled Mignon without any plausible reason. Well now, I have just discovered that the young lady, doubtless at

the moment when she was clasping my hands, stole from me the little ring adorned with a precious stone that I constantly wore on my finger, as you know. I am infinitely sorry to lose this simple trinket, which was a priceless souvenir of a critical period in my life."

"How is that? In heaven's name," said Ludwig, lowering his voice, "it's not possible! That sweet face, those eyes, that pure look cannot lie to such an extent. You must have dropped your ring, you have lost it somewhere!" "Well," said Euchar, "we shall see. But night is coming on, let us go back to the city."

On the way Ludwig never stopped talking of Emmanuela and lavishing the sweetest epithets on her; he pretended that she had darted a look at him as she departed, as though to prove how deep an impression he had made on her. This triumph, however, was in his case repeated in all similar circumstances, in other words, every time he found himself involved in any romantic and unusual adventure. Euchar took good care not to interrupt his friend; but the other became more and more ecstatic. Coming to the gate of the city, at the moment when the drums began to beat the sunset retreat, he threw himself on Euchar's neck and, with tears in his eyes, cried in his ear in a high-pitched voice (to overcome the stunning rattle of the drummer virtuoso) that he was decidedly in love with the fascinating Mignon, and determined to risk his life to find her again and snatch her out of the hands of the misshapen old rascal.

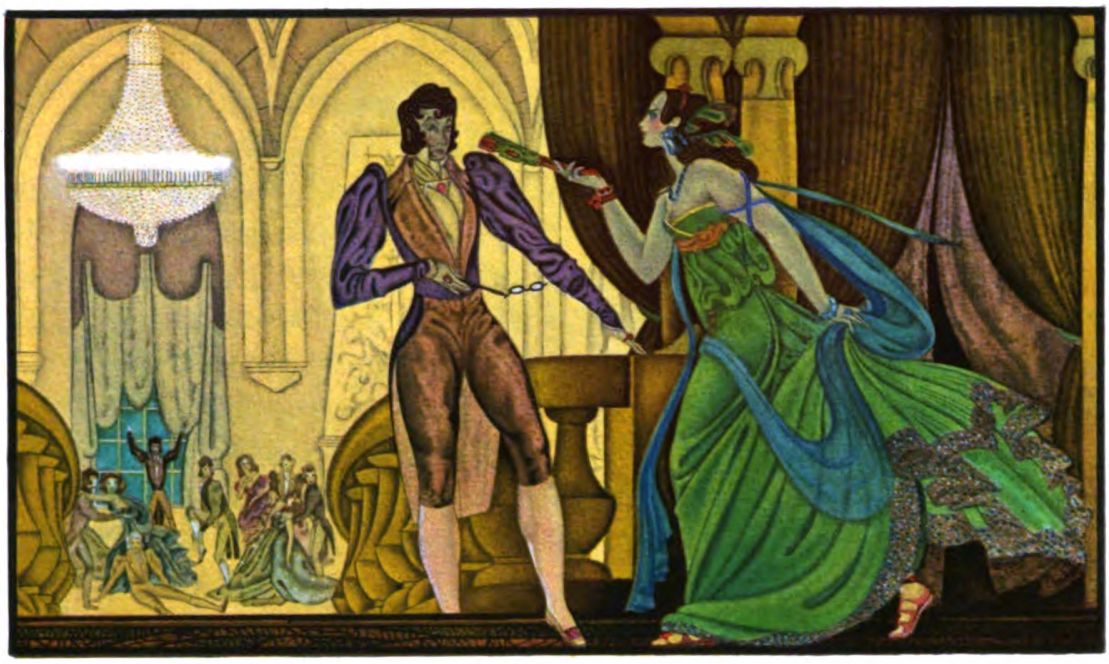
On the threshold of Ludwig's lodging there was a manservant in a rich livery, who on seeing Ludwig came forward to present a card to him. No sooner had Ludwig cast his eye on this and dismissed the footman than he again leaped impetuously on Euchar's neck and exclaimed, "Oh, my friend, you see in me the luckiest, the most enviable of mortals! Let your heart expand,

let it open wide to feel celestial joy that it may share the excess of my delight! My good friend, mingle your tears of happiness with mine!"

"But," asked Euchar, "what miraculously propitious news does this visiting card proclaim to you?" "Do not be perturbed, my friend," Ludwig went on, stammering, "if I disclose to you the brilliant magic paradise to which this card is to give me entrance to-morrow!"

"Still I should like to know," rejoined Euchar, "what supreme happiness is in store for you?" "You shall learn," cried Ludwig, "you shall hear, you shall know!... Be smitten with astonishment, with stupefaction! cry aloud! roar! swoon!... I am invited to the supper and the ball Count Walther Puck is giving to-morrow. Victorine! ravishing, incomparable Victorine!"

"And *ravishing, divine Mignon*?" said Euchar coldly. But Ludwig continued moaning in lamentable fashion, "Victorine! my life!..." And dashed into the house.



II

PERHAPS it is not amiss to tell the reader something more about the two friends, that he may know what to keep in mind, and on what footing to place them.

Both were of the same quality and condition: they were barons, or free suzerains. This title may indeed pass for fantastical, since to no mortal here below is it given to be free. Brought up together in close intimacy, they could never break that bond of habit, in spite of the contrast between their characters and even in their outward appearance, which as years went by became more and more pronounced. Euchar in his childhood was what is called a *nice little boy,* one of those who remain for hours together in company, sitting in the same spot, never asking for anything, never opening their mouths, and so on,

and who later in life generally become so many admirable sticks! But Euchar was not altogether like this portrait. If anyone spoke to him while he was sitting as good as gold, as we have just described, with eyes cast down and head bent, he would suddenly shiver and stammer, and even sometimes shed tears, and seem as if he was tearing himself away from deep and secret dreaming. When he was alone he was no longer the same. Then he would be found talking vivaciously, as though he had been conversing with a number of people, and, so to speak, dramatically representing actions and whole stories he had read or heard told; the furniture round him, tables, chairs, cupboards, represented for him towns, villages, woods, people. When he was allowed to run freely by himself in the country, a peculiar excitement seemed to take possession of him. He bounded with pleasure, strained the trees in his arms, kissed the flowers in the meadows, rolled in the grass... it was only against the grain that he took part in the games of the boys of his own age and he was set down as cowardly and dull because he always refused to share in any risky enterprise, to venture a dangerous leap or a bold climb. But in the end, when all the others had lost heart and given up in face of the perilous chances, Euchar would stay quietly behind and in total silence do the things the others had vainly bragged of in advance. If, for instance, it was a question of climbing a towering slender tree, and if everybody had given it up, they were sure next moment to find little Euchar perched up on the top, if he had found himself alone for half a minute.

With cold ways and an external indifference, the boy knew only passionate feelings within, and he had the steadfastness of character that is the mark of strongly tempered spirits. When at certain moments his restrained sentiments were displayed by action, it was with irresistible energy and enthusiasm : everyone

was astonished to see the boy nourish in secret such ardent sensibilities. A number of tutors, men of excellent sense, lost their pains with him; the last one alone declared that his pupil was of a poetic nature; this terrified Euchar's father, for he trembled to see the boy display the strange disposition of his mother, to whom the most brilliant court ceremonies gave headaches and physical nausea. But the father's intimate friend, a very *chic* and elegant chamberlain, always dressed in the height of fashion, positively declared that the aforesaid tutor was an ass, that the purest of noblest bloods ran in the young baron's veins, and that consequently his nature was baronial and not poetic. Which brought remarkable solace to the good man's mind.

The early disposition of the boy developed rapidly in the young man. Nature had imprinted on Euchar's face the characteristic seal with which she stamps her favourites. These favourites of nature know how to enjoy the boundless love of that good mother, and understand her in her divine essence; and it is only by their peers that they can ever be truly appreciated. And so Euchar was misunderstood by the common crowd, and taxed with being cold, indifferent, prosaic, because he did not fall into ecstasy at hearing every new tragedy. Many beautiful ladies who were most qualified to judge of the matter were unable to conceive that that brow of Apollo, those imperious, haughtily arched eyebrows, those eyes sparkling from underneath a sombre brow, those elegantly curving lips, could belong to a lifeless statue. Yet how could they suppose it was otherwise with Euchar, in face of his notorious inability to maintain empty conversations in still emptier language with pretty women, and to play the sentimental part of a despairing Rinaldo.

Ludwig resembled this portrait in no particular. He was one

of those headstrong and undisciplined boys for whom the world seems all too small. He was constantly inciting his comrades to the riskiest of schoolboy pranks, and everyone was continually in fear lest his over-audacity might result in some disaster. But he always came off safe and sound; for he was very cunning, when it came to performance, to plant himself in reserve, or even to disappear completely.

He seized upon everything with enthusiasm and vivacity, but he was no less prompt to let go. Thus he learned many things, without ever knowing them thoroughly. When he became a young man he made little verses very agreeably, played passably well on various instruments, painted a little, spoke several languages almost fluently, and consequently passed for a veritable prodigy of erudition. It cost him nothing to swoon with admiration at any moment, and to express his ecstasies in the most high-flown language; but he was like a kettle-drum, the emptier it is the more noise it makes.

The sublime and beautiful made little more impression on him than the titillation that affects the skin alone without touching the nerves. Ludwig was one of those people we often hear say, "I should like to!" and in whom volition never shows itself in action. But in this world those who always and everywhere proclaim beforehand what they are going to do make a very different figure from those who confine themselves to acting while calmly pursuing their chosen path, and everybody agreed in recognizing great capabilities in Ludwig; amid the general admiration of which he was the object no one thought of ascertaining whether he had really done what he had so loudly boasted of beforehand. There were indeed a few persons who looked closer into things, and seriously inquired if Ludwig had carried out this plan or that project : this annoyed him all the more, inasmuch as in certain hours of solitary meditation he

was forced to confess to himself that to be eternally parading a barren and unperforming will was a poor part for him to play. In this state of mind he one day happened upon an ancient and forgotten volume in which the doctrine of the mechanical and fatal interdependence of things was set forth and developed. He adopted with delight a system that must serve, in the eyes of others and even in his own, as an excuse for his behaviour and the impotence of his will; for if his promises or his designs never came to performance, he could not be responsible for it — it was a question of the interdependence of things. At any rate the reader will realize that it was a perfectly good and useful theory.

Ludwig was, in any case, a very handsome young man, with a fine fresh complexion, and lacking nothing, thanks to his other qualities, to make him the idol of smart society, if his shortsightedness had not unfortunately made him commit the strangest blunders, and over and over again been responsible for unpleasant scenes. He consoled himself however for this kind of disgrace by thinking complacently of the irresistible fascination he fancied he exercised over all female hearts. Besides, he had the habit of coming much closer to ladies than was correct, because of his weak sight, so as to avoid any mistake in the person he was addressing, as had often happened to him to his great displeasure. But in him this way of behaving passed for the simple audacity of a somewhat innocent person.

The day after Count Walther Puck's ball, Euchar received the following note from his friend in the early morning :

"My dear affectionate friend! I am desolated, heart-broken, lost, destroyed! hurled headlong from the bright pinnacle of the fairest hopes to the gloomy abyss of despair! What was to have ensured me the supremest felicity proves my woe! Come! hasten, come and console me, if it is not impossible!"

Euchar found his friend stretched out on a sofa, his head wrapped up in wet towels, pale and worn with lack of sleep. "There you are, my noble friend!" said Ludwig in a miserable voice, holding out his arms to him. "Your heart feels for my distress, my sufferings! Let me at least tell you my misfortune, and then pronounce my sentence, if you think I am indeed lost beyond retrieving."

Euchar smilingly replied, "Did things not go at the ball as you had expected?" Ludwig heaved a deep sigh. "Can charming Victorine," Euchar went on, "have looked at you askance?" "Ah!" replied Ludwig in a purely sepulchral voice, "I have mortally offended her, beyond hope of forgiveness!"

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Euchar, "how did that happen?" Ludwig sighed again dolefully, shed a few tears, and slowly, but with a pathetic accent, recounted his miserable story.

"My dear Euchar, even as the striking of a clock is announced by a mysterious creaking of the works, so are the strokes of fate preceded by menacing circumstances. Already the night before the ball I had had a horrible, a terrifying dream! I was in the count's drawing-room, and at the moment when I was getting ready to dance I found it impossible to move my legs from the spot. There was a mirror opposite me; imagine the terror that took hold of me when I saw that instead of the elegant pedestal with which nature has endowed me, I was the owner of the massive and elephantine legs of the gouty old

consistorial president! And while I remained, as though bewitched, nailed to the floor, what a sight was presented to my eyes! That same infamous president was waltzing, as light as a bird, softly cradled in the arms of Victorine, and smiled on me with a malicious air. And then presently he accosted me and impudently maintained that he had won my legs from me at piquet! I woke up, as you will not be surprised to hear, bathed in the perspiration of anguish!... Still preoccupied with that fatal vision, without thinking I lifted my cup filled with scalding chocolate to my lips, and burned myself so atrociously that you can still see the traces in spite of the vast quantity of ointment I have smeared on my face.

"Other people's sufferings mean very little to you; so I therefore pass silently over the whole host of deplorable accidents that jealous fate saw fit to harass me with throughout the whole day. I will only tell you that when evening came at last, and when I was in the middle of dressing, a stitch gave way in my silk stockings, and two buttons flew off my waistcoat; when I was on the point of getting into my carriage I dropped my hat into the gutter; in the carriage, when I tried to fix my patent buckles more firmly on my shoes I was plunged into dismay to perceive by the feel that my lout of a valet had put odd buckles on them. I had to go back, and was delayed a good half-hour at least.

"Victorine came to meet me in all the splendour of her most fascinating charms. I asked her for the first waltz. It began... I was in the seventh heaven... all at once I was stricken by the cruel malice of infernal Fate."

"Of the interdependence of things," interrupted Euchar.

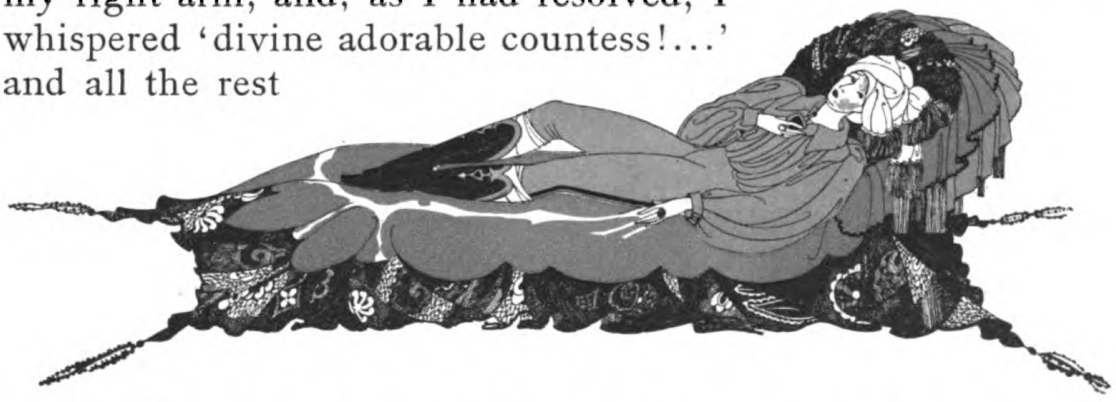
"As you please," Ludwig went on, "to-day nothing matters to me. In a word, it was a diabolical fatality that made me stumble against that root the day before yesterday! As I danced

I felt the pain in my knee wake up and become more and more acute. At that very moment Victorine said, loud enough to be heard by the dancers, 'But really you would think we are all going to sleep!' Then everybody claps hands, signals to the musicians, and the waltz begins to whirl at a terrific pace. With a great effort I master the agony I am enduring, elegantly I pirouette, I keep a gay, laughing face; and nevertheless Victorine repeats every moment, 'What is making you so heavy to-day, dear baron? You are not dancing nearly as well as usual.' Every word went like a stab into my heart."

"My poor friend!" said Euchar smiling. "I can realize how you suffered." "Well then," went on Ludwig, "all that was just the prelude to the most deplorable catastrophe! You know, my friend, how much time I have devoted to learning the movements of the *contredanse à seize*. You know with what zeal I have studied them all in this very room to achieve the perfection I dreamed of; I practised the boldest *sauts*, I knocked over glass and china, and never troubled if they were broken. One of these figures in particular is the most admirable invention of the human brain in this kind. Four couples form a picturesque group, and the gentlemen, balancing on the point of the right foot, place their right arms round their ladies' waists, while with their left arms they describe a graceful flourish above their heads : the other performers dance around them. Neither Vestris nor Gardel ever invented the like. I had based my hope of bliss on this *seize*. I was reserving my triumph for this *fête* of Count Walther Puck. In this delicious figure, as I was holding Victorine in my arms, I meant to murmur in her ear : 'Ravishing, divine countess! I love you more than I can say, I adore you! Be mine, angel of light!' That, my dear Euchar, was why I was transported with so much joy when I received a formal invi-

tation from the Count; I had feared he might omit me, for he had some days earlier appeared very annoyed with me, after I had expounded to him the doctrine of the interdependence of things, their mechanical linking with one another—in short, the whole system of the macrocosm. He conceived the ridiculous notion that I was comparing his person to a clock; a malicious allusion, he said, which he only forgave me in consideration of my youth, and therewith he turned his back on me.

"Well then, when this ill-omened waltz was ended, I remained aloof in an adjoining room, where I encountered no one but good Cochenille, who made haste to pour out some champagne for me. The sudden effect of the wine was to fill me with renewed vigour; I no longer felt anything wrong. The *seize* was about to begin; I hurried back to the ballroom, I ran to Victorine, I seized her hand and kissed it ardently, I took my place in the quadrille. And now came the signal for the figure I have described. I surpassed myself, I balanced, I capered to perfection, the god of ballets would have admired me! At length I encircled my partner's slender waist with my right arm, and, as I had resolved, I whispered 'divine adorable countess!...' and all the rest



of it. When my avowal of love had been made I sought my answer in the eyes of my lady... God of heaven! it was not Victorine I had danced with, it was another young lady whom

I did not know at all, who resembled Victorine only in her bearing and in her costume!

"Can you imagine what a thunderbolt it was for me! A sudden dizziness made everything swim about me. I ceased to hear the orchestra, I drove like a desperado through all the bystanders, greeted right and left by a thousand shrill and plaintive cries; at last I came to a stand in a far corner of the ballroom on feeling myself seized by two powerful arms: the accursed consistorial president, whom I had already seen in my dream, was shouting in stentorian tones in my very ear, 'A thousand thunders! a thousand gods, baron! I think you must have a legion of devils in your legs. I have only just left the card-table and put in an appearance here, when like a hurricane you dash from the middle of the dance and stamp on my feet hard enough to make me roar like a bull with pain if I were not a man who knows how to behave in good company. Just look at the confusion you have made!' And indeed the band had stopped, all the dancers had dispersed; I saw several men limping, while the ladies, ready to faint, were going back to their places calling for smelling-salts. This turmoil was due to the figure of despair I had just executed on the feet of the dancers until the massive president had put an end to my wild career.

"Victorine came to me. 'Very good!' she said, with eyes sparkling with wrath, 'what politeness, baron! You engage me for the dance, you give your hand to another lady, and to crown matters you throw the whole ball into confusion!' You may imagine my protests; but Victorine replied, beside herself with rage : 'These jests are just in your manner, baron; I know you, but I request you for the future not to single me out as the object of your mordant and caustic irony.' And thereupon she left me. My partner came to me, sweetness,

I might say benevolence, in person! The poor child had been smitten, and I cannot blame her: but is it my fault? Oh, Victorine! Victorine! Oh, wretched *seize*! infernal dance that delivered me up to the tender mercy of all the furies!"

Ludwig closed his eyes; he sighed, he wept, and Euchar was sufficiently charitable to refrain from a great burst of laughter. And, besides, he was not unaware that accidents such as his poor friend had been a victim of at Count Walther Puck's ball are sometimes exceedingly distressing for men even much less fatuous than Ludwig.

The latter, having swallowed two or three cups of chocolate — without burning his lips like the day before — seemed to recover a certain energy and to be bearing his horrible destiny more courageously.

"But tell me then, my good friend," he said to Euchar, who had begun to read, "tell me, you were invited to the ball as well?" "Yes," replied Euchar casually and without raising his eyes from his book.

"And you never went, and you never even mentioned the invitation to me!"

"I was kept," said Euchar, "by an affair of greater importance to me than a ball, though it had been given by the Emperor of Japan."

"Countess Victorine," resumed Ludwig, "asked why you were not there. She even seemed so uneasy, and turned such assiduous eyes to the door, that in truth I might have turned jealous and imagined that you had at last for the first time succeeded in touching a woman's heart; but everything was explained naturally. I hardly dare repeat to you how harshly the young countess spoke about you. You are, according to her, an unfeeling and gloomy crank, whose presence she finds embarrassing in a gay gathering; her one fear was lest you

should come yet again this time to annoy her in the midst of her enjoyment. And so she was delighted not to see you arrive. To speak frankly, I do not at all understand, my dear Euchar, how you, whom heaven has endowed with so many moral and physical advantages, are so decidedly unfortunate with ladies, and why I always have the better of you. Chilly fellow! chilly fellow! I am tempted to believe that you are absolutely incapable of feeling the supreme bliss of love, and no doubt that is the cause of your lack of favour with the fair sex, while I!... Now see: that anger of Victorine, what was the cause of it, if it wasn't the amorous fire with which she burns for me, the favoured, the happy mortal?"

The door opened, and a singular little man entered the room; he wore a red coat adorned with large steel buttons, a black vest, breeches and silk stockings of the same colour; his hair was frizzed on top of his head and copiously powdered, with a little rosette of ribbon tying it behind.

"My good Cochenille," cried Ludwig, "my excellent Mr Cochenille! what is the reason for this rare pleasure?"

Euchar alleged important business that called him away, and left his friend *tête à tête* with Count Walther Puck's personal valet.

Cochenille, with a simpering smile and downward eyes, said that his noble lordship the count believed the most honourable baron had been seized during the dance with a strange malady, the Latin name of which sounded something like *raptus*; he added that he himself, Mr Cochenille, had come to inquire as to the state of health in which his most honourable lordship the baron thought proper to find himself.

"What, *raptus*?" cried Ludwig, "*raptus*. Oh, Cochenille!" Then he told the valet in detail everything that had happened, and begged him to employ his uncommon adroitness to re-establish order in his affairs as far as was possible.

Ludwig learned that his partner in the dance was a cousin of Victorine's, who had come specially from the country for the count's entertainment; the countess and she had but one heart and mind between them, and following a fancy natural to young women, which makes them express the similarity of their characters by the colour of the materials and the choice of the flowers they wear, the two friends often took delight in wearing costumes exactly alike. Cochenille pretended further that the wrath of Countess Victorine could hardly have serious consequences, for at the end of the ball, while she was sitting beside her cousin and he was serving them both with ices, they were laughing heartily and gaily; and he had at the same time caught the name of his most honourable lordship the baron spoken more than once between them and quite unmistakably. He added that he knew in fact that the countess's cousin was of a very amorous complexion; she would assuredly insist that the baron should continue what he had begun, and pay her constant court until he finally took the white gloves to lead her to the altar. At the same time Mr Cochenille promised for his part to do everything that might be necessary to dissuade her from such a hope. He proposed the very next day, while he was having the honour to be engaged in dressing the hair of his gracious lordship the count, and at the moment when he should be doing the second curl on the left side, to explain the whole affair to him, and beg him to let the cousin know that the baron's declaration of love was not serious, and that it should be looked upon as a pleasant jest of a dancer. No other remedy for the mishap would be called for. Cochenille finally advised the baron to see Victorine as soon as possible, and indicated a favourable opportunity to do so that same day. The wife of the consistorial president Wechs was, he said, giving that night an æsthetic tea, of the most delicate fragrance,

which she had obtained direct from China by the help of the Russian embassy, as the ambassador's own valet had informed him. Victorine would be there, and everything could be smoothed out perfectly.

Ludwig realized that only a lack of self-confidence unworthy of him could have cast a cloud or two over his prosperous love-making, and he resolved to display such enchanting amiability at the consistorial presidentess's æsthetic tea that it would never enter Victorine's head to sulk for a single moment.

III

In the middle of the drawing-room of the consistorial president's lady a dozen or so ladies were ranged about a tea-table: one was wearing a vague smile, another examining the points of her russet shoes; this one seemed absorbed in a gentle dreaming; that levelled murderous looks at the young men lined about the panelled walls; another greeted with spasms of admiration a young poet's reading of some tragedy in which fate played the chief part; what added to the interest of the scene was a kind of low bellow coming from the consistorial president himself as he played cards with Count Walther Puck.

At the moment when the poet, carried away by his theme, was about to thunder with full throat the most energetic of his denunciations, *vox faucibus hæsit,* as Virgil puts it, he was

taken with so violent a fit of coughing that he fell in a swoon; he was carried out of the drawing-room almost choked.

The president's lady paid very scant attention to this accident. When the disorder had subsided she, proposed to replace the interrupted reading by a few interesting tales. Euchar, pressed to satisfy the unanimous request of the company, confessed that the only stories he knew were exceedingly sombre ones. The ladies' curiosity was so strongly aroused that willy-nilly our friend must needs place himself in the centre of the ring. He began as follows :

"I shall proceed, if you will permit me, dear ladies, to narrate to you the strange adventures of one of my boyhood's companions, whom I shall call Edgar, and who fought through the war in Spain under the flag of Wellington. Distressed by the enslavement of Germany, Edgar had left his native town to live in Hamburg, in a humble little room hired in the heart of the most isolated quarter of the city. His room was only separated by a thin partition from the refuge in which a poor sick old man was gradually sinking to his end; sometimes he heard the moans of the doomed man without catching the meaning of the broken phrases that escaped him at intervals. At the end of a certain time his old neighbour began to walk about his room; this exercise seemed to suggest some improvement in his health. One day he began to strum a guitar, and sang Spanish songs.

"The landlady of the house, interrogated by Edgar, informed him that the old man was a Spanish officer belonging to the Marquis de la Romana's corps; a sudden illness had kept him at Hamburg, and the surveillance of the police held him confined in the strictest isolation.

"The next night the officer began to sing warlike verses the sense of which was something like this: 'Hear the alarm

running through the plains of Castile; the Asturian echoes reply with a warrior blast; Seville rises for vengeance; the thunder roars above Valencia; the earth of Moncayo rumbles like a volcano. See, from the mountains to the ocean, Spain arms for liberty; the drum beats, the bugle rings, the flags fly widely spread, and the gleaming weapons are athirst for blood!'

"Edgar, as he heard these proud words, felt the fire of war burning in his blood; triumph and glory appeared to him like two fantastic deities ready to crown him. 'To Spain! to Spain!' he cried in a mood of exaltation.

"The guitar and the voice fell silent at once. Edgar, wishing at all costs to make his neighbour's acquaintance, left his own room and pushed at the door, which was shut from within; it gave way under his hand, but at his first step inside the room the Spaniard sprang up like a tiger, stiletto in hand. Edgar avoided the blow, and threw his vigorous arms round the old officer, weakened by age and illness, and managed to hold him fast while at the same time beseeching him in the most touching phrases to forgive his folly; he described the irresistible enthusiasm that war song had aroused in him, and said that, not being able to consecrate his unavailing devotion to his own country, he had resolved to go and fight for the cause of Spanish freedom. The old man looked at Edgar with surprise; then, conquered by the young man's frankness, he folded him to his heart and told him his own adventures without reserve.

"Sprung from one of the foremost families of Spain, he was called Baldassare de Luna. Left without friends or resources in a foreign land, he had seen sickness and destitution wear away his strength and deprive him of all hope of escaping. When Edgar had promised and even sworn that he would secure their departure together for England, Baldassare, given new life by this prospect of freedom, at once became another

man, and the true energy of the Spanish character reappeared in that soul so long beaten to earth by distress.

"Edgar faithfully kept his promise to his new friend. Thanks to proper precautions, and to gold skilfully distributed, they managed to evade all vigilance and to reach English soil. But destiny did not permit poor Baldassare de Luna to see his native land again. He fell sick once more directly he arrived in London, and died in Edgar's arms. In his last hour a prophetic vision perhaps revealed to him the future deliverance of his beloved Spain, for a proud smile brought a fleeting tinge of colour to his pale lips, and he expired murmuring one last word—*Vittoria!*

"It was the moment when Suchet was on the point of bringing the peninsula into subjection to France by victory after victory. Edgar arrived before Tarragona in the suite of an English officer, Colonel Sterret. The latter judged the city to be in a situation too dangerous for him to hazard disembarking his troops with any hope of success. But Edgar, animated with an irresistible spirit, left the English ranks and managed to make his way into the citadel, which the Spanish general Contreras was defending with eight thousand picked troops. In spite of his gallant resistance, Tarragona fell into the hands of the French army. Edgar in these circumstances was a witness to the most dreadful excesses of war. After exhausting all its munitions and losing half of its effectives, the Spanish garrison sallied out from the ruins of the town and cut its way through the enemy battalions. The slaughter was horrible, but the soldiers effected their retreat by the road to Barcelona. One last stroke of disaster awaited these heroic remnants — they were mown down by a field battery placed in ambush. Edgar fell among the dying.

"When he recovered his senses the night had fallen. A keen cold made itself felt. Edgar was only aware of a violent pain

in his head; but he suffered far more from hearing all around him the groans and the hoarse, labouring breathing of those unfortunates who were struggling with agony and death. He tried to rise, and after a thousand attempts succeeded in getting a little way apart from that spot of pain and horror. At day-break he had got to the crest of a rise, and was about to let himself slip down when he was picked up by a party of Spanish guerrillas, to whom he made himself known. His wound was healed in a reasonably short space of time, and he recovered enough strength to go and join the troops of Don Joachim Blake, who had succeeded in throwing himself into Valencia after several sharp skirmishes.

"Valencia, the beautiful city on the Guadalquivir, was at that moment the centre of the war. Consternation was visible on the faces of all its inhabitants; everywhere there was nothing but preparations for a desperate struggle and maledictions against the common foe. One day Edgar, resting under the great trees that adorn the public promenade of the Alameda, was sadly brooding over the dark future that menaced Spain; he was roused from his meditation by the measured tread of a man of early middle age, very tall, proud and grave of mien, who every time he passed him by stopped to contemplate him with an eye filled with distrust. Edgar, becoming tired of this behaviour, went straight up to him and asked what could be the reason for this strange scrutiny. 'Ah! I was not mistaken then,' said the unknown; 'I perceive from your accent that you are not a Spaniard. In that case why do you wear that military dress!' Although offended by this rude way of making an acquaintance, Edgar nevertheless replied calmly and related his story. The unknown had no sooner heard him mention Baldassare de Luna than he exclaimed with friendly eagerness : 'What! you knew my worthy cousin, the noble and

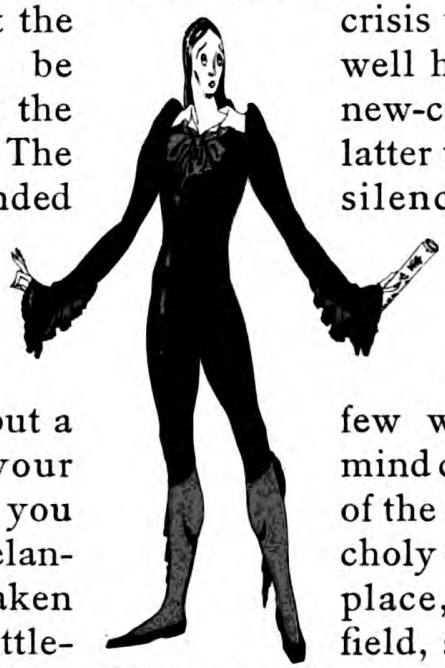
valiant Baldassare de Luna!' Edgar satisfied all the inquiries of his friend's relative. 'Forgive me,' his interlocutor went on, 'for anything rude and offensive in my suspicions. There is a rumour that our enemies have introduced among us foreign officers instructed to examine our position from within so as to betray us presently. Since the affair of Tarragona the junta has resolved to send away all foreign officers. Don Joachim Blake has obtained exception only in favour of engineer officers; but he has pledged himself to have the first one suspected of treachery shot within twenty-four hours. If it is true that you were the friend of my dear Baldassare, take advantage of this warning'. With these words the unknown left him at once.

