

BARING-GOULD SABINE

# A BOOK OF GHOSTS

Sabine Baring-Gould

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# Sabine Baring-Gould

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### PREFACE

Some of the stories in this volume have already appeared in print. "The Red-haired Girl" in *The Windsor Magazine*; "Colonel Halifax's Ghost Story" in *The Illustrated English Magazine*; "Glámr" I told in my *Iceland: Its Scenes and Sagas*, published in 1863, and long ago out of print. "The Bold Venture" appeared in *The Graphic*; "The 9.30 Up-train" as long ago as 1853 in *Once a Week*.

## JEAN BOUCHON

I was in Orléans a good many years ago. At the time it was my purpose to write a life of Joan of Arc, and I considered it advisable to visit the scenes of her exploits, so as to be able to give to my narrative some local colour.

But I did not find Orléans answer to my expectations. It is a dull town, very modern in appearance, but with that measly and decrepit look which is so general in French towns. There was a Place Jeanne d'Arc, with an equestrian statue of her in the midst, flourishing a banner. There was the house that the Maid had occupied after the taking of the city, but, with the exception of the walls and rafters, it had undergone so much alteration and modernisation as to have lost its interest. A museum of memorials of la Pucelle had been formed, but possessed no genuine relics, only arms and tapestries of a later date.

The city walls she had besieged, the gate through which she had burst, had been levelled, and their places taken by boulevards. The very cathedral in which she had knelt to return thanks for her victory was not the same. That had been blown up by the Huguenots, and the cathedral that now stands was erected on its ruins in 1601.

There was an ormolu figure of Jeanne on the clock – never wound up – upon the mantelshelf in my room at the hotel, and there were chocolate figures of her in the confectioners' shop-windows for children to suck. When I sat down at 7 p.m. to table d'hôte, at my inn, I was out of heart. The result of my exploration of sites had been unsatisfactory; but I trusted on the morrow to be able to find material to serve my purpose in the municipal archives of the town library.

My dinner ended, I sauntered to a café.

That I selected opened on to the Place, but there was a back entrance near to my hotel, leading through a long, stone-paved passage at the back of the houses in the street, and by ascending three or four stone steps one entered the long, well-lighted café. I came into it from the back by this means, and not from the front.

I took my place and called for a café-cognac. Then I picked up a French paper and proceeded to read it – all but the feuilleton. In my experience I have never yet come across anyone who reads the feuilletons in a French paper; and my impression is that these snippets of novel are printed solely for the purpose of filling up space and disguising the lack of news at the disposal of the editors. The French papers borrow their information relative to foreign affairs largely from the English journals, so that they are a day behind ours in the foreign news that they publish.

Whilst I was engaged in reading, something caused me to look up, and I noticed standing by the white marble-topped table, on which was my coffee, a waiter, with a pale face and black whiskers, in an expectant attitude.

I was a little nettled at his precipitancy in applying for payment, but I put it down to my being a total stranger there; and without a word I set down half a franc and a ten centimes coin, the latter as his *pourboire*. Then I proceeded with my reading.

I think a quarter of an hour had elapsed, when I rose to depart, and then, to my surprise, I noticed the half-franc still on the table, but the sous piece was gone.

I beckoned to a waiter, and said: "One of you came to me a little while ago demanding payment. I think he was somewhat hasty in pressing for it; however, I set the money down, and the fellow has taken the tip, and has neglected the charge for the coffee."

"*Sapristi!*" exclaimed the *garçon*; "Jean Bouchon has been at his tricks again."

I said nothing further; asked no questions. The matter did not concern me, or indeed interest me in the smallest degree; and I left.

Next day I worked hard in the town library. I cannot say that I lighted on any unpublished documents that might serve my purpose.

I had to go through the controversial literature relative to whether Jeanne d'Arc was burnt or not, for it has been maintained that a person of the same name, and also of Arques, died a natural death some time later, and who postured as the original warrior-maid. I read a good many monographs on the Pucelle, of various values; some real contributions to history, others mere second-hand cookings-up of well-known and often-used material. The sauce in these latter was all that was new.

In the evening, after dinner, I went back to the same café and called for black coffee with a nip of brandy. I drank it leisurely, and then retreated to the desk where I could write some letters.

I had finished one, and was folding it, when I saw the same pale-visaged waiter standing by with his hand extended for payment. I put my hand into my pocket, pulled out a fifty centimes piece and a coin of two sous, and placed both beside me, near the man, and proceeded to put my letter in an envelope, which I then directed.

Next I wrote a second letter, and that concluded, I rose to go to one of the tables and to call for stamps, when I noticed that again the silver coin had been left untouched, but the copper piece had been taken away.

I tapped for a waiter.

"*Tiens*," said I, "that fellow of yours has been bungling again. He has taken the tip and has left the half-franc."

"Ah! Jean Bouchon once more!"

"But who is Jean Bouchon?"

The man shrugged his shoulders, and, instead of answering my query, said: "I should recommend monsieur to refuse to pay Jean Bouchon again – that is, supposing monsieur intends revisiting this café."

"I most assuredly will not pay such a noodle," I said; "and it passes my comprehension how you can keep such a fellow on your staff."

I revisited the library next day, and then walked by the Loire, that rolls in winter such a full and turbid stream, and in summer, with a reduced flood, exposes gravel and sand-banks. I wandered around the town, and endeavoured vainly to picture it, enclosed by walls and drums of towers, when on April 29th, 1429, Jeanne threw herself into the town and forced the English to retire, discomfited and perplexed.

In the evening I revisited the café and made my wants known as before. Then I looked at my notes, and began to arrange them.

Whilst thus engaged I observed the waiter, named Jean Bouchon, standing near the table in an expectant attitude as before. I now looked him full in the face and observed his countenance. He had puffy white cheeks, small black eyes, thick dark mutton-chop whiskers, and a broken nose. He was decidedly an ugly man, but not a man with a repulsive expression of face.

"No," said I, "I will give you nothing. I will not pay you. Send another *garçon* to me."

As I looked at him to see how he took this refusal, he seemed to fall back out of my range, or, to be more exact, the lines of his form and features became confused. It was much as though I had been gazing on a reflection in still water; that something had ruffled the surface, and all was broken up and obliterated. I could see him no more. I was puzzled and a bit startled, and I rapped my coffee-cup with the spoon to call the attention of a waiter. One sprang to me immediately.

"See!" said I, "Jean Bouchon has been here again; I told him that I would not pay him one sou, and he has vanished in a most perplexing manner. I do not see him in the room."

"No, he is not in the room."

"When he comes in again, send him to me. I want to have a word with him."

The waiter looked confused, and replied: "I do not think that Jean will return."

"How long has he been on your staff?"

"Oh! he has not been on our staff for some years."

"Then why does he come here and ask for payment for coffee and what else one may order?"

"He never takes payment for anything that has been consumed. He takes only the tips."

"But why do you permit him to do that?"

"We cannot help ourselves."

"He should not be allowed to enter the café."

"No one can keep him out."

"This is surpassing strange. He has no right to the tips. You should communicate with the police."

The waiter shook his head. "They can do nothing. Jean Bouchon died in 1869."

"Died in 1869!" I repeated.

"It is so. But he still comes here. He never pesters the old customers, the inhabitants of the town – only visitors, strangers."

"Tell me all about him."

"Monsieur must pardon me now. We have many in the place, and I have my duties."

"In that case I will drop in here to-morrow morning when you are disengaged, and I will ask you to inform me about him. What is your name?"

"At monsieur's pleasure – Alphonse."

Next morning, in place of pursuing the traces of the Maid of Orléans, I went to the café to hunt up Jean Bouchon. I found Alphonse with a duster wiping down the tables. I invited him to a table and made him sit down opposite me. I will give his story in substance, only where advisable recording his exact words.

Jean Bouchon had been a waiter at this particular café. Now in some of these establishments the attendants are wont to have a box, into which they drop all the tips that are received; and at the end of the week it is opened, and the sum found in it is divided *pro rata* among the waiters, the head waiter receiving a larger portion than the others. This is not customary in all such places of refreshment, but it is in some, and it was so in this café. The average is pretty constant, except on special occasions, as when a fête occurs; and the waiters know within a few francs what their perquisites will be.

But in the café where served Jean Bouchon the sum did not reach the weekly total that might have been anticipated; and after this deficit had been noted for a couple of months the waiters were convinced that there was something wrong, somewhere or somehow. Either the common box was tampered with, or one of them did not put in his tips received. A watch was set, and it was discovered that Jean Bouchon was the defaulter. When he had received a gratuity, he went to the box, and pretended to put in the coin, but no sound followed, as would have been the case had one been dropped in.

There ensued, of course, a great commotion among the waiters when this was discovered. Jean Bouchon endeavoured to brave it out, but the *patron* was appealed to, the case stated, and he was dismissed. As he left by the back entrance, one of the younger *garçons* put out his leg and tripped Bouchon up, so that he stumbled and fell headlong down the steps with a crash on the stone floor of the passage. He fell with such violence on his forehead that he was taken up insensible. His bones were fractured, there was concussion of the brain, and he died within a few hours without recovering consciousness.

"We were all very sorry and greatly shocked," said Alphonse; "we did not like the man, he had dealt dishonourably by us, but we wished him no ill, and our resentment was at an end when he was dead. The waiter who had tripped him up was arrested, and was sent to prison for some months, but the accident was due to *une mauvaise plaisanterie* and no malice was in it, so that the young fellow got off with a light sentence. He afterwards married a widow with a café at Vierzon, and is there, I believe, doing well.

"Jean Bouchon was buried," continued Alphonse; "and we waiters attended the funeral and held white kerchiefs to our eyes. Our head waiter even put a lemon into his, that by squeezing it he

might draw tears from his eyes. We all subscribed for the interment, that it should be dignified – majestic as becomes a waiter."

"And do you mean to tell me that Jean Bouchon has haunted this café ever since?"

"Ever since 1869," replied Alphonse.

"And there is no way of getting rid of him?"

"None at all, monsieur. One of the Canons of Bourges came in here one evening. We did suppose that Jean Bouchon would not approach, molest an ecclesiastic, but he did. He took his *pourboire* and left the rest, just as he treated monsieur. Ah! monsieur! but Jean Bouchon did well in 1870 and 1871 when those pigs of Prussians were here in occupation. The officers came nightly to our café, and Jean Bouchon was greatly on the alert. He must have carried away half of the gratuities they offered. It was a sad loss to us."

"This is a very extraordinary story," said I.

"But it is true," replied Alphonse.

Next day I left Orléans. I gave up the notion of writing the life of Joan of Arc, as I found that there was absolutely no new material to be gleaned on her history – in fact, she had been thrashed out.

Years passed, and I had almost forgotten about Jean Bouchon, when, the other day, I was in Orléans once more, on my way south, and at once the whole story recurred to me.

I went that evening to the same café. It had been smartened up since I was there before. There was more plate glass, more gilding; electric light had been introduced, there were more mirrors, and there were also ornaments that had not been in the café before.

I called for café-cognac and looked at a journal, but turned my eyes on one side occasionally, on the look-out for Jean Bouchon. But he did not put in an appearance. I waited for a quarter of an hour in expectation, but saw no sign of him.

Presently I summoned a waiter, and when he came up I inquired: "But where is Jean Bouchon?"

"Monsieur asks after Jean Bouchon?" The man looked surprised.

"Yes, I have seen him here previously. Where is he at present?"

"Monsieur has seen Jean Bouchon? Monsieur perhaps knew him. He died in 1869."

"I know that he died in 1869, but I made his acquaintance in 1874. I saw him then thrice, and he accepted some small gratuities of me."

"Monsieur tipped Jean Bouchon?"

"Yes, and Jean Bouchon accepted my tips."

"*Tiens*, and Jean Bouchon died five years before."

"Yes, and what I want to know is how you have rid yourselves of Jean Bouchon, for that you have cleared the place of him is evident, or he would have been pestering me this evening." The man looked disconcerted and irresolute.

"Hold," said I; "is Alphonse here?"

"No, monsieur, Alphonse has left two or three years ago. And monsieur saw Jean Bouchon in 1874. I was not then here. I have been here only six years."

"But you can in all probability inform me of the manner of getting quit of Jean."

"Monsieur! I am very busy this evening, there are so many gentlemen come in."

"I will give you five francs if you will tell me all – all – succinctly about Jean Bouchon."

"Will monsieur be so good as to come here to-morrow during the morning? and then I place myself at the disposition of monsieur."

"I shall be here at eleven o'clock."

At the appointed time I was at the café. If there is an institution that looks ragged and dejected and dissipated, it is a café in the morning, when the chairs are turned upside-down, the waiters are in aprons and shirt-sleeves, and a smell of stale tobacco lurks about the air, mixed with various other unpleasant odours.

The waiter I had spoken to on the previous evening was looking out for me. I made him seat himself at a table with me. No one else was in the saloon except another *garçon*, who was dusting with a long feather-brush.

"Monsieur," began the waiter, "I will tell you the whole truth. The story is curious, and perhaps everyone would not believe it, but it is well *documentée*. Jean Bouchon was at one time in service here. We had a box. When I say we, I do not mean myself included, for I was not here at the time."

"I know about the common box. I know the story down to my visit to Orléans in 1874, when I saw the man."

"Monsieur has perhaps been informed that he was buried in the cemetery?"

"I do know that, at the cost of his fellow-waiters."

"Well, monsieur, he was poor, and his fellow-waiters, though well-disposed, were not rich. So he did not have a grave *en perpétuité*. Accordingly, after many years, when the term of consignment was expired, and it might well be supposed that Jean Bouchon had mouldered away, his grave was cleared out to make room for a fresh occupant. Then a very remarkable discovery was made. It was found that his corroded coffin was crammed – literally stuffed – with five and ten centimes pieces, and with them were also some German coins, no doubt received from those pigs of Prussians during the occupation of Orléans. This discovery was much talked about. Our proprietor of the café and the head waiter went to the mayor and represented to him how matters stood – that all this money had been filched during a series of years since 1869 from the waiters. And our *patron* represented to him that it should in all propriety and justice be restored to us. The mayor was a man of intelligence and heart, and he quite accepted this view of the matter, and ordered the surrender of the whole coffin-load of coins to us, the waiters of the café."

"So you divided it amongst you."

"Pardon, monsieur; we did not. It is true that the money might legitimately be regarded as belonging to us. But then those defrauded, or most of them, had left long ago, and there were among us some who had not been in service in the café more than a year or eighteen months. We could not trace the old waiters. Some were dead, some had married and left this part of the country. We were not a corporation. So we held a meeting to discuss what was to be done with the money. We feared, moreover, that unless the spirit of Jean Bouchon were satisfied, he might continue revisiting the café and go on sweeping away the tips. It was of paramount importance to please Jean Bouchon, to lay out the money in such a manner as would commend itself to his feelings. One suggested one thing, one another. One proposed that the sum should be expended on masses for the repose of Jean's soul. But the head waiter objected to that. He said that he thought he knew the mind of Jean Bouchon, and that this would not commend itself to it. He said, did our head waiter, that he knew Jean Bouchon from head to heels. And he proposed that all the coins should be melted up, and that out of them should be cast a statue of Jean Bouchon in bronze, to be set up here in the café, as there were not enough coins to make one large enough to be erected in a Place. If monsieur will step with me he will see the statue; it is a superb work of art."

He led the way, and I followed.

In the midst of the café stood a pedestal, and on this basis a bronze figure about four feet high. It represented a man reeling backward, with a banner in his left hand, and the right raised towards his brow, as though he had been struck there by a bullet. A sabre, apparently fallen from his grasp, lay at his feet. I studied the face, and it most assuredly was utterly unlike Jean Bouchon with his puffy cheeks, mutton-chop whiskers, and broken nose, as I recalled him.

"But," said I, "the features do not – pardon me – at all resemble those of Jean Bouchon. This might be the young Augustus, or Napoleon I. The profile is quite Greek."

"It may be so," replied the waiter. "But we had no photograph to go by. We had to allow the artist to exercise his genius, and, above all, we had to gratify the spirit of Jean Bouchon."

"I see. But the attitude is inexact. Jean Bouchon fell down the steps headlong, and this represents a man staggering backwards."

"It would have been inartistic to have shown him precipitated forwards; besides, the spirit of Jean might not have liked it."

"Quite so. I understand. But the flag?"

"That was an idea of the artist. Jean could not be made holding a coffee-cup. You will see the whole makes a superb subject. Art has its exigencies. Monsieur will see underneath is an inscription on the pedestal."

I stooped, and with some astonishment read —

**"JEAN BOUCHON MORT SUR LE CHAMP DE GLOIRE  
1870 DULCE ET DECORUM EST PRO PATRIA MORI."**

"Why!" objected I, "he died from falling a cropper in the back passage, not on the field of glory."