"Meanwhile all the efforts of the Spaniards were unable to stay the enemy's progress; Valencia was speedily besieged by numerous forces, and Blake, its defender, resolved to attempt a decisive sortie at the head of twelve thousand men. Edgar charged the enemy with a courage that deserved a happier fate : after prodigies of valour he fell in the turmoil of the fray. This new wound produced an instantaneous delirium, caused by the heat of the battle and by the state of violent excitement in which Edgar had found himself. The delirium was followed by a long period of unconsciousness. When he recovered the use of his senses he found himself lying in a magnificent bed covered with silken draperies, but in the depths of a little stone-built cellar that received no light from without, and lit at the moment by kaind of funerary lamp.

"Edgar painfully raised himself on his couch, sent his surprised eyes round the objects that surrounded him, and perceived a Franciscan monk sitting at the other end of the cellar in a great arm-chair, where he seemed to be asleep. 'Where am I?' cried our hero in as loud a voice as was possible in his weak state caused by serious loss of blood.

"The monk roused himself from his slumbers, turned up the little lamp, whose light was dying down, and raising it to Edgar's face, he felt his pulse, murmuring a few words the prisoner could not understand.

"Edgar was himself about to question him, when a section of the wall opened noiselessly and a man entered whom Edgar at once recognized for the elderly man of the Alameda. The monk told him that the crisis was past, and that everything would be well henceforth. 'God be praised!' replied the new-comer, and he came up to Edgar's bed. The latter tried to speak, but the other recommended silence, because the smallest effort might be dangerous. 'Meeting with me,' he added, 'and your presence in such a spot, must no doubt appear inexplicable to you; but a few words will suffice not only to set your mind completely at ease, but also to convince you of the necessity for lodging you in this melancholy den.' Edgar then heard all that had taken place, how when he had fallen on the battle-field, struck by a bullet in the breast, his intrepid companions had picked him up under a terrific fire and had carried him back into the city. There, in the midst of the tumult and the crowd, Don Rafael Marchez (such was the Spaniard's name) recognized Edgar, who was being carried to the hospital, and had him brought to his own house in order that he might surround the friend of Baldassare de Luna with every possible care.



"Valencia was bombarded for three days and three nights. The terrible results of the siege filled that populous city with dread, the same populace who, excited by the junta, had

with dreadful threats demanded that Blake should defend himself to the very last, now wished to coerce him to immediate surrender. Blake, with the coolness of a true hero, scattered these wild rioters with his Walloon guards, and thereafter made honourable terms for capitulation with Suchet. Don Rafael Marchez wished to prevent Edgar, who was in danger of death, from being made a prisoner of war. When the capitulation was concluded, and the French had entered Valencia, he had him carried into a secret cellar, the way into which no stranger could possibly discover. 'Friend of my dear Baldassare,' said Don Rafael as he ended, 'be my friend also; every drop of blood shed for my beloved country has fallen burning into my bosom, and has there effaced a mistrust that in these distressful times is too often justified. A Spanish heart knows how to love and to hate with equal ardour, it is capable of all devotion and of all sacrifice. Enemies are installed in my house, but you are safe; for, I swear it, if any misadventure should befall, I would rather let myself be buried under the ruins of these walls than betray you; in this you may believe me!'

"During the day a profound silence reigned all about the dark retreat of the patient; but during the night Edgar fancied he could often distinguish, as though borne on an underground echo, a sound of footsteps, of doors opened and shut, a low, confused murmur of voices, and the clink of weapons. Night seemed to be the signal for subterranean activity. Edgar questioned the Franciscan, who very seldom left him, and who lavished the most unremitting attention upon him. He answered that Don Rafael would no doubt tell him later what he wished to know. This was presently so. Don Rafael came one night to find him, carrying a lighted torch, and invited him to dress and follow him, with Father Eusebio—that was the name of the Franciscan who had served him as both doctor and nurse.

"Don Rafael went along a narrow corridor; a door opened at a signal. What was Edgar's astonishment, on entering a vaulted hall, spacious and well lighted, to see a large concourse of men, for the most part of a wild aspect. In their midst was a man in peasant garb, with tumbled hair; his whole person displayed a singular character of pride and daring that commanded respect. In the nobility of his features, in his eye of fire, there shone the courage that marks the hero. It was to this individual that Don Rafael presented his friend as the valiant young man whom he had saved from the hands of the enemy, and who only asked to fight along with them for the great cause of Spanish freedom. Then turning to Edgar, he said, 'You see here, in the very heart of Valencia, under our enemies' feet, the mysterious hearth where the fire that is destined to consume our infamous oppressors is fostered; we await the moment when, blinded by fortune and trusting to a fallacious appearance of quiet, they will give themselves up without reserve to the intoxication of pride and pleasure. These underground vaults adjoin the convent of the Franciscans; it is here that by a hundred secret ways the chiefs of our brave defenders come together; it is from here that our holy insurrection radiates, so to speak, to all points of the country, and prepares the way for the annihilation of the perfidious foreigner, who owes his victories to the power of numbers alone. Don Edgar, we see in you a Spaniard, a brother: take your share in the glory of our enterprise.'

"Then El Empecinado, that illustrious guerrilla chief whose intrepid daring verily bordered upon prodigy, who by himself alone braved all the efforts of the army of invasion, and who might be seen, at the very moment when the enemy was loudly proclaiming the total defeat of his bands, suddenly appearing once more with doubled forces and arriving at the gates of

Madrid to freeze the unlawful monarch with terror, El Empecinado held out his hand to Edgar and addressed a short and cordial speech to him.

"While this was going on, a young man was brought in tightly bound; despair was depicted on his pallid features; he trembled and seemed on the point of fainting when he saw himself face to face with El Empecinado. The latter pierced him with his blazing eyes; after a brief moment of silence, he began to speak with a sinister calm. 'Antonio,' he said, 'you have entered into communication with the enemy; you have betaken yourself to Suchet on several occasions at unseemly hours; and you have plotted to betray the secret of our refuges in the province of Cuença.'

"'I acknowledge it,' said Antonio with a sigh of agony. El Empecinado then exclaimed in wrath : 'Can it indeed be that you are a Spaniard, and does the blood of your forefathers run in your veins! You have deserved death : prepare to meet it.'

"Antonio threw himself moaning at El Empecinado's feet and cried, 'My uncle! my uncle! take pity on me, I conjure you! Yes, my uncle, I am a Spaniard; allow me to prove it. Grant me this favour: permit me worthily to wipe out the dishonour, the opprobrium that has fallen upon me, to rehabilitate myself in your eyes, and the eyes of my brothers! My uncle! you understand me, you know the favour I am entreating of you?'

"El Empecinado raised the youth from the ground, turning his eyes away to hide his emotion. 'Son of my sister,' he said. 'I pardon you, for I understand your high intention. Come to my arms!' He snapped the bonds of the captive, strained him to his heart, then held out the short dagger he wore in his belt. 'Thanks,' said Antonio, 'thanks!' And standing with one hand on his uncle's arm, with the other he drove the steel into his breast, and fell dead without a groan. This

horrible sight impressed Edgar so sharply that he fainted. The monk Eusebio carried him to his bed.

"After some weeks Don Rafael Marchez thought that his guest might without danger leave the prison that served as his retreat. Edgar was brought to a room that was isolated, but elegant and cheerful; Rafael merely recommended him not to leave the house, so that he might avoid encountering the French soldiers who lodged all around. But our hero could not for long resist the desire to see some new faces. One evening he was taking the air under the porch when a French officer threw himself on his neck, exclaiming, 'My dear Edgar, how do you come to be here? How delighted I am to see you!'

"This officer was a Colonel Lacombe of the Imperial Guard, an old friend of Edgar's family, which he had known during the French invasion of Germany. The soldier's noble character, his frankness, and many traits of courage and generosity had won him the esteem and regard of the young German, in spite of his national prejudices. 'So that's it,' said the colonel after looking fixedly at him for several minutes. 'Can you have come here to draw the sword in this country in defence of the pretended liberties of a nation of savages? Indeed it would be wronging my friendship if you did not dare to trust yourself to me. God forbid that I should repay my memories of hospitality by betraying you, but you must remain on your guard, my friend, against spies and surprises. I should like you to pass for the agent of a German commercial firm established in Marseilles. I will say we are old acquaintances and that I will answer for you with my own person. That's settled, isn't it?'

"Thanks to this encounter, Edgar left his isolated chamber, and took possession of the most sumptuous lodging the house of Rafael Marchez could offer. He was at all possible pains to

explain to the suspicious Spaniard his meeting with the French colonel as something altogether natural and of no consequence. However, day after day Colonel Lacombe took Edgar with him to endless parties of pleasure. The young German observed here and there certain sinister faces that seemed to keep an eye on him, and even on one occasion, in a café, he heard a murmur behind him, *'Aquí está el traidor!'* — there is the traitor! Don Rafael, who was every day becoming less communicative, ended by totally avoiding any meeting with Edgar, who took all his meals *tête à tête* with the colonel.

"One day our hero was alone; Father Eusebio came into his room, and after some exchange of civilities he said warmly : 'No, my young friend, I cannot believe that you are a traitor. Many a time while you were asleep I came into your room. I interrogated your dreams : I have listened to such phrases as your fevered blood might bring to your lips, and never have I heard a single word that bade me doubt you. No, you are no traitor, but you live in the midst of a suspicious people; keep on your guard! Be careful that after some of the excesses of good cheer to which this French colonel is always leading you, the excitement of intoxication does not make you rashly reveal some of the secrets concealed by the house of Rafael Marchez. A terrible punishment would be the reward of any such error. Come, if you would be ruled by me, I would advise you to throw yourself to-morrow into the arms of the French; their protection would get you out of Valencia safe and sound.'

" 'Who, I, defile myself by doing anything so vile!' cried Edgar, whose cheeks, pallid from illness, were lit up with crimson. 'No! I had rather die a thousand times beneath the daggers than be wanting to my sworn faith!' 'Dear Edgar,' said the monk, 'again you have come triumphant out of a difficult test. No, I cannot believe you capable of any

perfidy.' With these words he drew his hood down over his eyes and went out slowly.

"Next night Edgar heard a knock at his door, and the voice of Rafael Marchez called to him, 'Open, open quickly!' Edgar obeyed, and found himself face to face with Rafael and the monk Eusebio, who came to fetch him to another session of the revolutionary club in the cellars of the Franciscan cloisters. The young man went along between his two companions; Rafael preceded him and lit up the underground passage with a resinous torch. Eusebio, who brought up the rear, leaned over Edgar and whispered in his ear, 'Unfortunate youth, you are going to your death.'

"Edgar shuddered; the courage that had sustained him on the battlefield suddenly failed him in face of the threat of murder. His knees gave way. Eusebio held him up without adding another word.

"When followed by his two guides he came into the chamber where the council was being held, he saw El Empecinado standing with eyes blazing, his features twisted with anger. Behind this formidable chief there stood a number of guerrillas and some Franciscan monks, motionless as statues. Edgar summoned up all his resolution to avert the danger that might be imminent if Eusebio's warning was true, and went up to El Empecinado. 'Chief,' he said, 'I am rejoiced at this summons hither, for I am about to renew the request I made to Don Rafael some days since in vain. My wounds are healed. I feel myself full of strength and ardour, and I can live no longer in degrading ease among those enemies of your country whom I came here to fight. It is time for me to give you proofs of my loyal devotion. Send me to the advance posts among your soldiers; I am on fire to share your glorious dangers.'

"At these words El Empecinado bent a look of surprise on

Edgar; the frankness that shone out from the attitude and the tones of the young German inspired him with a lively interest. He took him by the hand, and enveloping him with a look charged with mesmeric power, 'Young man', he said, a different fate was to be yours; are you fully determined not to flinch? Can we count on the arm and the heart of a stranger?' 'The friend of Baldassare de Luna,' returned Edgar, 'is no longer a stranger for the Spanish people. Give him weapons and show him the foe!' 'Good, young man,' cried El Empecinado; 'I accept your services. You shall speedily be put to the proof. This very night you shall go, without returning to Don Rafael's house.' And at a sign from the chief Father Eusebio and a guerrilla named Isidoro Mirr, who subsequently covered himself with glory in this war of independence, took our embryo hero away. It was no long journey to get out of Valencia by the underground passages that ended on the other side of the walls. The enemy were at the gates of the city, and the guerrillas covered the whole countryside to harass them without respite. Edgar was taken into a picked band.

"His conduct was conspicuously brilliant, and every day saw him undertake the boldest adventures with unexampled good fortune. One day he met his former host, Rafael; the poor devil had escaped from the besieged city, entrusting to some of his guerrilla friends the task of protecting a number of mules that carried his baggage and certain bags stuffed with old ducats. As night was drawing on with no news of the convoy, Rafael was running hither and thither like a madman, groaning at the thought that he might lose his treasure by the most simple accident. Edgar was looking with contempt at this degenerate Spaniard, who was so filled with miserly fears in the midst of his country's woes, when repeated musket-shots awoke the echoes of the gorges near by. Soon a few guerrillas

came limping in; they brought the sad news of the loss of the convoy they had been charged with escorting. Attacked by French skirmishers, they had not been able to stand against superior numbers, and those whom the bullets had spared had found themselves reduced to flee to avoid being taken prisoner. Hearing this fatal tale, Don Rafael fell with his face to the ground like a man smitten by lightning. 'To arms!' cried Edgar; 'this is not the place for us while the enemy is slaying our comrades. Let us hasten to avenge their death and recapture the booty fallen into the hands of the French!' A thousand acclamations greeted Edgar's enthusiasm. The whole band sprang to their muskets, and threw themselves into the depths of the ravines, filling the air with cries of 'Viva Valencia!' The French were taken by surprise and cut to pieces. The action lasted several minutes, and the victors were preparing to withdraw, when Edgar heard a piercing cry in the underwoods close to the scene of battle. He ran up and found a little man at grips with a French soldier who was trying to stab him with a poignard. Seeing a new assailant the soldier let go his opponent and fired; but Edgar, whom the bullet had missed, gave him a mortal blow and stretched him at his feet. Then without losing a moment he carried away in his arms the little man he had just rescued, and placed him on a mule that had not been sent scampering off among the hills by the firing. The animal had on his back a little girl of eight or ten; Edgar fastened the poor wounded man on to the crupper behind her, and holding the mule by the bridle went back to his comrades' rendezvous. Impossible to describe the transports of Don Rafael at the sight of Edgar bringing in his capture. With one bound he reached the mule, crying out, 'My child! my beloved daughter!' He clasped the little girl convulsively in his arms, then threw himself at Edgar's feet. 'Don Edgar,'

he said, 'you are an angel of salvation, and I have been all unworthy of the service you have rendered me. I who had suspected you of treachery, I who wished to have you cruelly done to death as a spy, can it be that to-day I owe you the safety of what is dearest to me in the world? Kill me, Edgar, I deserve your vengeance! Kill me, it would be merely justice!' Edgar generously reassured him, and asked him how he had come to abandon Valencia. Don Rafael informed him that Colonel Lacombe, in a fury at not finding Edgar on his return, and supposing him to have been murdered, had threatened the direst reprisals; he had barely had time to flee with his daughter, his valet, and the few valuables he possessed. After this adventure the guerrillas took the road again, for their fashion of making war called for continual movement in order the better to deceive and surprise the enemy. A few days after Don Rafael was left behind in a place of safety, but before taking leave of Edgar he gave him a talisman that in the sequel was to preserve him from a host of dangers."

Euchar came to a stop at this point in his narrative; the young poet who had been taken ill earlier in the evening, and who had been cosily installed in the softest of arm-chairs, declared that Edgar's adventures in Spain would provide material for an interesting drama. But a young lady said that one indispensable element in the plot was missing, a love interest. "I believe," said Miss Victorine in low tones, "that I have somewhere or other met with this Edgar of the melancholy temperament, who has been so unfortunate in his life as not to have taken hold of the one real good that can make existence endurable."

"Ladies," said the hostess, "I agree that this tale contains nothing particularly thrilling for us; but I have a little entertainment to offer you that will bring this evening to an end in

delightful fashion." She rang, the door of the drawing-room opened, and the lovely Emmanuela appeared, accompanied by the dwarfish Biagio Cubas, who, guitar in hand, bowed to the ground to salute the brilliant company that was doing him the honour to receive him. Emmanuela smiled on recognizing Euchar and Ludwig, whom she had met in the park of W. After curtsying gracefully she announced to the company, in a gentle, modest voice, that she was about to attempt something that had no charm except novelty, and that she begged a little indulgence.

"Well now," whispered Ludwig to his friend, "there is the girl who stole your ring; now is the time to ask her quietly to give it back." "Be quiet," said Euchar, "I found it again in my glove, she had slipped it into it. This is an adorably beautiful creature. Let me give myself up to the pleasure of seeing her!"

When little Biagio Cubas had arranged the eggs for his pretty companion's dance, Emmanuela drew everyone's applause by her prodigies of grace and lightness. Euchar watched her in silence, while Ludwig expressed his admiration in the most inflated phrases. Miss Victorine leaned to him and pinched him. "Wicked fellow," she said, "you dared to say you loved me, and here you are going wild over this gipsy jumping-jenny. I forbid you to look at her any more!" Ludwig, intent on the pretty gitana, felt for the first time that he was not madly in love with Victorine, and that if jealousy was an evidence of love it occasionally became a nuisance. When the dancing was over, Emmanuela took her tambourine and began to sing songs of her native land with delicious expression. Ludwig begged her to sing the stanzas his friend Euchar had listened to with so much pleasure. The pretty young lady at once struck up

"Láurea inmortal al gran Palafox..."

While she sang her voice more and more assumed a strange

poetical expression; when she reached the final verse, aflame as it was with patriotism and love of liberty, her eyes met Euchar's eyes; she uttered a cry, burst into tears, and fell on her knees. The president's lady hurried forward to lift her up, and making her sit on a sofa by her side, lavished the most solicitous attentions upon her.

"That gipsy girl is mad!" said Victorine in a low voice. "You don't love her, you can't love her—tell me, Ludwig?" "No, no," stammered Ludwig, greatly taken aback by the too dramatic aspect assumed by Miss Victorine's love.

Meanwhile the president's lady was making much of pretty Emmanuela and pressing her to take a few biscuits steeped in sweet wine; Biagio Cubas was regaling himself in a corner with a goblet of sherry, of which he was not wasting a single drop. The ladies were surrounding the daughter of Bohemia, full of curiosity, overwhelming her with questions about her native country, her way of life, and a thousand things besides. The president's lady had the greatest trouble to rescue her from this ring of cross-examiners in which the poor child was obviously ill at ease; she escorted her to the door with charming graciousness. When the hour had come for the company to separate, she told Euchar before all the company that she did not hold him absolved in the matter of the story he had begun so well, and that she must next evening have the conclusion of the adventures of his friend Edgar, who could not possibly have spent his whole youth without ceding some little part to love. Every one was so insistent that he was obliged to pledge himself for the following evening.

When the two friends were alone together Ludwig descanted interminably on the trouble Victorine's jealousy had just caused him. He had perceived that in spite of all his attempts at resistance, his heart was seized by an extreme love for the

gitana. "I shall see her again," he exclaimed, "I shall talk with her, I shall carry her off!" "Well said!" replied the other young man coldly, *"qui vivra verra!"*

Next day, when the company were all assembled, the president's lady sadly informed her friends that Baron Euchar, having been called away on unexpected business, was obliged to postpone the end of his tale until his return.

Two years later, a post-chaise stopped before the Golden Angel, the most comfortable hotel in W.; from it there alighted a young man, a veiled woman, and an old man. Ludwig, who passed by at that moment, examined the new arrivals with curiosity. The younger traveller, turning round by chance, recognized him and threw himself into his arms with a cry of joy. It was Euchar. To Ludwig's rapid questions he replied that all would speedily be made clear in a satisfactory fashion. "As for you, my friend, what has become of you since my departure?" "Well," said Ludwig, "it's more than a year ago now since Victorine gave me the priceless gift of her hand. Do you see that handsome house there? That is where my domestic bliss weaves days of silk and gold for me; come this very instant and visit my El Dorado."

Euchar let himself be drawn away; coming to the foot of the stairs Ludwig begged his friend to go up with the least possible noise; Victorine, he said, was extremely subject to neuralgia that at times sent her almost mad. With infinite precautions they slipped along to Ludwig's room. After the first transports of friendship, Ludwig pulled a bell-rope, then falling back several steps he exclaimed, "Almighty God, what have I done! I'm a lost man!" Barely had he finished when a little woman bounced into the room like an india-rubber ball, saying in a whining voice, "God bless you, baron, you have sent madame into

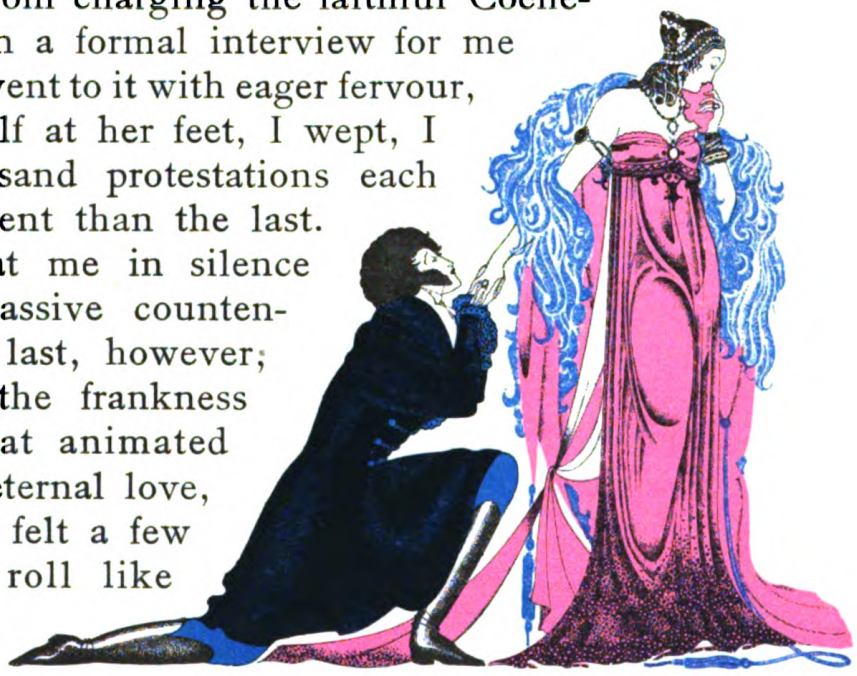
such a state! Do you want to kill her outright! here she is gone into a nervous convulsion." "Ah, Jesus!" cried Ludwig again, "always the same scenes! And yet I am hardly to blame. The delight of seeing an old friend made me forget my usual precautions. Go, my good Nettchen," he continued, slipping a coin into her hand, "go and tell your mistress that my friend Euchar would be very happy to be presented to her."

"We'll go," said the maid, "and we will do what we can." Friend Euchar, who smelt a conjugal scene, asked Ludwig if he was still as fervent a partisan of his famous theory of the interdependence of things. "Alas!" said Ludwig, "destiny is inevitable, and my theory is the one thing that helps me to endure life. Not long after our last interview at the president's lady's party, I had occasion to pass the inn where I had seen the beautiful Emmanuela when we first met. The landlady told me that my dear gitana had disappeared with her companion, and no one knew what road they had taken. I then reflected on the madness of my love for this nobody, and I felt my predilection for the charms of Victorine grow twofold; but the notion of my faithlessness had made her furious with me. Cochenille persuaded me that a deep melancholy had taken possession of the poor girl, and offered me his services to help me to return to her good graces. I gratified him with a gold piece every day in exchange for the gleams of hope he was artful enough to bring me. Finally my goddess's wrath was appeased by the perseverance of my repentance. I obtained the favour of seeing her again; she seemed to me more beautiful, more fascinating than ever."

At that moment Nettchen the chambermaid came in to tell Ludwig that the baroness could not and would not receive anyone whosoever; she presented her excuses to her husband's friend. Therewith she withdrew with the satisfied stiffness of

a dominant serving woman, eyeing Euchar over from head to foot. Ludwig seemed far from satisfied with this result; while Euchar looked at him, concealing a smile, he continued :

"You could never imagine, my dear friend, how disappointed I have been in my dearest hopes. Victorine received me with a coldness that would have offended less sensitive susceptibilities than mine. I put up with everything, thinking that doubtless she wished to enjoy a little revenge in return for the trial to which I had subjected her love. My patience triumphed gradually over her severity and brought her to a softer mood. One day, after a waltz, I declared the full violence of my passion. She laughed heartily in my face; but that did not prevent me from charging the faithful Cochenille to obtain a formal interview for me next day. I went to it with eager fervour, I threw myself at her feet, I wept, I made a thousand protestations each one more ardent than the last. She looked at me in silence with an impassive countenance; at the last, however, subdued by the frankness and truth that animated my vows of eternal love, she suddenly felt a few gentle tears roll like pearls to the edge of her eyelids; her hand fell into mine, then she tore herself away from my arms and fled from the room weeping burning tears. That, it seems to me, was a good and sufficient confession of love. I went immediately to the count, her father, and asked



him for Victorine's hand. The celestial *yes* came with delicious modesty from the prettiest mouth of a marriage-ripe maiden that could possibly be imagined. God alone knows what was in my heart at that fortunate moment. On the morning of the day before my marriage, I arrived at an early hour in the house of my betrothed. Victorine was not in her room, but her door was half-open. I slipped in stealthily, and on a little round table among other papers, songs, and music-books, I saw a book on the cover of which the word *Diary* was written. Oh, my friend! every line, every word, contained a secret of my Victorine's heart. There I read with delight the whole history of the struggles of her love. I read aloud. Suddenly Victorine appeared, I fell at her feet. I renewed my vows; I thanked her with tears for the happiness of all these testimonies I had surprised of so beautiful a passion. 'No,' I said to her, 'I never loved that little gipsy that caused you a moment of jealousy. I have never adored anyone but you, O my divine betrothed!' O despair! O fury! Victorine wrenched herself from my arms and drew back exclaiming, 'But it was not you I meant in that diary!' Thereupon she escaped and ran to lock herself up in another room. Was ever woman seen to carry prudery so far?"

As he said these words Nettchen came back to ask what was keeping the baron from bringing his friend to Madame, who had been expecting this visit for an hour already, and whose impatience was displayed by nervous spasms exceedingly difficult to keep under control. "Admirable woman," said Ludwig, "a moment ago she refused, and now she is sacrificing herself to my wishes!" Euchar, who expected to find the baroness in bed, was not a little surprised to find her almost fully dressed. "Here is our dear Euchar, our old friend," said Ludwig. "I hope that now he will never be parted from us again."

Victorine raised her eyes, looked at Euchar, and at the instant

the gallant young gentleman took her hand to kiss it, she fell in a swoon. Euchar went sadly away, murmuring: "Poor Ludwig! no, it was not you Victorine spoke of in her diary." He left Ludwig to the attentions his wife's condition demanded, and went away reflecting on a thousand things he had never noticed till then. From the bottom of his heart he pitied the unfortunate girl, whose secret feelings he had never guessed, and his friend Ludwig, whom an unexampled fatuousness had blinded as to the dangers of a marriage with a woman whose heart did not belong to him.

On the evening following this painful interview the same persons who had two years earlier heard Euchar's story found themselves once more assembled at the house of president Wechs. Euchar was received by his old friends with every mark of the greatest pleasure; but at the sight of Victorine, whom he had not expected to meet so soon again, he felt a painful catch at the heart. Victorine was there, elegantly attired, more beautiful than ever, and she seemed given up to the wildest and most carefree gaiety. Euchar could not refrain from darting unobserved a look full of reproach at her. The young woman took advantage of a moment when the general conversation was at its noisiest and kept everyone busy to take him gently aside, and said to him, "You know, my friend, Ludwig's ideas as to the system of inevitable interdependence, which, according to him, rules our fates. For my part, I believe that our mistakes and blunders are the only things that really and truly influence the happiness or the misfortunes of our existences. Life is like a phantasmagoric play the plot of which it is given to few minds to decipher. Only from to-day have you learned to read my heart. Your mistake has severed us for ever. I bear you no ill will for it; it is my evil genius that prevented you from understanding me. Now it is too late to go

back on the past; let us ask God to grant us patience and rest."

" Yes, Victorine," stammered Euchar, with tears in his eyes, " may God give you days of peace and rest. When the soul closes its gates on hope, it is sweet for it to sleep in resignation as in the depths of a tomb! "

" All is finished," went on Victorine in a muffled voice. " All is well, since it was God's will." She went back to the general company. The president's lady, who had not missed the private talk of Euchar and Victorine, leaned to the young man and said in his ear: " I have told her everything, was I wrong? "

" No," said Euchar with a sigh, " was not man created to suffer and to be resigned? "

However, the ladies, who had not forgotten the adventures of Edgar in Spain, asked the historian to resume his story at the point where it had been interrupted two years before. " With great pleasure, ladies," said Euchar, " but I forewarn you that it is no longer an affair of underground passages, of murders, of nocturnal combats, and all the obligatory paraphernalia of the romantic novels. The story of my friend Edgar ends with a love affair something out of the common, as you are about to judge. The talisman of Rafael Marchez was a gold ring on which were engraved mysterious ciphers that could make him pass for one of the highest members of certain secret societies, and assure him everywhere powerful protection at the hands of those who had risen for the war of independence. After fighting for some time among the guerrillas he took service in Wellington's army. The rest of the compaign went by with no memorable incident as far as he was concerned. Tired of a bootless war, he one day decided to go back to his own country. Several months had passed since his return, when Edgar one morning perceived that his mysterious ring had disappeared. The day after he made this discovery, which had vexed him

greatly, a little man came into his apartment without being announced, and gave him the lost ring, crying, 'Don Edgar, so I find you once more after this long time!' Edgar looked at the little man, and presently recognised Don Rafael's valet. 'Ah, in God's name!' he said, 'and what has become of your master and his daughter? Can any misfortune have befallen them?' 'Come,' said the little man, 'come, there is not a moment to lose.'

"Edgar followed him to the far outskirts of a suburb, and climbed at his heels the twisting stairs of a wretched hovel. In the corner of a garret open to the four winds lay old Marchez struggling against death. Beside him a girl was weeping on her knees. Oh, a heavenly child! Seeing Edgar come in, she rose up and ran to him, and brought him to the old man's bedside. 'It is he, father; is it not he indeed?' she said in a tone that pierced to the heart. The dying man seemed to revive for a moment. 'Yes, it is he,' stammered his voice all but extinct, 'it is your rescuer!'

" Edgar heard from the girl that Don Rafael's enemies had managed to bring him into suspicion with the Government, which had pronounced against him a decree of punishment and confiscation. Reduced to the lowest depths of want, for a long time he had lived only on public charity and on what was earned by his youthful daughter's dancing and singing. That daughter, ladies, I can now name to you—it was Emmanuela; Rafael's old servant was Biagio Cubas. Edgar felt a chaste love spring up in his heart for that pure and lovely girl who was about to be left an orphan. He brought Don Rafael, Emmanuela, and old Cubas to an estate belonging to his uncle, and I myself aided him on that occasion. A little later a letter from Father Eusebio brought Don Rafael the news that his old friends the Franciscans of Valencia had preserved in their

convent a very considerable sum of money he had hidden there; this money was at his disposal if he could send a trusty messenger to fetch it. Edgar took it upon himself to go and collect in Valencia the fragments of the old gentleman's fortune; he did more : in Madrid he obtained a revision of the judgment that had condemned Rafael Marchez upon calumnious charges, and he brought back to Germany the act of rehabilitation in favour of Emmanuela's father."

At this moment the drawing-room door opened, and a young lady magnificently attired entered, giving her hand to a man of advanced age, of a proud and lofty bearing. The president's wife rose to receive the new-comers; she brought the lady to the middle of the circle. "Here," she said to the company, "is Doña Emmanuela Marchez, the lovely bride of our Euchar, and this is Don Rafael, her noble father." "Yes," said Euchar, in a voice of emotion, "the Edgar whose story I have told you is myself!"

Victorine threw herself on Emmanuela's neck. The two charming women embraced one another cordially, like two old friends after a long absence.

Ludwig, a little aloof, contemplated the picture, and said to himself, "Our fates are linked one to another by bonds invisible : all this was destined to happen!"

THE SANDMAN

NATHANAEL TO LOTHAR

I AM sure you must all be very uneasy at not hearing from me for so very long. My mother will be cross, and Clara perhaps imagines that I am living in a whirl of dissipation and forgetting her angel image that is so deeply imprinted on my heart and mind. But it is nothing of the sort : every day and every minute I think of you all, and my Clara's lovely face comes to me in my dreams, and smiles on me as she used to do when we were all together. But how could I have written to you in the wretched mood that has perturbed my mind until now? Something terrible has invaded my life! Dark

forebodings of some dreadful impending fate have wrapped me round with thick black clouds impervious to any cheerful ray of sunshine. Must I tell you what has happened to me? I can see that I must indeed, but even at the thought of it I break into an involuntary laugh as though I had gone crazy. My dear Lothar, how can I put it so that you will understand that what happened a few days ago could really have such a fatal effect on my life? If you were here you could see for yourself, but now you will certainly think me a ridiculous ghost-seer. In a word, the terrible experience the impression of which I struggle in vain to overcome was simply that a few days ago, on the 20th of October at twelve o'clock midday, a seller of barometers came into my room to offer me his wares. I did not buy, and threatened to fling him downstairs, upon which he took himself off. But before telling you of the hideous relations fate was to establish between myself and this accursed pedlar, I had better recount to you some details of my early childhood.

In those years my sister and I hardly ever saw our father except at meals. His business seemed to engross all his energies. But after supper every evening we used to go with our mother and sit about a round table in his study. My father would light his pipe, fill a huge beer glass to the brim, and tell us a host of marvellous tales, during which his pipe would go out, to my great joy, for it was my job to light it again each time. Often when he was in a less expansive mood he would let us have fine books full of marvellous engravings; while we were eagerly poring over their treasures of illustration he would lie back in his big oak arm-chair and puff hard at his pipe till he disappeared in a thick fog of smoke. On those evenings my mother was sad, and when the clock struck nine, "Come now," she would say, "off to bed with you quickly, here comes the *sand-*

man!" And thereupon I would indeed hear a noise of heavy steps on the stair—they must be the mysterious sandman's.

One night this fantastic sound had frightened me more than usual ; I asked my mother who was this nasty person she threatened us with, and who was always driving us away from our father's room. "There is no sandman, my dear boy," replied my mother ; "when I say 'here's the sandman!' it only means you are sleepy and keep shutting your eyes as if somebody had thrown sand in them." My mother's answer failed to satisfy me, and my childish mind was convinced that she only denied the sandman's existence to prevent us from being afraid of him, for I still could hear him mounting the stairs. Eager and curious to learn something more definite about this sandman and his connexion with us children, I finally asked the old woman who had charge of my little sister who he was. "Ah, Thanelchen," she said, "don't you know that yet? He is a bad man who comes for children when they refuse to go to bed; he throws big handfuls of sand in their eyes, then he bundles them into a bag and carries them off to the moon for his young ones to eat. They have hooky beaks, like owls, to eat the eyes of children who don't behave themselves."

From that moment the image of the cruel sandman was imprinted upon my mind under a horrible guise. When in the evening I heard the noise he made coming up the stairs I shivered with terror. My mother could get nothing out of me but the cry I stammered through my sobs — "the sandman, the sandman!" I would rush away for refuge to the bedroom, and all night through I would be tormented by the dreadful apparition. I grasped the idea that the old servant's tale of the sandman and his brood of children in the moon might not be altogether gospel; but the sandman remained a dreadful spectre

in my eyes, and I was seized with terror every time I heard him come up the stair and the sharp sound of his opening the door of my father's study and shutting it behind him. Sometimes he let several days go by without coming, and then his visits would continue without a break. This went on for several years, and I could never get used to the idea of this odious spectre; his relations with my father filled my imagination more and more. The sandman had transported me into the realm of the marvellous, the fantastic, the idea of which sprouts so easily in children's minds. Nothing pleased me more than to hear or read tales about spirits, about witches, about dwarfs; but over everything there hovered the sandman, whom I used to draw with chalk or charcoal on the tables, on the cupboard doors, on the walls, in the strangest and most horrible shapes.

When I reached the age of ten my mother took me from the nursery bedroom and installed me in a little room opening into a corridor not far from my father's study. We were still bound to retire when on the stroke of nine the unknown was heard in the house. From my little room I knew the moment when he entered my father's study, and it seemed to me that very soon after a vapour with a strange odour spread through the house. Along with curiosity I felt rising within me also the courage to make the acquaintance of the sandman one way or another. Often I slipped quietly out of my room into the corridor after my mother had left me, but without success; for the sandman had always gone in when I had reached the point from which I might have seen him pass. At length, yielding to an irresistible impulse, I determined to hide in my father's room itself, and wait for the sandman's arrival. One day I guessed from my father's silence and my mother's low spirits that the sandman was coming; I pretended to be very tired so that I might get away from the others a little before

nine o'clock, and I hid myself in a corner. Soon after, the house door opened noisily, then was shut again. A slow, heavy, echoing tread passed through the hall and made towards the stairs. My mother passed by me swiftly with my sister. Very gently I opened the door of my father's study. He was sitting as usual, silent and motionless, with his back to the door, and did not notice me. In a trice I was hidden away in a wardrobe behind the curtain that served as its door. The sound of steps came nearer and nearer. Outside could be heard a cough, a murmur, and a strange sort of shuffling. My heart beat wildly with fear: the bell rang violently, the door was thrust open. I plucked up courage with an effort and very cautiously parted the curtains slightly. The sandman was before my father, in the middle of the room; the light of the candles fell full on his face; the sandman, the terrible sandman, was — the old lawyer Coppelius, who occasionally dined at our house. But the most abominable face could not have roused in me a deeper horror than that of Coppelius.

Imagine a tall man with broad shoulders, a misshapen head, an earthy yellow face, very thick eyebrows under which there gleamed two cat's eyes, and a long nose hooked down above the upper lip. His crooked mouth often contracted into a sardonic laugh; and at that moment two dark red spots sprang

up on his cheek-bones, and an extraordinary whistling sound came through his clenched teeth. Coppelius habitually wore an ashen grey coat of ancient cut, with vest and breeches to match, black stockings, and little jewelled buckles on his shoes. His little wig barely covered the top of his head, the curls did not nearly come down to his big red ears, a broad stitched bag stood out from the nape of his neck and disclosed the silver buckle that held his crumpled cravat in place. His whole person, in short, was horrible and repulsive. But what we hated worst about him were his big bony hairy fingers, so badly that we could not bear anything he had touched. He had observed this, and when our mother had slipped a piece of tart or a preserved fruit on to our plates he took a delight in putting a hand to it under some pretext or other, so that we used to reject with tears in our eyes the dainties that should have filled us with joy. He would do the same when our father had poured us out a little glass of sweet wine on festive occasions; he would quickly pass a hand over it, or even sometimes put the glass to his bluish lips, and laugh with a truly diabolical air to see our mute repugnance and the stifled sobs that betrayed our disgust. He never called us anything else than *his little animals*, and we were forbidden to complain or even to open our mouths before him for any cause or reason whatsoever. Our mother seemed to dread this horrible Coppelius no less than we did. As for my father, he behaved in his presence with all the signs of the utmost deference.

At once the idea came to my mind that the sandman could not be any other creature than this odious Coppelius; and instead of the fantastic being of the nurse's tales, I saw in him something satanic and infernal that was fated to bring some dreadful misfortune upon us.

But the dread of being caught made me suppress any

outward manifestation of my fears, and I hid away closer than ever at the back of the wardrobe, only leaving enough space to let me see everything through the curtains.

My father received Coppelius with all ceremony. "Come," cried the visitor in a harsh voice, "come, to work!" As he spoke he pulled off his coat. My father did so too, and both put on long dark robes taken from a recess in the wall, at the back of which I caught sight of a stove. Coppelius went to this, and almost at once a blue flame shot up under his fingers, filling the room with a diabolical light. Chemical vessels and utensils were lying here and there about the floor. When my father bent over the crucible on the fire, his face all at once took on a strange expression; his features, contracted with some violent inner pang, had something of the hateful mask of Coppelius. The latter was puddling in the burning mass with tongs, and he drew out ingots of metal and hammered them on the anvil. I imagined I saw human heads leaping all round him, but eyeless. "Eyes! eyes!" roared Coppelius. I heard no more; I was so agitated that I began to lose consciousness and tumbled out on the floor. The noise of my downfall made my father start, while Coppelius leapt upon me and picked me up, gnashing his teeth, and held me above the flames of the stove, which were already beginning to scorch my hair. "Ah! here are eyes, child's eyes!" cried Coppelius, raking red-hot coals out of the fire and making to put them on my eyelids. My father struggled to stop him. "Master, Master!" he cried, "leave my Nathanael his eyes!" "Be it so," said Coppelius; "then I shall study the mechanism of his feet and his hands." He then began to twist and turn my joints so rudely that they all felt as though they were dislocated. Then everything went black and silent about me, and I ceased to feel anything. When I came out of this second fainting fit, my mother's gentle

breath was warming my frozen lips. "Is the sandman there still?" I stammered. "No, my darling boy," said my mother, "he is gone, and he shall never harm you. Do not be afraid of him, for I shall never leave you now!" And she hugged me to her breast with the convulsive embrace of mingled love and fear.

Can you understand, Lothar, the true inwardness of this adventure? A raging fever took hold of me, and for six weeks I hovered between life and death; in my delirious fits I always imagined I saw the sandman in the shape and features of Coppelius. But that is not the most terrible part of my story. Listen again. For a year nobody had seen Coppelius, and everyone thought he had left the town. Little by little my father had recovered his cheerful spirits and his customary ways of tranquillity and paternal affection. But one night, as nine o'clock struck from the neighbouring belfry, we heard the door of the house creak on its hinges, and footsteps as heavy as a hammer on the anvil began to come upstairs. "It is Coppelius!" said my mother, turning pale. "Yes, it is Coppelius," repeated my father brokenly, and sinister visions flocked upon me on every hand.

Tears ran down my mother's face. "My dear, my dear!" she exclaimed, "must this be?" "For the last time," replied my father. "He has come for the last time, I swear to you. Go, go with your children, and good night!"

I was as though turned to stone, I could not breathe. Seeing me motionless, my mother took me by the arm. "Come, Nathanael!" she said. I let her draw me along to my room. "Be very quiet and go to sleep. Sleep!" said she as she left me. But I was filled with a terror I could not master, and could not shut my eyes. I saw before me that horrible, odious Coppelius with his shining eyes; he smiled at me with a hypocritical

air, and vainly did I seek to drive away his image. It was on the stroke of midnight when a violent noise was heard, like the report of a fire-arm. The whole house shook, someone ran by outside my room, and the door shut with a loud bang. I sprang out of bed, dashed along the corridor; heart-rending cries came from my father's room, out of which a black foul smoke was surging in great whirls; the servant was screaming, "Ah, my master, my poor master!"

In front of the flaring hearth lay my father's body, blackened and mutilated in horrible fashion. My mother and my sister were bending over him, uttering lamentable cries. "Coppelius, Coppelius," I exclaimed, "you have killed my father!" and I fell almost lifeless.

Two days after, when my poor father had been laid in his coffin, his features had recovered, in spite of the ravages of death, the peace and tranquillity of the old days; we hoped that, in spite of his relations with Coppelius, God had pardoned his soul and had called it to Himself.

The explosion had roused the neighbours. The affair made a sensation, and the authorities tried to lay hold of Coppelius, but the wretch had disappeared, and nobody knew where he had gone.

And now, my dear Lothar, when I tell you that the barometer-seller who visited me was no other than this accursed Coppelius, you will understand the overwhelming horror this apparition of an enemy brought upon me. He was dressed differently, but the features of Coppelius are too strongly printed in my soul for me to mistake them. He is passing himself off as a Piedmontese mechanic, and has given himself the name of Giuseppe Coppola.

I am determined to avenge my father whatever may happen. Do not speak of this horrible encounter to my mother. Greet

dear Clara from me; I shall write to her when I am in a calmer mood.

CLARA TO NATHANAEL

Although you have not written to me for a long time, I am still convinced that you have not yet banished me from your heart and mind; for when you wrote the other day to my brother you put my name on the envelope. And so I opened your letter, but perceived my mistake with the first line. Of course I ought to have read not another word, and should have taken your letter to my brother. But the beginning of the tale you had to tell him had so filled me with curiosity that it almost made me dizzy. Your Coppelius is a terrifying person. Till now I never knew the nature of the dreadful accident that deprived you of your dear father. This accursed barometer-monger you call Giuseppe Coppola, and who, you say, is so fatally like Coppelius, has pursued me for a whole day like a threatening spectre. I dreamed of him in my sleep, and awoke more than once with terrified cries. Still you must not be annoyed, my dear, if Lothar's reply tells you that next day I had recovered my usual serenity and had driven away the phantoms of my imagination. I confess that this matter does not appear to me to have anything supernatural about it. Coppelius might be the most repulsive creature in the world, and I can conceive your childish aversion for his ugly face. You made him into a personification of the sand-man. That was the working of a youthful mind infected by an old nurse's tales. Coppelius's nocturnal interviews with your father had certainly no other object than experiments in alchemy. Your mother was distressed because these things must entail great expenditure with no return; and besides,

your father, being absorbed in this passion for making gold and hunting for the philosopher's stone, was neglecting his household affairs and his family ties. Your father's death seems to me to have resulted from some piece of carelessness. Certain combinations of substances in fusion can produce an explosion of greater or less violence; this I have ascertained from a chemist, who filled my ears with a great number of strange names that I shall spare you, since I have clean forgotten them myself.

I know you will be sorry for your poor Clara, who has no belief in the fantastic, and who only sees the world through very ordinary eyes. Ah! my dear Nathanael, is there really an occult power endowed with such an ascendancy over our nature that it can drag us along a path of disaster and misfortune? No, God has given us the light of the spirit and the touchstone of conscience that by their help we may recognize at any point and under any guise the enemy that prowls about our destiny. If we proceed with steady steps, and eyes fixed on heaven, along the path of virtue, this occult power seeks in vain to draw us into its snares. It may happen that at moments our imagination lets itself be fascinated by deceiving ghosts that to our senses put on the appearance of a menacing reality; but these ghosts are but our own thoughts, transformed by a kind of fever, which lends them strange shapes borrowed, according to our momentary mood, from the notions we have made for ourselves of heaven or of hell. There, my dear Nathanael, is the way my brother and I look at these high questions of occult powers. You see that mysteries don't frighten everybody, and that there are even girls bold enough to reason instead of trembling. So I beg you to put clear away from your memory the ugly faces of Coppelius and the barometer-monger Giuseppe Coppola. If your letter did not

in every line betray signs of the utmost agitation I would take delight in telling you all the comical things that floated through my mind about the sandman and Coppelius, the lawyer-barometer-pedlar. But that will be for another occasion.

If your fears seize upon you again, come and shelter under my wing; I will be your good fairy. I know nothing so good as a jolly spell of laughing to put fantastic monsters to flight for ever.

Always yours, my dearest Nathanael.

NATHANAEL TO LOTHAR

I was greatly put out, my dear friend, to think that, thanks to my foolish slip, Clara had read the letter I wrote to you. The lively girl made fun of me to her heart's content; and yet, in spite of all her arguments about what she regards as my obsession, I am sure of what my own eyes have seen.

In any event I have realized that the seller of barometers and the lawyer Coppelius are two quite different persons. I am attending the lectures of the celebrated physicist Spalanzani, who is an Italian. This man has for a long time known Giuseppe Coppola, who as a matter of fact has a Piedmontese accent. Coppelius was German, extremely German. And now your sister and you, my friend, may both look on me as a morbid dreamer, but I cannot shake off my first impression of that fatal likeness. I am glad he has left the town, as Spalanzani tells me. This professor is a singular person, rotund, with high cheek-bones, a pointed nose and eyes shining like carbuncles. The other day as I went up to his flat I noticed that the green curtain, usually drawn over a glass door, was a little open. I hardly know how I came to look through the glass. A splendid beauty, in richest attire, was sitting in the room, with her folded hands lying on a small table in front

of her. She was facing me, and I could see her eyes. I observed with astonishment, mingled with a secret fear, that they were utterly lifeless and vacant. She seemed to be asleep with her eyes open. In a whirl of emotions I slipped into the lecture-room, where a full class was waiting for the professor. Someone told me that the mysterious lady was Olympia, Spalanzani's daughter, whom he keeps in almost cloistered seclusion. Perhaps this lovely person is astray in her wits, or he may have some other good reason for his conduct. I intend to find out the truth. But why need I go on wearying you with my mare's nests? We shall soon be able to talk face to face. In a fortnight at the most I shall be with you all, with my dear Clara, and my poor imagination will be soothed under the happy influence of her kind eyes, and so farewell, my friend.

I

The narrative of the strange adventures of the student Nathanael might very well begin at the point where he sends the barometer-seller to the devil. The three letters shown me by my friend Lothar are like three strokes of the brush laid at random on the canvas. The outlines must be sketched in and then the colouring done later. Let us set to work.

Not long after the death of Nathanael's father, Clara and Lothar, the children of a distant relation, were received in the house of our hero's mother. Clara and Nathanael grew up together, conceived a mutual affection, and were betrothed when Nathanael went away to the city of G., where he was to finish his studies, and where we have just seen him attending the physics lectures of Professor Spalanzani.

Clara was not beautiful in the common sense of the word. A painter would have found in the lines of her figure, her

shoulders, and her bust, merely an exaggerated maidenliness, but he would have been obliged to admire her magnificent Magdalen-like hair with which she could cover herself like an all-enveloping veil, and the sheen of her satin skin eclipsed the whitest snow. A devotee of beauty had compared Clara's eyes to the the blue lakes of Ruysdael, whose limpid mirror reflects with so pure a charm the woods, the meadows, and the flowers, all the poetic elements of the most smiling landscape. To these natural graces the girl added a vivid imagination, a sensitive and affectionate heart that was by no means incompatible with clear and positive powers of reasoning, as her letter has shown us. Romantic spirits were never to her taste; she held little conversation with light and presumptuous persons; her sparkling eye and ironical smile seemed to say to them, "Poor shadows that you are, do you hope to pass yourselves off to me as noble figures, full of life and sap?" And hence some accused Clara of being cold and prosaic, while others, who knew more of life, admired her exquisite sense of delicacy and purity under that cool exterior. Yet no one loved her like Nathanael, who cultivated science and the arts assiduously, and Clara returned his affection with all her heart. With what joy did she throw herself into his arms when he came home from G. at the time he had said in his letter to Lothar. And as Nathanael had hoped, from that day the young man was entirely rid of all thoughts of Coppelius and Coppola alike.

Yet Nathanael had been right when he told his friend Lothar that the appearance of the accursed pedlar Giuseppe Coppola had cast a fatal spell upon his destiny. His disposition had undoubtedly altered, and his humour, hitherto so cheerful, had given way to melancholy. His mystical broodings, from which nothing now availed to draw him, gave poor Clara

much distress; all her wise arguments were insufficient to cope with the moral malady that was killing her friend. One day when Nathanael was complaining very seriously that the monster Coppelius was the evil principle that had fastened upon him from the moment he had hidden behind a curtain to watch him, and that his demon antagonist would poison their happy love, Clara suddenly became serious, and said, "Yes, Nathanael, Coppelius is a hostile principle that will trouble our happiness if you do not banish him from your mind: his power lies only in your credulity." This clash of minds irritated Nathanael without curing him of his dismal preoccupations; little by little, in his vexation, he came to place Clara among those inferior creatures whose eye, lacking in *second sight*, cannot penetrate the secrets of invisible nature. Next morning he bent himself to the task of converting her to his ideas, and read treatises of occult philosophy to her while she was busily preparing breakfast. "But, my dear Nathanael," said Clara after a few minutes' attention, "what would you say if I were to call you the bad genius of my coffee, for if I were to spend my time listening to you reading and holding forth, my coffee would boil over on the ashes and you would all have to go without breakfast!" Nathanael shut his book with a bang, and buried himself in his room, and no one saw him again all day. Uneasiness fell upon the family gatherings, and a discord grew up between the hearts of two people who

had been born to adore each other and make each other happy. Yet time went on, and took with it some of poor Nathanael's eccentricities, and he found the detestable image of Coppelius gradually recede into a distant haze. He found in poetry a distraction for his fatal thoughts. One day he hastened to Clara, a bulky manuscript in his hand : it was a whole poem, into which he had lavishly poured all his impressions, all his dreams, all the sufferings of his fevered brain. He began to read it under the arbour in the garden; the air was scented with the warm breath of evening; the setting sun gilded the tree-tops with its mild rays. Nathanael opened his book, Clara went on knitting, promising herself to turn a deaf ear to a work that she expected to be dull and tiresome, but when the first pages were finished she felt a singular agitation; her work fell from her hands; she remained fixed in contemplation of Nathanael, who was completely carried away by his frenzied poetry. When he had come to an end of his reading the young man flung his manuscript from him, and, eyes filled with tears, breast strained with sobs, leaned over to Clara, pressing her hands with a convulsive clasp and crying out in despairing tones, "Ah, Clara! Clara!" The kind girl looked at him with tender pity. "My darling," she said, "your poem is absurd, do throw the dreadful thing in the fire!" Nathanael leaped to his feet. "Foolish creature," he said, eyeing her darkly. "An automaton with no life and no soul!" and he left her, running away. Clara remained behind in tears. "Alas!" she said to herself, "he never loved me, for he is unable to understand me and scorns me!"

At that moment Lothar made his appearance in the arbour; he forced his unhappy sister to tell him why she was weeping, for he loved her with boundless affection. Two minutes after he was on Nathanael's heels, and reproached him bitterly;

the other made violent reply. They exchanged dreadful provocations, and finally agreed to meet in a duel at daybreak next morning behind the wall of the garden. All the rest of the day they remained dark and speechless in each other's presence. But Clara had guessed everything, she had seen the duelling swords being furbished; she trembled to think of the danger that might tear from her her brother and her betrothed as well. At the appointed hour the naked swords lay on the sward they were meant to redden with blood. Lothar and Nathanael had already thrown aside their coats, their eyes flashed fire and their mouths were filled with threats; they were on the point of engaging when Clara flung herself all dishevelled between them, crying, "Kill me, since it is for me you are going to murder one another; and whichever of you may be the one to fall in this dreadful duel, I swear I will not survive him!" Her brother hurled his sword away, and Nathanael threw himself at Clara's feet. "Dear angel, forgive me," he said, weeping, "you too, Lothar, forgive me; I am in fault towards both of you! But you know whether I love you, my tears and my repentance are full proof!" The brother and sister joined in raising him up, and they all three mingled their tears and their renewed vows of eternal affection.

From this day, Nathanael felt his heart eased to some extent. The affection of those he loved had driven from his brain part of the fumes and vapours that vexed it. He spent three days more with them before returning to G. for his final year of study at the university, after which he was to settle down permanently in his native town at the side of his beloved.

Nathanael's mother knew nothing of the disorder wrought by the memory of Coppelius in her son's mind. This unhappy secret had been sedulously concealed from her to spare her distress, for she had never ceased to grieve for her husband's

death; and the mere name of Coppelius uttered in her presence would have been an agony to her.

II

Nathanael on his return to G. found the house where he had lodged burned to the ground; there was nothing of it left but two or three stumps of walls blackened and calcined by the flames. The fire had broken out in an apothecary's workshop. A number of Nathanael's friends, who lived close to the scene of disaster, had saved his clothes, his scientific instruments, his papers, and deposited them under lock and key in another room which they hired in his name. This room was situated over against the apartment of Professor Spalanzani. From its window the eye could readily see into the room where, when the curtains were open, Olympia might often be observed, silent and sitting in an unchanging posture. Nathanael was at first astonished at this immobility she maintained for hours together at her little table. The contemplation of this magnificent creature had an electric effect on Nathanael. But the faithful love of Clara filled his soul and preserved him against the charms of the austere Olympia; and thus it was only at intervals that our friend threw a few almost casual glances in the direction of the retreat occupied by that lovely statue. He was writing a long letter to his betrothed, when he suddenly became aware of the unpleasant figure of Coppola. A nervous shudder ran through him; but presently, recalling Clara's arguments and the details he had heard from Professor Spalanzani with regard to Coppola, he was almost ashamed of his first dismay, and in a voice as calm as he could contrive he said to his unwelcome visitor: "My friend, I never buy barometers; will you kindly go to the deuce."

But Coppola, taking no notice of this dismissal, entered the

room, and fixing eyes full of sinister fire on the student replied: "I have not only barometers, I have also eyes, lovely eyes!" "What, eyes!" cried Nathanael, "accursed madman, how can you have eyes?" "There you are," replied the hawker, opening his pack, and taking out a collection of spectacles of all sizes and all colours. He went on laying out more and more till the table was covered with them. Poor Nathanael imagined thousands of fantastic eyes staring at him on every hand; the more spectacles Coppola produced, as though bringing them out from an inexhaustible store, the greater was our poor student's agitation. Suddenly he could contain himself no longer, and sprang upon the hawker, who fell back in terror, huddled all his spectacles back into his bundle, crying, "For pity's sake, my dear sir, what are you doing? If these glasses are not what you want, that's no reason to throttle me. Perhaps you would rather have lorgnettes. Here are some for every taste." As soon as the spectacles had gone back in the bag, Nathanael became calm once more as though by magic. The new articles that Coppola showed him had no disturbing influence on him whatever. Vexed at his loss of self-control, he determined to buy something from the hawker to make up for his violence; he chose a very small lorgnette of exquisite workmanship, and to try it levelled it at the room in which Olympia Spalanzani was seated in her usual place. For the first time he saw her features close at hand; the sight threw him into a long trance, from which he was roused only by the noise Coppola made tapping his foot on the floor. "*Tre zecchini*" (three ducats) repeated the prosaic mechanic *ad nauseam*. Nathanael made haste to pay him, and Coppola backed out of the room with innumerable bowings and thankings, but no sooner had he reached the stairs than he gave vent to a gross burst of laughter. "This thieving dog," said

Nathanael to himself, "has made me pay ten times too much for his lorgnette, and is laughing at his victim." He tossed the thing aside to finish his letter to Clara, but hardly had he resumed his pen when the image of Olympia intervened to distract his mind to an excessive degree; he got up once more and fixed his eyes on the window of her room. And so he continued in a kind of daze till the moment when his friend Siegmund came to fetch him to Professor Spalanzani's lecture.

From that moment the curtains of Olympia's room remained closely drawn; the love-sick student lost his time and his trouble in two whole days spent like a sentry at watch, lorgnette in hand, in his window. On the third his brain was on fire. Seized by a kind of delirium, he ran out of the city. Olympia's figure seemed to multiply itself around him as though by enchantment; he saw it hovering in air like a snowy mist, gleaming through the flowery hedges and mirrored in the crystal brooks. Poor Clara was utterly forgotten! Nathanael went along at random, eyes uplifted to the sky, and with sobs in his voice he cried, "O my star of love, why dost thou leave me thus alone on earth? Far from thee my days turn drab and my life withers like a flower under the desert sun!"

When Nathanael returned to his lodging, there was a great to-do in Spalanzani's. The doors were opened, the windows had been taken off their hinges; many workmen were coming and going, carrying furniture, nailing up hangings and plying hammers with extraordinary activity. His friend Siegmund informed our hero that Professor Spalanzani was giving a great ball next day to all the *élite* of the university, and that on this occasion Miss Olympia would make her first appearance in society.

Nathanael found an invitation awaiting him in his lodgings.

How great was his joy when at the appointed hour he made his way into the brilliantly lighted drawing-room, where the best society of the little city was already gathered around the learned professor. Olympia was dressed with exquisite taste and magnificence. Everybody admired her beauty, and no one could find any fault with her admirable shape, except for a slightly exaggerated curve in the waist, which seemed to be due to an excess of pressure by her corset. This beautiful person had a stately way of walking; but there was a touch of stiffness in it that was put down to her natural shyness. She took her place at the harpsichord, and sang a national song then very popular, with a sonorous and vibrant tone like that of a harmonica. Nathanael gazed on her in a kind of ecstasy; but as he had come a little late, or had not been able to make his way into the front of the crowd, he took from his pocket Coppola's little lorgnette and discreetly levelled it at the charming features of Olympia. Immediately a sort of delirium took hold upon him. It seemed to him that Spalanzani's lovely daughter fixed upon him looks filled with voluptuous languor; her singing assumed in his ear all the sublime inflexions of an echo from heaven; then a cloud passed before his eyes; his imagination lost itself in the most distant spheres of the ideal; for a moment he fancied he felt about his neck the warm clasp of two amorous arms, and exclaimed, "Olympia! Olympia!" Some of the guests who were near Nathanael turned and laughed in his face; but he took no heed. After the concert came the ball. To dance with this masterpiece of beauty would be the highest possible peak of happiness. But how was he to dare to invite her? How indeed? I cannot tell; but the fact is that after a very few moments Nathanael was seen bowing very low before Miss Olympia. A cold perspiration bedewed his brow when with the tips of his

fingers he lightly touched those of Olympia. The girl's hand was icy like the hand of a corpse. Nathanael lifted his eyes to hers, and found in them the same languorous fixity; he forgot his impression of timid surprise, and placing a supple arm about the waist of the queen of the ball he took the floor among the crowd of the waltzers, turning about with infinite grace. Miss Olympia waltzed with a rhythm and precision that shamed all the girls of the little city. When he had brought her back to her place, Nathanael, like a lovesick hero, would willingly have sought a quarrel with anyone who might have taken into his head to invite her to dance, but the gravity of the place and of the people present happily restrained him. He had sat down beside Olympia, and taking her hand in his own he spoke to her of his love in delicate but burning words. The virtuous young lady made him no answer save with a guttural monosyllable sufficiently hard to reproduce, "Ach! ach! ach!" and that was all. And Nathanael, losing his head, said to her, "O woman, worthy of the love of the angels! chaste reflection of the happiness of the blessed! let your gentle eyes fall on me!" But to all that Miss Olympia replied only with her eternal "Ach! ach! ach!"

During this remarkable conversation Professor Spalanzani several times passed before our lovers, smiling strangely on them the while. Gradually, despite his preoccupation, Nathanael perceived that the blaze of the lights was decreasing. The tapers in the drawing-room were one after another dying out; the music and dancing had long since ceased; the guests had gone. "O God!" said Nathanael, "must we leave one another already, and shall I be allowed to see you again, my angel?" He bowed over Olympia's hands to cover them with kisses. But the chill of death met his lips—he shivered from head to foot. "Olympia," he said in a broken voice, "Olympia, do

you love me?" Olympia rose up as though moved by a spring, and answered as always, "Ach! ach! ach!" And she began to walk away, followed by Nathanael, who ceaselessly repeated his emphatic declarations. Olympia stopped in front of Spalanzani, who said to the student, "My dear sir, since you take so much pleasure in my daughter's conversation, your visits will always be very welcome to us." Nathanael thought the heavens had opened upon him, and went away wild with love and joy.

Long was Doctor Spalanzani's ball the theme of all gossiping, and in particular the object of severe criticism. Some found fault with numbers of solecisms that had not escaped them, and which betrayed the Professor's ignorance of good society; the others, the great majority, discussed the imperfections of Miss Olympia; all agreed in finding her stupid, which offered sufficient justification for the care Spalanzani had taken to keep her out of sight so long. Nathanael heard this sort of talk with great wrath, but dared not burst out with it, for fear of compromising his beloved, and seeing her door shut in his face. One day Siegmund said to him: "My dear brother, how can a reasonable man fall in love, as you have done, with a doll that can't say a word?" Nathanael replied with outward calm: "How can a young man with such excellent eyes have failed to see all the visible and hidden charms and treasures in the person of Olympia? All the better, my brother, that you have not seen all this, for you would love the lady with a fervour like mine; and I feel that I could not live alongside a rival, were he my best friend!"

Siegmund grasped that Nathanael's head was gravely affected, and accordingly sought to bring him back to less aggressive notions. "Beauty," he said, "is a matter of convention: caprice often has more to say to it than any reality. But does it not seem strange to you that all our comrades pass the same

judgment on Olympia? Even if this woman has a great many beautiful features and physical attractions, can it be denied, when one has examined her closely, that her eye is empty and that every movement seems the effect of a mechanism? She sings, she plays with perfect rhythm; but it is always the same song with the same accompaniment; her dancing is mechanical and uniform. That is what I have seen, what we have all seen; I conclude from it that your Olympia is a supernatural creature whose secret will one day be revealed to us." Nathanael made a fresh effort to contain himself. "You are all," he said to Siegmund, "nothing but prosaic creatures; all the loveliness and charm in Olympia is revealed to me alone, because I am the only one with sufficiently sensitive faculties to appreciate the treasure fate offered to me. I can conceive that she may not please you; for she has no part or lot in your insipid conversations. The few words she lets fall from her lips are to me like hieroglyphs from the inner world where souls reside; but you know nothing of all that." "Quite true," replied Siegmund, "and so I leave you to your dreams; but if ever you come to need, in the real world to which you will descend sooner or later, the services of a friend, remember me. Adieu!" Nathanael seemed touched by his friend's last words, and the two young men, before parting, exchanged a cordial grasp of the hand.