"Monsieur! all Orléans is a field of glory. Under S. Aignan did we not repel Attila and his Huns in 451? Under Jeanne d'Arc did we not repulse the English – monsieur will excuse the allusion – in 1429. Did we not recapture Orléans from the Germans in November, 1870?"

"That is all very true," I broke in. "But Jean Bouchon neither fought against Attila nor with la Pucelle, nor against the Prussians. Then '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*' is rather strong, considering the facts."

"How? Does not monsieur see that the sentiment is patriotic and magnificent?"

"I admit that, but dispute the application."

"Then why apply it? The sentiment is all right."

"But by implication it refers to Jean Bouchon, who died, not for his country, but in a sordid coffee-house brawl. Then, again, the date is wrong. Jean Bouchon died in 1869, not in 1870."

"That is only out by a year."

"Yes, but with this mistake of a year, and with the quotation from Horace, and with the attitude given to the figure, anyone would suppose that Jean Bouchon had fallen in the retaking of Orléans from the Prussians."

"Ah! monsieur, who looks on a monument and expects to find thereon the literal truth relative to the deceased?"

"This is something of a sacrifice to truth," I demurred.

"Sacrifice is superb!" said the waiter. "There is nothing more noble, more heroic than sacrifice."

"But not the sacrifice of truth."

"Sacrifice is always sacrifice."

"Well," said I, unwilling further to dispute, "this is certainly a great creation out of nothing."

"Not out of nothing; out of the coppers that Jean Bouchon had filched from us, and which choked up his coffin."

"Jean Bouchon has been seen no more?"

"No, monsieur. And yet – yes, once, when the statue was unveiled. Our *patron* did that. The café was crowded. All our *habitués* were there. The *patron* made a magnificent oration; he drew a superb picture of the moral, intellectual, social, and political merits of Jean Bouchon. There was not a dry eye among the audience, and the speaker choked with emotion. Then, as we stood in a ring, not too near, we saw – I was there and I distinctly saw, so did the others – Jean Bouchon standing with his back to us, looking intently at the statue of himself. Monsieur, as he thus stood I could discern his black mutton-chop whiskers projecting upon each side of his head. Well, sir, not one word was spoken. A dead silence fell upon all. Our *patron* ceased to speak, and wiped his eyes and blew his nose. A sort of holy awe possessed us all. Then, after the lapse of some minutes, Jean Bouchon turned

himself about, and we all saw his puffy pale cheeks, his thick sensual lips, his broken nose, his little pig's eyes. He was very unlike his idealised portrait in the statue; but what matters that? It gratified the deceased, and it injured no one. Well, monsieur, Jean Bouchon stood facing us, and he turned his head from one side to another, and gave us all what I may term a greasy smile. Then he lifted up his hands as though invoking a blessing on us all, and vanished. Since then he has not been seen."

## POMPS AND VANITIES

Colonel Mountjoy had an appointment in India that kept him there permanently. Consequently he was constrained to send his two daughters to England when they were quite children. His wife had died of cholera at Madras. The girls were Letice and Betty. There was a year's difference in their ages, but they were extraordinarily alike, so much so that they might have been supposed to be twins.

Letice was given up to the charge of Miss Mountjoy, her father's sister, and Betty to that of Lady Lacy, her maternal aunt. Their father would have preferred that his daughters should have been together, but there were difficulties in the way; neither of the ladies was inclined to be burdened with both, and if both had been placed with one the other might have regarded and resented this as a slight.

As the children grew up their likeness in feature became more close, but they diverged exceedingly in expression. A sullenness, an unhappy look, a towering fire of resentment characterised that of Letice, whereas the face of Betty was open and gay.

This difference was due to the difference in their bringing up.

Lady Lacy, who had a small house in North Devon, was a kindly, intellectual, and broad-minded old lady, of sweet disposition but a decided will. She saw a good deal of society, and did her best to train Betty to be an educated and liberal-minded woman of culture and graceful manners. She did not send her to school, but had her taught at home; and on the excuse that her eyes were weak by artificial light she made the girl read to her in the evenings, and always read books that were standard and calculated to increase her knowledge and to develop her understanding. Lady Lacy detested all shams, and under her influence Betty grew up to be thoroughly straightforward, healthy-minded, and true.

On the other hand, Miss Mountjoy was, as Letice called her, a Killjoy. She had herself been reared in the midst of the Clapham sect; had become rigid in all her ideas, narrow in all her sympathies, and a bundle of prejudices.

The present generation of young people know nothing of the system of repression that was exercised in that of their fathers and mothers. Now the tendency is wholly in the other direction, and too greatly so. It is possibly due to a revulsion of feeling against a training that is looked back upon with a shudder.

To that narrow school there existed but two categories of men and women, the Christians and the Worldlings, and those who pertained to it arrogated to themselves the former title. The Judgment had already begun with the severance of the sheep from the goats, and the saints who judged the world had their Jerusalem at Clapham.

In that school the works of the great masters of English literature, Shakespeare, Pope, Scott, Byron, were taboo; no work of imagination was tolerated save the Apocalypse, and that was degraded into a polemic by such scribblers as Elliot and Cumming.

No entertainments, not even the oratorios of Handel, were tolerated; they savoured of the world. The nearest approach to excitement was found in a missionary meeting. The Chinese contract the feet of their daughters, but those English Claphamites cramped the minds of their children. The Venetians made use of an iron prison, with gradually contracting walls, that finally crushed the life out of the captive. But these elect Christians put their sons and daughters into a school that squeezed their energies and their intelligences to death.

Dickens caricatured such people in Mrs. Jellyby and Mr. Chadband; but he sketched them only in their external aspect, and left untouched their private action in distorting young minds, maiming their wills, damping down all youthful buoyancy.

But the result did not answer the expectations of those who adopted this system with the young. Some daughters, indeed, of weaker wills were permanently stunted and shaped on the approved model, but nearly all the sons, and most of the daughters, on obtaining their freedom, broke away

into utter frivolity and dissipation, or, if they retained any religious impressions, galloped through the Church of England, performing strange antics on the way, and plunged into the arms of Rome.

Such was the system to which the high-spirited, strong-willed Letice was subjected, and from which was no escape. The consequence was that Letice tossed and bit at her chains, and that there ensued frequent outbreaks of resentment against her aunt.

"Oh, Aunt Hannah! I want something to read."

After some demur, and disdainful rejection of more serious works, she was allowed Milton.

Then she said, "Oh! I do love *Comus*."

"*Comus!*" gasped Miss Mountjoy.

"And *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, they are not bad."

"My child. These were the compositions of the immortal bard before his eyes were opened."

"I thought, aunt, that he had dictated the *Paradise Lost and Regained* after he was blind."

"I refer to the eyes of his soul," said the old lady sternly.

"I want a story-book."

"There is the *Dairyman's Daughter*."

"I have read it, and hate it."

"I fear, Leticia, that you are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity."

Unhappily the sisters very rarely met one another. It was but occasionally that Lady Lacy and Betty came to town, and when they did, Miss Mountjoy put as many difficulties as she could in the way of their associating together.

On one such visit to London, Lady Lacy called and asked if she might take Letice with herself to the theatre. Miss Mountjoy shivered with horror, reared herself, and expressed her opinion of stage-plays and those who went to see them in strong and uncomplimentary terms. As she had the custody of Letice, she would by no persuasion be induced to allow her to imperil her soul by going to such a wicked place. Lady Lacy was fain to withdraw in some dismay and much regret.

Poor Letice, who had heard this offer made, had flashed into sudden brightness and a tremor of joy; when it was refused, she burst into a flood of tears and an ecstasy of rage. She ran up to her room, and took and tore to pieces a volume of *Clayton's Sermons*, scattered the leaves over the floor, and stamped upon them.

"Letice," said Miss Mountjoy, when she saw the devastation, "you are a child of wrath."

"Why mayn't I go where there is something pretty to see? Why may I not hear good music? Why must I be kept forever in the Doleful Dumps?"

"Because all these things are of the world, worldly."

"If God hates all that is fair and beautiful, why did He create the peacock, the humming-bird, and the bird of paradise, instead of filling the world with barn-door fowls?"

"You have a carnal mind. You will never go to heaven."

"Lucky I – if the saints there do nothing but hold missionary meetings to convert one another. Pray what else can they do?"

"They are engaged in the worship of God."

"I don't know what that means. All I am acquainted with is the worship of the congregation. At Salem Chapel the minister faces it, mouths at it, gesticulates to it, harangues, flatters, fawns at it, and, indeed, prays at it. If that be all, heaven must be a deadly dull hole."

Miss Mountjoy reared herself, she became livid with wrath. "You wicked girl."

"Aunt," said Letice, intent on further incensing her, "I do wish you would let me go – just for once – to a Catholic church to see what the worship of God is."

"I would rather see you dead at my feet!" exclaimed the incensed lady, and stalked, rigid as a poker, out of the room.

Thus the unhappy girl grew up to woman's estate, her heart seething with rebellion.

And then a terrible thing occurred. She caught scarlet fever, which took an unfavourable turn, and her life was despaired of. Miss Mountjoy was not one to conceal from the girl that her days were few, and her future condition hopeless.

Letice fought against the idea of dying so young.

"Oh, aunt! I won't die! I can't die! I have seen nothing of the pomps and vanities. I want to just taste them, and know what they are like. Oh! save me, make the doctor give me something to revive me. I want the pomps and vanities, oh! so much. I will not, I cannot die!" But her will, her struggle, availed nothing, and she passed away into the Great Unseen.

Miss Mountjoy wrote a formal letter to her brother, who had now become a general, to inform him of the lamented decease of his eldest daughter. It was not a comforting letter. It dwelt unnecessarily on the faults of Letice, it expressed no hopes as to her happiness in the world to which she had passed. There had been no signs of resignation at the last; no turning from the world with its pomps and vanities to better things, only a vain longing after what she could not have; a bitter resentment against Providence for having denied them to her; and a steeling of her heart against good and pious influences.

A year had passed.

Lady Lacy had come to town along with her niece. A dear friend had placed her house at her disposal. She had herself gone to Dresden with her daughters to finish them off in music and German. Lady Lacy was very glad of the occasion, for Betty was now of an age to be brought out. There was to be a great ball at the house of the Countess of Belgrove, unto whom Lady Lacy was related, and at the ball Betty was to make her *début*.

The girl was in a condition of boundless excitement. A beautiful ball-dress of white satin, trimmed with rich Valenciennes lace, was laid over her chair for her to wear. Neat little white satin shoes stood on the floor, quite new, for her feet. In a flower-glass stood a red camellia that was destined to adorn her hair, and on the dressing-table, in a morocco case, was a pearl necklace that had belonged to her mother.

The maid did her hair, but the camellia, which was to be the only point of colour about her, except her rosy lips and flushed cheeks – that camellia was not to be put into her hair till the last minute.

The maid offered to help her to dress.

"No, thank you, Martha; I can do that perfectly well myself. I am accustomed to use my own hands, and I can take my own time about it."

"But really, miss, I think you should allow me."

"Indeed, indeed, no. There is plenty of time, and I shall go leisurely to work. When the carriage comes just tap at the door and tell me, and I will rejoin my aunt."

When the maid was gone, Betty locked her door. She lighted the candles beside the cheval-glass, and looked at herself in the mirror and laughed. For the first time, with glad surprise and innocent pleasure, she realised how pretty she was. And pretty she was indeed, with her pleasant face, honest eyes, finely arched brows, and twinkling smile that produced dimples in her cheeks.

"There is plenty of time," she said. "I shan't take a hundred years in dressing now that my hair is done."

She yawned. A great heaviness had come over her.

"I really think I shall have a nap first. I am dead sleepy now, and forty winks will set me up for the night."

Then she laid herself upon the bed. A numbing, over-powering lethargy weighed on her, and almost at once she sank into a dreamless sleep. So unconscious was she that she did not hear Martha's tap at the door nor the roll of the carriage as it took her aunt away.

She woke with a start. It was full day.

For some moments she did not realise this fact, nor that she was still dressed in the gown in which she had lain down the previous evening.

She rose in dismay. She had slept so soundly that she had missed the ball.

She rang her bell and unlocked the door.

"What, miss, up already?" asked the maid, coming in with a tray on which were tea and bread and butter.

"Yes, Martha. Oh! what will aunt say? I have slept so long and like a log, and never went to the ball. Why did you not call me?"

"Please, miss, you have forgotten. You went to the ball last night."

"No; I did not. I overslept myself."

The maid smiled. "If I may be so bold as to say so, I think, Miss Betty, you are dreaming still."

"No; I did not go."

The maid took up the satin dress. It was crumpled, the lace was a little torn, and the train showed unmistakable signs of having been drawn over a floor.

She then held up the shoes. They had been worn, and well worn, as if danced in all night.

"Look here, miss; here is your programme! Why, deary me! you must have had a lot of dancing. It is quite full."

Betty looked at the programme with dazed eyes; then at the camellia. It had lost some of its petals, and these had not fallen on the toilet-cover. Where were they? What was the meaning of this?

"Martha, bring me my hot water, and leave me alone."

Betty was sorely perplexed. There were evidences that her dress had been worn. The pearl necklace was in the case, but not as she had left it – outside. She bathed her head in cold water. She racked her brain. She could not recall the smallest particular of the ball. She perused the programme. A light colour came into her cheek as she recognised the initials "C. F.," those of Captain Charles Fontanel, of whom of late she had seen a good deal. Other characters expressed nothing to her mind.

"How very strange!" she said; "and I was lying on the bed in the dress I had on yesterday evening. I cannot explain it."

Twenty minutes later, Betty went downstairs and entered the breakfast-room. Lady Lacy was there. She went up to her aunt and kissed her.

"I am so sorry that I overslept myself," she said. "I was like one of the Seven Sleepers."

"My dear, I should not have minded if you had not come down till midday. After a first ball you must be tired."

"I meant – last night."

"How, last night?"

"I mean when I went to dress."

"Oh, you were punctual enough. When I was ready you were already in the hall."

The bewilderment of the girl grew apace.

"I am sure," said her aunt, "you enjoyed yourself. But you gave the lion's share of the dances to Captain Fontanel. If this had been at Exeter, it would have caused talk; but here you are known only to a few; however, Lady Belgrove observed it."

"I hope you are not very tired, auntie darling," said Betty, to change slightly the theme that perplexed her.

"Nothing to speak of. I like to go to a ball; it recalls my old dancing days. But I thought you looked white and fagged all the evening. Perhaps it was excitement."

As soon as breakfast was concluded, Betty escaped to her room. A fear was oppressing her. The only explanation of the mystery was that she had been to the dance in her sleep. She was a somnambulist. What had she said and done when unconscious? What a dreadful thing it would have been had she woke up in the middle of a dance! She must have dressed herself, gone to Lady

Belgrove's, danced all night, returned, taken off her dress, put on her afternoon tea-gown, lain down and concluded her sleep – all in one long tract of unconsciousness.

"By the way," said her aunt next day, "I have taken tickets for *Carmen*, at Her Majesty's. You would like to go?"

"Oh, delighted, aunt. I know some of the music – of course, the Toreador song; but I have never heard the whole opera. It will be delightful."

"And you are not too tired to go?"

"No – ten thousand times, no – I shall love to see it."

"What dress will you go in?"

"I think my black, and put a rose in my hair."

"That will do very well. The black becomes you. I think you could not do better."

Betty was highly delighted. She had been to plays, never to a real opera.

In the evening, dinner was early, unnecessarily early, and Betty knew that it would not take her long to dress, so she went into the little conservatory and seated herself there. The scent of the heliotropes was strong. Betty called them cherry-pie. She had got the libretto, and she looked it over; but as she looked, her eyes closed, and without being aware that she was going to sleep, in a moment she was completely unconscious.

She woke, feeling stiff and cold.

"Goodness!" said she, "I hope I am not late. Why – what is that light?"

The glimmer of dawn shone in at the conservatory windows.

Much astonished, she left it. The hall, the staircase were dark. She groped her way to her room, and switched on the electric light.

Before her lay her black-and-white muslin dress on the bed; on the table were her white twelve-button gloves folded about her fan. She took them up, and below them, somewhat crumpled, lay the play-bill, scented.

"How very unaccountable this is," she said; and removing the dress, seated herself on the bed and thought.

"Why did they turn out the lights?" she asked herself, then sprang to her feet, switched off the electric current, and saw that actually the morning light was entering the room. She resumed her seat; put her hands to her brow.

"It cannot – it cannot be that this dreadful thing has happened again."

Presently she heard the servants stirring. She hastily undressed and retired between the sheets, but not to sleep. Her mind worked. She was seriously alarmed.