Clara, kind good Clara, was as much forgotten as though she had never existed. Lothar had likewise vanished from Nathanael's memory. The poor fellow spent all his days at Olympia's side; he came and recited to her verses, poems, ballads, treatises of psychology, without end. The beauty listened to it all with a patience and impassiveness that were fantastic. She looked at her lover with her two black eyes that never changed; when Nathanael, carried away by passion,

fell on his knees and kissed her hands or her lips, she always said "Ach! ach! ach!" and when he was leaving to go home she would add, "Good night, my beloved!" These few words opened to Nathanael the whole world of Platonic loves; he imagined that he thought and acted and felt for Olympia, and he admired the power of love that had drawn to itself the soul and the faculties of Olympia. Sometimes he had lucid moments, and then he would think of the strange immobility of the girl; but he would say to himself immediately, "What are words? Empty sounds that break upon the ear and vanish; Olympia's look says more than all the eloquence of men!"

Professor Spalanzani seemed to take an extraordinary interest in his daughter's relations with Nathanael; he lavished signs of the most cordial goodwill on the student. One day our hero, armed with all his resolution to strike a decided blow, determined that he would, without further delay, and with all suitable gravity, request the honour of aspiring to Olympia's hand. To be more sure of his hopes, he thought it necessary in the first place to address a positive declaration to the lady of his thoughts; and to set the seal of greater ceremony upon it, he looked through a casket for a gold ring, a gift from his mother, which he wished to place on Olympia's finger as a betrothal pledge. First of all in the casket he came upon the letters of Lothar and Clara, tossed them aside impatiently, found the ring and hastened to the professor's house.

When he had reached the head of the stair he heard a terrific hubbub in Spalanzani's apartment. Through the trampling of feet, the clinking of metal, the noise of violent battering against the walls of the house, he distinguished two voices bellowing dreadful imprecations.

"Let go, scoundrel!" "Would you dare to rob me of my blood and my life?" "It is my best-loved handiwork!" "It

was I who made the eyes!" "And I made the springs of the works!" "Go to the devil, accursed clock-maker!" "Satan, stop! Hell-hound, give me my own!" "Ha! ha! ha!" These two dreadful voices belonged to Spalanzani and Coppelius. Nathanael, quite beside himself, drove in the door with a kick, and dashed into the room in the thick of the fray. The professor had hold of the shoulders, the Italian Coppola had hold of the legs, of a woman they were furiously tugging at between them.

"Horror!" cried Nathanael, "it is Olympia!" He was leaping at the throat of Coppola, when the latter, as strong as Hercules, with a last convulsive tug forced his antagonist to let go; picking up the woman in his powerful arms, he let fly so fierce a blow with her on the professor's head that the poor man, almost stunned, fell his whole length on the floor ten paces away, smashing in his fall a table covered with a mass of flasks, retorts, alembics, and instruments. Profiting by this disorder Coppola threw Olympia across his shoulders and disappeared, laughing like a devil; all the way downstairs they could hear Olympia's legs clattering on the steps with a sound like castanets.

Olympia's head had remained on the battlefield. With terror Nathanael perceived a wax face, the enamel eyes were broken. The wretched Spalanzani was lying in the midst of splinters of glass that had cut his arms and his face and his breast to pieces. "Coppelius! Coppelius!" he cried in a voice of agonized distress. "Accursed thief! you are robbing me of the fruit of twenty years' study and work! But no matter, I have taken the eyes! Yes, there they are!" Thereupon Nathanael saw at his feet two blood-stained eyes staring fixedly at him. Spalanzani picked them up and threw them full in his breast. Immediately Nathanael, seized with a fit of madness, began

to cry out the most incoherent nonsense, and hurling himself at the professor would have choked him to death if the neighbours had not rushed in and seized the student. They had to tie him up tight to avert a disaster. They took him away to the hospital for the insane, and his friend Siegmund accompanied him in tears.

The famous Professor Spalanzani recovered in a short time, for none of his hurts was at all serious. But directly he could travel he was obliged to leave the city; all the students of the university who had been witnesses to the hoax played on Nathanael had sworn to wreak a terrible vengeance on the Italian mechanic who had had the impertinence to employ a mannequin to make fools of real persons so estimable as the inhabitants and the students of the good town of G. A number of legal minds had proposed to bring a criminal action against Spalanzani as responsible for the madness that had torn Nathanael from the bosom of society. But the professor had gone away in time, and no one ever again saw Giuseppe Coppola, the seller of barometers, spectacles, and lorgnettes.

When after anxious nursing Nathanael came back to sound mind, he seemed to himself to be awakened out of a long nightmare. He found himself in his paternal home; his mother, kind Clara, and Lothar were all weeping round his bed. The moment his eyes opened Clara was the first to speak. "You are restored to us, my beloved! you have been healed by our care of a dreadful malady." "Clara! Clara!" murmured Nathanael, sending an astonished look round all the objects in the room, as if he were endeavouring to remember something. Siegmund, who had refused to leave his sick friend, came into the room and clasped him by the hand. A few days of peaceful convalescence completed the cure. When the student was perfectly recovered he was informed that an old uncle, who

while he was alive had always seemed wretchedly poor and miserly, had just died, leaving his heirs a considerable property in the country not far from the town, with a comfortably furnished strong-box. The whole family proposed to go and take up its abode here in serene retirement. The day was fixed for this new installation, and before departing they went here and there in the city to make the last purchases, so that they need not come back for a long time. As they were crossing the square before the church, "My dearest beloved," said Clara, "would you not like us to go up the tower to look once again at the view over the mountains and the distant forests?" Nathanael thought it a charming idea, and the pair went up by themselves; the old mother took her way back to their house, and Lothar, not so eager to clamber up two or three hundred steps, waited for them at the botton of the tower.

The two lovers, leaning over the balustrade of the belfry, intoxicated themselves with the poetic spectacle that was spread before their eyes. The tops of the great trees were bending like waves of a green sea, and the mountains stood out on the deep blue of the sky like silhouettes of grey ghosts.

"Look," cried the girl, "do look at that grey clump yonder; you would say it is moving, coming in our direction." Nathanael, less keen of eye, mechanically felt in his pocket for Coppola's lorgnette. No sooner had he directed it towards the plain beneath than he sprang up like a tiger with a hoarse cry of fury : Olympia had been in front of the lens of the fatal lorgnette. Nathanael's brain seemed to burn. He stared fixedly at Clara; then his eyes rolled all bloodshot in their sockets. "Mannequin! Mannequin from hell!" he shrieked, "go back to the devil that created you!" Then he seized Clara with convulsive strength and made to fling her down from the tower. The poor child, half dead with terror, clung

to the balustrade with the strength of despair. Fortunately, Lothar heard her screams; conjecturing some terrible mishap, he darted up the twisting stairway and reached the platform at the very moment when Clara had fainted and was being thrust out over the abyss. He was just in time to snatch his sister back, and in order to make Nathanael loosen his hold he fetched him a furious blow on the head that made him stagger and spin round like a top. Lothar went down the stairs with his precious burden, seemingly deserted by life. As for Nathanael, he began to run round the platform like a maniac, leaping and dancing in the most dangerous fashion and uttering wild yells that collected a terror-stricken crowd. Among the curious spectators there suddenly appeared the lawyer Coppelius, who had just entered the town. A few of the people prepared to climb the tower and take hold of the madman, whose wild agitation made the onlookers tremble. "Pooh!" said Coppelius, "leave him alone: he will come down by himself all right!" And as he watched, open-mouthed, the gyrations of Nathanael, the latter, who at that moment leaned over the balustrade, caught sight of him, recognized him, and uttering a wild yell of diabolical laughter flung himself headlong.

He was taken up with his head shattered to pieces. Coppelius disappeared in the crowd.

THE MYSTERY OF THE DESERTED HOUSE

The many fine mansions to be seen in W., the luxurious productions of art and industry of every kind with which it increases in riches from day to day, are the delight of the sightseer and the admiration of every traveller. The street lined with magnificent residences leading to the old gate, serves as a continual corridor for the *élite* of society going to while away the time in one another's houses. The ground floors of the houses are occupied by very elegant shops; the upper storeys are divided into comfortable flats. It is the quarter belonging to the upper ten.

I had already gone up and down this avenue a thousand times, when my eyes paused by chance on a building whose strange construction was in strong contrast with its neighbours. Imagine a square block of stone pierced by four windows, forming two storeys only, a ground floor and a first floor; its height was hardly more than that of the ground floor of the magnificent mansions flanking it on either side. This building, cracked and decayed, was topped by a roof in exceedingly bad condition, and most of the window-panes were broken and replaced by squares of grey or blue paper. The four windows were fast shut. Those belonging to the ground floor had been walled up, and you might look in vain for a bell by the front door, which was narrow and low and without a lock. This dilapidation proclaimed utter desolation; the hovel looked as though it had been derelict and abandoned for a hundred years. A deserted house is, after all, nothing surprising; but in so wealthy a quarter, on a site that might have brought its owner a substantial income, it certainly offered grounds for speculation, and I could never again pass the old barrack by without building a thousand castles in Spain.

One day, at the hour when the smart folk were jostling one another like ants, I was standing leaning against a perron opposite the deserted house, lost in reverie, when a gentleman I had lost sight of for a long time suddenly stopped beside me and drew me from my dreaming. This was Count P., a dreamer at least as fantastic and curious as I could possibly be. Like me, he had speculated tremendously about the mystery of the deserted house. His imaginings had gone far beyond mine, and he had finally invented a legend so extravagant that only the boldest imagination could accept it as real, and that with great difficulty. Judge the disappointment of this poor count when, after elaborating his story to the best of his ability, and in the

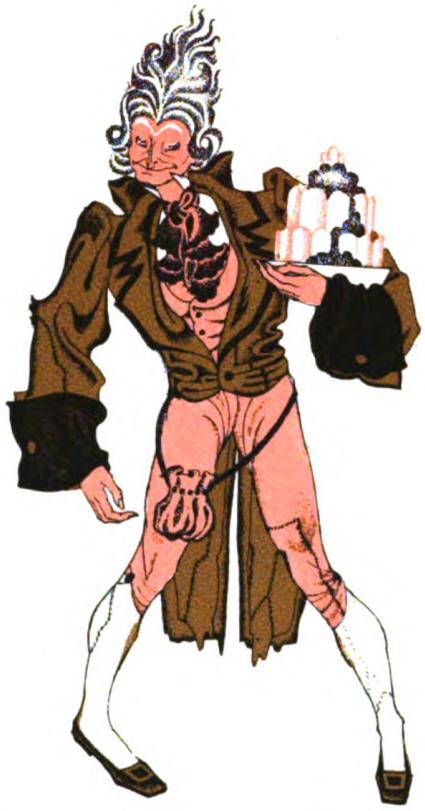
most tragical fashion, he learned that the famous deserted house was simply the workshop of a fashionable pastrycook whose shop was close by! The windows in the ground floor had been walled up to hide the stoves and the boilers from the passers-by; and the windows of the first floor had been stuffed up to preserve the sweetstuffs kept in store there from the sun and from the flies. This accursed piece of information was like an icy douche to me; no more dreams, no more romantics were possible! It was enough to make an emotional and easily excited heart burst with annoyance. However, in spite of the quite commonplace and materialistic explanation I had been given, I could not prevent myself from looking at the quondam deserted house with an inexplicable feeling that gave me a shiver. My spirit once aroused wrathfully rejected that idea of bonbons instead of the ghosts that had so powerfully taken hold of me; and I did not despair of one day seeing the fantastic world resume possession of that dwelling. Chance, too, was very soon to launch me once more in the path of speculation.

A few days after my meeting with Count P. I was passing about noon before the deserted house; I saw a slight movement in a green taffeta curtain that veiled the window next to the confectioner's shop. A white hand, exquisitely shaped, the loveliest finger of which bore a superb diamond, slipped under the curtain; then I saw an alabaster arm, adorned with a gold bracelet. The hand placed a crystal flask on the window-sill, and was withdrawn.

I stayed there staring, nose in air, my feet nailed to the pavement, displaying, it must be believed, so strange an air that in less than ten minutes an innumerable crowd of gapers, and very smart ones, were pressing round about me, and straining their eyes to see what I was looking at; but there was no rosy hand or alabaster arm now; the inquisitive ones made

nothing by their impertinence; this city populace made me think of the ninnies of a certain village who flocked one morning before a house crying miracle because a cotton cap had fallen from the sixth floor without breaking a single thread. It was a thousand to one that the rose-tinged hand and the alabaster arm belonged in lawful property to the confectioner's wife, or his sister, or his daughter, and that the crystal flask prosaically contained gooseberry cordial. See how a disturbed but logical mind contrives to attain its end by the quickest way! It came into my head to go into the confectioner's shop and cunningly extract some confidences from him. As I took my chocolate ice, I said to him: "You have chosen an excellent place for your establishment, and I find it particularly convenient for you to enjoy possession of the next house in which you have set up your kitchens." At these words the honest tradesman looked at me with an air of surprise. "Who on earth," he exclaimed, "could have told you that the next door house was mine? I would certainly like to have it with all my heart; but in spite of all my attempts the affair never came off. In any case, and all things considered, I am not too sorry for it, for there must be a heap of things going on in that house that would embarrass a peaceful tenant to a singular extent." Imagine, my dear reader, how I was excited by these words. I tried to get my man to talk freely; but all I could learn from him was that the deserted house belonged to Countess S., who lived on her estates, and who had not been seen in this residence for a number of years. The house in any event had from time immemorial looked exactly as it did to-day, and no one seemed to trouble to make even the smallest repairs to save it from imminent ruin. Two creatures lived in it, an old manservant and a decrepit dog that never stopped barking. The common folk in the quarter were convinced that the place was haunted by ghosts, for at

certain times, and particularly when Christmas was at hand, there were heard fantastic noises disturbing the silent night; sometimes there was a frantic hubbub. Once the broken voice of an old woman essayed a yelping sort of ghostly song, in which a few French words could just be distinguished, mingled with some entirely unknown language. "Look, sir," said the confectioner, as he brought me through into his back-shop, "look at this iron pipe coming through the party-wall; sometimes in the height of summer I have seen huge volumes of smoke coming out of it, as if there was a regular hell-fire inside the house. More than once I have soundly scolded the old servant, who constantly makes us afraid we are going to have a fire; but the slyboots pretends it's his kitchen stove. The devil alone knows what such a creature eats, for the smoke coming out of his den every now and then spreads a stink that is anything but appetizing."



At that moment the shop-door opened, setting in motion a little bell with a shrill sharp note. The confectioner excused himself on the score of duty calling him to attend to a customer, and as I was coming back in his wake I divined, from a sly sign he made me with his head, the person we had just been discussing. Imagine, dear reader, a little dry fellow with a skin like yellow parchment, a nose sharp as an awl, lips thin as a knife-blade, greeny-grey eyes, a vacant smile, hair powdered

and turned up into a pyramid; his dress was made up of a loose shabby coat, the colour of which had once been a dark brown, his tight breeches fitted over grey stockings, and the individual ended in square-toed shoes with imitation gold buckles. From his sleeves emerged two powerful fists that hardly matched a thin whiney voice asking for preserved oranges, marrons glacés, marchpanes, and other dainties. The confectioner took all pains to serve him; the old man brought out of his pocket a well-worn purse of reddish leather, and took from it one by one a few much-rubbed pieces of money, almost defaced and hardly fit for circulation. He paid, grumbling the while, and snarling and murmuring bits of phrases devoid of meaning. "Are you ill, my good neighbour?" said the shopkeeper. "You seem very melancholy; old age, I suppose, old age." "Hoho! hoho! hoho! who says so?" growled the satanic old fellow angrily, with a pirouette so heavy that the shop windows rattled in their frames; as he came down he nearly crushed the paw of the black dog that accompanied him, which set up a shrill yelp. "Accursed brute!" the old man went on, opening his bag to throw a marzipan to the dog, which shut up to gulp it down, and sat on its tail with the grace of a squirrel. "Good night to you, neighbour," said the old servant when the dog had swallowed his allowance, "good night, neighbour: the poor old boy whom old age has broken wishes you good luck and long life!" And saying this he gripped the shopkeeper's hand with his bony talon, so hard that the other gave a cry of pain. "You see," said the confectioner to me after his client had gone, "that is Count S.'s factotum, the caretaker of the deserted house. Every so often I call on him to put an end to his nocturnal racket; but he has an answer for everything: he is expecting his master's family, he says, but it has been going on now for so many years that

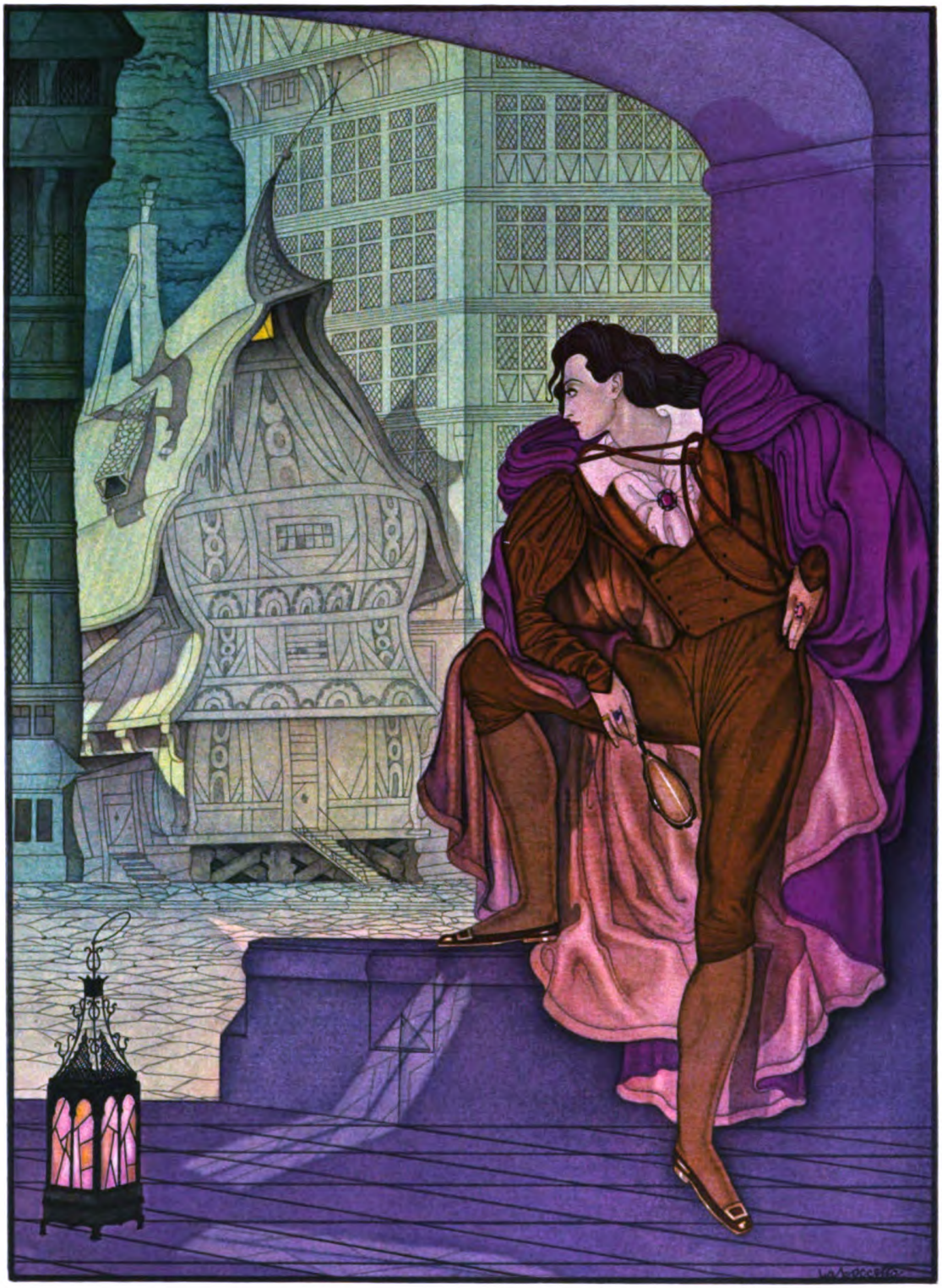
we may believe they will never arrive. That is as much as I know, and I now have the honour to bid you good day, for this is the hour when our fine ladies lay siege to my shop and compete with one another for the sweet things I invent every day for their pretty little mouths."

When I took leave of the confectioner I set my brains to work to discover some natural link between the strange and melancholy song that had been heard in the deserted house and the lovely arm I had caught a glimpse of under the taffeta curtain. I persuaded myself that by some acoustical illusion what the confectioner had taken for the wailing of an old woman was the sweet though plaintive song of a beautiful creature persecuted and held prisoner by some detestable tyrant. I thought again of the stinking smoke issuing from the pipe, of the crystal flask on the window-sill, and from this I concluded, without more ado, that the lovely unknown was the victim of abominable enchantments. The old servant turned, in my mind, into a wizard in disguise; my brain soared into flights of imagination, and diabolical shapes haunted my sleeplessness. By some inexplicable magic the alabaster arm was joined to a snowy shoulder my very eyes seemed to see; then the face of an adorable maiden rose up out of this hallucination white and veiled: it seemed to me that the silvery mist that half concealed from me the features of this angelic being came in endless waves from the crystal flask. For the rescuing of this heavenly creature I devised the maddest plans; I gave myself up to the most chivalrous soliloquies; suddenly it seemed that a skeleton hand clapped me on the shoulder, shattered the magic flask to ten thousand fragments, and the apparition vanished, leaving the dying echo of a sweet plaint behind.

The next day I hastened at an early hour to station myself in front of the deserted house. Venetian blinds had been

installed since the previous day. The house had all the aspect of a tomb. I prowled round the neighbourhood all that day; in the evening I passed it again; the lockless door was ajar, the man in the dark-brown coat was putting his head out through it. I made bold to speak to him. "Does not Councillor Binder live in this house?" I asked, in the politest manner possible. "No," said the old fellow with a suspicious smile; "he has never set a foot in it, and he never will; and everybody knows that he lives a long way from this quarter." As he finished he pulled his head inside and shut the door in my face. I heard him cough, and then move with slow, heavy tread, accompanied by a jangling of keys, and it seemed as though he was going down an internal staircase. I had noticed through the half-open door that the hall was stretched with old ragged tapestries, and furnished with ancient arm-chairs covered in scarlet.

The following day, about noon, some irresistible power brought me back to the same place. I saw, or thought I saw, through the first-floor window, the green taffeta curtain half drawn up; a diamond sparkled, then a ravishing creature, leaning her elbows on the inner sill, held out her arms to me with a beseeching air. Hardly believing myself awake, I looked for some spot whence I could continue my watch without attracting the attention of the crowd. There was a stone bench on the other side of the street directly opposite the house : I went over and sat on it, I raised my eyes, I pondered : it was she indeed, it was the exquisite maiden my imagination had guessed so well, only her posture was unchanging and her wild eyes were not fixed upon me. I was tempted to think that my senses were tricked by a beautiful painting. Suddenly there passed by close to me a hawker of miscellaneous odds and ends who begged me to buy something from him "for luck," as he had sold nothing all day. At first I refused harshly; but



he insisted, spreading out all his stock in front of me, and offered me a little pocket-mirror, which he held in front of me at a certain distance and in such a way that I could clearly see in it the window of the deserted house and the angelic face of the girl. This article tempted me so strongly that I bought it at the first price he quoted, without bargaining. No sooner had I begun to use it on my own account than a kind of catalepsy seemed to glue my eyes on the mirror, with no possible power in me to turn them away; I fancied all at once that I saw the lovely eyes of my unknown divinity interpose between the mirror and me; a feeling of ineffable tenderness made my heart beat. "That is a charming pocket-mirror of yours," said a voice beside me. I awoke as from a dream; great was my astonishment to see myself surrounded by a ring of people, complete strangers to me, who were smiling at me with an equivocal air, as if they thought I was mad. The same voice presently began again. "That is a most wonderful mirror; but might we know what it is that so powerfully holds your attention? Are you by any chance in communication with spirits?" The person who put this question to me appeared to be a gentleman, he was clad with elegant simplicity; his kindly, honourable face inspired trust. I could not refrain from telling him frankly my feelings, and asking him if he had not himself observed this admirable figure. "Upon my word, sir," he answered, "I think my eyes are pretty good, and God send I need not take to spectacles till the last possible moment! I have seen the face you speak of, but it is, I verily believe, a portrait in oils executed by an excellent artist." I hastened to look again, but the curtain had just fallen on the other side of the window. "Good heavens, sir," added my interlocutor, "the old servant of the owner of this barrack, Count S., has just taken down that portrait to dust it, and then he has shut

the window." "Are you quite, quite sure?" I cried in consternation. "As sure as I am that I'm alive," he rejoined; "as you looked at it in your mirror you were deceived by an optical illusion; for my own part, when I was your age and had the same burning fancy I might have been caught too." "But I saw the arm and the hand move!" I exclaimed again in a state of stupefaction hard to describe. "I do not say you didn't," rejoined my neighbour rising with a smile, and fixing upon me a look of polite irony, he went away, adding: "Beware of mirrors of the devil's making. I have the honour to bid you adieu."

Can you conceive, dear reader, what I must have suffered to see myself mystified in this fashion and treated as a visionary idiot? Filled with anger and with shame, I hurried off to shut myself up at home, fully resolved to have nothing more to do with the deserted house.

A few matters of business occupied several days and helped to cool my brain. Only during the night I still at moments felt a feverish super-excitement; but I resisted this without great difficulty, and had even come to make use of the mirror that had played me such a trick, when one morning as I was about to use it in my toilet the glass seemed to be tarnished : I breathed on it and wiped it; when I tried to see myself oh! I still shudder at the memory! I saw instead of my own face that of the mysterious unknown lady of the deserted house. Her eyes were wet with tears, and fixed me with an expression more heart-rending than the first time.

So violent was my emotion that on the following days I did nothing but pass to and fro before the deserted house. The image of the marvellous maiden had taken possession of all my thoughts; I now lived for nothing but the phantom; I came to feel physical, though invisible, ties taking shape between me and this creature of nature unknown. Gradually I fell into

a languid state that sapped at the roots of my life; it was a mixture of pain and pleasure that exhausted me, and I could bring no force to fight the supernatural influence. Fearing I might become mad, and finding myself barely able to drag myself along, I managed with great difficulty to visit a celebrated physician who specialized in the preventive treatment of mental diseases. I told him everything that had happened within me over a certain period, and besought him not to abandon me to a condition worse than death. "Make your mind easy," said the doctor, "your brain is sick, but you know the exact cause of your trouble, and this in itself offers a good chance for a cure. In the first place leave your mirror with me, go back to your home, take up some task that will absorb all your faculties, and when you have worked solidly on it, tire your body out with a long tramp; in the evening see your friends and enjoy yourself with them. To this course of treatment add a generous diet and drink rich wines. Your whole malady lies merely in a fixed idea; if we can once drive it away you will be radically cured."

I hesitated to part with the mirror. The doctor took it, breathed on it, wiped it, and handed it to me, saying : " Do you see anything? " " I see my own features, nothing else, " I replied. " That's good," said the doctor; "well now, try the experiment yourself this time." A cry escaped me, and I became very pale. " 'Tis she! 'tis she!" I exclaimed. The doctor took the mirror again. "For my part," he said, "I see nothing, absolutely nothing; but I must confess that at the moment I looked in it I felt an involuntary shudder. So you must have complete trust in me. If there is a charm we must break it. Would you be so good as to try it again." Once more I breathed on the mirror, while the doctor placed his hand on my spine. The face appeared again; the doctor grew

pale on observing the effect this phenomenon had upon me. He took the mirror from me and locked it away in a box, and sent me away, repeating the advice he had given me; he added that we should see a little later what was to be done.

From that day I gave myself wholly up to a multitude of distractions, and led a noisy existence, well calculated to keep my mind under control by dint of physical weariness. A few evenings later, I found myself in a very lively gathering, and the talk ran on occult sciences and magnetic phenomena, and the most surprising anecdotes were told on this theme. We ran over all the experiments connected with dreams, with hallucinations, with trances, and we asked ourselves most seriously if some will existing outside our life could not in certain conditions exercise a real influence upon our faculties without the help of any material contact. "To admit such a hypothesis," said one of the talkers, "would lead us direct to recognize the truth of the sorceries of the Middle Ages, and all the superstitions long since disposed of by a philosophy enlightened by the progress of the sciences."

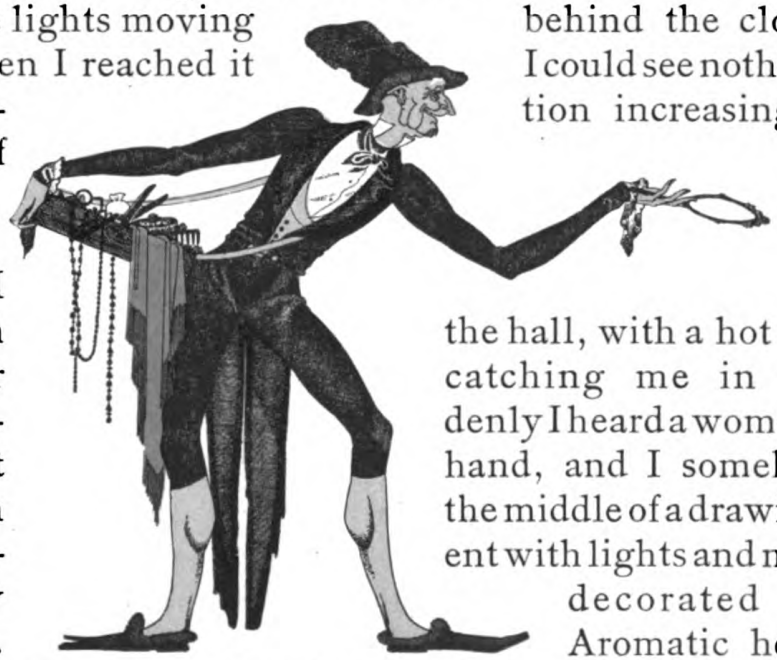
"But," said a young doctor in his turn, "must we, under pretext of wisdom and an enlightened philosophy, deny the existence of ascertained facts? Does not nature comprise mysteries that our feeble organs are powerless to fathom and to understand? Just as a blind man recognizes by the rustling of leaves, or by the murmur of running water, that he is near a wood or a stream, can we not in like manner feel certain things in our existence by means of the invisible communication between certain spirits and our own?" At these words I entered the lists. "You do admit then," said I to the young doctor, "the existence of a non-material principle endowed with a power that in certain conditions our will could not repel?" "Yes," he answered, "that is a fact proved by observations brought

together by the most serious students of magnetism." " In that case," I continued, "we must also acknowledge as possible the existence of demons, maleficent beings, armed with a nature superior to ours." " That would be going too far," replied the doctor, smiling. "I do not believe in possession. My opinion is merely that in the chain of creatures there may exist certain non-material principles capable of exerting an irresistible action on others. But I base this idea solely on simple observations, and I believe that only organisms of feeble constitution or debilitated by some excess in living are liable to undergo this kind of experience." " But," said a gentleman of mature years who had not spoken till then, " if, as you practically agree, there do exist occult powers inimical to our nature, I conclude from this, in accordance with your explanations, that these powers exist solely through the weakness of our minds. If only faculties debilitated from excesses or suffering, or incomplete organs, can be subjected to this physiological phenomenon, I infer that this phenomenon is nothing else but an accidental malady of our mind, and consequently outside of ourselves there do not exist any powers endowed with capability of material action, half-way between God and ourselves. And now here is my own personal opinion with regard to those mental maladies that subject us to passing hallucinations. I think that by reason of its disturbing power over the most delicate fibres of our organism, the passion or rather the disease of love is the one affection of the mind that can bring about disorders in the material life, and present the example of a power exercised in irresistible fashion by one individual over another. I have seen in my own house a case the details of which are a drama in themselves. When the French army was laying waste our provinces under the orders of General Bonaparte, I had billeted in my house a colonel of

the guards of the Viceroy of Naples; he was an officer of uncommon distinction, but his features unmistakably betrayed the ravages of either a deep grief or a recent illness. A few days after his arrival I surprised him in the throes of a paroxysm of distress that filled me with compassion. He was almost choking with sobs that made it impossible for him to speak: he was compelled to throw himself down upon a day-bed; gradually his eyes lost their vision and his limbs their power to move; he became as rigid as a statue. Every now and then he had a spasm of convulsions, but without moving from where he lay. A physician whom I sent for in haste brought him under the magnetic influence, which seemed to afford him a little ease; but he was obliged to discontinue this, for he could not relieve the patient without feeling within himself a sensation of intense suffering impossible to explain. However, on recovering from this attack, the officer, whose confidence he had won by his attentions, told him that in the height of the crises he had seen the image of a woman he had known at Pisa; this phantom had an eye and a look that pierced his very heart, like the burning of a red-hot iron; he escaped this agony only to fall into a kind of lethargy, after which he had unbearable bouts of migraine and complete prostration in every limb, as if he had been indulging in frantic sensuality. At the same time he never told what had passed in the old days between him and the lady of Pisa. The order having been given for his regiment to move to the advance guard, he asked for luncheon to be served while his baggage was being packed. Just as he put a last glass of madeira to his lips he fell dead with a stifled cry. The doctor was of the opinion that he had been struck with apoplexy. Two or three weeks after this accident I received a letter addressed to the colonel. I opened it in the hope of finding some information as to the family of my late guest.