At the usual time Martha arrived with tea.

"Awake, Miss Betty!" she said. "I hope you had a nice evening. I dare say it was beautiful."

"But," began the girl, then checked herself, and said —

"Is my aunt getting up? Is she very tired?"

"Oh, miss, my lady is a wonderful person; she never seems to tire. She is always down at the same time."

Betty dressed, but her mind was in a turmoil. On one thing she was resolved. She must see a doctor. But she would not frighten her aunt, she would keep the matter close from her.

When she came into the breakfast-room, Lady Lacy said —

"I thought Maas's voice was superb, but I did not so much care for the *Carmen*. What did you think, dear?"

"Aunt," said Betty, anxious to change the topic, "would you mind my seeing a doctor? I don't think I am quite well."

"Not well! Why what is the matter with you?"

"I have such dead fits of drowsiness."

"My dearest, is that to be wondered at with this racketing about; balls and theatres – very other than the quiet life at home? But I will admit that you struck me as looking very pale last night. You shall certainly see Dr. Groves."

When the medical man arrived, Betty intimated that she wished to speak with him alone, and he was shown with her into the morning-room.

"Oh, Dr. Groves," she said nervously, "it is such a strange thing I have to say. I believe I walk in my sleep."

"You have eaten something that disagreed with you."

"But it lasted so long."

"How do you mean? Have you long been subject to it?"

"Dear, no. I never had any signs of it before I came to London this season."

"And how were you roused? How did you become aware of it?"

"I was not roused at all; the fact is I went asleep to Lady Belgrove's ball, and danced there and came back, and woke up in the morning without knowing I had been."

"What!"

"And then, last night, I went in my sleep to Her Majesty's and heard *Carmen*; but I woke up in the conservatory here at early dawn, and I remember nothing about it."

"This is a very extraordinary story. Are you sure you went to the ball and to the opera?"

"Quite sure. My dress had been used on both occasions, and my shoes and fan and gloves as well."

"Did you go with Lady Lacy?"

"Oh, yes. I was with her all the time. But I remember nothing about it."

"I must speak to her ladyship."

"Please, please do not. It would frighten her; and I do not wish her to suspect anything, except that I am a little out of sorts. She gets nervous about me."

Dr. Groves mused for some while, then he said: "I cannot see that this is at all a case of somnambulism."

"What is it, then?"

"Lapse of memory. Have you ever suffered from that previously?"

"Nothing to speak of. Of course I do not always remember everything. I do not always recollect commissions given to me, unless I write them down. And I cannot say that I remember all the novels I have read, or what was the menu at dinner yesterday."

"That is quite a different matter. What I refer to is spaces of blank in your memory. How often has this occurred?"

"Twice."

"And quite recently?"

"Yes, I never knew anything of the kind before."

"I think that the sooner you return to the country the better. It is possible that the strain of coming out and the change of entering into gay life in town has been too much for you. Take care and economise your pleasures. Do not attempt too much; and if anything of the sort happens again, send for me."

"Then you won't mention this to my aunt?"

"No, not this time. I will say that you have been a little over-wrought and must be spared too much excitement."

"Thank you so much, Dr. Groves."

Now it was that a new mystery came to confound Betty. She rang her bell.

"Martha," said she, when her maid appeared, "where is that novel I had yesterday from the circulating library? I put it on the boudoir table."

"I have not noticed it, miss."

"Please look for it. I have hunted everywhere for it, and it cannot be found."

"I will look in the parlour, miss, and the schoolroom."

"I have not been into the schoolroom at all, and I know that it is not in the drawing-room."

A search was instituted, but the book could not be found. On the morrow it was in the boudoir, where Betty had placed it on her return from Mudie's.

"One of the maids took it," was her explanation. She did not much care for the book; perhaps that was due to her preoccupation, and not to any lack of stirring incident in the story. She sent it back and took out another. Next morning that also had disappeared.

It now became customary, as surely as she drew a novel from the library, that it vanished clean away. Betty was greatly amazed. She could not read a novel she had brought home till a day or two later. She took to putting the book, so soon as it was in the house, into one of her drawers, or into a cupboard. But the result was the same. Finally, when she had locked the newly acquired volume in her desk, and it had disappeared thence also, her patience gave way. There must be one of the domestics with a ravenous appetite for fiction, which drove her to carry off a book of the sort whenever it came into the house, and even to tamper with a lock to obtain it. Betty had been most reluctant to speak of the matter to her aunt, but now she made to her a formal complaint.

The servants were all questioned, and strongly protested their innocence. Not one of them had ventured to do such a thing as that with which they were charged.

However, from this time forward the annoyance ceased, and Betty and Lady Lacy naturally concluded that this was the result of the stir that had been made.

"Betty," said Lady Lacy, "what do you say to going to the new play at the Gaiety? I hear it very highly spoken of. Mrs. Fontanel has a box and has asked if we will join her."

"I should love it," replied the girl; "we have been rather quiet of late." But her heart was oppressed with fear.

She said to her maid: "Martha, will you dress me this evening – and – pray stay with me till my aunt is ready and calls for me?"

"Yes, miss, I shall be pleased to do so." But the girl looked somewhat surprised at the latter part of the request.

Betty thought well to explain: "I don't know what it is, but I feel somewhat out of spirits and nervous, and am afraid of being left alone, lest something should happen."

"Happen, miss! If you are not feeling well, would it not be as well to stay at home?"

"Oh, not for the world! I must go. I shall be all right so soon as I am in the carriage. It will pass off then."

"Shall I get you a glass of sherry, or anything?"

"No, no, it is not that. You remain with me and I shall be myself again."

That evening Betty went to the theatre. There was no recurrence of the sleeping fit with its concomitants. Captain Fontanel was in the box, and made himself vastly agreeable. He had his seat by Betty, and talked to her not only between the acts, but also a good deal whilst the actors were on the stage. With this she could have dispensed. She was not such an *habituée* of the theatre as not to be intensely interested with what was enacted before her.

Between two of the acts he said to her: "My mother is engaging Lady Lacy. She has a scheme in her head, but wants her consent to carry it out, to make it quite too charming. And I am deputed to get you to acquiesce."

"What is it?"

"We purpose having a boat and going to the Henley Regatta. Will you come?"

"I should enjoy it above everything. I have never seen a regatta – that is to say, not one so famous, and not of this kind. There were regattas at Ilfracombe, but they were different."

"Very well, then; the party shall consist only of my mother and sister and your two selves, and young Fulwell, who is dancing attendance on Jannet, and Putsey, who is a tame cat. I am sure my

mother will persuade your aunt. What a lively old lady she is, and for her years how she does enjoy life!"

"It will be a most happy conclusion to our stay in town," said Betty. "We are going back to auntie's little cottage in Devon in a few days; she wants to be at home for Good Friday and Easter Day."

So it was settled. Lady Lacy had raised no objection, and now she and her niece had to consider what Betty should wear. Thin garments were out of the question; the weather was too cold, and it would be especially chilly on the river. Betty was still in slight mourning, so she chose a silver-grey cloth costume, with a black band about her waist, and a white straw hat, with a ribbon to match her gown.

On the day of the regatta Betty said to herself; "How ignorant I am! Fancy my not knowing where Henley is! That it is on the Thames or Isis I really do not know, but I fancy on the former – yes, I am almost positive it is on the Thames. I have seen pictures in the *Graphic* and *Illustrated* of the race last year, and I know the river was represented as broad, and the Isis can only be an insignificant stream. I will run into the schoolroom and find a map of the environs of London and post myself up in the geography. One hates to look like a fool."

Without a word to anyone, Betty found her way to the apartment given up to lessons when children were in the house. It lay at the back, down a passage. Since Lady Lacy had occupied the place, neither she nor Betty had been in it more than casually and rarely; and accordingly the servants had neglected to keep it clean. A good deal of dust lay about, and Betty, laughing, wrote her name in the fine powder on the school-table, then looked at her finger, found it black, and said, "Oh, bother! I forgot that the dust of London is smut."

She went to the bookcase, and groped for a map of the Metropolis and the country round, but could not find one. Nor could she lay her hand on a gazetteer.

"This must do," said she, drawing out a large, thick *Johnston's Atlas*, "if the scale be not too small to give Henley."

She put the heavy volume on the table and opened it. England, she found, was in two parts, one map of the Northern, the second of the Southern division. She spread out the latter, placed her finger on the blue line of the Thames, and began to trace it up.

Whilst her eyes were on it, searching the small print, they closed, and without being conscious that she was sleepy, her head bowed forward on the map, and she was breathing evenly, steeped in the most profound slumber.

She woke slowly. Her consciousness returned to her little by little. She saw the atlas without understanding what it meant. She looked about her, and wondered how she could be in the schoolroom, and she then observed that darkness was closing in. Only then, suddenly, did she recall what had brought her where she was.

Next, with a rush, upon her came the remembrance that she was due at the boat-race.

She must again have overslept herself, for the evening had come on, and through the window she could see the glimmer of gaslights in the street. Was this to be accompanied by her former experiences?

With throbbing heart she went into the passage. Then she noticed that the hall was lighted up, and she heard her aunt speaking, and the slam of the front door, and the maid say, "Shall I take off your wraps, my lady?"

She stepped forth upon the landing and proceeded to descend, when – with a shock that sent the blood coursing to her heart, and that paralysed her movements – she saw *herself* ascending the stair in her silver-grey costume and straw hat.

She clung to the banister, with convulsive grip, lest she should fall, and stared, without power to utter a sound, as she saw herself quietly mount, step by step, pass her, go beyond to her own room.

For fully ten minutes she remained rooted to the spot, unable to stir even a finger. Her tongue was stiff, her muscles set, her heart ceased to beat.

Then slowly her blood began again to circulate, her nerves to relax, power of movement returned. With a hoarse gasp she reeled from her place, and giddy, touching the banister every moment to prevent herself from falling, she crept downstairs. But when once in the hall, she had recovered flexibility. She ran towards the morning-room, whither Lady Lacy had gone to gather up the letters that had arrived by post during her absence.

Betty stood looking at her, speechless.

Her aunt raised her face from an envelope she was considering. "Why, Betty," said she, "how expeditiously you have changed your dress!"

The girl could not speak, but fell unconscious on the floor.

When she came to herself, she was aware of a strong smell of vinegar. She was lying on the sofa, and Martha was applying a moistened kerchief to her brow. Lady Lacy stood by, alarmed and anxious, with a bottle of smelling-salts in her hand.

"Oh, aunt, I saw – " then she ceased. It would not do to tell of the apparition. She would not be believed.

"My darling," said Lady Lacy, "you are overdone, and it was foolish of you tearing upstairs and scrambling into your morning-gown. I have sent for Groves. Are you able now to rise? Can you manage to reach your room?"

"My room!" she shuddered. "Let me lie here a little longer. I cannot walk. Let me be here till the doctor comes."

"Certainly, dearest. I thought you looked very unlike yourself all day at the regatta. If you had felt out of sorts you ought not to have gone."

"Auntie! I was quite well in the morning."

Presently the medical man arrived, and was shown in. Betty saw that Lady Lacy purposed staying through the interview. Accordingly she said nothing to Dr. Groves about what she had seen.

"She is overdone," said he. "The sooner you move her down to Devonshire the better. Someone had better be in her room to-night."

"Yes," said Lady Lacy; "I had thought of that and have given orders. Martha can make up her bed on the sofa in the adjoining dressing-room or boudoir."

This was a relief to Betty, who dreaded a return to her room – her room into which her other self had gone.

"I will call again in the morning," said the medical man; "keep her in bed to-morrow, at all events till I have seen her."

When he left, Betty found herself able to ascend the stairs. She cast a frightened glance about her room. The straw hat, the grey dress were there. No one was in it.

She was helped to bed, and although laid in it with her head among the pillows, she could not sleep. Racking thoughts tortured her. What was the signification of that encounter? What of her strange sleeps? What of those mysterious appearances of herself, where she had not been? The theory that she had walked in her sleep was untenable. How was she to solve the riddle? That she was going out of her mind was no explanation.

Only towards morning did she doze off.

When Dr. Groves came, about eleven o'clock, Betty made a point of speaking to him alone, which was what she greatly desired.

She said to him: "Oh! it has been worse this last occasion, far worse than before. I do not walk in my sleep. Whilst I am buried in slumber, someone else takes my place."

"Whom do you mean? Surely not one of the maids?"

"Oh, no. I met her on the stairs last night, that is what made me faint."

"Whom did you meet?"

"Myself – my double."

"Nonsense, Miss Mountjoy."

"But it is a fact. I saw myself as clearly as I see you now. I was going down into the hall."

"You saw yourself! You saw your own pleasant, pretty face in a looking-glass."

"There is no looking-glass on the staircase. Besides, I was in my alpaca morning-gown, and my double had on my pearl-grey cloth costume, with my straw hat. She was mounting as I was descending."

"Tell me the story."

"I went yesterday – an hour or so before I had to dress – into the schoolroom. I am awfully ignorant, and I did want to see a map and find out where was Henley, because, you know, I was going to the boat-race. And I dropped off into one of those dreadful dead sleeps, with my head on the atlas. When I awoke it was evening, and the gas-lamps were lighted. I was frightened, and ran out to the landing and I heard them arrive, just come back from Henley, and as I was going down the stairs, I saw my double coming up, and we met face to face. She passed me by, and went on to my room – to this room. So you see this is proof pos that I am not a somnambulist."

"I never said that you were. I never for a moment admitted the supposition. That, if you remember, was your own idea. What I said before is what I repeat now, that you suffer from failure of memory."

"But that cannot be so, Dr. Groves."

"Pray, why not?"

"Because I saw my double, wearing my regatta costume."

"I hold to my opinion, Miss Mountjoy. If you will listen to me I shall be able to offer a satisfactory explanation. Satisfactory, I mean, so far as to make your experiences intelligible to you. I do not at all imply that your condition is satisfactory."

"Well, tell me. I cannot make heads or tails of this matter."

"It is this, young lady. On several recent occasions you have suffered from lapses of memory. All recollection of what you did, where you went, what you said, has been clean wiped out. But on this last – it was somewhat different. The failure took place on your return, and you forgot everything that had happened since you were engaged in the schoolroom looking at the atlas."

"Yes."

"Then, on your arrival here, as Lady Lacy told me, you ran upstairs, and in a prodigious hurry changed your clothes and put on your – "

"My alpaca."

"Your alpaca, yes. Then, in descending to the hall, your memory came back, but was still entangled with flying reminiscences of what had taken place during the intervening period. Amongst other things – "

"I remember no other things."

"You recalled confusedly one thing only, that you had mounted the stairs in your – your – "

"My pearl-grey cloth, with the straw hat and satin ribbon."

"Precisely. Whilst in your morning gown, into which you had scrambled, you recalled yourself in your regatta costume going upstairs to change. This fragmentary reminiscence presented itself before you as a vision. Actually you saw nothing. The impression on your brain of a scrap recollected appeared to you as if it had been an actual object depicted on the retina of your eye. Such things happen, and happen not infrequently. In cases of D. T. – "

"But I haven't D. T. I don't drink."

"I do not say that. If you will allow me to proceed. In cases of D. T. the patient fancies he sees rats, devils, all sorts of objects. They appear to him as obvious realities, he thinks that he sees them with his eyes. But he does not. These are mere pictures formed on the brain."

"Then you hold that I really was at the boat-race?"

"I am positive that you were."

"And that I danced at Lady Belgrove's ball?"

"Most assuredly."

"And heard *Carmen* at Her Majesty's?"

"I have not the remotest doubt that you did."

Betty drew a long breath, and remained in consideration.

Then she said very gravely: "I want you to tell me, Dr. Groves, quite truthfully, quite frankly – do not think that I shall be frightened whatever you say; I shall merely prepare for what may be – do you consider that I am going out of my mind?"

"I have not the least occasion for supposing so."

"That," said Betty, "would be the most terrible thing of all. If I thought that, I would say right out to my aunt that I wished at once to be sent to an asylum."

"You may set your mind at rest on that score."

"But loss of memory is bad, but better than the other. Will these fits of failure come on again?"

"That is more than I can prognosticate; let us hope for the best. A complete change of scene, change of air, change of association – "

"Not to leave auntie!"

"No. I do not mean that, but to get away from London society. It may restore you to what you were. You never had those fits before?"

"Never, never, till I came to town."

"And when you have left town they may not recur."

"I shall take precious good care not to revisit London if it is going to play these tricks with me."

That day Captain Fontanel called, and was vastly concerned to hear that Betty was unwell. She was not looking herself, he said, at the boat-race. He feared that the cold on the river had been too much for her. But he did trust that he might be allowed to have a word with her before she returned to Devonshire.

Although he did not see Betty, he had an hour's conversation with Lady Lacy, and he departed with a smile on his face.

On the morrow he called again. Betty had so completely recovered that she was cheerful, and the pleasant colour had returned to her cheeks. She was in the drawing-room along with her aunt when he arrived.

The captain offered his condolences, and expressed his satisfaction that her indisposition had been so quickly got over.

"Oh!" said the girl, "I am as right as a trivet. It has all passed off. I need not have soaked in bed all yesterday, but that aunt would have it so. We are going down to our home to-morrow. Yesterday auntie was scared and thought she would have to postpone our return."

Lady Lacy rose, made the excuse that she had the packing to attend to, and left the young people alone together. When the door was shut behind her, Captain Fontanel drew his chair close to that of the girl and said —

"Betty, you do not know how happy I have felt since you accepted me. It was a hurried affair in the boat-house, but really, time was running short; as you were off so soon to Devonshire, I had to snatch at the occasion when there was no one by, so I seized old Time by the forelock, and you were so good as to say 'Yes.'"

"I – I – " stammered Betty.

"But as the thing was done in such haste, I came here to-day to renew my offer of myself, and to make sure of my happiness. You have had time to reflect, and I trust you do not repent."

"Oh, you are so good and kind to me!"

"Dearest Betty, what a thing to say! It is I – poor, wretched, good-for-naught – who have cause to speak such words to you. Put your hand into mine; it is a short courtship of a soldier, like that

of Harry V. and the fair Maid of France. 'I love you: then if you urge me farther than to say, "Do you in faith?" I wear out my suit. Give me your answer; i' faith, do: and so clap hands and a bargain.' Am I quoting aright?"

Shyly, hesitatingly, she extended her fingers, and he clasped them. Then, shrinking back and looking down, she said: "But I ought to tell you something first, something very serious, which may make you change your mind. I do not, in conscience, feel it right that you should commit yourself till you know."

"It must be something very dreadful to make me do that."

"It is dreadful. I am apt to be terribly forgetful."

"Bless me! So am I. I have passed several of my acquaintances lately and have not recognised them, but that was because I was thinking of you. And I fear I have been very oblivious about my bills; and as to answering letters – good heavens! I am a shocking defaulter."

"I do not mean that. I have lapses of memory. Why, I do not even remember – "

He sealed her lips with a kiss. "You will not forget this, at any rate, Betty."

"Oh, Charlie, no!"

"Then consider this, Betty. Our engagement cannot be for long. I am ordered to Egypt, and I positively must take my dear little wife with me and show her the Pyramids. You would like to see them, would you not?"

"I should love to."

"And the Sphynx?"

"Indeed I should."

"And Pompey's Pillar?"

"Oh, Charlie! I shall love above everything to see you every day."

"That is prettily said. I see we understand one another. Now, hearken to me, give me your close attention, and no fits of lapse of memory over what I now say, please. We must be married very shortly. I positively will not go out without you. I would rather throw up my commission."

"But what about papa's consent?"

"I shall wire to him full particulars as to my position, income, and prospects, also how much I love you, and how I will do my level best to make you happy. That is the approved formula in addressing paterfamilias, I think. Then he will telegraph back, 'Bless you, my boy'; and all is settled. I know that Lady Lacy approves."

"But dear, dear aunt. She will be so awfully lonely without me."

"She shall not be. She has no ties to hold her to the little cottage in Devon. She shall come out to us in Cairo, and we will bury the dear old girl up to her neck in the sand of the desert, and make a second Sphynx of her, and bake the rheumatism out of her bones. It will cure her of all her aches, as sure as my name is Charlie, and yours will be Fontanel."

"Don't be too sure of that."

"But I am sure – you cannot forget."

"I will try not to do so. Oh, Charlie, don't!"

Mrs. Thomas, the dressmaker, and Miss Crock, the milliner, had their hands full. Betty's trousseau had to be got ready expeditiously. Patterns of materials specially adapted for a hot climate – light, beautiful, artistic, of silks and muslins and prints – had to be commanded from Liberty's. Then came the selection, then the ordering, then the discussions with the dressmaker, and the measurings. Next the fittings, for which repeated visits had to be made to Mrs. Thomas. Adjustments, alterations were made, easements under the arms, tightenings about the waist. There were fulnesses to be taken in and skimpiness to be redressed. The skirts had to be sufficiently short in front and sufficiently long behind.

As for the wedding-dress, Mrs. Thomas was not regarded as quite competent to execute such a masterpiece. For that an expedition had to be made to Exeter.

The wedding-cake must be ordered from Murch, in the cathedral city. Lady Lacy was particular that as much as possible of the outfit should be given to county tradesmen. A riding habit, tailor-made, was ordered, to fit like a glove, and a lady's saddle must be taken out to Egypt. Boxes, basket-trunks were to be procured, and a correspondence carried on as to the amount of personal luggage allowed.

Lady Lacy and Betty were constantly running up by express to Exeter about this, that, and everything.

Then ensued the sending out of the invitations, and the arrival of wedding presents, that entailed the writing of gushing letters of acknowledgment and thanks, by Betty herself. But these were not allowed to interfere with the scribbling of four pages every day to Captain Fontanel, intended for his eyes alone.

Interviews were sought by the editors or agents of local newspapers to ascertain whether reporters were desired to describe the wedding, and as to the length of the notices that were to be inserted, whether all the names of the donors of presents were to be included, and their gifts registered. Verily Lady Lacy and Betty were kept in a whirl of excitement, and their time occupied from morning till night, and their brains exercised from night to morning. Glass and china and plate had to be hired for the occasion, wine ordered. Fruit, cake, ices commanded. But all things come to an end, even the preparations for a wedding.

At last the eventful day arrived, bright and sunny, a true May morning.

The bridesmaids arrived, each wearing the pretty brooch presented by Captain Fontanel. Their costume was suitable to the season, of primrose-yellow, with hats turned up, white, with primroses. The pages were in green velvet, with knee-breeches and three-cornered hats, lace ruffles and lace fronts. The butler had made the claret-cup and the champagne-cup, and after a skirmish over the neighbourhood some borage had been obtained to float on the top. Lady Lacy was to hold a reception after the ceremony, and a marquee had been erected in the grounds, as the cottage could not contain all the guests invited. The dining-room was delivered over for the exposing of the presents. A carriage had been commanded to convey the happy couple to the station, horses and driver with white favours. With a sigh of relief in the morning, Lady Lacy declared that she believed that nothing had been forgotten.

The trunks stood ready packed, all but one, and labelled with the name of Mrs. Fontanel.

A flag flew on the church tower. The villagers had constructed a triumphal arch at the entrance to the grounds. The people from farms and cottages had all turned out, and were already congregating about the churchyard, with smiles and heartfelt wishes for the happiness of the bride, who was a mighty favourite with them, as indeed was also Lady Lacy.

The Sunday-school children had clubbed their pence, and had presented Betty, who had taught them, with a silver set of mustard-pot, pepper caster, and salt-cellar.

"Oh, dear!" said Betty, "what shall I do with all these sets of mustard- and pepper-pots? I have now received eight."

"A little later, dear," replied her aunt, "you can exchange those that you do not require."

"But never that set given me by my Sunday-school pets," said Betty.

Then came in flights of telegrams of congratulation.

And at the last moment arrived some more wedding presents.

"Good gracious me!" exclaimed the girl, "I really must manage to acknowledge these. There will be just time before I begin to dress."

So she tripped upstairs to her boudoir, a little room given over to herself in which to do her water-colour painting, her reading, to practise her music. A bright little room to which now, as she felt with an ache, she was to bid an eternal good-bye!

What happy hours had been spent in it! What day-dreams had been spun there!

She opened her writing-case and wrote the required letters of thanks.

"There," said she, when she had signed the fifth. "This is the last time I shall subscribe myself Elizabeth Mountjoy, except when I sign my name in the church register. Oh! how my back is hurting me. I was not in bed till two o'clock and was up again at seven, and I have been on the tear for the whole week. There will be just time for me to rest it before the business of the dressing begins."

She threw herself on the sofa and put up her feet. Instantly she was asleep – in a sound, dreamless sleep.

When Betty opened her eyes she heard the church bells ringing a merry peal. Then she raised her lids, and turning her head on the sofa cushion saw – a bride, herself in full bridal dress, with the white veil and the orange-blossoms, seated at her side. The gloves had been removed and lay on the lap.

An indescribable terror held her fast. She could not cry out. She could not stir. She could only look.

Then the bride put back the veil, and Betty, studying the white face, saw that this actually was not herself; it was her dead sister, Letice.

The apparition put forth a hand and laid it on her and spoke: "Do not be frightened. I will do you no harm. I love you too dearly for that, Betty. I have been married in your name; I have exchanged vows in your name; I have received the ring for you; put it on your finger, it is not mine; it in no way belongs to me. In your name I signed the register. You are married to Charles Fontanel and not I. Listen to me. I will tell you all, and when I have told you everything you will see me no more. I will trouble you no further; I shall enter into my rest. You will see before you only the wedding garments remaining. I shall be gone. Hearken to me. When I was dying, I died in frantic despair, because I had never known what were the pleasures of life. My last cries, my last regrets, my last longings were for the pomps and vanities."

She paused, and slipped the gold hoop on to the forefinger of Betty's hand.

Then she proceeded —

"When my spirit parted from my body, it remained a while irresolute whither to go. But then, remembering that my aunt had declared that I never would go to Heaven, I resolved on forcing my way in there out of defiance; and I soared till I reached the gates of Paradise. At them stood an angel with a fiery sword drawn in his hand, and he laid it athwart the entrance. I approached, but he waved me off, and when the point of the flaming blade touched my heart, there passed a pang through it, I know not whether of joy or of sorrow. And he said: 'Letice, you have not been a good girl; you were sullen, resentful, rebellious, and therefore are unfit to enter here. Your longings through life, and to the moment of death, were for the world and its pomps and vanities. The last throb of your heart was given to repining for them. But your faults were due largely to the mistakes of your rearing. And now hear your judgment. You shall not pass within these gates till you have returned to earth and partaken of and had your fill of its pomps and vanities. As for that old cat, your aunt' – but no, Betty, he did not say quite that; I put it in, and I ought not to have done so. I bear her no resentment; I wish her no ill. She did by me what she believed to be right. She acted towards me up to her lights; alas for me that the light which was in her was darkness! The angel said: 'As for your aunt, before she can enter here, she will want illumining, enlarging, and sweetening, and will have to pass through Purgatory.' And oh, Betty, that will be gall and bitterness to her, for she did not believe in Purgatory, and she wrote a controversial pamphlet against it. Then said the angel: 'Return, return to the pomps and vanities.' I fell on my knees, and said: 'Oh, suffer me but to have one glimpse of that which is within!' 'Be it so,' he replied. 'One glimpse only whilst I cast my sword on high.' Thereat he threw up the flaming brand, and it was as though a glorious flash of lightning filled all space. At the same moment the gates swung apart, and I saw what was beyond. It was but for one brief moment, for the sword came down, and the angel caught it by the handle, and instantly the gates were shut. Then, sorrowfully, I turned myself about and went back to earth. And, Betty, it was I who took and read your novels. It was I who went to Lady Belgrove's ball in your place. It was I who sat instead of you at Her Majesty's

and heard *Carmen*. It was I who took your place at Henley Regatta, and I – I, instead of you, received the protestation of Charles Fontanel's affection, and there in the boat-house I received the first and last kiss of love. And it was I, Betty, as I have told you, who took your place at the altar to-day. I had the pleasures that were designed for you – the ball-dress, the dances, the fair words, the music of the opera, the courtship, the excitement of the regatta, the reading of sensational novels. It was I who had what all girls most long for, their most supreme bliss of wearing the wedding-veil and the orange-blossoms. But I have reached my limit. I am full of the poms and vanities, and I return on high. You will see me no more."

"Oh, Letice," said Betty, obtaining her speech, "you do not grudge me the joys of life?"

The fair white being at her side shook her head.

"And you desire no more of the poms and vanities?"

"No, Betty. I have looked through the gates."

Then Betty put forth her hands to clasp the waist of her sister, as she said fervently —

"Tell me, Letice, what you saw beyond."

"Betty – everything the reverse of Salem Chapel."

## McALISTER

The city of Bayonne, lying on the left bank of the Adour, and serving as its port, is one that ought to present much interest to the British tourist, on account of its associations. For three hundred years, along with Bordeaux, it belonged to the English crown. The cathedral, a noble structure of the fourteenth century, was reared by the English, and on the bosses of its vaulting are carved the arms of England, of the Talbots, and of other great English noble families. It was probably designed by English architects, for it possesses, in its vaulting, the long central rib so characteristic of English architecture, and wholly unlike what was the prevailing French fashion of vaulting in compartments, and always without that connecting rib, like the inverted keel of a ship, with which we are acquainted in our English minsters. Under some of the modern houses in the town are cellars of far earlier construction, also vaulted, and in them as well may be seen the arms of the English noble families which had their dwellings above.

But Bayonne has later associations with us. At the close of the Peninsular War, when Wellington had driven Marshal Soult and the French out of Spain, and had crossed the Pyrenees, his forces, under Sir John Hope, invested the citadel. In February, 1814, Sir John threw a bridge of boats across the Adour, boats being provided by the fleet of Admiral Penrose, in the teeth of a garrison of 15,000 men, and French gunboats which guarded the river and raked the English whilst conducting this hazardous and masterly achievement. This brilliant exploit was effected whilst Wellington engaged the attention of Soult about the Gaves, affluents of the Adour, near Orthez. It is further interesting, with a tragic interest, on account of an incident in that campaign which shall be referred to presently.

The cathedral of Bayonne, some years ago, possessed no towers – the English were driven out of Aquitaine before these had been completed. The west front was mean to the last degree, masked by a shabby penthouse, plastered white, or rather dirty white, on which in large characters was inscribed, "Liberté égalité et fraternité."

This has now disappeared, and a modern west front and twin towers and spires have been added, in passable architecture. When I was at Bayonne, more years ago than I care to say, I paid a visit to the little cemetery on the north bank of the river, in which were laid the English officers who fell during the investment of Bayonne.

The north bank is in the Department of the Landes, whereas that on the south is in the Department of the Basses Pyrénées.

About the time when the English were expelled from France, and lost Aquitaine, the Adour changed its course. Formerly it had turned sharply round at the city, and had flowed north and found an outlet some miles away at Cap Breton, but the entrance was choked by the moving sand-dunes, and the impatient river burst its way into the Bay of Biscay by the mouth through which it still flows. But the old course is marked by lagoons of still blue water in the midst of a vast forest of pines and cork trees. I had spent a day wandering among these tree-covered *landes*, seeking out the lonely lakes, and in the evening I returned in the direction of Bayonne, diverging somewhat from my course to visit the cemetery of the English. This was a square walled enclosure with an iron gate, rank with weeds, utterly neglected, and with the tombstones, some leaning, some prostrate, all covered with lichen and moss. I could not get within to decipher the inscriptions, for the gate was locked and I had not the key, and was quite ignorant who was the custodian of the place.

Being tired with my trudge in the sand, I sat down outside, with my back to the wall, and saw the setting sun paint with saffron the boles of the pines. I took out my Murray that I had in my knapsack, and read the following passage: —

"To the N., rises the citadel, the most formidable of the works laid out by Vauban, and greatly strengthened, especially since 1814, when it formed the key to

an entrenched camp of Marshal Soult, and was invested by a detachment of the army of the Duke of Wellington, but not taken, the peace having put a stop to the siege after some bloody encounters. The last of these, a dreadful and useless expenditure of human life, took place after peace was declared, and the British forces put off their guard in consequence. They were thus entirely taken by surprise by a sally of the garrison, made early on the morning of April 14th; which, though repulsed, was attended with the loss of 830 men of the British, and by the capture of their commander, Sir John Hope, whose horse was shot under him, and himself wounded. The French attack was supported by the fire of their gunboats on the river, which opened indiscriminately on friend and foe. Nine hundred and ten of the French were killed."

When I had concluded, the sun had set, and already a grey mist began to form over the course of the Adour. I thought that now it was high time for me to return to Bayonne, and to table d'hôte, which is at 7.30 p.m., but for which I knew I should be late. However, before rising, I pulled out my flask of Scotch whisky, and drained it to the last drop.

I had scarcely finished, and was about to heave myself to my feet, when I heard a voice from behind and above me say – "It is grateful, varra grateful to a Scotchman."

I turned myself about, and drew back from the wall, for I saw a very remarkable object perched upon it. It was the upper portion of a man in military accoutrements. He was not sitting on the wall, for, if so, his legs would have been dangling over on the outside. And yet he could not have heaved himself up to the level of the parapet, with the legs depending inside, for he appeared to be on the wall itself down to the middle.