The letter came from Pisa, and contained only the following words, without any signature : ' My poor friend, this day, the seventh of June, at noon, Antonia died imagining that she was embracing your shadow!' It was the very hour and day of the colonel's death. Explain that if you can."

I could not possibly, dear reader, depict the terror that seized me when I suddenly realized the analogy between my own sensations and those the colonel had endured. A cloud passed over my eyes; a ringing in my ears as dismal as the sound of a passing-bell prevented me from hearing the end of the tale; and my imagination at once soaring to delirious heights, I hurried away from the room to go to the deserted house. From afar I seemed to see lights moving behind the closed blinds; but when I reached it I could see nothing. My hallucination increasing, I threw myself against the door, which yielded, and I found myself in the hall, with a hot and acrid vapour catching me in the throat. Suddenly I heard a woman's cry close at hand, and I somehow found myself in the middle of a drawing-room resplendent with lights and most sumptuously decorated in mediæval style. Aromatic herbs in perfume-burners filled the air with divine fragrances that floated up to the vaulted roof in azure clouds. "O welcome, welcome, welcome, my betrothed, for now is the hour for love!" said the same woman's voice I had just heard; and only at that moment did I perceive a young woman in bridal attire



coming towards me with open arms; when I looked at her closer, I saw the face was yellow and dreadfully contorted by insanity. I fell back in terror, but the woman still advanced, and I then fancied I could see that this hideous face was only a crape mask behind which the enchanting features of my ideal might be divined. Already her hands were touching mine, when she fell moaning on the floor, and I heard behind a growl, "Hu, hu! to bed, my pretty, or beware of the stick!" and turning round I saw the old servant, he of the dark-brown coat, who was making long birch twigs whistle in the air and about to fall upon the poor woman lying on the ground in floods of tears. I sprang forward to stay his arm; but throwing me off with a strength I had not expected from him, he contented himself with saying, "Eh! do you not see that but for me this madwoman would have strangled you! Away, away from here quicker than you came in!"

At these words my vertigo seized me once more, and I rushed from the drawing-room feeling for some way out of this fatal house. I heard the shrieks of the madwoman mingling with the sound of the blows the old man was showering on her. I was turning back to rescue her, when the ground gave way under me and I fell from step to step down a stair, falling through a door at the bottom. From the tumbled bed and the dark-brown coat thrown over a chair, I guessed this was the lair that harboured the servant. I had no sooner collected my senses when I heard heavy steps shaking the stairs again. It was the old man returning from his nocturnal execution. "Oh, sir," he cried, throwing himself at my feet, "whoever you are, I conjure you to preserve absolute silence on everything you have seen here; the slightest indiscretion would ruin me, a poor old man who could never know where to turn to earn his bread for the rest of his days. The madwoman has been soundly corrected, and I have tied her down in her bed. Every-

thing is quiet now. So do you also go and take your rest at home, my good gentleman! Sleep well, and try to forget this night."

When he had said this, the old man took a candle, and inviting me to go in front, took me on my feet up the stairs I had gone down on my back, and pushed me out of the house, bolting the door behind me. I hurried off home in a state of stupor hard to describe, and dreaming over the extraordinary encounter I had just been through; it needed almost supernatural efforts to put from my mind the fatal hallucinations the accursed magic mirror had engendered in it.

Some time after, I met Count P. in a drawing-room; he took me aside and told me laughingly that he was on the track of the mysteries of the deserted house. The arrival of a servant to announce supper did not allow time to listen to the account he was about to give me. I gave my hand to a young lady to bring her to the supper-room with the proper ceremony observed in good society. Judge of my surprise when on fixing my eyes on her features I recognized the face of the ideal shown me by my mirror! When I told her my idea that I had met her somewhere she replied easily that nothing was less likely, as she had just arrived in W. for the first time in her life. She accompanied her reply with so charming a look that I was as though electrified. We talked long together, and I introduced into our conversation a certain boldness of expression that nevertheless did not seem to displease her, and on her side she displayed an exquisite wit. When the moment came for champagne I went to fill her glass; but the English crystal, knocked by inadvertence, gave out a high, melancholy note. At once I saw my pretty neighbour's brow turn to a deathly pallor, and I seemed to hear the shrill falsetto of the mysterious old woman of the deserted house. During the course of the evening I watched for an opportunity to join Count P.

From him I learned that the beautiful lady who had so much occupied my attention was Countess Edwina S., and that her aunt was shut away as insane in the deserted house. That very day mother and daughter had visited the unhappy recluse. The old servant having been suddenly smitten with a serious illness, the ladies had admitted their sad secret to Doctor K., who was to employ his celebrated skill in an attempt to cure the poor woman. At that moment Doctor K., who was passing close beside us, and whom I had myself consulted as to what remedies might combat my hallucinations, stopped to inquire after my health, and by my importunate questions I got from him some details of the story of the woman imprisoned in the deserted house.

" Angelika Countess of Z.", said the doctor, " was at thirty in the full splendour of her beauty, when Count S., several years her junior, fell desperately in love with her, and set everything at work to get himself accepted by her family. But on a visit he paid to the Castle of Z. to ask for the object of his passion in marriage he met Gabrielle, Angelika's sister. This encounter utterly changed his feelings and altered his plans immediately. From that moment Angelika lost all the charms with which she had at first seemed to him to be endowed, and, on the other hand, Gabrielle became lovelier in his eyes with everything her sister no longer possessed. Gabrielle was asked for in marriage instead of Angelika. The poor forsaken one made no complaint; her pride made her look on the affair from a very consoling angle. ' It is not this young spark who is jilting me,' she said to herself, ' it is I who do not want him any longer.' Still, she had suddenly ceased to show herself in society, and she was now rarely to be met with save in the darkest and least frequented part of her father's park.

" One day the servants of the Castle of Z. were returning

from hunting down a horde of thieving gipsies who for some time had been devastating the countryside with pillage and burning; they brought back into the courtyard of the manor a cartful of carefully trussed-up prisoners. Among these bandits the most remarkable countenance was that of a scrawny, decrepit old woman, bundled up rather than clothed in scarlet tatters, who as she stood up in the cart shouted imperiously that she wished to get down. The cords that bound her were untied, and she was allowed to descend. Count von Z., informed of the capture of the band, had left his apartments, and was busy arranging the cellars of the castle to serve as prisons for the marauders fate had thrown into his hands, when suddenly Countess Angelika rushed all dishevelled into the courtyard, and falling on her knees sobbing and imploring, besought pardon for the gipsies; she drew a stiletto from her dress and declared that she would kill herself then and there if the least harm was done to those poor people whose innocence she asseverated. 'Bravo, my lovely,' cried the old woman, 'I knew that you would be an advocate for us whose pleadings would be heard on our behalf!' And as Angelika, exhausted by this violent outburst, had fallen in a swoon, the old woman broke the bonds that still held her, and threw herself on her knees beside her, lavishing the most eager attentions upon her. She took from her satchel a flask filled with a liquor in which there seemed to swim a golden fish; directly this flask was laid on Angelika's bosom the beautiful girl opened her eyes, sprang up as though a new life ran in her veins, and after closely embracing the old gipsy pulled her headlong after her into the castle. Count von Z., who had been joined by his wife and his daughter Gabrielle, looked on at this strange scene with a kind of surprise and fear mixed. The gipsies had remained impassive. They were locked away in the underground cells of the castle.

"The next day the council of justice was assembled, and the gipsies were brought before it and subjected to a severe examination; then Count von Z. himself formally declared that he recognized them as innocent of all misdeeds and all brigandage committed on his domain. They were restored to liberty and passports were granted them to continue their travels. As for the old woman in the scarlet rags, she had vanished, and no one knew whither she had gone. Everyone had his own opinion and his own conjectures upon the Count's behaviour. It was said that the leader of the gipsies had had a long interview with the Count by night, in which extraordinary revelations were exchanged.

"Meantime Gabrielle's marriage was about to be celebrated. On the eve of the day fixed for the ceremony Angelika had all her possessions put on a coach and left the castle, accompanied in her flight by a single woman who was said to look very much like a gipsy. Count von Z., to avoid scandal, gave this flight a plausible motive, announcing that his daughter, distressed by a marriage that aroused her jealousy, had asked him to give her a little house in W.; she had declared that she wished to retire to it and end her days in complete solitude. After the wedding Count S. went with his bride to a domain at D., where for a year they enjoyed the most perfect felicity; suddenly the Count's health broke down for no cause that could be divined; an internal complaint seemed to eat away his vital organs; he refused all attention, and his wife could not get from him any confession of the hidden malady under which he was becoming exhausted with languor. At length after long resistance he gave way to the doctors, who prescribed a journey to distract his mind. He went to Pisa. Gabrielle, who was on the point of giving birth to a child, could not accompany him. The little girl she brought into the world disappeared shortly

after the birth without a trace, and without its being possible to fix suspicion for the kidnapping on anyone whomsoever. The mother's agony was pitiable, and to add to her distress there arrived a message from her father, Count von Z., informing her that Count S., instead of being at Pisa, had just died at W., in the little lonely house to which Angelika had retired; and Angelika had fallen into a fearful condition of dementia, against which the physicians declared themselves powerless.

"Poor Gabrielle went home to her father. One night as she lay brooding over the twofold loss of her husband and her child the sound of sobbing fell upon her ears. She listened: the feeble sound seemed to come from a room adjoining her bedchamber; she rose up disquieted, took a night-light, and softly opened the door. What did she behold! the gipsy of the scarlet rags sitting on the floor, her eye dull and staring; in her arms leapt a baby uttering tiny cries. A mother's instinct is seldom at fault. Countess Gabrielle knew her child at once; she darted forward and seized the babe from the old savage's arms; the other tried to resist, but the violent effort finally broke what little strength was left to her, and she fell back heavily to rise no more. The Countess uttered cries of affright. The footmen were on the alert, everybody ran up, but there was nothing left but a corpse to be laid in earth. Count von Z. betook himself to the little house in W. to question Angelika with regard to the babe lost and found again. In her father's presence the poor madwoman seemed to recover a few moments of sanity; but presently the malady reasserted its fatal sway. Angelika began to wander, her features became distorted and assumed a horrible likeness to the face of the old gipsy. She wept and sobbed; then in hoarse and frantic accents she begged everyone to go away and leave her alone.

"The unhappy father gives the world to understand that the

madwoman is shut up in one of his castles; but the truth is that Angelika has refused to leave her retreat; she lives alone in the little house where Count S. came to die beside her. The secret of what took place at the last between those two has remained undivulged and impenetrable.

" Count von Z. is dead. Gabrielle has come with Edwina to W. to settle up the family affairs. As for the recluse of the deserted house, she is at the brutal discretion of the old serving-man whom solitude has turned into a maniac."

Doctor K. ended his story by saying that my unexpected presence in the deserted house had produced on Angelika's blurred senses a shock the result of which might very well restore equilibrium to her faculties. In any case, the deliciously lovely image I had seen reflected in my pocket-mirror was that of Edwina, who at the moment of my inquisitive watching was visiting Angelika's retreat. A few days after these happenings, which had so nearly unbalanced my brain, feelings of blackest melancholy forced me to give up residing in W. for a long period. And this strange influence was not entirely dissipated until after the death of the poor mad lady.

THE LOST REFLECTION

I

I was delirious with fever: the cold of death pierced my very heart, and heedless of the fury of the storm I ran through the streets hatless and cloakless like one escaped from a madhouse. The weathercocks screaked on the roof-tops like scared owls, and the gusts of the night wind followed one another through the air like the distant sound of the eternal wheels that register the fall of the years into the gulf of time. And yet this was the eve of the very merry festival of the New Year.

Now every year the devil chooses just this moment to play me some trick of his own peculiar fashion. Here is one out of a thousand. The counsellor of justice of our town is in the habit of giving a brilliant soirée to welcome the coming of

each new year. When I entered the ante-room the counsellor hastened to meet me and stood in my way. "My dear friend," he said with a knowing smile, "you have no idea what a delightful surprise awaits you to-night!" So saying he took me by the hand and led me into the drawing-room. Among a group of exquisitely elegant ladies sitting on sofas drawn up in a circle about the fireplace in which a bright fire glowed and sparkled, I perceived HER adored features! It was SHE, she whom I had not seen for several years! By what miracle was she brought back to me? At the sight of her I stood motionless and dumb. "Now then!" said the counsellor, nudging me forward, "now then!" I went on mechanically. "Good God," I said, "is it really you, Julia?" At these words of mine she stood up and said in a cold voice : "I am delighted to see you here; you seem to be in excellent health." Then sitting down again she leaned to her neighbour without further notice of me, and said with an affected air : "Dear lady, are we to expect a fine show in the theatre next week?"

I was completely taken aback. Fear of ridicule completed my discomfiture. Bowing to the ladies to cover my speedy retreat, I stepped back into the counsellor, who was putting his cup of tea to his lips; the collision sent the tea splashing over his lace jabot and pleated cuffs. There was a great deal of laughter at my clumsiness. And yet I plucked up countenance to struggle against fate; Julia alone had not laughed, and her look dwelt on me with an expression that gave me a gleam of hope once more.

A few moments after, she rose to move into another drawing-room, where an improvisatore was entertaining the company. Julia's white dress admirably set off the charm of her figure, the dazzling whiteness of her snowy shoulders, her elegant shape. She was endowed with irresistible attractions; her refinement of carriage and pose made her resemble one of Mieris's

virgins. Before entering the adjoining room she turned towards me; and it seemed to me that her face, so perfectly, so angelically lovely, fell into a slight expression of irony. I was seized by an inexpressible sense of uneasiness. However, a few minutes later Julia was beside me. "I should be glad," she said to me in a low voice and the suavest of tones, "if you would take your place at the harpsichord and give us one of those tender tunes I once loved so much." As I was about to reply with all the intoxication engendered by our memories, several persons came between us and we were separated. For a long time I made every effort to resume our *tête-à-tête*, but could not succeed : it almost looked as if Julia for her part was taking all possible precautions to avoid me. Presently, however, no one was left between us but the footman whose office it was to offer refreshments. Julia took a finely engraved glass filled with a delicious sherbet and gave it to me, saying: "My friend, do you accept it from my hand with as much pleasure as you would have felt in the old days?" "O Julia! Julia!" I cried, caressing with my lips her alabaster fingers, whose touch sent an electric shudder through my veins, "O Julia!" I could not add another word; a mist veiled my sight, everything whirled round me, I lost my sense of hearing; when I recovered I found myself, to my a stonishment, half reclining on a sofa in a delicately perfumed boudoir, and Julia, leaning above me, was looking at me with love as in the old days. "Oh!" I said to her, trying to clasp her to my heart, "I have found you once more, for ever, have I not, my lovely angel of love and poesy! Your life is mine, and nothing shall part us evermore!"

At this moment a hideous face above long spider legs, with toad's eyes bulging out of the forehead, suddenly opened the door of the boudoir, crying in a sort of thin yelp, "Where the devil has my wife got to?"

Julia escaped from the room in terror. Julia married! Julia lost to me for ever!

I flung out of that accursed house like a madman, and ran breathlessly through the fury of the storm, hatless and cloakless. The weathercocks screaked on the roof-tops like frightened owls, and the gusts of the night wind, which lashed the snow into wild eddies in the air, were like demon voices mocking my fever and my despair.

II

Rushing from street to street like a wild horse, I came over against the Huntsmen tavern. A group of boon companions was coming away from it with lively songs and loud bursts of laughter. Parched with a violent thirst, I went into the tavern, and dropped on a bench quite blown and breathless.

"What can we serve you, sir?" said the landlord, taking off his foxskin cap. "A pot of beer and some tobacco!" I exclaimed. Thanks to the beverage beloved by our good Germans, I speedily found myself in such a state of inert satisfaction that the devil, having bewitched me all night, thought he would do well to put off till the morrow the next trick he was getting ready to play me.

My ball costume, taken in conjunction with my strange looks, must have looked very extraordinary to my neighbours. The landlord was about to cross-question me, when a strong hand knocked on the shutters of the tavern and a voice called out, "Open, open, it is I!"

No sooner was the door half opened, for it was long past the usual hours, than a tall individual, who seemed nothing but skin and bone, slipped into the room, taking pains, it seemed, to walk with his back against the wall. He came and sat down opposite me. The landlord placed two candlesticks on

the table. The new-comer had a distinguished but most melancholy countenance. Like me, he called for a pot of beer and a pipe of tobacco; then he seemed to bury himself fathoms deep in his own thoughts, while sending out vast clouds of smoke, which mingling with ours speedily enveloped us all in an atmosphere of narcotic fog. I examined him through this fog without saying a word. His black hair, parted on the forehead, fell in curls such as are seen in the heads of Rubens. He wore a tight-fitting frock-coat with frogs, and, a thing that surprised me, he had pulled big fur slippers over his riding-boots. When he had finished his pipe he took out of a tin case a great quantity of plants, which he spread out one after the other with obvious satisfaction. To make conversation, I complimented him on his apparent erudition in botany. He smiled queerly and replied, "These herbs you see have no real value except rarity. I plucked them myself on the slopes and on the summit of Chimborazo."

As I was about to put another question to him someone knocked again at the door of the tavern. The landlord went and opened, and a voice called from without, "Be so kind as to cover up your mirror." "Ah!" said the landlord, "General Suvarov is very late to-night." At the same moment a little dry fellow, wrapped up in the folds of a brown cloak, came with a little sparrow walk into the tavern, and sat down between me and the traveller from Chimborazo. "How cold it is outside," he said, "and how smoky inside here! I should dearly love a pinch of snuff." I made haste to offer him a steel snuff-box polished like a mirror, the gift of a very dear friend. No sooner had the little man set eyes on it than he started back, and thrust it away from him exclaiming, "The devil fly away with your accursed looking-glass!" I stared at him stupefied; all his features were discomposed, and he was pale as

a corpse. I did not dare to ask him why he was so upset; something fantastic and infernal seemed to me to cling about this little brown man. I turned to my neighbour from Chimborazo, and we went on with our botanical conversation. While we talked I stole an occasional look, with some anxiety, at the little man, and an icy shiver ran through all my veins to see his face changing every minute.

From one thing to another, and no doubt arising from our strange meeting, the conversation turned on the metaphysics of happiness. "Upon my soul," said the man from Chimborazo, "my whole philosophy resolves itself into setting patience up against the thousand and one vexations with which life is strewn. Every day, and in every place, we leave some shred of our poor existence on the thorns of some misadventure no human prudence could have preserved us from." "By Jove, my dear master," I rejoined, "I am an undeniable example of the truth of what you are saying; for this very night by a most disagreeable adventure I have lost my hat and my cloak, which have remained hanging on a peg in the cloak-room at Counsellor Blank's." At these words I saw my two neighbours shudder, as if they had both had a violent shock. The little brown man shot a dark look at me in which there was something truly diabolical. He sprang up on a chair and carefully adjusted the red serge curtain with which the landlord had covered up the tavern plate-glass mirror, while the gentleman from Chimborazo snuffed the candles in such a way that they made no shadows whatever. The conversation resumed with some difficulty, and turned this time on the work of a young painter greatly in vogue at the moment. "He catches a likeness with admirable art," said the tall dry man; "his portraits lack nothing but speech; they are so full of life that you might think them a reflection taken out of a mirror."

"What a stupid thing to say!" exclaimed the little brown man, throwing himself about in his chair. "How can anyone imagine that an image reflected in a mirror could be taken away from it? By whom, I ask you, unless the devil took a hand? Yes, yes, master professor, you great judge of matters artistic, just you make me touch with my finger a reflection taken out of any mirror you please, and I will cut you a caper a hundred feet in the air on the spot!" The tall dry one rose up and went over to the little brown man. "Easy! my friend," he said; "don't be so crusty, or you will be made to cut a caper the length of the stair. Egad, you do well to be proud! Your face would certainly look mighty funny in a mirror." Before he had finished his sentence the little brown man was rolling about on his seat in the throes or a convulsion of laughter, crying, "Ha, ha, ha! my poor comrade, what matter about my reflection? At any rate I have a shadow that nobody has stolen from me!" So saying he went off cavorting and flung himself out of the tavern. The tall one had fallen back on his seat as though in a state of collapse. "What is the matter, dear sir?" said I, in a tone full of pity. "The matter!" he replied, sobbing, "the matter! Alas! that little man you saw there a moment ago is a wicked sorcerer who has just pursued me into the last refuge where I imagined I might forget my horrible misfortune of having lost my... Adieu, sir, adieu!"

And the stranger got up and swiftly reached the door, passing all the way through the whole tavern without casting the smallest shadow on the walls. "Peter Schlemihl! Peter Schlemihl!" I called out as I ran after him, for I had just recognized that famous victim of a curse; but he had already gone too far, and disappeared in the darkness.

When I wished to come back to my place, the landlord thrust me outside by the shoulders and banged the door in my

face, saying, "The good God preserve my house from such ghosts! I would as soon pour out a drink for the devil in person!"

III

Mr Matthew is my very dear friend, and his porter, the best Cerberus I know of, opened to me at the very first tinkle of the bell I pulled at the door of the Golden Eagle. I told him in a word or two the little mishaps of my evening; as the key of my room was in the pocket of my cloak at the counsellor's, he opened another room for me, placed a candlestick in it, and withdrew discreetly, wishing me a good night. In this room there was a great mirror covered with a curtain. I put the lights in front of the mirror, and drew the curtain aside that I might contemplate my rueful countenance. Directly I fixed my eyes on my image I seemed to see a vague, floating face come out from the background in the mirror and move forward towards me. Little by little this figure became more distinct, and presently I recognized the adored features of Julia. I could not suppress a cry of surprise and love; I stretched out my arms towards this apparition and called "Julia! Julia!"

Immediately I heard at my back a prolonged sigh. I went quickly to the far end of the room and sharply pulled the bed-curtains apart, and perceived the little man in the brown cloak, as fast asleep as a dormouse. From his breast, heaving in a heavy nightmare, there came at intervals a woman's name. "Giulietta! Giulietta!" he murmured. A shiver ran through me; but, plucking up my courage, I shook the little man violently and cried "Look here, my friend, what devil bundled you into my bed? If you please, go and find a shelter somewhere else." The little man stretched all his limbs, woke up slowly, and said to me, "Ah! thank you, my dear sir; you have

brought me out of a bad dream." As he said this he seemed to me so sad and so cast down that I took pity on him; I realized also that the porter might very well by mistake have opened a room for me that had been already engaged, and that I would be in the wrong if I disturbed the rest of its occupant.

"Sir," said the little man, sitting up with his elbow on the pillow, "my behaviour in the tavern must have seemed very absurd to you; how can I help it? I am labouring under a cruel influence that drives me to commit a host of transgressions in good manners." "Oh, my dear sir," I rejoined, "I am in exactly the same case; and to-night when I saw Julia again—" "Julia! did you say?" cried the little man, all his features changed. "Ah! sir, I implore you, let me sleep, and be so good as to cover over that mirror!" As he spoke the little brown man hid his face in the folds of his pillow. "But, my dear sir," I replied, raising my voice to compel him to listen to me, "why does that name have such a painful effect upon you? I hope you will confide in me so far when, after covering up the mirror at your request, I have taken my place in bed beside you; for in all good earnest it is time for repose."

The little man sat bolt upright as if moved by a spring. "So you really want to know the secret of my miserable life? Well then, this is my story." He got out of bed, bundled himself up in a kind of dressing-gown, and was going over to the fireplace, but the veil had not yet been drawn again over the mirror, and his eyes fixed themselves on it. What a surprise! Standing beside him I could see no reflection of him alongside my own! The little man turned his eyes to me filled with agony and distress. Sobbing he said, "I am more to be pitied than Peter Schlemihl. Schlemihl sold his shadow: it was his own fault, his own doing, and besides, he had his price. But I, dear sir, I had given my reflection for love, to

HER, to Giulietta! Alas, alas!" And he ran and threw himself on the bed with stifled groans.

Opposing sensations moved in my mind before so grotesquely sorrowful a sight. I was still standing glued to the spot like a regular automaton, when I heard my interlocutor snoring like an organ-pipe; the temptation to follow his example seized me so strongly that ten minutes after I was sleeping the sleep of the just on the half of the bed he gave up to me.

An hour before the dawn I was awakened by a very bright light. Opening my eyes I perceived the little brown man half clad, exceedingly busy writing by the light of two candelabra. His fantastic appearance made me dizzy; I fell into a kind of hallucination: I was at the counsellor's, sitting on the sofa with Julia, as I had been the night before. The counsellor seemed to be a sugar doll among bushes laden with fruit and bunches of roses. Julia was offering me, like the previous night, a crystal glass from which there leaped little bluish flames with a phosphorescent gleam; someone plucked at me from behind; it was no one else but the little brown man, who whispered in my ear, "Don't drink! don't drink!" "What are you afraid of?" said Julia. "Are you not altogether mine, *you and your shadow?*" I took the glass from her hands; I was at point to drink, when the little brown man jumped on my shoulder, turned into a squirrel, repeating "Don't drink! don't drink!" And with his fluttering tail he tried to extinguish the little bluish flames. Julia spoke again. "Why," she said, "do you refuse to take this glass, my beloved? This pure little flame you see shining on its surface is the emblem of our first kiss!" The sound of her sweet voice transported me; I was about to clasp that idolized woman to my heart, when Peter Schlemihl suddenly passed between us and started to laugh in our faces. At the same moment all the persons who filled the counsellor's

drawing-room seemed to me to be turned into sugar figures: they all began to hop and skip, buzzing like bees the while, and clambering on me on every side like boys on a greasy pole.

I woke up. It was broad daylight, noon was striking from the church tower, and rubbing my eyes I asked myself if my nocturnal apparitions were not just a nightmare, when the servant came in with my chocolate, and told me that the stranger who had shared my room and my bed had gone at daybreak, asking that his compliments should be presented to me.

Here is what this strange individual had written while I slept, and had left behind on the table, perhaps inadvertently.

IV

One day Erasmus Spicker found himself in the seventh heaven; for the first time in his life he was in a position to travel. He filled a leather belt with gold pieces, and got into a berlin to go and visit romantic Italy. His dear wife bade him adieu with tears, and held up little Rasmus a score of times to the carriage window for his affectionate father to kiss him good-bye. Then above all things she enjoined on her dear husband not to lose the travelling-cap she had knitted for him with her own hands.

Erasmus arrived in Florence, where he found several of his countrymen in the midst of every kind of voluptuous delight. He threw himself into their orgies, and shared all their adventures. It happened one night that all these boon companions had arranged to meet at a villa in the outskirts of the city for a gala entertainment. Each one, with the sole exception of Erasmus, had brought his mistress. The men were wearing the national costume of old Germany, the women were arrayed in all their richest and freshest. They ate and drank and sang the most delightful Italian ballads. The blossoming orange-

trees flung their fragrance into the air; the night breeze wafted far away the echoes of languorous harmony; the guests' delight rose to the pitch of ecstasy.

Suddenly Frederick, the wildest gallant of the band, rose to his feet; in one arm he clasped and held up his mistress by the waist, with the other hand he raised above his head his glass filled to the brim with golden wine. "O my friends," he cried, "in what corner of the whole globe better than this could we find all that makes life worth living? Women of Italy, if love had not existed from the very cradle of the world, you would have invented it! But you, Erasmus, why have you come here alone? Why do you alone not share in our gay intoxication? Why sadden us with your melancholy?"

"What am I to say to you, my friends?" replied Erasmus. "My heart does not share your joys, because my spirit does not place happiness in the intoxication of the senses. And besides, I have left behind in our own country a faithful wife whose trust I must not betray. You are all free, but I have a family I must needs think of all the time."

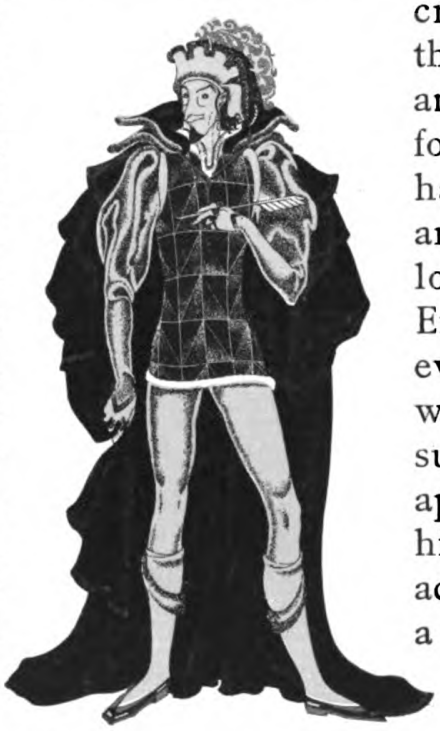
The young people jested at Erasmus's sobersidedness; his years seemed as yet little suited to the cares of a household. Frederick's mistress made them translate Spicker's words into Italian, then she said with a smile: "Here is a sage whose soul Giulietta might make him lose!" As she said this, a woman of marvellous beauty was seen coming into the festal room. She might have been a virgin by Rubens or Mieris.

"Giulietta!" cried the girls.

The newcomer darted a lively, knowing look over the guests. "Gallant Germans," she said, "will you make room for me at your gay banquet? And indeed there is one of you who seems to me to be lonely and sad : I shall make it my task to cheer him up!" And placing herself with enchanting coquetry

beside Erasmus, by her airs and graces she made all the young men jealous of Spicker's good fortune.

At the sight of Giulietta Erasmus had felt a devouring fire shoot through his veins. When he found her so close to him the intoxication of desire inflamed his imagination. The lovely Italian rose, took a goblet, and offered it to him. He drained the treacherous drink at a draught, and fell at the feet of the siren. "Oh!" he cried, "'tis thou, thou alone in all the world that art worthy of love, angel of heaven! 'Tis thou I sought for in my young man's dreams! I have found thee now at last, my soul and my God!"



The young people looked at one another; some thought Erasmus had gone mad; no one had ever seen him like this before. The whole night went by in songs of pleasure and vows of love. When dawn appeared each of the guests escorted his mistress away. Erasmus wished to accompany Giulietta, but she turned a deaf ear to all his pleadings, and confined herself to indicating a house where he could see her again. Poor Spicker was obliged to make his lone way home, escorted by a little page with a torch. As he was coming to his own street the servant put out the torch against the pavement, because day was already treading on the heels of dawn. All at once a tall dry man with a hooked nose and a sardonic mien, clad in a crimson doublet with steel buttons, appeared in front of Erasmus and said, laughing, in a bleating voice: "Aha, Master Spicker, have we escaped out of some old

book of engravings with that costume of the olden times, that plumed bonnet and that rapier? Do you want the street urchins to run hooting after you? You had best get back quickly into your book." "Eh! what has my costume to do with you?" cried Erasmus; and elbowing the rascal who was thus teasing him he tried to pass him by, but the man in red stopped him and said in very loud tones "Gently, my master, do not go so fast, and don't push people; this is not the hour to visit the fair Giulietta!" "Giulietta!" The red blood rose to Erasmus's brow; he tried to seize this fellow by the throat to choke him; the other twirled about and disappeared like a lightning flash. "Do not trouble about this adventure, sir," said the footboy; "you have just encountered the marvellous doctor of Florence, Signor Dapertutto.