"Are you a Scotchman or an Englishman?" he inquired.

"An Englishman," I replied, hardly knowing what to make of the apparition.

"It's mabbe a bit airly in the nicht for me to be stirring," he said; "but the smell of the whisky drew me from my grave."

"From your grave!" I exclaimed.

"And pray, what is the blend?" he asked.

I answered.

"Weel," said he, "ye might do better, but it's guid enough. I am Captain Alister McAlister of Auchimachie, at your service, that is to say, his superior half. I fell in one of the attacks on the citadel. Those" – he employed a strong qualification which need not be reproduced – "those Johnny Crapauds used chain-shot; and they cut me in half at the waistbelt, and my legs are in Scotland."

Having somewhat recovered from my astonishment, I was able to take a further look at him, and could not restrain a laugh. He so much resembled Humpty Dumpty, who, as I had learned in childhood, did sit on a wall.

"Is there anything so rideeculous about me?" asked Captain McAlister in a tone of irritation. "You seem to be in a jocular mood, sir."

"I assure you," I responded, "I was only laughing from joy of heart at the happy chance of meeting you, Alister McAlister."

"Of Auchimachie, and my title is Captain," he said. "There is only half of me here – the etceteras are in the family vault in Scotland."

I expressed my genuine surprise at this announcement. "You must understand, sir," continued he, "that I am but the speeritual presentment of my buried trunk. The speeritual presentment of my nether half is not here, and I should scorn to use those of Captain O'Hooligan."

I pressed my hand to my brow. Was I in my right senses? Had the hot sun during the day affected my brain, or had the last drain of whisky upset my reason?

"You may be pleased to know," said the half-captain, "that my father, the Laird of Auchimachie, and Colonel Graham of Ours, were on terms of the greatest intimacy. Before I started

for the war under Wellington – he was at the time but Sir Arthur Wellesley – my father took Colonel Graham apart and confided to him: 'If anything should happen to my son in the campaign, you'll oblige me greatly if you will forward his remains to Auchmachie. I am a staunch Presbyterian, and I shouldn't feel happy that his poor body should lie in the land of idolaters, who worship the Virgin Mary. And as to the expense, I will manage to meet that; but be careful not to do the job in an extravagant manner.'

"And the untoward Fates cut you short?"

"Yes, the chain-shot did, but not in the Peninsula. I passed safely through that, but it was here. When we were makin' the bridge, the enemy's ships were up the river, and they fired on us with chain-shot, which ye ken are mainly used for cutting the rigging of vessels. But they employed them on us as we were engaged over the pontoons, and I was just cut in half by a pair of these shot at the junction of the tunic and the trews."

"I cannot understand how that your legs should be in Scotland and your trunk here."

"That's just what I'm aboot to tell you. There was a Captain O'Hooligan and I used to meet; we were in the same detachment. I need not inform you, if you're a man of understanding, that O'Hooligan is an Irish name, and Captain Timothy O'Hooligan was a born Irishman and an ignorant papist to boot. Now, I am by education and convection a staunch Presbyterian. I believe in John Calvin, John Knox, and Jeannie Geddes. That's my creed; and if ye are disposed for an argument – "

"Not in the least."

"Weel, then, it was other with Captain O'Hooligan, and we often had words; but he hadn't any arguments at all, only assertions, and he lost his temper accordingly, and I was angry at the unreasonableness of the man. I had had an ancestor in Derry at the siege and at the Battle of the Boyne, and he spitted three Irish kerns on his sabre. I glory in it, and I told O'Hooligan as much, and I drank a glass of toddy to the memory of William III., and I shouted out Lillibulero! I believe in the end we would have fought a duel, after the siege was over, unless one of us had thought better of it. But it was not to be. At the same time that I was cut in half, so was he also by chain-shot."

"And is he buried here?"

"The half of him – his confounded legs, and the knees that have bowed to the image of Baal."

"Then, what became of his body?"

"If you'll pay me reasonable attention, and not interrupt, I'll tell you the whole story. But – sure enough! Here come those legs!"

Instantly the half-man rolled off the wall, on the outside, and heaving himself along on his hands, scuttled behind a tree-trunk.

Next moment I saw a pair of nimble lower limbs, in white ducks and straps under the boots, leap the wall, and run about, up and down, much like a setter after a partridge.

I did not know what to make of this.

Then the head of McAlister peered from behind the tree, and screamed "Lillibulero! God save King William!" Instantly the legs went after him, and catching him up kicked him like a football about the enclosure. I cannot recall precisely how many times the circuit was made, twice or thrice, but all the while the head of McAlister kept screaming "Lillibulero!" and "D – the Pope!"

Recovering myself from my astonishment, and desirous of putting a term to this not very edifying scene, I picked up a leaf of shamrock, that grew at my feet, and ran between the legs and the trunk, and presented the symbol of St. Patrick to the former. The legs at once desisted from pursuit, and made a not ungraceful bow to the leaf, and as I advanced they retired, still bowing reverentially, till they reached the wall, which they stepped over with the utmost ease.

The half-Scotchman now hobbled up to me on his hands, and said: "I'm varra much obleeged to you for your intervention, sir." Then he scrambled, by means of the rails of the gate, to his former perch on the wall.

"You must understand, sir," said McAlister, settling himself comfortably, "that this produces no pheelsical inconvenience to me at all. For O'Hooligan's boots are speeritual, and so is my trunk speeritual. And at best it only touches my speeritual feelings. Still, I thank you."

"You certainly administered to him some spiritual aggravation," I observed.

"Ay, ay, sir, I did. And I glory in it."

"And now, Captain McAlister, if it is not troubling you too greatly, after this interruption would you kindly explain to me how it comes about that the nobler part of you is here and the less noble in Scotland?"

"I will do so with pleasure. Captain O'Hooligan's upper story is at Auchimachie."

"How came that about?"

"If you had a particle of patience, you would not interrupt me in my narrative. I told you, did I not, that my dear father had enjoined on Colonel Graham, should anything untoward occur, that he should send my body home to be interred in the vault of my ancestors? Well, this is how it came about that the awkward mistake was made. When it was reported that I had been killed, Colonel Graham issued orders that my remains should be carefully attended to and put aside to be sent home to Scotland."

"By boat, I presume?"

"Certainly, by boat. But, unfortunately, he commissioned some Irishmen of his company to attend to it. And whether it was that they wished to do honour to their own countryman, or whether it was that, like most Irishmen, they could not fail to blunder in the discharge of their duty, I cannot say. They might have recognised me, even if they hadn't known my face, by my goold repeater watch; but some wretched camp-followers had been before them. On the watch were engraved the McAlister arms. But the watch had been stolen. So they picked up – either out of purpose, or by mistake – O'Hooligan's trunk, and my nether portion, and put them together into one case. You see, a man's legs are not so easily identified. So his body and my lower limbs were made ready together to be forwarded to Scotland."

"But how – did not Colonel Graham see personally to the matter?"

"He could not. He was so much engaged over regimental duties. Still, he might have stretched a point, I think."

"It must have been difficult to send the portions so far. Was the body embalmed?"

"Embalmed! no. There was no one in Bayonne who knew how to do it. There was a bird-stuffer in the Rue Pannceau, but he had done nothing larger than a seagull. So there could be no question of embalming. We, that is, the bit of O'Hooligan and the bit of me, were put into a cask of eau-de-vie, and so forwarded by a sailing-vessel. And either on the way to Southampton, or on another boat from that port to Edinburgh, the sailors ran a gimlet into the barrel, and inserted a straw, and drank up all the spirits. It was all gone by the time the hogshead reached Auchimachie. Whether O'Hooligan gave a smack to the liquor I cannot say, but I can answer for my legs, they would impart a grateful flavour of whisky. I was always a drinker of whisky, and when I had taken a considerable amount it always went to my legs; they swerved, and gave way under me. That is proof certain that the liquor went to my extremities and not to my head. Trust to a Scotchman's head for standing any amount of whisky. When the remains arrived at Auchimachie for interment, it was supposed that some mistake had been made. My hair is sandy, that of O'Hooligan is black, or nearly so; but there was no knowing what chemical action the alcohol might have on the hair in altering its colour. But my mother identified the legs past mistake, by a mole on the left calf and a varicose vein on the right. Anyhow, half a loaf is better than no bread, so all the mortal relics were consigned to the McAlister vault. It was aggravating to my feelings that the minister should pronounce a varra eloquent and moving discourse on the occasion over the trunk of a confounded Irishman and a papist."

"You must really excuse me," interrupted I, "but how the dickens do you know all this?"

"There is always an ethereal current of communication between the parts of a man's body," replied McAlister, "and there is speeritual intercommunication between a man's head and his toes, however pairted they may be. I tell you, sir, in the speeritual world we know a thing or two."

"And now," said I, "what may be your wishes in this most unfortunate matter?"

"I am coming to that, if you'll exercise a little rational patience. This that I tell you of occurred in 1814, a considerable time ago. I shall be varra pleased if, on your return to England, you will make it your business to run up to Scotland, and interview my great-nephew. I am quite sure he will do the right thing by me, for the honour of the family, and to ease my soul. He never would have come into the estate at all if it had not been for my lamented decease. There's another little unpleasantness to which I desire you to call his attention. A tombstone has been erected over my trunk and O'Hooligan's legs, here in this cemetery, and on it is: 'Sacred to the Memory of Captain Timothy O'Hooligan, who fell on the field of Glory. R. I. P.' Now this is liable to a misunderstanding for it is me – I mean I, to be grammatical – who lies underneath. I make no account of the Irishman's nether extremities. And being a convinced and zealous Presbyterian, I altogether conscientiously object to having 'Requiescat in pace' inscribed over my bodily remains. And my great-nephew, the present laird, if he be true to the principles of the Covenant, will object just as strongly as myself. I know very weel those letters are attached to the name of O'Hooligan, but they mark the place of deposition of my body rather than his. So I wish you just to put it clearly and logically to the laird, and he will take steps, at any cost, to have me transferred to Auchimachie. What he may do with the relics of that Irish rogue I don't care for, not one stick of barley sugar."

I promised solemnly to fulfil the commission entrusted to me, and then Captain McAlister wished me a good night, and retired behind the cemetery wall.

I did not quit the South of France that same year, for I spent the winter at Pau. In the following May I returned to England, and there found that a good many matters connected with my family called for my immediate attention. It was accordingly just a year and five months after my interview with Captain McAlister that I was able to discharge my promise. I had never forgotten my undertaking – I had merely postponed it. Charity begins at home, and my own concerns engrossed my time too fully to allow me the leisure for a trip to the North.

However, in the end I did go. I took the express to Edinburgh. That city, I think candidly, is the finest for situation in the world, as far as I have seen of it. I did not then visit it. I never had previously been in the Athens of the North, and I should have liked to spend a couple of days at least in it, to look over the castle and to walk through Holyrood. But duty stands before pleasure, and I went on directly to my destination, postponing acquaintance with Edinburgh till I had accomplished my undertaking.

I had written to Mr. Fergus McAlister to inform him of my desire to see him. I had not entered into the matter of my communication. I thought it best to leave this till I could tell him the whole story by word of mouth. I merely informed him by letter that I had something to speak to him about that greatly concerned his family.

On reaching the station his carriage awaited me, and I was driven to his house.

He received me with the greatest cordiality, and offered me the kindest hospitality.

The house was large and rambling, not in the best repair, and the grounds, as I was driven through them, did not appear to be trimly kept. I was introduced to his wife and to his five daughters, fair-haired, freckled girls, certainly not beautiful, but pleasing enough in manner. His eldest son was away in the army, and his second was in a lawyer's office in Edinburgh; so I saw nothing of them.

After dinner, when the ladies had retired, I told him the entire story as freely and as fully as possible, and he listened to me with courtesy, patience, and the deepest attention.

"Yes," he said, when I had concluded, "I was aware that doubts had been cast on the genuineness of the trunk. But under the circumstances it was considered advisable to allow the matter to stand as it was. There were insuperable difficulties in the way of an investigation and a certain identification. But the legs were all right. And I hope to show you to-morrow, in the kirk, a very handsome tablet against

the wall, recording the name and the date of decease of my great-uncle, and some very laudatory words on his character, beside an appropriate text from the Screeptures."

"Now, however, that the facts are known, you will, of course, take steps for the translation of the half of Captain Alister to your family vault."

"I foresee considerable difficulties in the way," he replied. "The authorities at Bayonne might raise objections to the exhuming of the remains in the grave marked by the tombstone of Captain O'Hooligan. They might very reasonably say: 'What the hang has Mr. Fergus McAlister to do with the body of Captain O'Hooligan?' We must consult the family of that officer in Ireland."

"But," said I, "a representation of the case – of the mistake made – would render all clear to them. I do not see that there is any necessity for complicating the story by saying that you have only half of your relative here, and that the other half is in O'Hooligan's grave. State that orders had been given for the transmission of the body of your great-uncle to Auchimachie, and that, through error, the corpse of Captain O'Hooligan had been sent, and Captain McAlister buried by mistake as that of the Irishman. That makes a simple, intelligible, and straightforward tale. Then you could dispose of the superfluous legs when they arrived in the manner you think best."

The laird remained silent for a while, rubbing his chin, and looking at the tablecloth.

Presently he stood up, and going to the sideboard, said: "I'll just take a wash of whisky to clear my thoughts. Will you have some?"

"Thank you; I am enjoying your old and excellent port."

Mr. Fergus McAlister returned leisurely to the table after his "wash," remained silent a few minutes longer, then lifted his head and said: "I don't see that I am called upon to transport those legs."

"No," I answered; "but you had best take the remains in a lump and sort them on their arrival."

"I am afraid it will be seriously expensive. My good sir, the property is not now worth what it was in Captain Alister's time. Land has gone down in value, and rents have been seriously reduced. Besides, farmers are now more exacting than formerly; they will not put up with the byres that served their fathers. Then my son in the army is a great expense to me, and my second son is not yet earning his livelihood, and my daughters have not yet found suitors, so that I shall have to leave them something on which to live; besides" – he drew a long breath – "I want to build on to the house a billiard-room."

"I do not think," protested I, "that the cost would be very serious."

"What do you mean by serious?" he asked.

"I think that these relics of humanity might be transported to Auchimachie in a hogshead of cognac, much as the others were."

"What is the price of cognac down there?" asked he.

"Well," I replied, "that is more than I can say as to the cask. Best cognac, three stars, is five francs fifty centimes a bottle."

"That's a long price. But one star?"

"I cannot say; I never bought that. Possibly three francs and a half."

"And how many bottles to a cask?"

"I am not sure, something over two hundred litres."

"Two hundred three shillings," mused Mr. Fergus; and then looking up, "there is the duty in England, very heavy on spirits, and charges for the digging-up, and fees to the officials, and the transport by water – " He shook his head.

"You must remember," said I, "that your relative is subjected to great indignities from those legs, getting toed three or four times round the enclosure." I said three or four, but I believe it was only twice or thrice. "It hardly comports with the family honour to suffer it."

"I think," replied Mr. Fergus, "that you said it was but the speeritual presentment of a boot, and that there was no pheelsical inconvenience felt, only a speeritual impression?"

"Just so."

"For my part, judging from my personal experience," said the laird, "speiritual impressions are most evanescent."

"Then," said I, "Captain Alister's trunk lies in a foreign land."

"But not," replied he, "in Roman Catholic consecrated soil. That is a great satisfaction."

"You, however, have the trunk of a Roman Catholic in your family vault."

"It is so, according to what you say. But there are a score of McAlisters there, all staunch Presbyterians, and if it came to an argument among them – I won't say he would not have a leg to stand on, as he hasn't those anyhow, but he would find himself just nowhere."

Then Mr. Fergus McAlister stood up and said: "Shall we join the ladies? As to what you have said, sir, and have recommended, I assure you that I will give it my most serious consideration."

## THE LEADEN RING

"It is not possible, Julia. I cannot conceive how the idea of attending the county ball can have entered your head after what has happened. Poor young Hattersley's dreadful death suffices to stop that."

"But, aunt, Mr. Hattersley is no relation of ours."

"No relation – but you know that the poor fellow would not have shot himself if it had not been for you."

"Oh, Aunt Elizabeth, how can you say so, when the verdict was that he committed suicide when in an unsound condition of mind? How could I help his blowing out his brains, when those brains were deranged?"

"Julia, do not talk like this. If he did go off his head, it was you who upset him by first drawing him on, leading him to believe that you liked him, and then throwing him over so soon as the Hon. James Lawlor appeared on the *tapis*. Consider: what will people say if you go to the assembly?"

"What will they say if I do not go? They will immediately set it down to my caring deeply for James Hattersley, and they will think that there was some sort of engagement."

"They are not likely to suppose that. But really, Julia, you were for a while all smiles and encouragement. Tell me, now, did Mr. Hattersley propose to you?"

"Well – yes, he did, and I refused him."

"And then he went and shot himself in despair. Julia, you cannot with any face go to the ball."

"Nobody knows that he proposed. And precisely because I do go everyone will conclude that he did not propose. I do not wish it to be supposed that he did."

"His family, of course, must have been aware. They will see your name among those present at the assembly."

"Aunt, they are in too great trouble to look at the paper to see who were at the dance."

"His terrible death lies at your door. How you can have the heart, Julia – "

"I don't see it. Of course, I feel it. I am awfully sorry, and awfully sorry for his father, the admiral. I cannot set him up again. I wish that when I rejected him he had gone and done as did Joe Pomeroy, marry one of his landlady's daughters."

"There, Julia, is another of your delinquencies. You lured on young Pomeroy till he proposed, then you refused him, and in a fit of vexation and mortified vanity he married a girl greatly beneath him in social position. If the *ménage* prove a failure you will have it on your conscience that you have wrecked his life and perhaps hers as well."

"I cannot throw myself away as a charity to save this man or that from doing a foolish thing."

"What I complain of, Julia, is that you encouraged young Mr. Pomeroy till Mr. Hattersley appeared, whom you thought more eligible, and then you tossed him aside; and you did precisely the same with James Hattersley as soon as you came to know Mr. Lawlor. After all, Julia, I am not so sure that Mr. Pomeroy has not chosen the better part. The girl, I dare say, is simple, fresh, and affectionate."

"Your implication is not complimentary, Aunt Elizabeth."

"My dear, I have no patience with the young lady of the present day, who is shallow, self-willed, and indifferent to the feelings and happiness of others, who craves for excitement and pleasure, and desires nothing that is useful and good. Where now will you see a girl like Viola's sister, who let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, feed on her damask cheek? Nowadays a girl lays herself at the feet of a man if she likes him, turns herself inside-out to let him and all the world read her heart."

"I have no relish to be like Viola's sister, and have my story – a blank. I never grovelled at the feet of Joe Pomeroy or James Hattersley."

"No, but you led each to consider himself the favoured one till he proposed, and then you refused him. It was like smiling at a man and then stabbing him to the heart."

"Well – I don't want people to think that James Hattersley cared for me – I certainly never cared for him – nor that he proposed; so I shall go to the ball."

Julia Demant was an orphan. She had been retained at school till she was eighteen, and then had been removed just at the age when a girl begins to take an interest in her studies, and not to regard them as drudgery. On her removal she had cast away all that she had acquired, and had been plunged into the whirl of Society. Then suddenly her father died – she had lost her mother some years before – and she went to live with her aunt, Miss Flemming. Julia had inherited a sum of about five hundred pounds a year, and would probably come in for a good estate and funds as well on the death of her aunt. She had been flattered as a girl at home, and at school as a beauty, and she certainly thought no small bones of herself.

Miss Flemming was an elderly lady with a sharp tongue, very outspoken, and very decided in her opinions; but her action was weak, and Julia soon discovered that she could bend the aunt to do anything she willed, though she could not modify or alter her opinions.

In the matter of Joe Pomeroy and James Hattersley, it was as Miss Flemming had said. Julia had encouraged Mr. Pomeroy, and had only cast him off because she thought better of the suit of Mr. Hattersley, son of an admiral of that name. She had seen a good deal of young Hattersley, had given him every encouragement, had so entangled him, that he was madly in love with her; and then, when she came to know the Hon. James Lawlor, and saw that he was fascinated, she rejected Hattersley with the consequences alluded to in the conversation above given.

Julia was particularly anxious to be present at the county ball, for she had been already booked by Mr. Lawlor for several dances, and she was quite resolved to make an attempt to bring him to a declaration.

On the evening of the ball Miss Flemming and Julia entered the carriage. The aunt had given way, as was her wont, but under protest.

For about ten minutes neither spoke, and then Miss Flemming said, "Well, you know my feelings about this dance. I do not approve. I distinctly disapprove. I do not consider your going to the ball in good taste, or, as you would put it, in good form. Poor young Hattersley –"

"Oh, dear aunt, do let us put young Hattersley aside. He was buried with the regular forms, I suppose?"

"Yes, Julia."

"Then the rector accepted the verdict of the jury at the inquest. Why should not we? A man who is unsound in his mind is not responsible for his actions."

"I suppose not."

"Much less, then, I who live ten miles away."

"I do not say that you are responsible for his death, but for the condition of mind that led him to do the dreadful deed. Really, Julia, you are one of those into whose head or heart only by a surgical operation could the thought be introduced that you could be in the wrong. A hypodermic syringe would be too weak an instrument to effect such a radical change in you. Everyone else may be in the wrong, you – never. As for me, I cannot get young Hattersley out of my head."

"And I," retorted Julia with asperity, for her aunt's words had stung her – "I, for my part, do not give him a thought."

She had hardly spoken the words before a chill wind began to pass round her. She drew the Barège shawl that was over her bare shoulders closer about her, and said – "Auntie! is the glass down on your side?"

"No, Julia; why do you ask?"

"There is such a draught."

"Draught! – I do not feel one; perhaps the window on your side hitches."

"Indeed, that is all right. It is blowing harder and is deadly cold. Can one of the front panes be broken?"

"No. Rogers would have told me had that been the case. Besides, I can see that they are sound."

The wind of which Julia complained swirled and whistled about her. It increased in force; it plucked at her shawl and slewed it about her throat; it tore at the lace on her dress. It snatched at her hair, it wrenched it away from the pins, the combs that held it in place; one long tress was lashed across the face of Miss Flemming. Then the hair, completely released, eddied up above the girl's head, and next moment was carried as a drift before her, blinding her. Then – a sudden explosion, as though a gun had been fired into her ear; and with a scream of terror she sank back among the cushions. Miss Flemming, in great alarm, pulled the checkstring, and the carriage stopped. The footman descended from the box and came to the side. The old lady drew down the window and said: "Oh! Phillips, bring the lamp. Something has happened to Miss Demant."

The man obeyed, and sent a flood of light into the carriage. Julia was lying back, white and senseless. Her hair was scattered over her face, neck, and shoulders; the flowers that had been stuck in it, the pins that had fastened it in place, the pads that had given shape to the convolutions lay strewn, some on her lap, some in the rug at the bottom of the carriage.

"Phillips!" ordered the old lady in great agitation, "tell Rogers to turn the horses and drive home at once; and do you run as fast as you can for Dr. Crate."

A few minutes after the carriage was again in motion, Julia revived. Her aunt was chafing her hand.

"Oh, aunt!" she said, "are all the glasses broken?"

"Broken – what glasses?"

"Those of the carriage – with the explosion."

"Explosion, my dear!"

"Yes. That gun which was discharged. It stunned me. Were you hurt?"

"I heard no gun – no explosion."

"But I did. It was as though a bullet had been discharged into my brain. I wonder that I escaped. Who can have fired at us?"

"My dear, no one fired. I heard nothing. I know what it was. I had the same experience many years ago. I slept in a damp bed, and awoke stone deaf in my right ear. I remained so for three weeks. But one night when I was at a ball and was dancing, all at once I heard a report as of a pistol in my right ear, and immediately heard quite clearly again. It was wax."

"But, Aunt Elizabeth, I have not been deaf."

"You have not noticed that you were deaf."

"Oh! but look at my hair; it was that wind that blew it about."

"You are labouring under a delusion, Julia. There was no wind."

"But look – feel how my hair is down."

"That has been done by the motion of the carriage. There are many ruts in the road."

They reached home, and Julia, feeling sick, frightened, and bewildered, retired to bed. Dr. Crate arrived, said that she was hysterical, and ordered something to soothe her nerves. Julia was not convinced. The explanation offered by Miss Flemming did not satisfy her. That she was a victim to hysteria she did not in the least believe. Neither her aunt, nor the coachman, nor Phillips had heard the discharge of a gun. As to the rushing wind, Julia was satisfied that she had experienced it. The lace was ripped, as by a hand, from her dress, and the shawl was twisted about her throat; besides, her hair had not been so slightly arranged that the jolting of the carriage would completely disarrange it. She was vastly perplexed over what she had undergone. She thought and thought, but could get no nearer to a solution of the mystery.

Next day, as she was almost herself again, she rose and went about as usual.

In the afternoon the Hon. James Lawlor called and asked after Miss Flemming. The butler replied that his mistress was out making calls, but that Miss Demant was at home, and he believed was on the terrace. Mr. Lawlor at once asked to see her.

He did not find Julia in the parlour or on the terrace, but in a lower garden to which she had descended to feed the goldfish in the pond.

"Oh! Miss Demant," said he, "I was so disappointed not to see you at the ball last night."

"I was very unwell; I had a fainting fit and could not go."

"It threw a damp on our spirits – that is to say, on mine. I had you booked for several dances."

"You were able to give them to others."

"But that was not the same to me. I did an act of charity and self-denial. I danced instead with the ugly Miss Burgons and with Miss Pounding, and that was like dragging about a sack of potatoes. I believe it would have been a jolly evening, but for that shocking affair of young Hattersley which kept some of the better sort away. I mean those who know the Hattersleys. Of course, for me that did not matter, we were not acquainted. I never even spoke with the fellow. You knew him, I believe? I heard some people say so, and that you had not come because of him. The supper, for a subscription ball, was not atrociously bad."

"What did they say of me?"

"Oh! – if you will know – that you did not attend the ball because you liked him very much, and were awfully cut up."

"I – I! What a shame that people should talk! I never cared a rush for him. He was nice enough in his way, not a bounder, but tolerable as young men go."

Mr. Lawlor laughed. "I should not relish to have such a qualified estimate made of me."

"Nor need you. You are interesting. He became so only when he had shot himself. It will be by this alone that he will be remembered."

"But there is no smoke without fire. Did he like you – much?"

"Dear Mr. Lawlor, I am not a clairvoyante, and never was able to see into the brains or hearts of people – least of all of young men. Perhaps it is fortunate for me that I cannot."

"One lady told me that he had proposed to you."

"Who was that? The potato-sack?"

"I will not give her name. Is there any truth in it? Did he?"

"No."

At the moment she spoke there sounded in her ear a whistle of wind, and she felt a current like a cord of ice creep round her throat, increasing in force and compression, her hat was blown off, and next instant a detonation rang through her head as though a gun had been fired into her ear. She uttered a cry and sank upon the ground.

James Lawlor was bewildered. His first impulse was to run to the house for assistance; then he considered that he could not leave her lying on the wet soil, and he stooped to raise her in his arms and to carry her within. In novels young men perform such a feat without difficulty; but in fact they are not able to do it, especially when the girl is tall and big-boned. Moreover, one in a faint is a dead weight. Lawlor staggered under his burden to the steps. It was as much as he could perform to carry her up to the terrace, and there he placed her on a seat. Panting, and with his muscles quivering after the strain, he hastened to the drawing-room, rang the bell, and when the butler appeared, he gasped: "Miss Demant has fainted; you and I and the footman must carry her within."

"She fainted last night in the carriage," said the butler.

When Julia came to her senses, she was in bed attended by the housekeeper and her maid. A few moments later Miss Flemming arrived.

"Oh, aunt! I have heard it again."

"Heard what, dear?"

"The discharge of a gun."

"It is nothing but wax," said the old lady. "I will drop a little sweet-oil into your ear, and then have it syringed with warm water."

"I want to tell you something – in private."

Miss Flemming signed to the servants to withdraw.

"Aunt," said the girl, "I must say something. This is the second time that this has happened. I am sure it is significant. James Lawlor was with me in the sunken garden, and he began to speak about James Hattersley. You know it was when we were talking about him last night that I heard that awful noise. It was precisely as if a gun had been discharged into my ear. I felt as if all the nerves and tissues of my head were being torn, and all the bones of my skull shattered – just what Mr. Hattersley must have undergone when he pulled the trigger. It was an agony for a moment perhaps, but it felt as if it lasted an hour. Mr. Lawlor had asked me point blank if James Hattersley had proposed to me, and I said, 'No.' I was perfectly justified in so answering, because he had no right to ask me such a question. It was an impertinence on his part, and I answered him shortly and sharply with a negative. But actually James Hattersley proposed twice to me. He would not accept a first refusal, but came next day bothering me again, and I was pretty curt with him. He made some remarks that were rude about how I had treated him, and which I will not repeat, and as he left, in a state of great agitation, he said, 'Julia, I vow that you shall not forget this, and you shall belong to no one but me, alive or dead.' I considered this great nonsense, and did not accord it another thought. But, really, these terrible annoyances, this wind and the bursts of noise, do seem to me to come from him. It is just as though he felt a malignant delight in distressing me, now that he is dead. I should like to defy him, and I will do it if I can, but I cannot bear more of these experiences – they will kill me."

Several days elapsed.

Mr. Lawlor called repeatedly to inquire, but a week passed before Julia was sufficiently recovered to receive him, and then the visit was one of courtesy and of sympathy, and the conversation turned upon her health, and on indifferent themes.

But some few days later it was otherwise. She was in the conservatory alone, pretty much herself again, when Mr. Lawlor was announced.

Physically she had recovered, or believed that she had, but her nerves had actually received a severe shock. She had made up her mind that the phenomena of the circling wind and the explosion were in some mysterious manner connected with Hattersley.

She bitterly resented this, but she was in mortal terror of a recurrence; and she felt no compunction for her treatment of the unfortunate young man, but rather a sense of deep resentment against him. If he were dead, why did he not lie quiet and cease from vexing her?

To be a martyr was to her no gratification, for hers was not a martyrdom that provoked sympathy, and which could make her interesting.

She had hitherto supposed that when a man died there was an end of him; his condition was determined for good or for ill. But that a disembodied spirit should hover about and make itself a nuisance to the living, had never entered into her calculations.

"Julia – if I may be allowed so to call you" – began Mr. Lawlor, "I have brought you a bouquet of flowers. Will you accept them?"

"Oh!" she said, as he handed the bunch to her, "how kind of you. At this time of the year they are so rare, and aunt's gardener is so miserly that he will spare me none for my room but some miserable bits of geranium. It is too bad of you wasting your money like this upon me."

"It is no waste, if it afford you pleasure."

"It is a pleasure. I dearly love flowers."

"To give you pleasure," said Mr. Lawlor, "is the great object of my life. If I could assure you happiness – if you would allow me to hope – to seize this opportunity, now that we are alone together – "

He drew near and caught her hand. His features were agitated, his lips trembled, there was earnestness in his eyes.

At once a cold blast touched Julia and began to circle about her and to flutter her hair. She trembled and drew back. That paralysing experience was about to be renewed. She turned deadly white, and put her hand to her right ear. "Oh, James! James!" she gasped. "Do not, pray do not speak what you want to say, or I shall faint. It is coming on. I am not yet well enough to hear it. Write to me and I will answer. For pity's sake do not speak it." Then she sank upon a seat – and at that moment her aunt entered the conservatory.

On the following day a note was put into her hand, containing a formal proposal from the Hon. James Lawlor; and by return of post Julia answered with an acceptance.

There was no reason whatever why the engagement should be long; and the only alternative mooted was whether the wedding should take place before Lent or after Easter. Finally, it was settled that it should be celebrated on Shrove Tuesday. This left a short time for the necessary preparations. Miss Flemming would have to go to town with her niece concerning a trousseau, and a trousseau is not turned out rapidly any more than an armed cruiser.

There is usually a certain period allowed to young people who have become engaged, to see much of each other, to get better acquainted with one another, to build their castles in the air, and to indulge in little passages of affection, vulgarly called "spooning." But in this case the spooning had to be curtailed and postponed.

At the outset, when alone with James, Julia was nervous. She feared a recurrence of those phenomena that so affected her. But, although every now and then the wind curled and souged about her, it was not violent, nor was it chilling; and she came to regard it as a wail of discomfiture. Moreover, there was no recurrence of the detonation, and she fondly hoped that with her marriage the vexation would completely cease.

In her heart was deep down a sense of exultation. She was defying James Hattersley and setting his prediction at naught. She was not in love with Mr. Lawlor; she liked him, in her cold manner, and was not insensible to the social advantage that would be hers when she became the Honourable Mrs. Lawlor.

The day of the wedding arrived. Happily it was fine. "Blessed is the bride the sun shines on," said the cheery Miss Flemming; "an omen, I trust, of a bright and unruffled life in your new condition."

All the neighbourhood was present at the church. Miss Flemming had many friends. Mr. Lawlor had fewer present, as he belonged to a distant county. The church path had been laid with red cloth, the church decorated with flowers, and a choir was present to twitter "The voice that breathed o'er Eden."