The same day Erasmus betook himself to the place indicated by Giulietta. The fair Italian received him with a still more delicate and subtle coquetry than the previous night. She took a pleasure in observing the progress of Erasmus's passion; but she kept him at a respectful distance, and countered all his efforts with imperturbable coolness. This resistance merely served as bellows and fan to his mad love. He ceased to see his friends in order to devote all his time to Giulietta.

One day Frederick met him, and took hold of his arm, saying: "My poor Spicker, do you know that you have fallen into a deadly snare? How is it you have not already realized that Giulietta is a light lady, and to crown everything, the most abandoned of all that ever plucked a lover? The hottest tales in the world are told about her. Can you for such a creature turn your back on your friends, and forget your wife and your child?" At these words Erasmus realized his fault; he hid his face in his hands and wept bitterly.

"Come, Spicker," said Frederick, "let us leave Florence, this city of danger; come and let us go home to our own good

country!" "Yes," said Erasmus, "let us go this very day!"

As Frederick was taking his friend away, Signor Dapertutto passed by close to Erasmus and laughed in his face, crying: "Good luck, my young friend; but run, run! Giulietta is dying of impatience and love, while she blames your neglect!" Erasmus stopped dead. "Begad," said Frederick, "this Doctor Dapertutto is a charlatan who well deserves chastisement: no one has ever seen such an insolent monkey since he has been poisoning the famous Giulietta with his fashionable pills." "Giulietta?" cried Erasmus. "What! does this puppy visit Giulietta?"

The two friends arrived under the divinity's balcony. A soft voice called Erasmus, he broke violently away from Frederick's arm and darted into the house. "Our poor friend Spicker is completely done for," said Frederick to himself as he went home.

That same day a brilliant entertainment gathered together all the fashionables of Florence, and Giulietta made Erasmus accompany her. There they met a very ugly little Italian who paid Giulietta the most determined and assiduous court. Erasmus, wounded by his beautiful companion's coquetry, fell into a fit of jealousy, and left the company suddenly. Missing him, Giulietta went in search of him, and finding him in a lonely alley down in the gardens, reproached him softly, and winding her snowy arms about his neck set a fiery kiss on his lips. Erasmus lost his head; he was on the point of forgetting the whole universe had not Giulietta recalled him to himself with a look of coldness and severity that threw him into despair. They both went back to the drawing-room.

The young Italian had seen Giulietta's manœuvre. Jealousy pricking him in his turn, he revenged himself by a running fire of sarcasms against the Germans. Erasmus went up to him. "Sir," he said, "I beg you to put an end to your

impertinences, otherwise I shall throw you out of the window." The Italian in a fury drew a stiletto. Spicker seized him and flung him so violently to the ground that the wretched fellow died with his forehead crushed in. Everybody threw themselves on Erasmus, who, in an agony of horror at the murder he had just committed, grew pale, staggered, and swooned. When he came to himself he was lying on a little day-bed in a boudoir in a voluptuous half-light. Giulietta was holding him in her arms. "Oh! wicked German," she said in accents of gentle reproach, "what uneasiness you have brought upon me! there is no safety for you in Florence, or in the whole of Italy, now; you must go and leave me for ever and ever." "No," replied Spicker, "I would rather die here; is it not death to live away from you?" Suddenly he seemed to hear a far-off voice calling him sadly: it was the voice of his dear wife. Erasmus shivered; he was ashamed of himself: the words died out on his lips—but a kiss from Giulietta's awoke his intoxication afresh. "Adored angel!" he cried, "I cannot sever myself from you: why can we not be united from this hour by undying bonds?"

At that moment two candelabra laden with wax tapers were lighting up a magnificent Venetian mirror at the other end of the boudoir. "My friend," said Giulietta, pressing Erasmus to her bosom, "what you wish is impossible! But at the least leave me your *reflection,* my beloved, that I may not remain for ever bereft of you wholly." "My reflection?" cried Erasmus. And at the same time he drew Giulietta in front of the mirror, which reproduced their amorous posture. "How could you keep my reflection?" "Dear friend," said Giulietta, "this fugitive appearance that we call a reflection, and which all polished surfaces give, can be detached from the person and belong to the being you love best on earth. Will you refuse

me this souvenir? Would you deprive me of the poor pledge that might remind me of our too-fleeting happiness?" "Yours, yours, now and for ever!" cried Erasmus in a frenzied delirium of love. "Take my reflection, and may no power of heaven or hell avail to take it from you!" These words exhausted his strength; he swooned in the embraces of the lovely Italian; and it seemed to him that his image detached itself from his *ego,* his individuality, that it joined itself closely to that of Giulietta, which held out its arms to it, and both fled away into the perspective of the mirror and were lost in a strange fantastic mist. A mysterious terror deprived him almost of his senses; for a moment he fancied he saw himself alone; and fumbling for a way out through an infernal darkness, full of satanic threatening voices, he staggered down a stair that seemed ready to crumble under his feet. When he was in the street, a few paces from Giulietta's house, he was seized and gagged and thrown into a carriage that set off at a gallop. There was a man at Erasmus's side, who said: "Do not be afraid, dear sir, Signora Giulietta has placed you in my charge so that I may bring you safe out of Italian territory. It is vexing for you to have to leave so lovely a creature; if you were willing to give yourself up to me unreservedly, I would engage to keep you clear of the vengeance of your enemies and the inquiries of the law, and you could remain quite at your ease beside your beloved."

This proposal made Erasmus tremble with eagerness. "I accept," he said to his guide; "but by what methods?..." "Do not let that trouble you," replied the unknown. "When day comes, you will look at yourself very attentively and for a long time in a mirror; during this time I shall carry out certain operations with your reflection; and then you shall judge for yourself of the efficacy of my methods." "God of heaven! what a dreadful misfortune!" exclaimed Erasmus. "What misfortune

are you talking about?" said the unknown. "Alas!" answered Erasmus, "I have—I have left—" "Ha, ha, ha! that's very rich!" interrupted the mystery man with a guffaw. "I see it all now! you have left your reflection with Giulietta! Very well, my friend; you may run lightly over hill and valley at your ease until you find your worthy wife and your little Rasmus again."

At that moment a band of young men singing along the road passed close beside the carriage with torches. By the fleeting gleam that pierced the darkness Erasmus recognized Doctor Dapertutto at his side. With a blow of his fist he knocked him into the bottom of the carriage, then opened the door and jumped out into the road, shouting to Frederick and his compatriots, for it was they who had just passed by so near. Hearing of the prosecution that hung over Erasmus, Frederick took him back to the city with all speed, to concert means for saving him; the very next day Erasmus was sent off on horseback on the way to Germany.

Somewhere about half-way on the journey he came to a hostelry in a large town, worn out with fatigue and dying of hunger. He took his place at the table; the waiter saw in a tall mirror that the chair occupied by Erasmus was reflected in it, but not the traveller. He said as much in a whisper to his neighbour, who passed it on, and in the twinkling of an eye the whole table was buzzing with it. Erasmus, eating and drinking for half a dozen, had no suspicion that he had become the subject of general curiosity, when a man of mature years came up and took him by the hand, and so leading him in front of the mirror said to him: "Sir, you have no reflection! You must be either the devil or one of his own!"

Furious and confounded, Erasmus hastened to shut himself up in a room, whither the police officers presently came to convey an order for him to appear before the magistrates equipped

with his reflection, on pain of being expelled from the town. Erasmus judged it more prudent to slip quietly away; but his legend was already spread through the whole of the town, and the populace collecting in front of the hostelry pursued him, pelting him with stones and mud, and shouting: "There he is! there is the accursed one who has sold his reflection to the devil!"

After this, wherever he stayed, Erasmus on arriving made them cover up looking-glasses and mirrors; that was why he was called General Suvarov by way of derision, because the general used to do the same.

On reaching his home poor Spicker found the tenderest welcome awaiting him from his wife. He imagined that in the calm of domestic life he could forget his lost reflection; for some time now the memory of Giulietta had been all but effaced from his mind. One evening, as he was playing with his little boy by the hearth, the child daubed his face with soot, and cried out "Daddy, daddy! look how black you are!" He ran off and got a pocket-mirror and presented it to Erasmus, looking in it himself too. Terrified at not seeing his father's face in it beside his own, he ran away crying and told his trouble to his mother. The lost reflection destroyed the peace of the household. Erasmus's wife uttered loud shrieks, and the neighbours came running in. Erasmus, in a paroxysm of fury and despair, fled from his house and ran breathlessly through the countryside. Giulietta's image then rose up in his mind in all the splendour of her beauty. "O Giulietta! O Giulietta!" he cried, "she for whom I sacrificed you has rejected me! Giulietta, I have nothing in the world but you! I give myself to you! Take me wholly and for ever!"

"You shall be satisfied, master," exclaimed the voice of Signor Dapertutto, who suddenly appeared beside him as if by magic. "Alas!" said Erasmus, "how can I find her again?"

"She is quite near, and more in love with you than ever," replied Dapertutto. "Happy to possess you wholly and for ever, she will be delighted, my dear sir, to restore you your reflection." "Oh! take me to her as quickly as may be," interrupted Spicker. "Gently, if you please," replied the doctor with the same old guffaw. "First of all the ties that unite you to your wife and child must be broken, so that Giulietta may be assured of possessing you without any rivalry. Take this phial." "Execrable man!" cried Erasmus, with a gesture of horror. "What! do you want me to poison my wife and my son?" "Phoo! who speaks of poison?" said Dapertutto. "What I am handing to you herewith is an elixir of exquisite flavour, a real family liqueur, with which you will be pleased."

Erasmus had the phial in his hands already and was looking at it mechanically. He went back, still mechanically, to his house, and found his wife and his son uneasy over what had occurred. The good woman refused to recognize him any longer, and maintained that a demon had assumed his shape to deceive her. Erasmus, driven to the last resource, thought for a moment of making use of the phial : a tame turtle-dove hopped up and pecked at the stopper, and fell dead. This brought the poor bewitched fellow to his senses, and he flung Dapertutto's elixir out of the window. A balsamic fragrance rose from the broken phial. Erasmus rushed to his chamber, and locked himself in to weep.

When it drew near to midnight the image of Giulietta came before his mind. His love and his despair were now without bounds. "O Giulietta," he cried, "to see thee one last time, and then to die!"

The door of the room opened soundlessly, and Giulietta, lovelier than ever, was in the arms of Erasmus. After the first transports of the most passionate love, "O my adored one,"

he cried, "if you do not wish me to go mad, take my life, but give me back my reflection!" "But," said Giulietta, "I can only do this when all the ties that bind you to the world are broken for good." "In that case," replied Erasmus, weeping, "if I can belong to you only through a crime, I would rather die." "My good Erasmus," said Giulietta, putting an arm round her lover's neck, and fixing a look full of fascination upon him, "no one wishes you to commit the crime that appals you so; but if you desire, my beloved, to be the eternal husband of my beauty, take this parchment and write these words: 'I give to Dapertutto full power to break the bonds that chain me to earth; it is my sole wish and desire henceforth to belong to Giulietta, whom I have freely chosen to be the mate of my body and of my soul for all eternity.'"

Erasmus felt the cold of death contracting his sinews, while his lips burned beneath the kisses of the enchantress. All at once he saw Dapertutto stand up behind her, clad in red, holding out an iron pen and saying "Write and sign!" At the same moment a small vein in Erasmus's left hand burst and the blood spirted. "Sign, my beloved," murmured Giulietta.

The deed was on the point of being done. Erasmus had dipped the pen in the blood, and was bending over to write, when a white ghost rose up from the floor and interposed between him and Giulietta. "In the name of the Saviour," said the ghost, sobbing, "do not proceed!"

It was the ghost of his mother.

Erasmus cast the pen at her feet, and tore up the document. Giulietta's eyes darted baleful fires; her lovely face dissolved, and from all her body there gushed greenish sparks. Erasmus Spicker made the sign of the cross, and Giulietta and Dapertutto vanished growling in a whirlwind of sulphurous smoke that put out the lights.

Long time the poor man lay in a swoon. At dawn a cool breeze revived him; he went to his wife, whom he found still in bed. She held out her hand to him, and said: "My poor friend, to-night in a dream I learned the adventure that cost you your reflection in Italy. I am sorry for you, and I forgive you. Great is the power of Satan, but God is stronger than he. I hope that now the spell is destroyed, for I have prayed for you the whole night through. Here, take this mirror for a moment and look."

Erasmus turned pale. The mirror did not give back his features; he dropped it to the ground. "Ah!" went on his wife, "it seems you have not done penance enough. Well, then, my dear husband, you must go back to Italy to seek for your reflection. Perhaps some good saint will force the devil to restore it to you. Kiss me, Erasmus, and *bon voyage!* When you come back a whole and complete man you can come home here again; you will be welcomed."

With these words Madame Spicker turned in bed, face to the wall, shut her eyes, and fell to snoring. Erasmus, with anguish in his heart, tried to embrace his child, but the little imp struggled and squealed like a dog being whipped. The poor father set him on the ground, took his holly-stick, and went off without a word. Ever since he has been going to and fro through the world. One day he met Peter Schlemihl, and the two ill-fortuned creatures planned to travel together and share expenses, each hiding his disability from the other. Erasmus Spicker might have furnished the necessary shadow to his travelling companion, who in return could have lent him the missing reflection; but they could never come to terms, and parted from one another with mutual abuse.

THE WALLED-IN DOOR

THE ruins of an old manor, which bears the name of R....sitten, are still to be seen on the lonely shores of a lake by the northern sea. Waste moorlands surround it in every direction. The horizon ends on one side in smooth, deep, leaden waters; on the other rises a wood of immemorial pines stretching out their black arms into the mist, like giant spectres. The skies, never out of mourning, harbour none save funereal birds. But a quarter of a league from this gloomy landscape all is changed: a cheerful, smiling village suddenly stands up among flowery meadows. At the end of the village an alder grove flourishes greenly, and not far from this are pointed out the first foundations of a country house one of the

lords of R....sitten intended to build in this oasis; but his heirs forgot the edifice once begun, and Baron Roderich von R., resigned to share the patrimonial donjon with the screech-owls, had taken no steps to complete the pleasure-house planned by his ancestors. He had confined himself to repairing the most dilapidated parts of the old castle, and shut himself up in it somehow or anyhow, with a handful of servants as taciturn and as surly as their master. He killed time riding here and there on the shores of the lake, and very seldom showed himself in his vassals' village, where his mere name served as a bogy for the children. On the watch-tower Roderich had rigged up a kind of belvedere equipped with all astronomical instruments known at that time. There he frequently spent whole days and nights together, in company with an old steward who shared in all his strange freaks and fancies. In that region he was credited with very extensive knowledge of the arts magic, and some went so far as to say that he had been expelled from Courland because he had openly engaged in illicit communication with the devil.

Roderich had a fanatical love for the seignorial barrack of his family; and he conceived the idea of setting it up as an entail, in order to give it its proper feudal importance. But neither Hubert, the son of this Roderich, nor the present holder of the entail, who was also called Roderich like his father and his grandfather, cared to live all the year round at the castle, but installed themselves on their Courland estates, where life was easier and less gloomy. Baron Roderich took care of two of his father's sisters, to whom he gave permanent hospitality. These two ladies had only one old woman to wait on them, and the three together occupied one wing of the castle. The kitchens filled the ground floor, and a kind of dilapidated pigeon-loft served as dwelling-place for a superannuated

huntsman who held the office of warden and caretaker. The rest of the men-servants lodged in the village with the steward. Every year, about the last days of autumn, the castle emerged from the dismal silence that weighed upon it like a chill winding-sheet. The packs of hounds shook its old walls with prolonged bayings, and Baron Roderich's friends did cheerful honour to their host's hunting parties, which gave them a chance to bring down great numbers of wolves and wild boars. These galas lasted for six weeks, during which the old castle was like a hostelry, open to all comers. Besides, Baron Roderich did not neglect his duties as suzerain. He dispensed justice to his vassals, seconded in this part of his functions by the lawyer V., whose family had for many generations from father to son exercised the office of justiciary of R....sitten.

In the year 179- the worthy lawyer, whose white head had already seen more than sixty winters, said to me one day with a kindly, shrewd smile : "Cousin" — I was his grand-nephew, but he called me cousin because our Christian names were the same — "cousin, I have a good mind to take you to R....sitten. The north winds, the bracing waters, and the early frosts, will put new vigour into you. And you will be of great service to me there by drawing up the legal documents that are becoming more numerous year by year; and for your own personal enjoyment you can learn to be a hardy hunter."

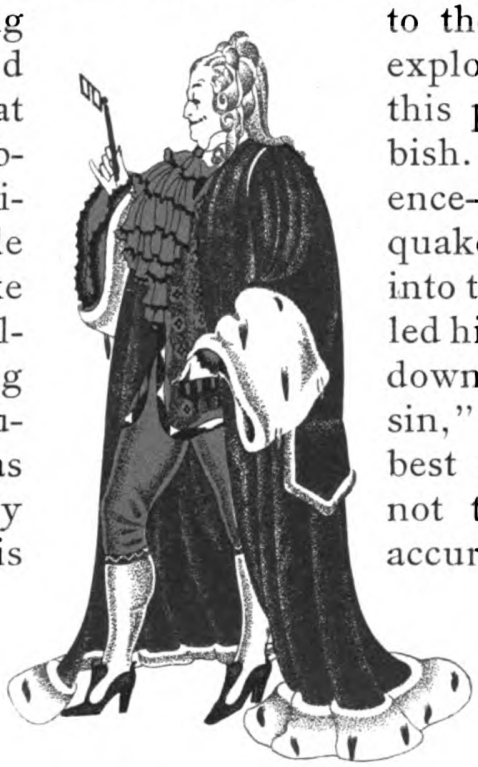
It need hardly be said that my great-uncle's proposal filled me with delight. The very next day we were bowling along in a snug berlin, warmly wrapped up in ample furs, through a region that became wilder and wilder as we went farther north through snow-covered tracts and endless pine-woods. On the way my great-uncle told me tales of the life of Baron Roderich, who had created the entail. He described to me the habits and the adventures of the old suzerain of R....sitten;

and he bemoaned the fact that this taste for a savage life was taking possession of the present holder of the entail, a young man who until then had been gentle of disposition and frail of health. In any case, he recommended me to enjoy myself at the castle. He ended by describing to me the apartments I should be occupying with him, which on the one side touched the ancient audience-chamber of the seigneur, and on the other the dwelling of the two ladies I have already mentioned. And so we arrived, well after dark, on the lands of R....sitten.

The village was celebrating. The steward's house, lit up from top to bottom, was echoing to the sound of dances, and the one inn was chock-full of gay revellers. Presently we found ourselves again on the road, which was already almost impassable and choked with snow. The sharp wind set the waters of the lake sullenly moaning and made the pine-boughs creak; amid the white desolation stood up the silhouette of the manor, whose gates were shut. A deathly silence reigned within; not a ray of light, not a gleam, escaped from its window embrasures that looked like loophole slits.

"Hi! Franz! Franz!" shouted my great-uncle, "Hi! look alive! The snow is freezing as it falls, and a regular bonfire is what we need!" A watch-dog replied in the first place to this summons; then we heard a little movement; the gleam of a torch wavered in the darkness, keys ground heavily in the locks, and old Franz greeted us with a "Good day, master justiciary; welcome in this devil's weather!" Franz, got up in a suit of livery that hung all too loose on his meagre little body, made a most comic figure as he received us. A ninny-fied honesty was stamped on his wrinkled features; but on the whole his ugliness was almost made up for by the warmth of his welcome. "My worthy sir," said Franz, "nothing is prepared to receive you; the rooms are frozen and the beds

are not made up; the wind is whistling from all sides through the broken panes: impossible to stand it even with fires!" "What, you old ruffian!" cried my great-uncle shaking off the hoarfrost that clung to his furs, "what, you are the caretaker of this barrack and you don't see that it's repaired in good time? So my room is uninhabitable?" "Very nearly," replied Franz bowing to the ground, for I had just sneezed explosively; "master justiciary's room is at this present moment heaped up with rub- bish. Three days ago the floor of the audi- ence-hall gave way as a result of a terrible quake." My great- uncle all but broke into terrific swearing, but suddenly control- led himself, and turn- ing to me and pulling down his fox-skin cap over his ears, "Cou- sin," he said, "we shall just manage as best we can; let us above everything try not to risk another question about this accursed castle; it looks as though we might be told things a thousand times worse. Now then" (and he turned to Franz), "could you not get some other room ready to take us in?" "Sir, your wishes have been forestalled," replied the old servant quickly; and at once, walking before us to show the way, he brought us by a little steep stair into a long gallery in which the light of a single torch lent fantastic shapes to the smallest objects. At the end of this gallery, which twisted about, making innumerable corners, he brought us through several damp halls devoid of furniture; then he opened a last door and ushered us into a great room in which a huge fire



was crackling nobly. This enlivening sight put me in an excellent humour; but my great-uncle stopped in the middle of the room, and casting an uneasy look about, said in a grave and almost faltering voice, "And is this the room then that is to serve for audiences in future?" Franz went several paces towards the far end of the room, and by the light of the candelabra he was carrying I discerned on the wall a broad, high white patch that presented the dimensions of a walled-in door.

And now Franz was making diligent haste to prepare everything we might need. The table was speedily laid, and after a cosy supper my great-uncle brewed a bowl of punch that was the very thing to assure us of long and peaceful slumbers. When he had finished serving Franz discreetly left us. Two wax-tapers and the fire dying down on the hearth shed a flickering light that played on the Gothic decorations of the hall and made them take on a thousand fantastic shapes. Pictures representing scenes of hunting and war hung upon the walls, and the wavering spurts from the fire seemed to make the persons in the pictures stir and move. I observed life-size family portraits, doubtless representing the most notable members of the feudal line of R....sitten. The old chests standing against the time-blackened panelling made the white patch that had originally caught my attention stand out the more conspicuously. I supposed quite simply that once upon a time there had been a communicating door at that point, and that it had subsequently been walled up without sufficient care being taken to cover the masonry with a coat of paint similar to the decoration of the room. In any case my imagination was much more occupied with dreams than with realities. I peopled the castle with supernatural apparitions until I began to be a little scared of myself. And finally, chance or the fitness of things had it that at that moment I should find

in my pocket a book that the young people of the period were never parted from, Schiller's *Der Geisterseher*. I read and read again, and my imagination became more and more excited. I came to the tale of the wedding at Count von V's, told with such powerful charm. Just at the moment when the spectre of Jeronymo enters the hall, the door into the ante-chamber opened with a crash. I got up in affright, the book fell out of my hands. But everything was quiet once more, and I was ashamed of my childish terror. It might be the wind that had banged the door—it was nothing, less than nothing. I went back to my book.

All at once some one came forward softly, slowly, with measured steps, crossing the hall; some one who sighed, who moaned; and in those sighs, those moans, there was the expression of deepest agony. But I was on guard against myself. No doubt it was some sick animal, left in the storey underneath, whose voice came to me by some trick of acoustics. In this way I reassured myself, but a sound of scratching began, and plainer, deeper sighs, uttered as though in the anguish of death, were heard from the direction of the walled-up door. The poor beast was shut in, I would stamp my foot, call out to it, and no doubt it would be dumb or else make itself heard more distinctly. That was my thought, but my blood stood still in my veins, I remained pale and trembling on my chair, unable to stand up, still less able to call out for help. The sinister scratching had stopped, the footsteps were once more audible; all at once life woke in me again, I stood up and took a couple of steps. The moon suddenly flung out a bright beam, and showed me a pale, grave man, almost horrible to look upon, and in a voice that seemed to come up from the bottom of the sea with the sound of the waves, he uttered these words: "No further, no further, thou wilt fall into hell!"

The door shut with the same violence as before: distinctly I heard footsteps in the gallery. They went down the stair; the great door of the castle swung on its hinges and presently clanged shut again; then there was the sound of a horse taken out of the stables and brought back almost at once, then all was quiet once more. And then I heard my uncle stirring and groaning in the next room. That brought me back my reason, I took the candlestick and hurried in to him. The old man seemed to be in the throes of a nightmare. "Wake up! Wake up!" I called, pulling him gently and letting the light of the candle fall on his face. He uttered a low cry, opened his eyes, and looked at me in friendly fashion. "You did well to wake me, nephew," he said; "I was having a bad dream; it was the hall next door and this room that brought it about, for they reminded me of strange things that have happened in them; but now we shall go to sleep quietly."

With these words the old gentleman buried himself once more among the bed-clothes, and seemed to fall asleep again. When I had put out the candles and was in my bed I heard him praying softly to himself.

Next morning early we began our duties. In the afternoon my great-uncle brought me to visit the ladies, Franz going first to announce us. The two ladies of the castle, clad in the fashion of long bygone days, made me think of a pair of puppets; they looked at me with an air of surprise that would have made me burst out laughing if my great-uncle had not made haste to tell them in his usual gay tone that I was a young scion of the law, a relative of his, come to put in a term at R....sitten. The faces of the two female antiques lengthened in a way that showed they had little confidence in my future. This visit, in a word, rather turned my stomach. Completely under the domination of the incidents that had given me such

a troubled night, I was altogether in the mood to see a pair of witches under the tinsel with which the two old ladies of R....sitten were bespangled like church banners. Their fantastic faces, their small blood-red-rimmed eyes, their sharply pointed noses and their sniffling tones, could only legitimately belong to beings escaped from the other world.

On the evening of the first day, as I was sitting with my great-uncle in our room, feet on the fire-dogs, chin sunk on my breast, "What devil has bewitched you since yesterday?" exclaimed the worthy lawyer. "You don't drink and you don't eat, and you look for all the world like a grave-digger." I did not think it necessary to hide the reason of my uneasiness from my great-uncle. As he listened to my tale he became very serious. "That is strange," he said, "I saw in my dreams everything you have just told me. I saw a hideous phantom enter the room, move slowly to the walled-up door, and scratch at that door so furiously that its fingers were torn to bloody shreds; then it went downstairs, brought out a horse, and presently brought him back. That was when you woke me up, and when I came to myself I mastered the secret horror that always springs from any contact with the unseen world." I did not dare to question the old gentleman. He perceived this. "Cousin," said he, "have you the courage to wait with me, with your eyes open, for the phantom's next visit?" I accepted the proposal stoutly. "Well, to-night then," he went on. "I put my trust in the pious motive that incites me to struggle against the evil genius of this castle. Whatever may be the outcome of my plan, I want you to be present at everything that happens, so that you may be able to give your testimony about it. I hope, with God's help, to break the spell that keeps the heirs of R....sitten away from this domain. But if I fall in my enterprise, I shall at least have sacrificed

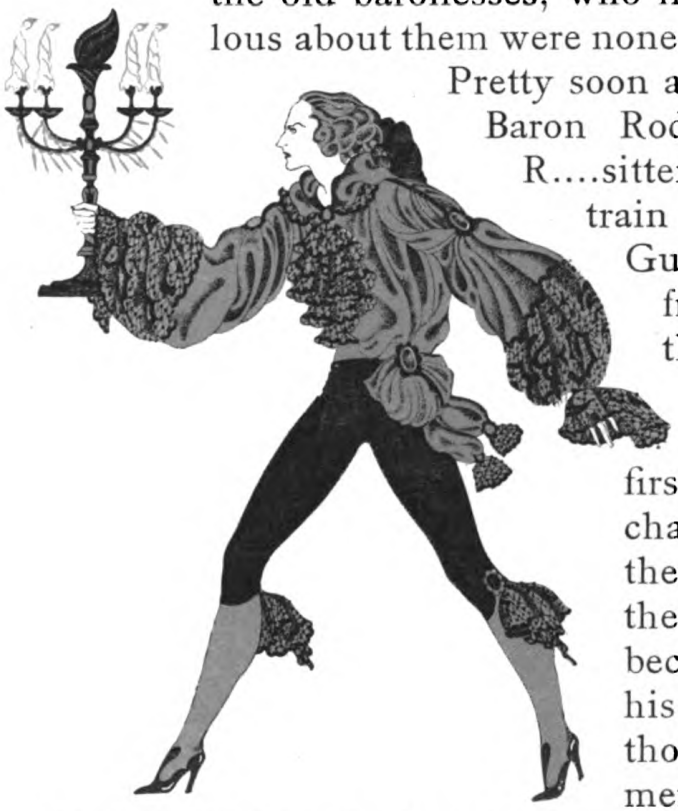
myself in the holiest of causes. As for you, cousin, you will be present, but no danger threatens you. The evil spirit has no power over you."

Franz served us, as on the previous evening, with an excellent supper and a bowl of punch; then he withdrew. When we were alone the full moon shone in brightest glory; the wind whistled as it eddied about the woods, and from one minute to another the windows creaked and shook in their leaden framing.

My great-uncle had put his repeater-watch on the table. It struck midnight. Then the door opened with a clang, and the footsteps I had heard the previous night began to move slowly across the floor. My great-uncle turned pale, but rose sturdily to his feet and turned to the direction from which the sound was coming, his left hand on his hip, the right hand stretched forth in a heroic attitude. Sobs mingled with the sound of the steps, then there was heard a violent scratching against the walled-up door. Then my great-uncle went to the place and called out in a loud voice : "Daniel! Daniel! what are you doing here at this hour?" A lamentable cry answered, and was followed by the sound of a heavy fall. "Ask for pardon at the foot of the throne of God," my great-uncle continued in a voice that became more and more animated; "and if God does not forgive thee, depart from here, where thou hast place no longer!"

A long moan died away outside amid the growling noises of the storm; my great-uncle came back with slow steps to his armchair. He looked like one inspired; his eyes shone like stars; he sat down before the fire again, and with joined hands and eyes raised to heaven he seemed to pray. After a few moments of silence : "Well, cousin," he said, "what think you of all this?" Filled with fear and respect, I knelt before the

old man and covered his hands with tears. But he took me in his arms, pressed me warmly to his heart, and added: "Now let us go to rest: quiet is henceforth restored." And indeed nothing troubled my dreams again, and from the very next day I regained my cheerfulness, occasionally at the expense of the old baronesses, who in spite of what was ridiculous about them were none the less excellent creatures.



Pretty soon after we had been installed, Baron Roderich himself arrived at R....sitten with his wife and his train for the hunting season. Guests flocked into the castle from all directions, everything took on an air of festivity. When the baron came to see us, he at first seemed displeased at the change of lodging put upon the justiciary. As he looked at the walled-up door his glance became grave and he passed his hand across his brow, as though to drive away a painful memory. He scolded poor Franz harshly for having assigned us a dwelling-place so dilapidated, and begged my great-uncle to have no hesitation in asking for whatever he wished, and to treat everything in the castle as his own property. I observed that not only were the baron's manners with his justiciary most courteous, but that there was also an intermixture of a kind of filial respect, which might give grounds for supposing that there was between them a relation closer than was apparent to the world. As for

me I was not included at all in these demonstrations of cordiality. The baron day by day affected manners more and more aloof, and but for the protective intervention of my great-uncle our lack of understanding might have ended in some scene of sharp temper, or even of violence.

The wife of Baron Roderich von R....sitten had from the very first moment made an impression on me that contributed in no small degree to make me put up with the cavalier manners of the baron. Seraphine presented a delicious contrast to her old relatives, whom I was tired of looking at. Her beauty, enhanced by all the charms of youth, had an astonishing quality of ideality. She seemed to me like an angel of light, better than any possible exorcism to drive away for ever the evil spirits that haunted the castle. The first time this adorable person addressed me to ask if I was enjoying myself in the gloomy solitude of the castle of R....sitten I was captivated by the charm of her voice and the heavenly melancholy of her eyes; in reply I could find nothing but disjointed monosyllables that must have made her look upon me as the shyest or stupidest of hobbledehoys. The baroness's old aunts, regarding me as of no consequence, took it into their heads to recommend me to the good graces of the young matron with airs of benevolence so full of haughtiness that I could not refrain from letting fly a few compliments at them that came very near sarcasm. From that moment, by the distress I felt at my position of inferiority where the baroness was concerned, I perceived that a burning passion was kindling in my heart; however persuaded I might be of the madness of any such feeling, it was impossible for me to resist it; it speedily became a kind of delirium, and during my long sleepless nights I used to call upon Seraphine in despairing accents. One night, awakened with a start by my extravagant soliloquizings, my great-uncle

cried out to me from his bed: "Cousin, cousin, are you losing your common sense? Be in love all day long if you like; but there is a time for everything, and night is meant for sleep!" I trembled lest my uncle had caught the name of Seraphine, and might give me a severe scolding; but his behaviour in the circumstances was discreet and reserved to perfection. The next day, as we were going into the hall where every one was assembled for the judicial audience, he said aloud: "God grant that every one here may keep his proper place!" Then as I was settling myself at the desk beside him he leaned toward me to add: "Cousin, try to write clearly so that I may be able to decipher your judicial hand without wearing out my eyes."