The rector stood by the altar, and two cushions had been laid at the chancel step. The rector was to be assisted by an uncle of the bridegroom who was in Holy Orders; the rector, being old-fashioned, had drawn on pale grey kid gloves.

First arrived the bridegroom with his best man, and stood in a nervous condition balancing himself first on one foot, then on the other, waiting, observed by all eyes.

Next entered the procession of the bride, attended by her maids, to the "Wedding March" in *Lohengrin*, on a wheezy organ. Then Julia and her intended took their places at the chancel step for the performance of the first portion of the ceremony, and the two clergy descended to them from the altar.

"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife?"

"I will."

"Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband?"

"I will."

"I, James, take thee, Julia, to my wedded wife, to have and to hold – " and so on.

As the words were being spoken, a cold rush of air passed over the clasped hands, numbing them, and began to creep round the bride, and to flutter her veil. She set her lips and knitted her brows. In a few minutes she would be beyond the reach of these manifestations.

When it came to her turn to speak, she began firmly: "I, Julia, take thee, James – " but as she proceeded the wind became fierce; it raged about her, it caught her veil on one side and buffeted her cheek; it switched the veil about her throat, as though strangling her with a drift of snow contracting into ice. But she persevered to the end.

Then James Lawlor produced the ring, and was about to place it on her finger with the prescribed words: "With this ring I thee wed – " when a report rang in her ear, followed by a heaving of her skull, as though the bones were being burst asunder, and she sank unconscious on the chancel step.

In the midst of profound commotion, she was raised and conveyed to the vestry, followed by James Lawlor, trembling and pale. He had slipped the ring back into his waistcoat pocket. Dr. Crate, who was present, hastened to offer his professional assistance.

In the vestry Julia rested in a Glastonbury chair, white and still, with her hands resting in her lap. And to the amazement of those present, it was seen that on the third finger of her left hand was a leaden ring, rude and solid as though fashioned out of a bullet. Restoratives were applied, but full a quarter of an hour elapsed before Julia opened her eyes, and a little colour returned to her lips and cheek. But, as she raised her hands to her brow to wipe away the damps that had formed on it, her eye caught sight of the leaden ring, and with a cry of horror she sank again into insensibility.

The congregation slowly left the church, awestruck, whispering, asking questions, receiving no satisfactory answers, forming surmises all incorrect.

"I am very much afraid, Mr. Lawlor," said the rector, "that it will be impossible to proceed with the service to-day; it must be postponed till Miss Demant is in a condition to conclude her part, and to sign the register. I do not see how it can be gone on with to-day. She is quite unequal to the effort."

The carriage which was to have conveyed the couple to Miss Flemming's house, and then, later, to have taken them to the station for their honeymoon, the horses decorated with white rosettes, the whip adorned with a white bow, had now to convey Julia, hardly conscious, supported by her aunt, to her home.

No rice could be thrown. The bell-ringers, prepared to give a joyous peal, were constrained to depart.

The reception at Miss Flemming's was postponed. No one thought of attending. The cakes, the ices, were consumed in the kitchen.

The bridegroom, bewildered, almost frantic, ran hither and thither, not knowing what to do, what to say.

Julia lay as a stone for fully two hours; and when she came to herself could not speak. When conscious, she raised her left hand, looked on the leaden ring, and sank back again into senselessness.

Not till late in the evening was she sufficiently recovered to speak, and then she begged her aunt, who had remained by her bed without stirring, to dismiss the attendants. She desired to speak with her alone. When no one was in the room with her, save Miss Flemming, she said in a whisper: "Oh, Aunt Elizabeth! Oh, auntie! such an awful thing has happened. I can never marry Mr. Lawlor, never. I have married James Hattersley; I am a dead man's wife. At the time that James Lawlor was making the responses, I heard a piping voice in my ear, an unearthly voice, saying the same words. When I said: 'I, Julia, take you, James, to my wedded husband' – you know Mr. Hattersley is James as well as Mr. Lawlor – then the words applied to him as much or as well as to the other. And then, when it came to the giving of the ring, there was the explosion in my ear, as before – and the leaden ring was forced on to my finger, and not James Lawlor's golden ring. It is of no use my resisting any more. I am a dead man's wife, and I cannot marry James Lawlor."

Some years have elapsed since that disastrous day and that incomplete marriage.

Miss Demant is Miss Demant still, and she has never been able to remove the leaden ring from the third finger of her left hand. Whenever the attempt has been made, either to disengage it by drawing it off or by cutting through it, there has ensued that terrifying discharge as of a gun into her ear, causing insensibility. The prostration that has followed, the terror it has inspired, have so affected her nerves, that she has desisted from every attempt to rid herself of the ring.

She invariably wears a glove on her left hand, and it is bulged over the third finger, where lies that leaden ring.

She is not a happy woman, although her aunt is dead and has left her a handsome estate. She has not got many acquaintances. She has no friends; for her temper is unamiable, and her tongue is bitter. She supposes that the world, as far as she knows it, is in league against her.

Towards the memory of James Hattersley she entertains a deadly hate. If an incantation could lay his spirit, if prayer could give him repose, she would have recourse to none of these expedients, even though they might relieve her, so bitter is her resentment. And she harbours a silent wrath against Providence for allowing the dead to walk and to molest the living.

## THE MOTHER OF PANSIES

Anna Voss, of Siebenstein, was the prettiest girl in her village. Never was she absent from a fair or a dance. No one ever saw her abroad anything but merry. If she had her fits of bad temper, she kept them for her mother, in the secrecy of the house. Her voice was like that of the lark, and her smile like the May morning. She had plenty of suitors, for she was possessed of what a young peasant desires more in a wife than beauty, and that is money.

But of all the young men who hovered about her, and sought her favour, none was destined to win it save Joseph Arler, the ranger, a man in a government position, whose duty was to watch the frontier against smugglers, and to keep an eye on the game against poachers.

The eve of the marriage had come.

One thing weighed on the pleasure-loving mind of Anna. She dreaded becoming a mother of a family which would keep her at home, and occupy her from morn to eve in attendance on her children, and break the sweetness of her sleep at night.

So she visited an old hag named Schändelwein, who was a reputed witch, and to whom she confided her trouble.

The old woman said that she had looked into the mirror of destiny, before Anna arrived, and she had seen that Providence had ordained that Anna should have seven children, three girls and four boys, and that one of the latter was destined to be a priest.

But Mother Schändelwein had great powers; she could set at naught the determinations of Providence; and she gave to Anna seven pips, very much like apple-pips, which she placed in a cornet of paper; and she bade her cast these one by one into the mill-race, and as each went over the mill-wheel, it ceased to have a future, and in each pip was a child's soul.

So Anna put money into Mother Schändelwein's hand and departed, and when it was growing dusk she stole to the wooden bridge over the mill-stream, and dropped in one pip after another. As each fell into the water she heard a little sigh.

But when it came to casting in the last of the seven she felt a sudden qualm, and a battle in her soul.

However, she threw it in, and then, overcome by an impulse of remorse, threw herself into the stream to recover it, and as she did so she uttered a cry.

But the water was dark, the floating pip was small, she could not see it, and the current was rapidly carrying her to the mill-wheel, when the miller ran out and rescued her.

On the following morning she had completely recovered her spirits, and laughingly told her bridesmaids how that in the dusk, in crossing the wooden bridge, her foot had slipped, she had fallen into the stream, and had been nearly drowned. "And then," added she, "if I really had been drowned, what would Joseph have done?"

The married life of Anna was not unhappy. It could hardly be that in association with so genial, kind, and simple a man as Joseph. But it was not altogether the ideal happiness anticipated by both. Joseph had to be much away from home, sometimes for days and nights together, and Anna found it very tedious to be alone. And Joseph might have calculated on a more considerate wife. After a hard day of climbing and chasing in the mountains, he might have expected that she would have a good hot supper ready for him. But Anna set before him whatever came to hand and cost least trouble. A healthy appetite is the best of sauces, she remarked.

Moreover, the nature of his avocation, scrambling up rocks and breaking through an undergrowth of brambles and thorns, produced rents and fraying of stockings and cloth garments. Instead of cheerfully undertaking the repairs, Anna grumbled over each rent, and put out his garments to be mended by others. It was only when repair was urgent that she consented to undertake it herself,

and then it was done with sulky looks, muttered reproaches, and was executed so badly that it had to be done over again, and by a hired workwoman.

But Joseph's nature was so amiable, and he was so fond of his pretty wife, that he bore with those defects, and turned off her murmurs with a joke, or sealed her pouting lips with a kiss.

There was one thing about Joseph that Anna could not relish. Whenever he came into the village, he was surrounded, besieged by the children. Hardly had he turned the corner into the square, before it was known that he was there, and the little ones burst out of their parents' houses, broke from their sister nurse's arms, to scamper up to Joseph and to jump about him. For Joseph somehow always had nuts or almonds or sweets in his pockets, and for these he made the children leap, or catch, or scramble, or sometimes beg, by putting a sweet on a boy's nose and bidding him hold it there, till he said "Catch!"

Joseph had one particular favourite among all this crew, and that was a little lame boy with a white, pinched face, who hobbled about on crutches.

Him Joseph would single out, take him on his knee, seat himself on the steps of the village cross or of the churchyard, and tell him stories of his adventures, of the habits of the beasts of the forest.

Anna, looking out of her window, could see all this; and see how before Joseph set the poor cripple down, the child would throw its arms round his neck and kiss him.

Then Joseph would come home with his swinging step and joyous face.

Anna resented that his first attention should be given to the children, regarding it as her due, and she often showed her displeasure by the chill of her reception of her husband. She did not reproach him in set words, but she did not run to meet him, jump into his arms, and respond to his warm kisses.

Once he did venture on a mild expostulation. "Annerl, why do you not knit my socks or stocking-legs? Home-made is heart-made. It is a pity to spend money on buying what is poor stuff, when those made by you would not only last on my calves and feet, but warm the cockles of my heart."

To which she replied testily: "It is you who set the example of throwing money away on sweet things for those pestilent little village brats."

One evening Anna heard an unusual hubbub in the square, shouts and laughter, not of children alone, but of women and men as well, and next moment into the house burst Joseph very red, carrying a cradle on his head.

"What is this fooling for?" asked Anna, turning crimson.

"An experiment, Annerl, dearest," answered Joseph, setting down the cradle. "I have heard it said that a wife who rocks an empty cradle soon rocks a baby into it. So I have bought this and brought it to you. Rock, rock, rock, and when I see a little rosebud in it among the snowy linen, I shall cry for joy."

Never before had Anna known how dull and dead life could be in an empty house. When she had lived with her mother, that mother had made her do much of the necessary work of the house; now there was not much to be done, and there was no one to exercise compulsion.

If Anna ran out and visited her neighbours, they proved to be disinclined for a gossip. During the day they had to scrub and bake and cook, and in the evening they had their husbands and children with them, and did not relish the intrusion of a neighbour.

The days were weary days, and Anna had not the energy or the love of work to prompt her to occupy herself more than was absolutely necessary. Consequently, the house was not kept scrupulously clean. The glass and the pewter and the saucepans did not shine. The window-panes were dull. The house linen was unhemmed.

One evening Joseph sat in a meditative mood over the fire, looking into the red embers, and what was unusual with him, he did not speak.

Anna was inclined to take umbrage at this, when all at once he looked round at her with his bright pleasant smile and said, "Annerl! I have been thinking. One thing is wanted to make us

supremely happy – a baby in the house. It has not pleased God to send us one, so I propose that we both go on pilgrimage to Mariahilf to ask for one."

"Go yourself – I want no baby here," retorted Anna.

A few days after this, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came the great affliction on Anna of her husband's death.

Joseph had been found shot in the mountains. He was quite dead. The bullet had pierced his heart. He was brought home borne on green fir-boughs interlaced, by four fellow-jägers, and they carried him into his house. He had, in all probability, met his death at the hand of smugglers.

With a cry of horror and grief Anna threw herself on Joseph's body and kissed his pale lips. Now only did she realise how deeply all along she had loved him – now that she had lost him.

Joseph was laid in his coffin preparatory to the interment on the morrow. A crucifix and two candles stood at his head on a little table covered with a white cloth. On a stool at his feet was a bowl containing holy water and a sprig of rue.

A neighbour had volunteered to keep company with Anna during the night, but she had impatiently, without speaking, repelled the offer. She would spend the last night that he was above ground alone with her dead – alone with her thoughts.

And what were those thoughts?

Now she remembered how indifferent she had been to his wishes, how careless of his comforts; how little she had valued his love, had appreciated his cheerfulness, his kindness, his forbearance, his equable temper.

Now she recalled studied coldness on her part, sharp words, mortifying gestures, outbursts of unreasoning and unreasonable petulance.

Now she recalled Joseph scattering nuts among the children, addressing kind words to old crones, giving wholesome advice to giddy youths.

She remembered now little endearments shown to her, the presents brought her from the fair, the efforts made to cheer her with his pleasant stories and quaint jokes. She heard again his cheerful voice as he strove to interest her in his adventures of the chase.

As she thus sat silent, numbed by her sorrow, in the faint light cast by the two candles, with the shadow of the coffin lying black on the floor at her feet, she heard a stumping without; then a hand was laid on the latch, the door was timidly opened, and in upon his crutches came the crippled boy. He looked wistfully at her, but she made no sign, and then he hobbled to the coffin and burst into tears, and stooped and kissed the brow of his dead friend.

Leaning on his crutches, he took his rosary and said the prayers for the rest of her and his Joseph's soul; then shuffled awkwardly to the foot, dipped the spray of rue, and sprinkled the dead with the blessed water.

Next moment the ungainly creature was stumping forth, but after he had passed through the door, he turned, looked once more towards the dead, put his hand to his lips, and wafted to it his final farewell.

Anna now took her beads and tried to pray, but her prayers would not leave her lips; they were choked and driven back by the thoughts which crowded up and bewildered her. The chain fell from her fingers upon her lap, lay there neglected, and then slipped to the floor. How the time passed she knew not, neither did she care. The clock ticked, and she heard it not; the hours sounded, and she regarded them not till in at her ear and through her brain came clear the call of the wooden cuckoo announcing midnight.

Her eyes had been closed. Now suddenly she was roused, and they opened and saw that all was changed.

The coffin was gone, but by her instead was the cradle that years ago Joseph had brought home, and which she had chopped up for firewood. And now in that cradle lay a babe asleep, and with her foot she rocked it, and found a strange comfort in so doing.

She was conscious of no sense of surprise, only a great welling up of joy in her heart. Presently she heard a feeble whimper and saw a stirring in the cradle; little hands were put forth gropingly. Then she stooped and lifted the child to her lap, and clasped it to her heart. Oh, how lovely was that tiny creature! Oh, how sweet in her ears its appealing cry! As she held it to her bosom the warm hands touched her throat, and the little lips were pressed to her bosom. She pressed it to her. She had entered into a new world, a world of love and light and beauty and happiness unspeakable. Oh! the babe – the babe – the babe! She laughed and cried, and cried and laughed and sobbed for very exuberance of joy. It brought warmth to her heart, it made every vein tingle, it ingrained her brain with pride. It was hers! – her own! – her very own! She could have been content to spend an eternity thus, with that little one close, close to her heart.

Then as suddenly all faded away – the child in her arms was gone as a shadow; her tears congealed, her heart was cramped, and a voice spoke within her: "It is not, because you would not. You cast the soul away, and it went over the mill-wheel."

Wild with terror, uttering a despairing cry, she started up, straining her arms after the lost child, and grasping nothing. She looked about her. The light of the candles flickered over the face of her dead Joseph. And tick, tick, tick went the clock.

She could endure this no more. She opened the door to leave the room, and stepped into the outer chamber and cast herself into a chair. And lo! it was no more night. The sun, the red evening sun, shone in at the window, and on the sill were pots of pinks and mignonette that filled the air with fragrance.

And there at her side stood a little girl with shining fair hair, and the evening sun was on it like the glory about a saint. The child raised its large blue eyes to her, pure innocent eyes, and said: "Mother, may I say my Catechism and prayers before I go to bed?"

Then Anna answered and said: "Oh, my darling! My dearest Bärbchen! All the Catechism is comprehended in this: Love God, fear God, always do what is your duty. Do His will, and do not seek only your own pleasure and ease. And this will give you peace – peace – peace."

The little girl knelt and laid her golden head on her folded hands upon Anna's knee and began: "God bless dear father, and mother, and all my dear brothers and sisters."

Instantly a sharp pang as a knife went through the heart of Anna, and she cried: "Thou hast no father and no mother and no brothers and no sisters, for thou art not, because I would not have thee. I cast away thy soul, and it went over the mill-wheel."