At table my uncle's daily place was laid at the lovely baroness's right hand, and this favour made a good many jealous. I slipped in here or there as chance decreed among the other guests, who were often officers from the neighbouring garrison, whom I must needs cope with in drinking and in gay chatter. One evening chance brought me near Seraphine, from whom I was always a long way off. I had just offered my arm to her companion to escort her into the dining-room; when we turned to bow to each other I observed with a thrill that I was beside the baroness. A gentle look gave me permission to sit down; and all through the meal instead of eating I talked with the companion, and every gallant and delicate thing I found to say was addressed to the baroness, from whom I never took my eyes for a moment. After supper Seraphine, as she presided over the drawing-room, came to me and asked me graciously, as before, if I was enjoying myself at the castle. I replied as well as I could that at the very first this wild domain had been somewhat disagreeable, but that since the baron's arrival this melancholy aspect was completely altered, and if I had anything to wish for it would merely be to be excused from

going out hunting. "But," said the baroness, "have I not heard that you were a musician and a poet? I am passionately in love with the arts, and I play the harp with some little skill; it is a pleasure I am obliged to forgo here, for my husband hates music." I made haste to answer that she might very well, during her husband's long hunting absences, give herself the pleasure of a little music. It was impossible that there should not be a pianoforte in the furniture stores of the castle. Miss Adelheid, the companion, in vain denied and swore that in the memory of man there had never been heard anything at R....sitten except the sound of the horn and the baying of the hounds, I was sure I could succeed in my plan. At that moment we saw Franz passing. "In truth," cried Miss Adelheid, "there is the only man I know capable of giving good advice in ticklish matters; I defy anything to compel him to utter the word *impossible.*"

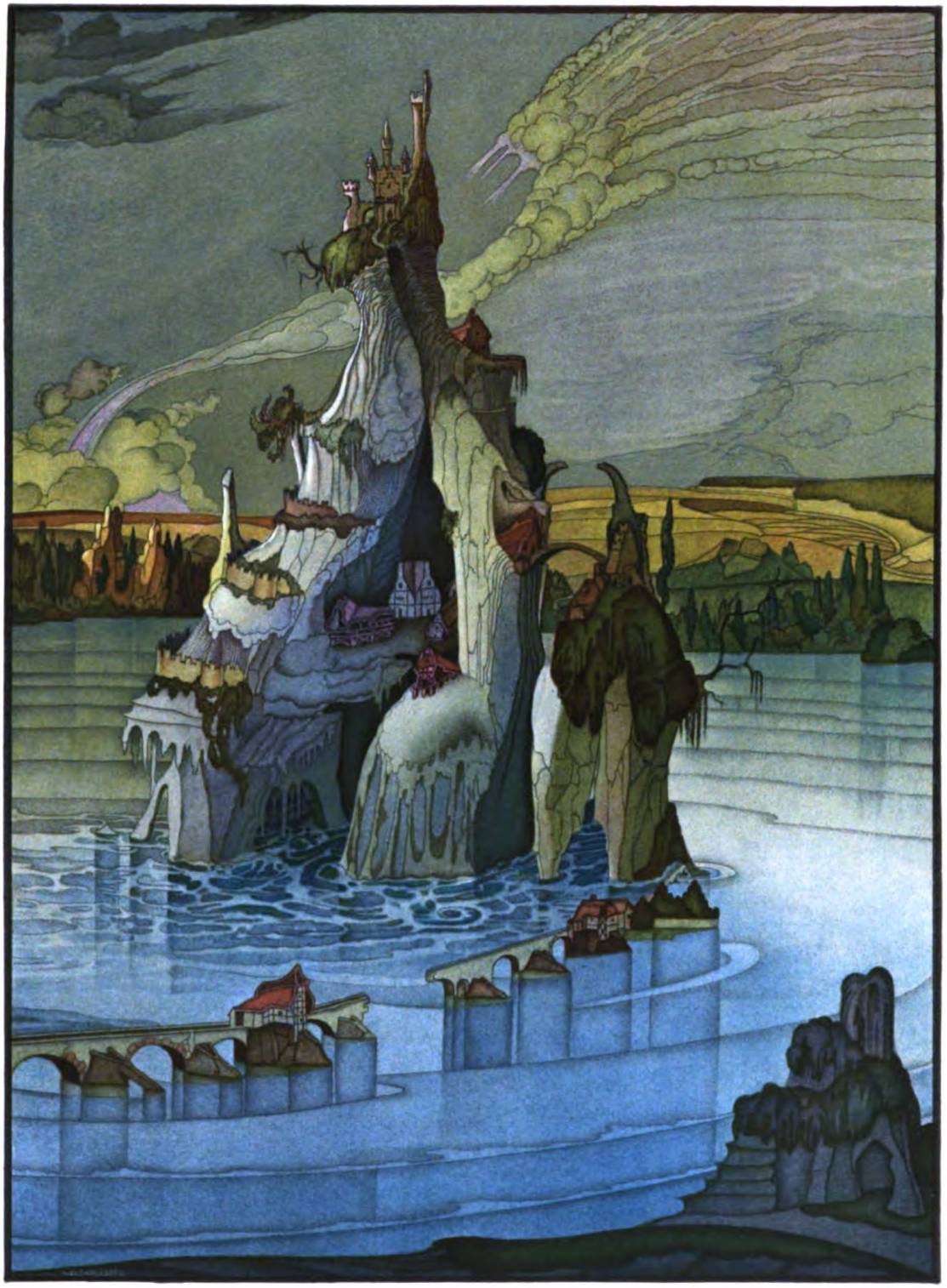
We summoned Franz. The good man, after turning and twisting his cap in his hands a thousand times, finally recollected that the wife of the steward, who lived in the neighbouring village, had a pianoforte; she used to accompany herself and sing in accents so pathetic that hearing her everybody wept as if their eyes had been rubbed with an onion-skin. "A pianoforte! we shall have a pianoforte!" cried Miss Adelheid. "Yes," said Franz, "but it has had a little misfortune: the village organist tried an anthem of his own composing on it and spoiled the machine as he played it!" "Ah! good heavens!" cried the baroness and Miss Adelheid with one voice. "So much," Franz continued, "that the pianoforte had to be taken to the city to be mended." "But has it come back?" interrupted Miss Adelheid eagerly. "I don't doubt it, my gracious young lady," replied Franz, "and the steward's wife will be most honoured, most delighted."

At that moment the baron appeared, paused before our little group, then moved on, saying to his wife : "Well, my dear, is old Franz still the man for good advice?" The baroness was all taken aback; Franz was nailed to the spot, his arms hanging limp at his sides. The old aunts came up and took Seraphine away. Miss Adelheid went with them. As for me, I remained a long time in the same place, thinking of the good fortune that had brought me so delightful an interview, and cursing Baron Roderich, who seemed to me nothing but a brutal tyrant, unworthy to possess so admirable a wife. I think I should be standing there still if my great-uncle, who had been looking for me, had not tapped me on the shoulder, saying in his kind, friendly voice : "Cousin, do not show yourself so very attentive to the baroness; leave the dangerous game of wooer to the scatter-brains who have nothing better to do." I embarked on a long speech to prove to my great-uncle that I had not in any way transgressed the strictest propriety; but he shrugged his shoulders, went and got into his dressing-gown, filled his pipe, and began to talk of yesterday's hunting.

That night there was a ball at the castle. Miss Adelheid had taken it into her head to hire a whole orchestra of travelling musicians. My great-uncle, an inveterate lover of his good rest, went to his bed at the usual hour. My youth and my amorousness made me adore the idea of this improvised ball. I was finishing dressing, when Franz came and knocked at my door to tell me that the pianoforte belonging to the steward's wife had arrived on a sledge; that the baroness had promptly had it placed in her room, where with her companion she was at that moment awaiting me. Think what a thrill of joy ran through me! I was intoxicated with love and eagerness; I ran off to Seraphine. Miss Adelheid could not

contain herself for joy; but the baroness, already fully dressed and adorned for the ball, was standing, silent and in an attitude of melancholy, beside the case in which there slept the harmonies that in my capacity of musician and poet I was summoned to awaken. "Theodore," she said, calling me by my Christian name in the northern way, "Theodore, here is the instrument we were waiting for: keep your promise."

I went straight to the pianoforte, but hardly had I opened the lid when several strings broke with a crash; those that remained were in such a bad condition that they produced a cacophony enough to disgust the bravest ear. "No doubt it's the organist trying it once more," exclaimed Miss Adelheid with a merry laugh. But Seraphine was by no means in a gay mood. "Fate!" she said in a low voice. "I can never procure one single pleasure in this place." Going through the pianoforte case I luckily discovered some coils of new strings. "We are saved!" I cried. "Patience and courage! Help me, the damage will soon be made good!" The baroness set to work to help me with her pretty fingers; Miss Adelheid uncoiled the strings as I wanted them for each note on the keyboard. After a score of fruitless attempts our perseverance was crowned with complete success; the instrument was in perfect tune. Our common task had done away with anything like aloofness between us. The lovely baroness in all simplicity shared with me the happiness of this success that promised her agreeable diversion. The pianoforte had become a kind of electric link between us; my shyness and awkwardness disappeared; nothing was left but love, love that set my whole soul on fire. I began by playing on that dear instrument those tender symphonies that paint with so much poetry the passions of the southern ands. Seraphine, standing before me, listened with all her soul; I saw her eyes shining. I perceived the thrills



that made her bosom heave; I felt her breath about me like an angel's kiss, and my soul took wing for the skies! Suddenly her face seemed to take fire, her lips murmured cadenced sounds that had long left her memory; a few notes escaped her and led my fingers to a melody they knew, and Seraphine's voice broke forth like a peal of crystal chimes.

It was a luxury of divine poesy, a sea of harmony in which my heart plunged crying to God to take us to Himself. When I emerged from this ecstasy, "Thank you," said Seraphine, "thanks for this hour that I shall never forget!" With these words she held out her hand to me; I fell on my knees to kiss it. It seemed to me that her nerves had quivered under my lips. Meanwhile the ball was calling us; the baroness disappeared.

I know not how I found myself back that night in my great-uncle's room; next day he told me he knew all about my interview with the baroness. "But take care," he added; "take care, cousin, you are walking on a thin ice that covers unfathomable depths. The devil fly away with your music if you can't make better use of it than to bring disquiet into the life of a romantic girl! Look to yourself: no one is so near death as a sick man who fancies he is in rude health."

"But uncle," I said, seeking to justify myself, "do you believe me capable of trying to win the heart of the baroness?" "Monkey that you are," cried my uncle, stamping his foot, "if I thought that for one minute I would fling you out of the window!" The baron's arrival interrupted this painful colloquy, and the tasks of business tore me from my dreams. In the drawing-room the baroness only addressed a few words to me, but no evening went by without my having a message from Miss Adelheid summoning me to Seraphine. We often spent our time discussing various subjects in the intervals of

our music, and Miss Adelheid took pains to chatter nonsense when she saw us plunging into dreamy sentimentalities. I was convinced in these interviews that there was something strange in the mind of the baroness, some melancholy element that she could neither surmount nor dissemble.

One day she did not appear at dinner. The guests solicitously asked the baron if his wife's illness gave him serious uneasiness. "Oh, not at all," he answered; "the strong air of this country, coupled with the hoarseness due to over-indulgence in musical evenings, is the only cause of this passing indisposition." As he said this the baron shot a side glance at me that said a great deal. Miss Adelheid understood enough to bring the red to her face. She kept her eyes down, but her whole attitude seemed to say we must for the future use proper precautions not to arouse the jealousy of the baron, who might play us some unpleasant trick. Keen anxiety took possession of my mind; I did not know what I should decide to do. The quietly threatening air of the baron irritated me all the more that I had nothing to blame myself for; but I feared lest I might expose Seraphine to his anger. Ought I to leave the castle? To give up seeing Seraphine seemed to me a sacrifice greater than I could bear. I learned that the whole company was going hunting after dinner. I told my great-uncle that I would join the party. "Very good," said the old gentleman, "it is a recreation suited to your age, and I herewith make you heir to my gun and my hunting-knife."

We set off, and took our stations at measured distances in order to surround the wolves. The snow was falling very thick; when day was almost declining a mist came down that hid everything six paces away. The cold was taking hold of me; I sought shelter in a patch of undergrowth, and leaning my gun against a pine branch I began to dream of Seraphine

once more. Soon shots were heard echoing down the line, and ten feet from the spot where I was sheltering a huge wolf sprang up. I aimed and fired, but missed him; he flew at me, but my presence of mind never left me, I received the furious brute on the point of my hunting-knife, and he impaled himself on it up to the very hilt. One of the foresters ran up at the sound of his howling; the hunters fell back in our direction and the baron rushed to me. "You are wounded?" he said. "No," I replied, "my hand was steadier than my shooting." Endless praises were heaped on that feat of mine. The baron gave me his own arm on the way back to the castle. A forester carried my gun. These attentions from the lord of R....sitten touched me deeply. I formed a very different opinion of him from that moment. I now thought him a man of heart and energy. But at the same time I thought of Seraphine; I felt that we were drawing together again. I conceived the boldest hopes. But when that night, all beaming with pride, I told my adventure to my great-uncle he contented himself with laughing in my face, saying, "God manifests his power by the hand of the weak."

The hour for repose was already long past when as I went through the gallery on my way to bed I met a white figure carrying a taper. It was Miss Adelheid. "Good night," she said, laughing, "my gallant wolf-hunter. Why are you running about alone this way without a light, like a very ghost?" At that word I shuddered from head to foot, remembering the first two nights of my stay in the castle. Miss Adelheid perceived the sudden emotion that had taken hold of me. "Oh!" she said, taking my hand in hers, "but what is the matter? You are as cold as marble; come, let me give you life and health again. The baroness is expecting you, and dying of impatience."

I allowed myself to be drawn away without resisting, but without any feeling of joy. I was in the grip of a fatal preoccupation. Seeing us, the baroness took several steps to meet me, with an exclamation she left unfinished, breaking off suddenly as though struck by a grave *arrière-pensée*. I took her hand and kissed it; she did not draw it away, but said: "Theodore, what took you hunting? Must the hand that makes such sweet music wield deadly weapons and commit butchery?" The sound of that adored voice pierced to my soul; a veil fell over my eyes, and instead of going to take my seat at the pianoforte I found myself on the sofa talking to Seraphine of my strange hunting adventure. When I had told her of her husband's behaviour, so different from his customary stiffness, she interrupted me. "You see, Theodore, you do not know the baron yet; it is only here that his mood is so disagreeable. Every time he comes here a fixed idea pursues him: which is that this castle is fated to be the theatre of some terrible catastrophe for our family and for his peace. He is convinced that an invisible enemy wields a power in these domains that will sooner or later bring about some misfortune. Strange things are told of the founder of this entail, and I myself know that the castle holds locked away within it a family secret; a ghost, they say, frequently attacks the owner, and prevents him from making any but limited visits. Every time I come to it with my husband I undergo almost continual terrors, and only your art, dear Theodore, has given me a little solace and relief. And hence I could not possibly show you too much gratitude."

Encouraged by this confidence on her part, I told Seraphine my own apprehensions. Even so I concealed from her the most terrifying details; but seeing her face assuming a deadly pallor I realized that it was better to tell her everything than to let her imagination run away with her out of all bounds.

When I spoke of the mysterious claws that scratched the walled-in door, "Yes, yes," cried Seraphine, "in that wall the fatal mystery is shut away!" and burying her lovely face in her hands she fell into deep meditation. Only then did I observe that Adelheid had left us. I said no more, and Seraphine remained still silent. I made an effort and got up and went over to the pianoforte. A few chords awoke the baroness from her apathy; peacefully she listened while I sang a melody as sad as our own souls, and her eyes filled with tears. I knelt before her, she leaned towards me, and our mouths were joined in a divine kiss; then she disengaged herself from my embrace, rose, and when she was at the door of the room she turned and said to me : "Dear Theodore, your uncle is a worthy man, who seems to me to be the protector of this house. Bid him, please, pray for us every day, that it may please God to preserve us from all evil!"

As she said these words her companion came back. I could not reply to Seraphine; I was too deeply moved to speak without transgressing the bounds of discretion. The baroness held out her hand to me. "Au revoir," she said, "au revoir, dear Theodore; I shall not easily forget this evening."

When I was back with my great-uncle I found him asleep. My eyes were full of tears; my love for Seraphine held my heart tight in a painful grip, and my sobs became so frequent and so loud that the justiciary awoke. "Cousin," he exclaimed, "are you really bent on going mad? Be so good as to go to bed at once!" This prosaic apostrophe brought me back to reality a trifle harshly; but I must needs obey. Barely a few moments went by, when I heard the noise of coming and going, of doors opening and shutting; then footsteps sounded along the gallery. There was a knock at the door of our room. "Who is there?" I asked in loud, rough tones. "Master

justiciary," answered someone without, "quick, get up!" It was the voice of old Franz. "Is the castle on fire?" I cried. At the word fire my great-uncle, who was waking out of sleep, sprang out of bed and went to open the door. "For God's love, make haste," continued Franz, "the baron is asking for you: the baroness is sick unto death!" The poor serving-man was livid and pale. We had scarcely lit the candle when the baron's voice was heard. "Could I speak to you at once, my dear V.?" he said. "The devil!" said my great-uncle to me, "who told you to dress? What are you going to do?" "To see her once more, to tell her I love her, and then to die!" I replied in a low and broken voice. "I might have guessed it," rejoined the austere justiciary, banging the door in my face and turning the key. Drunk with fury, I at first made to smash the lock; but on second thoughts, considering the consequences such an outburst might involve, I resigned myself to wait patiently for my great-uncle's return, but fully determined to get away from him at all costs directly he reappeared. I heard him in the distance talking very earnestly with the baron; but I could not distinguish anything that was said. My name came into it, and my anxiety became unendurable. At last the baron went away; it seemed to me that they had come to fetch him in a hurry. My great-uncle came back, and was stupefied at the state of wild delirium in which he found me. "Is she dead then?" I cried at sight of him. "I mean to go down: I shall blow out my brains before your eyes!" My great-uncle remained impassive. "And do you think then," he said, "that your life has any value in my eyes, if you are pleased to make it depend on a pitiful threat? What business have you with the baron's wife? By what right would you go and plant yourself in a death-chamber which your ridiculous behaviour debars you more than ever from

entering?" I fell on a chair, wretched and all broken up. My great-uncle had pity on me. "You may know," he went on, "that the baroness's supposed danger was nothing but a dream. Miss Adelheid loses her head in a fix, and the two old aunts, who came hurrying at the sound of trouble, harried poor Seraphine with their attentions and their nostrums. It was only a fainting fit, an attack of nerves that the baron puts down to the effects of her music. So now, since I hope your mind is sufficiently set at rest, with your permission I am going to smoke a good pipe, for I am not likely to get any sleep till morning. And see now, cousin," he went on after a pause, blowing out thick clouds of smoke, "I advise you not to be carried away by the fuss they are making here about you since your

adventure with the wolf. A poor young devil like you is sure to get clean out of his depth when he is vain enough to travel out of his own sphere. I remember when I was at the University I had a friend of the mildest disposition, peaceful,

always even-tempered. Chance tumbled him into a duel, and he behaved with a vigour that astonished everybody. Unhappily this success and the admiration of which he saw himself the object changed his character completely. From the firm, serious fellow he ought to have remained he turned a quarreller and a ruffler: in short, one fine day he insulted a comrade for the wretched pleasure of bravado; he was killed like a fly. I tell you this tale, cousin, merely to while away the time; but you may perhaps find something in it to your advantage. And with that here is my pipe finished; the skies are still pitch black; we will have two hours yet for sleep."

At that moment Franz's voice was heard. He came to tell us news of the patient. "The baroness," he said, "is quite recovered from her indisposition, which she attributes to a bad dream." At these words I was on the point of uttering an exclamation of delight; but a glance from my uncle made me keep my mouth shut. "That is well," he said to Franz. "I was waiting for that to get a little rest, for at my age it's not wholesome to go without sleep. God keep us to the end of this night!" Franz withdrew, and though he could hear the cocks crowing already down in the village the justiciary buried his nose in the blankets once more.

Next morning early I slipped down without a sound to go and ask Miss Adelheid for news of my dear Seraphine's health. But at the threshold of her apartments I found myself face to face with the baron; his keen eye measured me closely. "What have you come here for?" he said. I controlled my emotion as well as I could, and taking my courage in both hands I replied firmly that I came on my uncle's behalf to inquire how the baroness was. "She is very well," replied the baron coldly; "she has had her usual fit of nerves. She is

resting at this moment; and I expect she will appear at table. Tell your uncle so."

From his air of impatience I judged him to be more uneasy than he wished to let it be seen. I bowed and was about to withdraw, when he stopped me with a hand on my arm, and said with a look that seemed to me full of fury, "I have something to say to you, young man." The tone of these words filled me in a moment with the direst conjectures. I saw myself face to face with an injured husband who had guessed what was going on in my heart, and who was preparing to exact a strict account for it. I was without a weapon, unless for a hunting-knife my uncle had presented to me. I felt it in my pocket at this supreme moment, and recovered my assurance. I followed the baron, who was pulling me along, fully determined to sell my life dearly if things took a tragic turn.

Coming into his own room, the baron shut the door carefully, walked up and down several times, then stopping in front of me, with his arms folded on his breast, "Young man," he said, "I have something to say to you." "I hope, baron," I answered, "that what you have to say will be what I can permit myself to hear!" The baron looked at me as though he had failed to understand; then he dropped his eyes, and with his hands clasped behind him he began once again to walk up and down the room. Then he took a gun from the wall and dropped the ramrod down the barrel to see if it was loaded. My blood boiled with anticipation of danger, and I opened my knife inside my pocket, coming close up to the baron so that he would not be able to take aim at me.

"A good weapon!" said the baron, and put the gun back in its place. I hardly knew how to take it, when the baron, coming back to me, put his hand on my shoulder, and said: "Theodore, you must think I am rather strange this morning.

I am indeed completely disturbed by the alarms of last night. My wife's attack of nerves was nothing very disquieting in itself; but in this castle there is some sort of evil genius that makes me see everything in the blackest colours. This is the first time the baroness has been ill here, and you are the sole cause of it." "Indeed," I said calmly, "I cannot understand that." "I wish," the baron interrupted, "that infernal pianoforte had been smashed to a thousand bits the day it was brought into my house! But after all I ought to have kept watch on what was happening here from the very first day. My wife is so delicate that the slightest emotion may kill her. I had brought her here with me in the hope that this bracing climate, along with the distractions of a vigorous, rough life, might have a happy effect upon her, but you have set yourself to work upon her nerves still more with your languishing melodies. Her highly-strung imagination makes her susceptible to shocks, and you gave her the *coup de grâce* by telling in front of her God knows what stupid story of a ghost. Your great-uncle has told me the whole thing, so you cannot deny anything; I merely want you to repeat to me yourself everything you say you saw."

The turn the conversation was taking reassured me, and I obeyed the baron's orders. He made no interruption in my circumstantial account except for a few sharp, half-suppressed ejaculations. When I came to the scene where my great-uncle had so powerfully conjured the invisible phantom, he raised his joined hands, exclaiming: "Aye, he is in very deed the tutelary genius of the family; and when God shall call his spirit to Himself I intend that his mortal remains shall sleep in honour beside those of my ancestors!" Then, as I was silent, he took my hand, and added, "Young man, it is you who have been the unintentional cause of my wife's illness; her cure

must come from you." At these words I felt my face turning red. The baron, who was watching me, smiled at my embarrassment, and went on in a tone bordering on the ironical. "You are not dealing with a very dangerous patient, and this is the service I look to you for. The baroness is altogether under the influence of your music—it would be cruel to suppress it. I give you my sanction then to continue it, but I insist that you must change the character of the pieces you play to her. Make a graduated selection of increasingly robust sonatas; mingle gay and serious cunningly; and then, above all, talk to her often about that apparition. She will become familiar with the idea by degrees, and end by ceasing to attach any importance to it. You follow me, I trust? I count on your scrupulous observance."

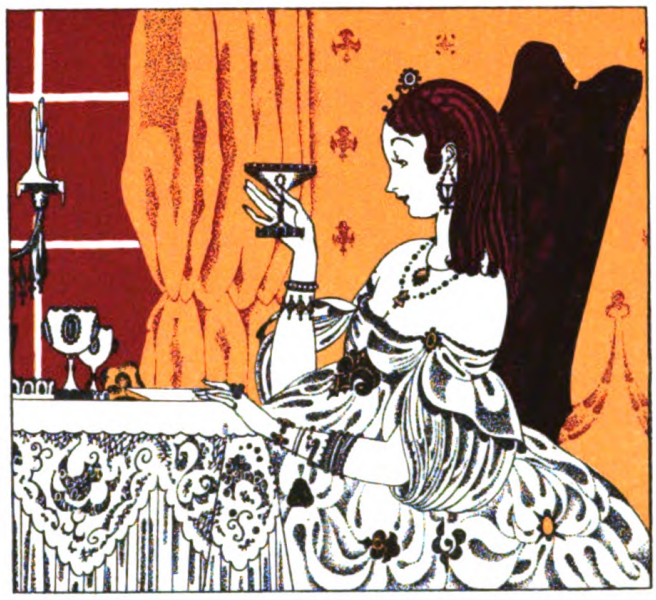
When he had made an end of these instructions, the baron left me. I remained rather dashed to see myself judged as of such little importance; I was not even capable of arousing a man's jealousy by my marked attentions to the most beautiful woman it was possible to imagine. My heroic dream was broken—I fell to the level of the child who takes his crown of gilt paper seriously in his games.

My great-uncle, persuaded in his mind that I had been engaged in some escapade, was anxiously awaiting my return. "Where have you been?" he cried out to me the moment he saw me. "I have been having a talk with the baron," I said, completely disconcerted. "There!" said the worthy justiciary, "when I told you that sooner or later all that would end in trouble!" The burst of laughter with which my great-uncle accompanied this sally proved to me clearly that on all sides my behaviour was looked on as a joke. I was greatly hurt, but I took care not to let anything be seen; had I not all the future to avenge myself for the scant importance accorded

to me? The baroness appeared at dinner clad in a white dress that matched the dull pallor of her cheeks; her visage breathed a suaver melancholy than ever; at sight of her I felt my heart dissolve in my bosom; and yet in spite of her divine loveliness I felt against Seraphine something of the anger the baron had inspired in me; it seemed to me that these two persons were in league to make a fool of me; I fancied I could discern some touch of the ironic in Seraphine's half-veiled look, and all the graciousness of her previous friendliness wounded me like a hateful lie. I endeavoured with the utmost care to keep as far away from her as possible, and I took my place between two soldiers with whom I drank level, glass for glass. Towards the end of the meal a footman handed me a dish full of bonbons, and whispered in my ear, "from Miss Adelheid." I took the dish, and on the biggest bonbon I read these words, traced with the point of a knife on the sugared covering: "And Seraphine?" Immediately a flame ran through my veins. I cast a furtive look at Adelheid; she made a sign to me that seemed to say, "Master drinker, so you remember everything but Seraphine's health." At once I raised my glass to my lips, and emptied it at a draught; as I put it down on the table I perceived that the beautiful baroness had done the same—we had drunk at the same instant; and when our glasses touched the table our eyes met! A mist passed over my eyes, and remorse stabbed into my heart. Seraphine loved me! I could doubt it no longer; my happiness turned to madness. But one of the guests stood up, and according to the northern custom proposed to drink the health of the lady of the castle. Chagrin seized me at finding myself forestalled. I took my glass, and stood up—I remained motionless; it seemed to me in that moment of glamour that I was about to fall at my beloved's feet. "Come, come! what are you doing, my dear fellow?" said my

nearest neighbour. That mere word broke the charm, my eyes were opened—but Seraphine had disappeared.

After dinner my intoxication had reached such a pitch that I was constrained to go out of the castle, in spite of the wild hurricane whirling outside and the snow tumbling down in thick flakes. I began to run through the heather and brush along the shores of the lake, crying at the top of my voice : "See now the dance the devil leads the foolish lad who sought to pluck the forbidden fruit in the garden of love!" And I ran and ran wildly until I was clean out of breath; and God knows how far I would have gone like that if I had not heard my name being shouted in the woods by a voice I knew, the voice of the head forester of R....sitten. "Hola! dear Mr Theodore," said the brave fellow, "where the devil are you got to, soaking your feet in the snow at the risk of catching your death of cold? I've been hunting for you everywhere; the justiciary has been waiting at the castle for you this two long hours." Recalled to common sense by the thought of my great-uncle, I followed, in a rather mechanical way, the guide he had sent to look for me.



When I got back I found him gravely at work in the audience-chamber. I counted on a thorough scolding; but the good man was very indulgent. "Cousin," he said smiling, "you did well to take the air to work off your wine to-day;

but be more reasonable in future, you are not old enough to indulge yourself in these little excesses." As I made no reply, and as, like a schoolboy found at fault, I made a show of setting to work, "Tell me, by the way," said my great-uncle, "what passed between you and the baron?" I told him everything, and kept nothing back. "Very good," interrupted my uncle when he had heard enough, "the baron has entrusted you with something like a mission here! Luckily for him we are going away to-morrow."

At these words I all but dropped. Next day my great-uncle was as good as his word, and from that day I never saw Seraphine again.

Not long after our return home the good justiciary was seized with extremely violent attacks of gout. His disposition suddenly became morose and bitter, as a result of the excruciating pain he had to endure; in spite of all my attentions and the best medical care the malady went from bad to worse. One morning I was summoned to his side in all haste; a particularly cruel attack had brought him to the verge of death. I found him stretched out in bed; his hand was still clenching a crumpled letter. I recognized the writing of the steward of the R....sitten domains; but my distress was too great to permit the awakening of curiosity in my mind; at every moment I trembled lest I should see that dear relative, whose real affection for me I knew so well, expire before my eyes. At last, after many hours of anguish, life regained the upper hand, the pulse began to beat once more, and the old man's robust constitution outwore the attacks of death. Gradually the danger receded; but he remained for many months confined to his bed of pain, scarcely moving at all. His health was so impaired by this rude shock that he was constrained to resign all his judicial functions. No hope was left me of ever going

back to R....sitten. The poor invalid could endure no other nursing than mine; when his pains gave him a moment's respite his one consolation was to talk with me at length, but he never spoke of our stay at R....sitten, and I for my part never ventured to turn his memory that way. When by dint of devoted care and constant watching I had succeeded in restoring a measure of health to my uncle, the memory of Seraphine awoke in my heart, surrounded by a charm more potent than ever. One day by chance I opened a portfolio I had used during my visit to R....sitten; something white fell from it. It was a silken ribbon enclosing a lock of Seraphine's hair. As I examined this token of remembrance left by the secret love that fate had broken at its birth, I observed a reddish stain on the ribbon. Was it blood? and was that blood a presage of some tragic happening? My imagination abandoned itself to the darkest conjectures.

Meanwhile my great-uncle saw his strength little by little returning with the summer weather. One warm evening I had brought him to sit under the fragrant limes in our garden. He was in a cheerful mood. "Cousin," he said, "I feel myself extraordinarily strong, but I have no illusions about the future : this return of health is like the last bright shining of a lamp about to be extinguished. Before falling into the last sleep, whose approach I perceive with all the calm of a just man, I must acquit myself of a debt I owe to you. Do you remember our stay at R....sitten?" That unlooked-for question threw me into a state of agitation impossible to express. The old man saw it, and went on without giving me time to seek for a reply. "Cousin," he continued, "if it had not been for me you would now have been in a gulf of misfortune—had I not dragged you away from R....sitten. A mysterious story involves the masters of that castle, with which your

imprudence all but involved you. Now that this peril is past, listen to what I shall tell you; before death severs us I wish to disclose strange things to you. Perhaps one day you will find an opportunity to profit by them."

And here is what my great-uncle told me, speaking of himself in the third person.

II

One stormy night in 176- the inhabitants of the manor of R....sitten were startled out of sleep by a shock like an earthquake. The servants of that gloomy house ran here and there through halls and chambers to find the cause for this shock; but no sign of damage was discovered. Everything had returned to the immemorial calm in which the ancient home of the R....sitten family habitually dwelt. The old major-domo, Daniel, went up alone to the hall of the knights, to which the baron Roderich von R. retired every night after the alchemical labours to which he addicted himself so ardently; he was seized with horror at a most lamentable sight. Between the door of Roderich's room and the door of another chamber there was a third door leading to the top of the donjon and a pavilion the baron had built there for his experiments. On Daniel's opening this door a gust blew out his torch; bricks broke away from the wall and fell into an abyss with a hoarse rattle. Daniel fell on his knees, crying out, "God's mercy! our good master has died a dreadful death!" Soon after the body of the unfortunate noble was brought up by the hands of his weeping servants. He was dressed in his richest garments and laid in a *chapelle ardente* erected in the middle of the hall of the knights. On examination it was found that the vaulted roof

of the donjon had fallen in. The weight of the great stones that formed the key of the vault had smashed through the floor; the beams, dragged along in the general fall, had levered out part of the mid-wall, and driven through the lower storeys like arrows. Opening the door of the great hall you could not set foot inside the tower without tumbling to the bottom of a hole more than a hundred feet deep.

Old Baron Roderich had foretold the day of his death, and had announced it to Wolfgang, his eldest son, to whom the entail of R....sitten now fell. This young noble, on receiving his father's message in Geneva, set out without delay to come to him. On his arrival he found all his fears cruelly come true, and fell almost fainting at the side of the funeral couch. "My poor father!" he exclaimed after a long pause, in a voice broken with sobs, "my poor father! The studies of the mysteries of the universe could not give you the knowledge that prolongs life!"

After the obsequies of his sire, the young baron made Daniel relate to him the details of the ruin of the donjon. When the major-domo asked for his orders for carrying out the necessary repairs, "No, never!" said Wolfgang. "What do I care for this old place, where my father wasted in works of sorcery the treasures I had a right to inherit one day! I do not believe that the roof of the donjon crashed in by any ordinary accident. My father died the victim of an explosion of his accursed crucibles in which my fortune was melting away. I would not give a florin to put back a stone in that kennel. I prefer to finish the house that one of my ancestors began down in the valley." "But," said Daniel, "what is to become of the faithful old servants that sheltered in this manor? Are they to go and beg the bread of charity?" "What is that to me!" rejoined the heir : "what have I to do with

these old folk? I will give each of them a gratuity in proportion to the length of his service." "Alas! alas!" cried the major-domo in grief, "must I see myself at my age turned away from this house where I hoped my bones would one day rest in peace!" "Cursed dog!" roared Wolfgang, raising his fist at Daniel, "damned hypocrite! do you look for any favour from me, and do you expect to make me your dupe after seconding my father in his sorcerymongering that day by day devoured the best of my property—you that spurred on an old man's heart to avarice? Would I not do well to have you beaten to death as your just reward?"

These words flung Daniel into a dreadful state of terror; he threw himself on his knees before his new lord, who ruthlessly stretched him out on the floor with a great kick full in the breast. The wretched major-domo gave a stifled cry, like a wild creature wounded to the death, and staggered to his feet, furtively casting at his master a look full of hate and revenge, and disregarding a purse of gold that Baron Wolfgang had thrown down to make up for his maltreatment of his servant.

The first care of the new owner of R....sitten was to ascertain, with the help of his justiciary, the exact revenues of the property. This examination, conducted with the most minute attention to detail, convinced the justiciary that the old baron Roderich had not managed to expend the whole amount of the annual income of his domains; and as among his papers there had only been found quite insignificant sums in bills of exchange, the money must have been hidden in some place the secret of which was doubtless known only to the major-domo Daniel, the confidant of his late master. Baron Wolfgang described to the justiciary the violent scene in which he had struck Daniel, and told him his fear that for the sake of revenge the major-domo would refuse to reveal the hiding-place in

which the old noble's ducats were probably reposing. The justiciary, like a man of good sense and a clever lawyer who knows how to make people talk unawares, bade Wolfgang not to be uneasy, and declared that he would undertake to question Daniel. His first attempts were fruitless. At every question Daniel smiled sardonically and answered : " In heaven's name, master justiciary, I have no mind to make a mystery over a few wretched crowns! You will find a goodly number in a recess adjoining my poor master's bedchamber; as for the rest," he added, with a red glint in his eyes, "you must go and look for them under the debris of the donjon. I wager that you will find enough gold there to buy a province! "

In accordance with these indications search was made in the recess in the presence of Daniel. They found a great iron chest full of gold and silver coins, with a parchment under the lid. On this parchment could be read the following message, written in the hand of the old baron : "He who will inherit the property of R....sitten after my death will find here a hundred and fifty thousand ducats : my last wish is that he should make use of them to build in the western angle of this castle, in place of the donjon, which he will find destroyed, a lighthouse, that shall burn every night to light those who sail upon the sea." This strange will was signed with the name and the arms of Roderich, Baron von R....sitten, and dated Saint Michael's night 176-.

Having verified the number of the ducats, Wolfgang turned to Daniel. "You have been a good and faithful servant," he said, "and I regret my violent behaviour. To compensate you, I retain and confirm you in your office of major-domo. In accordance with your wish, your bones shall lie in repose in this castle; but in the meantime, if gold is your desire, stoop and take as much as you will." Daniel made no answer

to the young baron save a hoarse groan. The justiciary shuddered at the extraordinary sound of that voice, which seemed to sob out in some hellish tongue, "I want none of your gold, I want your blood!" Dazzled by the sight of the treasure under his eyes, Wolfgang had not noticed Daniel's expression when like a cringing beaten dog he bent to kiss the hand of his lord and to thank him for his gracious favours.

Wolfgang closed the chest and put the key in his pocket; then he left the recess, saying to Daniel: "But would it be so difficult to recover the treasures engulfed under the debris of the donjon?" Daniel's only reply was to shake his head and open the door leading to the donjon; scarcely was it opened when an eddy of cold wind drove a mass of snow into the hall, and from the abyss there rose up a screech-owl that flew round and round several times and went out again, completely terrified and uttering wild and ill-omened cries. The baron went up to the edge of the gulf, and could not refrain from shivering as he plumbed the black depths with his eye. The justiciary feared an attack of dizziness, and pulled Wolfgang back, while Daniel made haste to shut the fatal door, saying in piteous tones: "Alas! yes, down there are my honoured master's instruments, articles of immense value!" "But," cried the baron, "you spoke of treasures in money, of substantial sums." "Oh!" rejoined Daniel, "I only meant that the telescopes and retorts and quadrants and crucibles had cost great sums. I know nothing more." No other reply could be got from the major-domo.

Baron Wolfgang was delighted to find at his disposal sums of money sufficient to meet the cost of constructing the new castle he intended to build. Famous architects were summoned to R....sitten to draw up plans, but the lord of the domain selected none of those that were presented to him, and deter-

mined himself to make sketches for the elegant house he meant to erect; and he was at all pains to pay the workmen he employed in a liberal fashion.

Daniel appeared to have forgotten his grievances against Wolfgang, and behaved to the baron with respectful reserve.

Some time after these events the peaceful life of the inhabitants of R....sitten was troubled by the coming of a new arrival, Hubert, Wolfgang's younger brother. This unexpected visit produced a strange impression upon the holder of the entail. He repelled his brother's embraces, and carried him off to a retired room, where they remained shut up for several hours. After this long session Hubert came forth with an air of consternation and asked for his horse, but at the moment of his departure the justiciary V., thinking that this meeting ought to re-establish harmony for ever between the two brothers, too long divided by family dissensions, begged Hubert to remain in the castle a few hours longer; Baron Wolfgang came up and added his request to the justiciary's, saying to his brother, "I hope you will soon come to a better mind." These words appeared to calm Hubert's agitation; he decided to remain. Towards evening my great-uncle went up to Wolfgang's office to consult him with regard to some detail of the administration of the domain. He found him a prey to violent anxiety, striding up and down the room, like a man absorbed in some harrowing fixed idea. "My brother has just come," said Wolfgang, "and from the first moment I have found in him the same family aversion that has separated us for many long years. Hubert hates me because I am rich, while he has devoured the greater part of his fortune like a true spendthrift. He has come to me in a most hostile mood, as if I ought to bear the responsibility for his follies. I cannot and I will not divest myself of a single iota of my rights in the revenues of

the entail. But in a brotherly spirit I would agree to give up to him half of the huge estates our father possessed in Courland. This sacrifice on my part would put Hubert in a position to pay the debts he has contracted and to ensure his wife and his children from want, for they are now suffering from the results of his improvidence and misconduct. But imagine, my dear V., that this insensate spendthrift has by some black magic discovered the existence of that chest with the hundred and fifty thousand ducats we found in the recess. He is trying to make me give up half this sum to him! May lightning blast me before I agree to such a thing, and if he is contemplating some foul stroke against me may God keep me and bring his attempts to naught!"

The justiciary forgot no argument that might make Wolfgang see his brother's visit in a less odious light. Delegated by the baron to negotiate a compromise with Hubert, he carried out this confidential mission with infinite zeal. Pressed by urgent need of money, Hubert accepted Wolfgang's offer on two conditions; the first was that Wolfgang should add to his share of the inheritance a gift of four thousand ducats that would go to quiet the most importunate of his creditors; the second was that he should be allowed to spend a few days at R....sitten with his dearly beloved brother.

To this request Wolfgang replied that he could not entertain it; besides, his wife was on the point of arriving. However, he had two thousand pieces of gold counted out for Hubert by way of gift. Hearing the message conveyed by the justiciary, Hubert frowned. "I will think it over," he said; "but for the moment I am installed here, and I shall not budge." The justiciary vainly strove to prevail upon him. Hubert could not resign himself to see the entail in the hands of a privileged brother. The law seemed to him to be intolerably unjust and

cruel. Wolfgang's generosity he found harder to bear than an insult. "And so," he exclaimed, "my brother is treating me like a beggar! I shall never forget it; soon he will know and feel the consequences of the way he is behaving to me." Hubert, as he had said he would, installed himself in one of the wings of the old castle. He spent his days hunting, and frequently Daniel accompanied him; for that matter he was the only one of the inhabitants of the manor Hubert seemed to care to have anything to do with. He lived in almost complete seclusion, above all else avoiding meeting his brother. The justiciary was not long in conceiving suspicions and showing a certain distrust of master Hubert and his mysterious way of living. One morning Hubert came into my great-uncle's cabinet and announced that he had changed his views, that he was ready to leave R....sitten, provided he was given the agreed two thousand gold pieces. His departure, he said, was set for the next night; and as he wished to travel on horseback he asked for the sum to be given him in the shape of a letter of exchange drawn on the banker Isaac Lazarus of the city of K., where it was his intention to take up his abode.

This news filled Wolfgang with the utmost delight. "My dear brother," he said as he signed the letter of credit, "has at last come to a better frame of mind! Harmony and peace are restored between us for ever; never again will he darken this castle with his presence."

In the middle of the following night the justiciary was awakened with a start by a lamentable groaning. He sat up and listened intently, but all was silence again, and V. imagined it was a bad dream; he got out of bed and went to the window to breathe in the quiet of the cool night. Almost immediately he saw the door of the manor open, creaking on its rusty hinges. The major-domo Daniel, armed with a dark

lantern, brought a saddled horse out of the stable and led it into the courtyard; then another man, wrapped up to the eyes in a fur cloak, came out of the castle apartments. This was Hubert; he talked to the major-domo for a few minutes with animated gestures, after which he went back into the castle. Daniel led the horse into the stable again, shut up the great gateway, and withdrew stealthily. The justiciary engaged in every kind of speculation upon this abortive departure. He asked how Hubert had come to change his mind; was there not some bond of complicity between him and Daniel for some crime that the future alone would disclose? Great sagacity and unremitting vigilance were called for to baffle the evil designs those two men might be hatching together, the second of whom in particular, master Daniel, was already suspect in the eyes of the justiciary. V. spent the remainder of the night amid these strange reflections. At daybreak, as he was about to try to get to sleep again, he heard a great noise of confused voices and people running this way and that: several distracted servants came and knocked at his door to tell him forlornly that Baron Wolfgang had disappeared and no one knew what had become of him. He had retired to bed the night before at his usual time; then he must have gone out in his dressing-gown with his candlestick, for those two articles were no longer to be found in his room in the place they had occupied on the previous night.

Stricken with terror, the justiciary remembered the scene of which he had been an involuntary witness during the night. He remembered the lamentable cry he had heard. A prey to the darkest apprehensions, he ran to the hall of the knights: the door communicating with the donjon was open! The justiciary pointed his finger to the gulf of the tower and said to the servants frozen with terror: "That is where your unhappy master

found death last night!" And in very deed through a thick blanket of snow that had been heaped up during the night over the debris there could be seen a death-rigid arm thrust up half-way among the stones. It was the work of several hours, with the help of ladders fastened end to end, to bring up the corpse of Baron Wolfgang. One of his clenched hands still gripped the silver candlestick that had served to light him to his end; all his limbs were horribly dislocated by his fall and mangled by the sharp corners of the stones.

Hubert came in with all the marks of despair upon his face. He found his brother's body stretched on the same table on which, a few weeks earlier, old Baron Roderich had been laid. Hubert threw himself upon the poor corpse. "My brother, my brother!" he cried, groaning. "No, I never asked his death of the devil that hovered around me!" The justiciary, who was there, could not understand what these mysterious words might mean; but a secret instinct he was unable to suppress pointed to Hubert as the murderer of the holder of the entail.

A few hours after this most painful scene Hubert came to him in his court-room. Pale and trembling, he fell into an arm-chair, and said, in a voice quivering with emotion: "I was my brother's enemy, because of that absurd law which enriches the eldest son of a family at the expense of the other children. A terrible misfortune has put an end to his life. I hope it may not have been a punishment from heaven for the hardness of his heart. Here am I this day the holder of the entail: God

knows how this change in fortune has smitten me to the heart; there is no more happiness for me in this world. As for you, master justiciary, I confirm you fully and absolutely in all charges and powers entrusted to you during the lives of my father and my brother; administer this domain in my best interests, following your own devices. For my part I shall leave this castle; I cannot live another day on the scene of such dreadful and deplorable happenings." With these words Hubert got up and left the hall. And two hours later he was spurring along the road to K.

Meanwhile all were speculating on the causes that might have brought about the death of the unfortunate baron. The most general opinion was that he had risen in the night to go and fetch a book from the library. In his half-asleep condition he had mistaken the door and had opened the middle one, which opened on to the gulf. And still this explanation was hardly satisfactory; the door of the donjon was habitually locked and bolted with great care, and it would have needed both time and exertion to open it. How then could it be seriously imagined that the young baron was the victim of any such mistake? The justiciary was lost in conjectures when Franz, Wolfgang's favourite servant, who heard him talking to himself, interrupted to say: "Ah! master justiciary, that was not the way this tragedy happened." But none of the questions put to him could extract the least explanation in the presence of witnesses. He declared that he would only speak to the justiciary, and only under the seal of secrecy. And in a mysterious *tête à tête* he afterwards told that the deceased baron often spoke of the treasures he supposed to be buried under the debris of the donjon; he had made Daniel deliver the key to him, and went often in the middle of the night to lean over the gulf, and dream undisturbed of the vast riches

his passion for gold imagined hidden away in those depths. The probability was that in one of these noctural pilgrimages he had been seized with a dizzy fit and fallen in. Daniel, who more than anyone else seemed to feel the whole horror of this accident, proposed to have the door walled up, and his advice was followed at once.

Hubert, now invested with the entail, returned to his province of Courland, leaving the justiciary V. the necessary powers for administering the domain of R....sitten in his name. The projected building of a new castle was abandoned, and only the work of repairing and strengthening the old one was undertaken.

Many years after these events Hubert reappeared one day at R....sitten, at the beginning of autumn. During his brief stay he had frequent interviews with the justiciary, spoke of his approaching death, and announced that he had already deposited his will in the hands of the magistrates of the town of K. His forebodings came true: he died in the following year. His son, who bore the same name as his father, immediately betook himself to R....sitten to take possession of his inheritance, and his mother and his sister accompanied him. This young lord seemed inclined to every vice. Immediately he arrived at R....sitten he incurred the hatred of all who lived in the manor; his very first act would have turned the whole domain upside down; but the justiciary declared that he formally forbade the carrying out of any orders given by this young madman until after the reading of his father's will, which alone could confer upon him the rights he was arrogating to himself.

This unexpected resistance on the part of a man who in his eyes was no more than an upper servant sent the young lord into transports of anger. But the justiciary knew how to make

head against the storm, and courageously maintained the inviolability of his functions. He went so far as to order young Hubert to leave R....sitten until the day fixed for the reading of the will. Three months from that time the parchments were unfolded at K. in the presence of the magistrates of the town. Besides the witnesses necessary for this reading the justiciary V. had brought a young man of handsome exterior but plainly clad, who was taken to be his secretary. The future holder of the entail presented himself with an arrogant air, and demanded the immediate reading of the will, not having, he said, much time to waste on stupid formalities.

The deceased Baron Hubert von R....sitten declared that he had never possessed the entail as true and legal holder, but that he had held it for and on behalf of the only son of his brother Wolfgang von R....sitten. This son, like his grandfather, bore the name of Roderich; and none but he could be the legitimate heir to the entail. The will furthermore related how Baron Wolfgang in his travels had become united by a secret marriage to a nobly born though portionless girl. At the end of a year his wife had left him widowed with a son whose rights by birth were incontestable, and who was thus called to take possession of the entail. Lastly, to explain his silence during his lifetime, Hubert declared that a private compact between Wolfgang and himself had imposed this silence as a sacred obligation.

When the notary had finished reading the will, the justiciary V. stood up and presented to the magistrates the unknown young man he had brought with him. "Gentlemen," he said, "here is Baron Roderich von R...., legitimate son of Wolfgang von R...., and lord by right of inheritance of the entail of R....sitten."

Hearing these words, Hubert seemed as overwhelmed as if

a thunderbolt had fallen upon his head; then coming to himself with a kind of convulsive start, he raised his hand in menace against the young man who was so suddenly depriving him of his fortune, and ran headlong out of the court with every sign of wild fury. Meanwhile at the command of the magistrates Roderich produced the documents that established his identity beyond question; he also placed before them a number of letters from his father to his mother. But in the legal documents Wolfgang had assumed the quality of merchant, and the pseudonym of von Born; and the letters, although the identity of the handwriting could be verified, were only signed with the initial W. The judges found themselves at a loss to decide this grave question, and terminated their session intending to proceed to a strict examination of the facts submitted to them. Hubert, learning what had taken place, at once addressed a formal request to the district authorities to be put in immediate possession of the entail, failing sufficient proofs in favour of his opponent. The tribunal decided that it should be according to the petition of Baron Hubert von R....sitten if within a reasonable time young Roderich should not have furnished irrefutable evidence of the legitimacy of his claims.

The justiciary V. went with meticulous care through all the papers left by Wolfgang von R....sitten. One night, about midnight, he was in the late baron's bedroom at R....sitten, his nose deep in the dust of ancient files; the moon shone outside with a sinister brightness, and its pallid beams fell upon the walls of the great hall adjoining, the door of which was open. Suddenly the justiciary was interrupted in his work by a sound of footsteps mounting the stairs, and by the jingling of a bunch of keys. He rose from his seat and went into the hall, listening keenly. A door opened, and a man only half-clothed, and carrying a dark lantern, entered with stumbling steps, showing

a pale and haggard countenance. V. recognized Daniel; he was about to speak to him, when on examining the old major-domo's features he perceived that he was the victim of an attack of sleep-walking, for he was walking with eyes fast shut. He went over to the walled-up doorway, put his lantern down on the floor, took a key from the bunch hanging at his belt, and began to scrape at the door, uttering hoarse moans the while. A few moments later he laid his ear against the wall as though to catch some sound, and seemed with an imperious gesture to impose silence upon someone. After all these mysterious demonstrations he stooped and picked up his lantern, and then went back the same way he had come. The justiciary followed him cautiously. Daniel went downstairs, opened the stable, saddled a horse, brought him out into the courtyard of the castle, remained for some little time with head bowed, in the attitude of a servant receiving his master's orders, took the horse back to the stable, and went up to his room again, taking care to push the bolt in his door. This strange scene gave birth to an idea in the justiciary's mind that a crime had been committed in the castle, and that Daniel had been either an accomplice or a witness.

The next day, towards evening, as Daniel had presented himself with regard to certain details of his duties, the justiciary took him by both hands and made him sit down in an arm-chair face to face with himself. "Just tell me, my old friend Daniel, what you think of the outcome of the tangled lawsuit between Hubert and young Roderich."

"Eh! what does it matter to me which of the two will be master here?" answered Daniel, blinking and dropping his voice as if he was afraid of being heard. "But what is the matter with you, Daniel?" the justiciary continued. "You are trembling in every limb as if you had committed a crime.

To look at you anyone would say you had had a very troubled night." Instead of replying Daniel rose heavily and made to leave the room, casting a lowering look about him. But the justiciary, forcing him to sit down again, cried out severely: "Stay where you are, Daniel, and tell me here and now what you did last night, or rather explain to me what I saw." "Eh! good heavens, what did you see?" said the old man with a shudder. The justiciary described the scene I have just related. As he listened, the old major-domo, stupefied, let himself sink into the depths of his great arm-chair, and covered his face with his hands to escape the penetrating eye that was questioning him. "It appears, Daniel," went on the justiciary, "that during the night you are seized with a desire to go and visit the treasures the old Baron Roderich had heaped up in the donjon. During their attacks sleep-walkers always return straightforward answers to the questions anyone puts to them; this coming night we will talk together of certain matters." While the justiciary was speaking Daniel grew more and more agitated; at the last words of V. he uttered a shrill cry and fell back unconscious. Servants were promptly summoned and carried him away to his bed. He passed from this fit into a state of complete coma that lasted for several hours.

When he woke up he asked for a drink, dismissed the servant appointed to sit up with him, and locked himself away in his room.

The next night, when the justiciary was meditating making a decisive experiment on Daniel, he heard a noise outside as if a number of window-panes were

being smashed. He rushed to his window—thick smoke was pouring out of Daniel's room. When they broke down the door to rescue him from the flames they found him on the floor unconscious. His lantern lying broken beside him had set fire to the bed-curtains, and but for the speedy coming of help he would have been miserably burned to ashes. To get to him it had been necessary to break down the door, which was armed with huge bolts. It was clear to the justiciary that Daniel had intended to preclude the possibility of his leaving his own room; but the blind instinct that governs sleep-walkers had been stronger than his will. He had waked up in the middle of his sleep-walking fit on meeting with unwonted resistance; his night-light, falling out of his hands, had started the fire, and the fright had caused him to lose his senses. Restored to himself, Daniel had a long and serious illness, from which he recovered only to fall into an alarming condition of languor.

One evening when the justiciary, always intent on the search for proofs that should establish the rights of his protégé Roderich, was once again rummaging among the archives of R....sitten, Daniel came into his room like a ghost, walking with measured steps. He came straight up to the justiciary's desk and laid a black leather portfolio upon it, then fell on his knees, exclaiming: "There is a judge in heaven! I would fain have time to repent me!" Then he rose up and went out of the room with slow steps, as he had come.

The black portfolio contained most valuable papers, all written by the hand of Baron Wolfgang, and sealed with his seal. These papers clearly established his son's legitimacy, and contained the whole story of his secret marriage. The proofs were unassailable. Hubert was obliged to acknowledge them, and he declared before the judges that he abandoned all his claims to the inheritance of his uncle Wolfgang von

R....sitten. After he had done so he left the town, and the country too. It was known that he had gone to St Petersburg, where he took service with the Russian army, and that he had been sent to Persia. His mother and his sister, after his departure, applied themselves to putting their Courland domains in order. Roderich, who was violently enamoured of Hubert's sister, accompanied the ladies to their estates; and the justiciary V. having returned to K. the castle of R....sitten became more deserted and gloomier than ever.

Ever since the affair of the black portfolio Daniel had become so ill again that his duties had to be transferred to another major-domo. Franz was given this position, the just reward for his faithful services. Soon after, all the legal questions pertaining to the entail were completely cleared up; and the proper formalities were carried out by the justiciary V., who never relaxed his efforts until he had seen young Roderich installed without opposition and secure from all fears for the future. Very soon they learned that Hubert, his rival, had perished in a battle against the Persians; his Courland properties passed to his sister Seraphine, who returned Roderich's love and presently became his wife.

The betrothal took place at R....sitten in early November; nothing was omitted to give the ceremony all the splendour called for by the high rank and the wealth of the bridal pair. The justiciary V., who for a number of years had considered himself as inseparably identified with the lords of R....sitten, had chosen the former bed-chamber of old Roderich, so as to be in a position to spy out the secrets of Daniel's behaviour. One evening while the baron and his justiciary, seated in that room one at each end of a table in front of a huge brazier, were going into the castle revenues, a wild tempest was howling outside, the forest pines were cracking like the skeletons of giants, and

the wind was sobbing round the galleries. "How dreadful the weather is out there, and how snug it is in here!" exclaimed V. "Yes, yes, dreadful!" mechanically repeated Roderich, whom nothing up till that moment had distracted from his calculations. He got up to go over to the window to see the effect of the storm; scarcely was he on his feet when he fell back on his chair, his mouth hanging open, his look a stare, his hand pointing to the door that had just opened to give passage to a livid, fleshless face whose aspect might have struck terror into the boldest.

It was Daniel!

Paler even than Daniel, and shaken as with fever at the sight of the old major-domo scraping at the walled-up doorway, Baron Roderich sprang towards him, crying: "Daniel! Daniel! what are you doing here at this hour?" Daniel gave a yell and fell backwards. They tried to raise him up, but the wretched man was dead. "Great God!" cried Roderich, clasping his hands, "what a crime one moment of affright has driven me to commit! This poor man was a sleep-walker, and the doctors tell us it is sufficient to call a man by his name when he is in this state to kill him on the spot!" "Baron," said the justiciary gravely, "do not accuse yourself of this man's death: he was your father's murderer!" "My father!" "Yes, my lord; it was God's hand that smote him when you spoke: the terror that took hold upon you was the instinct of repulsion that seizes us at the sight, at the touch, of a miscreant. The very words you have just spoken to Daniel, which killed him like a stroke of lightning, were the last words uttered by your unhappy father."

The justiciary then took from his bosom a carefully sealed paper, which was entirely in the handwriting of Hubert, the brother of Wolfgang von R....sitten, and disclosed to the eyes of Roderich the mysteries of hate and revenge that had already

brought so many misfortunes to the family of R....sitten. He read a kind of autograph confession, in which Hubert declared that his animosity against his brother Wolfgang dated from the setting up of the entail of R....sitten. This act of their father's own volition, which deprived Hubert of the better part of his fortune to the advantage of his elder brother, had planted in his heart the seeds of a resentment that nothing availed to efface. From that time, yielding to an irresistible desire for vengeance, Hubert had plotted with Daniel to find the most effective means of creating dissension between Wolfgang and the old Baron Roderich. The old man was bent on giving lustre to the new entail by allying his eldest son in marriage with one of the oldest families in the country. His astrological observations had even led him to read in the courses of the stars the certainty of this match; and thus any choice Wolfgang might make against his father's wishes would have become a cause for deadly displeasure and malediction.

Wolfgang, falling violently in love at Geneva with a girl of noble lineage, but wholly without fortune, had flattered himself with the hope that with time and assiduity he would succeed in bringing his old father to approve the marriage he had secretly contracted with the woman he adored. Meanwhile the old baron, finding in the constellations the presage of his own impending death, had written to Geneva bidding Wolfgang come home to him immediately. When the latter arrived his father was dead, as we saw at the beginning of the tale. A little later, when Hubert came to R....sitten to settle with his brother the business of the succession, Wolfgang frankly told him the mystery of his marriage, and expressed his joy that heaven had given him a son, and that he could presently disclose to his beloved wife that the merchant von Born, with whom she had joined her destiny, was the rich and powerful

heir of the Baron von R....sitten. He confided to him at the same time his plan of returning at once to Geneva to bring back the Baroness Seraphine von R....sitten. But death surprised him at the moment of setting out on this journey. Hubert took advantage of this death to secure his direct succession to the entail, since there was nothing to establish the rights of Wolfgang's son. However, since he had the foundations of honour and loyalty within him, remorse speedily seized on his mind. An incident that he looked upon as providential finally awoke in him the fear of the wrath of heaven. He had two boys, already about eleven or twelve years old, who hated one another and gave each other continual proofs of mutual ill-feeling. One day the elder said to the younger, "You are nothing but a poor devil of a thing; I shall one day be lord of R....sitten, and then, my dear young brother, you will have to come humbly to ask me for money to buy a new doublet." The younger brother, enraged by this gibe, drove a knife into his brother, inflicting a very serious wound. Fearing even worse misfortunes, Hubert sent his younger son to Russia, where he subsequently engaged in military service, and was killed fighting under Suvarov against the French. Hubert's grief made him reflect seriously. He collected the revenues of the entail with most scrupulous care, and sent funds to Geneva, supposedly from a relative of the merchant von Born, to help in bringing up Wolfgang's son. As for Wolfgang's death, it had long remained a hideous mystery, the truth about which could barely be dimly conjectured through Daniel's madness.

Here is the story as Hubert's confession made it clear:

On the night of his departure, Daniel, who without a doubt desired to profit by the animosity between the two brothers, held him back at the moment when he was mounting his horse, telling him he must not thus abandon a magnificent inheritance

to the avarice of Wolfgang. "But what can I do in the matter?" Hubert had cried, smiting his brow with rage; then, making a threatening gesture with his gun, he had added : "Ah! why could I not have found an opportunity to put an end to it in the confusion of a hunt!" "You are lucky not to have been guilty of that imprudence!" rejoined Daniel, taking hold of his arm. "But would you be determined to resume possession of this domain if you had not to bear the responsibility for the means?" "Yes, at any price," murmured the sullen Hubert hoarsely. "Stay here, then," said Daniel; "you are in your own house, Baron von R....sitten; the previous lord of the entail died this very night crushed beneath the debris of the donjon!"

Here is how the fatal drama was accomplished. Daniel, who pursued his design of appropriating a large sum of money, to say nothing of the gifts of the new baron, had observed that Wolfgang went every night to brood at the edge of the gulf made by the fall of the donjon roof. One night therefore, having learned of Hubert's impending departure, he had posted himself in a dark corner of the hall of the knights to wait for Wolfgang; when the unhappy baron had opened the door of the tower he came up to him at the edge of the abyss, and the baron, who already read his doom in the traitor's eyes, had cried out : "Daniel! Daniel! what are you doing here at this hour?" "Die, dog!" Daniel had cried in his turn, and violently hurled him into the depths.

He was about to realize his hopes, and he had glutted his hate.

Cruelly shaken by these horrible revelations, Baron Roderich could not go on living in this castle, over which there lay a pall of blood. He went back to his Courland estates, whence he came to R....sitten only for the autumn hunting.

Franz, the new major-domo, declared that from time to time,

during the nights when the moon was full, the ghost of Daniel was seen to wander through the galleries and the halls of the manor.

Such was the tale my great-uncle the justiciary told me. And then I ventured a timid question about Seraphine. "Cousin," said the good old gentleman in a voice of emotion, "the cruel destiny that smote the family of R....sitten has not spared that poor girl. Two days after our departure the baron arranged a sledging party. Suddenly the horses harnessed to the sledge in which he was with the baroness bolted and set off through the woods with incredible fury. 'The old man! the old man is behind us! He is pursuing us!' cried the baroness in a piercing shriek. At that moment the sledge overturned and was smashed. She was found dead! The baron will die of grief for her. Cousin, we shall never see R....sitten again." With these words my great-uncle's voice died out in tears. I left him with my heart all but breaking.

Many a year had gone by. The justiciary was long since at peace within his tomb. Napoleon was ravaging the North, and I was on my way back from St Petersburg, following the Baltic coast. Passing by the little town of K. I perceived a long way off a star-like light. As I came nearer I could distinguish a very bright blaze. I asked the postilion if it was a fire.

"No, sir," he replied, "it is the lighthouse of R....sitten."

The lighthouse of R....sitten! The name awakened all the memories in my heart. I saw once more in a pale aureole my adored Seraphine! I was driven to the village where the steward of the domain used to live, and asked to see him. "Sir," said a clerk in royal livery, taking his pipe from his mouth, "there is no longer any steward of the R....sitten domain. This is a domain that has fallen to the Crown by

the death, without heirs, of the last Baron von R....sitten, now sixteen years ago."

I went up to the manor; it was in ruins. The best of the materials had been employed to build a lighthouse on a rock. A peasant whom I met on the edge of the pine-wood told me, and trembled as he told, that in the full of the moon there were often seen white shadowy shapes pursuing each other through the debris, uttering lamentable cries.

Poor short-sighted old Roderich! What dread power was it that in its last scions destroyed the tree whose roots you fondly dreamed you had planted for all eternity?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