The cuckoo called one. The child had vanished. But the door was thrown open, and in the doorway stood a young couple – one a youth with fair hair and the down of a moustache on his lip, and oh, in face so like to the dead Joseph. He held by the hand a girl, in black bodice and with white sleeves, looking modestly on the ground. At once Anna knew what this signified. It was her son Florian come to announce that he was engaged, and to ask his mother's sanction.

Then said the young man, as he came forward leading the girl: "Mother, sweetest mother, this is Susie, the baker's daughter, and child of your old and dear friend Vronie. We love one another; we have loved since we were little children together at school, and did our lessons out of one book, sitting on one bench. And, mother, the bakehouse is to be passed on to me and to Susie, and I shall bake for all the parish. The good Jesus fed the multitude, distributing the loaves through the hands of His apostles. And I shall be His minister feeding His people here. Mother, give us your blessing."

Then Florian and the girl knelt to Anna, and with tears of happiness in her eyes she raised her hands over them. But ere she could touch them all had vanished. The room was dark, and a voice spake within her: "There is no Florian; there would have been, but you would not. You cast his soul into the water, and it passed away for ever over the mill-wheel."

In an agony of terror Anna sprang from her seat. She could not endure the room, the air stifled her; her brain was on fire. She rushed to the back door that opened on a kitchen garden, where grew the pot-herbs and cabbages for use, tended by Joseph when he returned from his work in the mountains.

But she came forth on a strange scene. She was on a battlefield. The air was charged with smoke and the smell of gunpowder. The roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry, the cries of the wounded, and shouts of encouragement rang in her ears in a confused din.

As she stood, panting, her hands to her breast, staring with wondering eyes, before her charged past a battalion of soldiers, and she knew by their uniforms that they were Bavarians. One of them, as he passed, turned his face towards her; it was the face of an Arler, fired with enthusiasm, she knew it; it was that of her son Fritz.

Then came a withering volley, and many of the gallant fellows fell, among them he who carried the standard. Instantly, Fritz snatched it from his hand, waved it over his head, shouted, "Charge, brothers, fill up the ranks! Charge, and the day is ours!"

Then the remnant closed up and went forward with bayonets fixed, tramp, tramp. Again an explosion of firearms and a dense cloud of smoke rolled before her and she could not see the result.

She waited, quivering in every limb, holding her breath – hoping, fearing, waiting. And as the smoke cleared she saw men carrying to the rear one who had been wounded, and in his hand he grasped the flag. They laid him at Anna's feet, and she recognised that it was her Fritz. She fell on her knees, and snatching the kerchief from her throat and breast, strove to stanch the blood that welled from his heart. He looked up into her eyes, with such love in them as made her choke with emotion, and he said faintly: "Mütterchen, do not grieve for me; we have stormed the redoubt, the day is ours. Be of good cheer. They fly, they fly, those French rascals! Mother, remember me – I die for the dear Fatherland."

And a comrade standing by said: "Do not give way to your grief, Anna Arler; your son has died the death of a hero."

Then she stooped over him, and saw the glaze of death in his eyes, and his lips moved. She bent her ear to them and caught the words: "I am not, because you would not. There is no Fritz; you cast my soul into the brook and I was carried over the mill-wheel."

All passed away, the smell of the powder, the roar of the cannon, the volumes of smoke, the cry of the battle, all – to a dead hush. Anna staggered to her feet, and turned to go back to her cottage, and as she opened the door, heard the cuckoo call two.

But, as she entered, she found herself to be, not in her own room and house – she had strayed into another, and she found herself not in a lone chamber, not in her desolate home, but in the midst of a strange family scene.

A woman, a mother, was dying. Her head reposed on her husband's breast as he sat on the bed and held her in his arms.

The man had grey hair, his face was overflowed with tears, and his eyes rested with an expression of devouring love on her whom he supported, and whose brow he now and again bent over to kiss.

About the bed were gathered her children, ay, and also her grandchildren, quite young, looking on with solemn, wondering eyes on the last throes of her whom they had learned to cling to and love with all the fervour of their simple hearts. One mite held her doll, dangling by the arm, and the forefinger of her other hand was in her mouth. Her eyes were brimming, and sobs came from her infant breast. She did not understand what was being taken from her, but she wept in sympathy with the rest.

Kneeling by the bed was the eldest daughter of the expiring woman, reciting the Litany of the Dying, and the sons and another daughter and a daughter-in-law repeated the responses in voices broken with tears.

When the recitation of the prayers ceased, there ensued for a while a great stillness, and all eyes rested on the dying woman. Her lips moved, and she poured forth her last petitions, that left her as rising flakes of fire, kindled by her pure and ardent soul. "O God, comfort and bless my dear husband, and ever keep Thy watchful guard over my children and my children's children, that they

may walk in the way that leads to Thee, and that in Thine own good time we may all – all be gathered in Thy Paradise together, united for evermore. Amen."

A spasm contracted Anna's heart. This woman with ecstatic, upturned gaze, this woman breathing forth her peaceful soul on her husband's breast, was her own daughter Elizabeth, and in the fine outline of her features was Joseph's profile.

All again was hushed. The father slowly rose and quitted his position on the bed, gently laid the head on the pillow, put one hand over the eyes that still looked up to heaven, and with the fingers of the other tenderly arranged the straggling hair on each side of the brow. Then standing and turning to the rest, with a subdued voice he said: "My children, it has pleased the Lord to take to Himself your dear mother and my faithful companion. The Lord's will be done."

Then ensued a great burst of weeping, and Anna's eyes brimmed till she could see no more. The church bell began to toll for a departing spirit. And following each stroke there came to her, as the after-clang of the boom: "There is not, there has not been, an Elizabeth. There would have been all this – but thou wouldest it not. For the soul of thy Elizabeth thou didst send down the mill-stream and over the wheel."

Frantic with shame, with sorrow, not knowing what she did, or whither she went, Anna made for the front door of the house, ran forth and stood in the village square.

To her unutterable amazement it was vastly changed. Moreover, the sun was shining brightly, and it gleamed over a new parish church, of cut white stone, very stately, with a gilded spire, with windows of wondrous lacework. Flags were flying, festoons of flowers hung everywhere. A triumphal arch of leaves and young birch trees was at the graveyard gate. The square was crowded with the peasants, all in their holiday attire.

Silent, Anna stood and looked around. And as she stood she heard the talk of the people about her.

One said: "It is a great thing that Johann von Arler has done for his native village. But see, he is a good man, and he is a great architect."

"But why," asked another, "do you call him Von Arler? He was the son of that Joseph the Jäger who was killed by the smugglers in the mountains."

"That is true. But do you not know that the king has ennobled him? He has done such great things in the Residenz. He built the new Town Hall, which is thought to be the finest thing in Bavaria. He added a new wing to the Palace, and he has rebuilt very many churches, and designed mansions for the rich citizens and the nobles. But although he is such a famous man his heart is in the right place. He never forgets that he was born in Siebenstein. Look what a beautiful house he has built for himself and his family on the mountain-side. He is there in summer, and it is furnished magnificently. But he will not suffer the old, humble Arler cottage here to be meddled with. They say that he values it above gold. And this is the new church he has erected in his native village – that is good."

"Oh! he is a good man is Johann; he was always a good and serious boy, and never happy without a pencil in his hand. You mark what I say. Some day hence, when he is dead, there will be a statue erected in his honour here in this market-place, to commemorate the one famous man that has been produced by Siebenstein. But see – see! Here he comes to the dedication of the new church."

Then, through the throng advanced a blonde, middle-aged man, with broad forehead, clear, bright blue eyes, and a flowing light beard. All the men present plucked off their hats to him, and made way for him as he advanced. But, full of smiles, he had a hand and a warm pressure, and a kindly word and a question as to family concerns, for each who was near.

All at once his eye encountered that of Anna. A flash of recognition and joy kindled it up, and, extending his arms, he thrust his way towards her, crying: "My mother! my own mother!"

Then – just as she was about to be folded to his heart, all faded away, and a voice said in her soul: "He is no son of thine, Anna Arler. He is not, because thou wouldest not. He might have been,

God had so purposed; but thou madest His purpose of none effect. Thou didst send his soul over the mill-wheel."

And then faintly, as from a far distance, sounded in her ear the call of the cuckoo – three.

The magnificent new church had shrivelled up to the original mean little edifice Anna had known all her life. The square was deserted, the cold faint glimmer of coming dawn was visible over the eastern mountain-tops, but stars still shone in the sky.

With a cry of pain, like a wounded beast, Anna ran hither and thither seeking a refuge, and then fled to the one home and resting-place of the troubled soul – the church. She thrust open the swing-door, pushed in, sped over the uneven floor, and flung herself on her knees before the altar.

But see! before that altar stood a priest in a vestment of black-and-silver; and a serving-boy knelt on his right hand on a lower stage. The candles were lighted, for the priest was about to say Mass. There was a rustling of feet, a sound as of people entering, and many were kneeling, shortly after, on each side of Anna, and still they came on; she turned about and looked and saw a great crowd pressing in, and strange did it seem to her eyes that all – men, women, and children, young and old – seemed to bear in their faces something, a trace only in many, of the Arler or the Voss features. And the little serving-boy, as he shifted his position, showed her his profile – it was like her little brother who had died when he was sixteen.

Then the priest turned himself about, and said, "Oremus." And she knew him – he was her own son – her Joseph, named after his dear father.

The Mass began, and proceeded to the "Sursum corda" – "Lift up your hearts!" – when the celebrant stood facing the congregation with extended arms, and all responded: "We lift them up unto the Lord."

But then, instead of proceeding with the accustomed invocation, he raised his hands high above his head, with the palms towards the congregation, and in a loud, stern voice exclaimed —

"Cursed is the unfruitful field!"

"Amen."

"Cursed is the barren tree!"

"Amen."

"Cursed is the empty house!"

"Amen."

"Cursed is the fishless lake!"

"Amen."

"Forasmuch as Anna Arler, born Voss, might have been the mother of countless generations, as the sand of the seashore for number, as the stars of heaven for brightness, of generations unto the end of time, even of all of us now gathered together here, but she would not – therefore shall she be alone, with none to comfort her; sick, with none to minister to her; broken in heart, with none to bind up her wounds; feeble, and none to stay her up; dead, and none to pray for her, for she would not – she shall have an unforgotten and unforgettable past, and have no future; remorse, but no hope; she shall have tears, but no laughter – for she would not. Woe! woe! woe!"

He lowered his hands, and the tapers were extinguished, the celebrant faded as a vision of the night, the server vanished as an incense-cloud, the congregation disappeared, melting into shadows, and then from shadows to nothingness, without stirring from their places, and without a sound.

And Anna, with a scream of despair, flung herself forward with her face on the pavement, and her hands extended.

Two years ago, during the first week in June, an English traveller arrived at Siebenstein and put up at the "Krone," where, as he was tired and hungry, he ordered an early supper. When that was discussed, he strolled forth into the village square, and leaned against the wall of the churchyard. The sun had set in the valley, but the mountain-peaks were still in the glory of its rays, surrounding the place as a golden crown. He lighted a cigar, and, looking into the cemetery, observed there an

old woman, bowed over a grave, above which stood a cross, inscribed "Joseph Arler," and she was tending the flowers on it, and laying over the arms of the cross a little wreath of heart's-ease or pansy. She had in her hand a small basket. Presently she rose and walked towards the gate, by which stood the traveller.

As she passed, he said kindly to her: "Grüss Gott, Mütterchen."

She looked steadily at him and replied: "Honoured sir! that which is past may be repented of, but can never be undone!" and went on her way.

He was struck with her face. He had never before seen one so full of boundless sorrow – almost of despair.

His eyes followed her as she walked towards the mill-stream, and there she took her place on the wooden bridge that crossed it, leaning over the handrail, and looking down into the water. An impulse of curiosity and of interest led him to follow her at a distance, and he saw her pick a flower, a pansy, out of her basket, and drop it into the current, which caught and carried it forward. Then she took a second, and allowed it to fall into the water. Then, after an interval, a third – a fourth; and he counted seven in all. After that she bowed her head on her hands; her grey hair fell over them, and she broke into a paroxysm of weeping.

The traveller, standing by the stream, saw the seven pansies swept down, and one by one pass over the revolving wheel and vanish.

He turned himself about to return to his inn, when, seeing a grave peasant near, he asked: "Who is that poor old woman who seems so broken down with sorrow?"

"That," replied the man, "is the Mother of Pansies."

"The Mother of Pansies!" he repeated.

"Well – it is the name she has acquired in the place. Actually, she is called Anna Arler, and is a widow. She was the wife of one Joseph Arler, a jäger, who was shot by smugglers. But that is many, many years ago. She is not right in her head, but she is harmless. When her husband was brought home dead, she insisted on being left alone in the night by him, before he was buried alone, – with his coffin. And what happened in that night no one knows. Some affirm that she saw ghosts. I do not know – she may have had Thoughts. The French word for these flowers is *pensées*– thoughts – and she will have none others. When they are in her garden she collects them, and does as she has done now. When she has none, she goes about to her neighbours and begs them. She comes here every evening and throws in seven – just seven, no more and no less – and then weeps as one whose heart would split. My wife on one occasion offered her forget-me-nots. 'No,' she said; 'I cannot send forget-me-nots after those who never were, I can send only Pansies.'"

## THE RED-HAIRED GIRL

### A WIFE'S STORY

In 1876 we took a house in one of the best streets and parts of B — . I do not give the name of the street or the number of the house, because the circumstances that occurred in that place were such as to make people nervous, and shy — unreasonably so — of taking those lodgings, after reading our experiences therein.

We were a small family — my husband, a grown-up daughter, and myself; and we had two maids — a cook, and the other was house- and parlourmaid in one. We had not been a fortnight in the house before my daughter said to me one morning: "Mamma, I do not like Jane" — that was our house-parlourmaid.

"Why so?" I asked. "She seems respectable, and she does her work systematically. I have no fault to find with her, none whatever."

"She may do her work," said Bessie, my daughter, "but I dislike inquisitiveness."

"Inquisitiveness!" I exclaimed. "What do you mean? Has she been looking into your drawers?"

"No, mamma, but she watches me. It is hot weather now, and when I am in my room, occasionally, I leave my door open whilst writing a letter, or doing any little bit of needlework, and then I am almost certain to hear her outside. If I turn sharply round, I see her slipping out of sight. It is most annoying. I really was unaware that I was such an interesting personage as to make it worth anyone's while to spy out my proceedings."

"Nonsense, my dear. You are sure it is Jane?"

"Well — I suppose so." There was a slight hesitation in her voice. "If not Jane, who can it be?"

"Are you sure it is not cook?"

"Oh, no, it is not cook; she is busy in the kitchen. I have heard her there, when I have gone outside my room upon the landing, after having caught that girl watching me."

"If you have caught her," said I, "I suppose you spoke to her about the impropriety of her conduct."

"Well, caught is the wrong word. I have not actually *caught* her at it. Only to-day I distinctly heard her at my door, and I saw her back as she turned to run away, when I went towards her."

"But you followed her, of course?"

"Yes, but I did not find her on the landing when I got outside."

"Where was she, then?"

"I don't know."

"But did you not go and see?"

"She slipped away with astonishing celerity," said Bessie.

"I can take no steps in the matter. If she does it again, speak to her and remonstrate."

"But I never have a chance. She is gone in a moment."

"She cannot get away so quickly as all that."

"Somehow she does."

"And you are sure it is Jane?" again I asked; and again she replied: "If not Jane, who else can it be? There is no one else in the house."

So this unpleasant matter ended, for the time. The next intimation of something of the sort proceeded from another quarter — in fact, from Jane herself. She came to me some days later and said, with some embarrassment in her tone —

"If you please, ma'am, if I do not give satisfaction, I would rather leave the situation."

"Leave!" I exclaimed. "Why, I have not given you the slightest cause. I have not found fault with you for anything as yet, have I, Jane? On the contrary, I have been much pleased with the thoroughness of your work. And you are always tidy and obliging."

"It isn't that, ma'am; but I don't like being watched whatever I do."

"Watched!" I repeated. "What do you mean? You surely do not suppose that I am running after you when you are engaged on your occupations. I assure you I have other and more important things to do."

"No, ma'am, I don't suppose you do."

"Then who watches you?"

"I think it must be Miss Bessie."

"Miss Bessie!" I could say no more, I was so astounded.

"Yes, ma'am. When I am sweeping out a room, and my back is turned, I hear her at the door; and when I turn myself about, I just catch a glimpse of her running away. I see her skirts – "

"Miss Bessie is above doing anything of the sort."

"If it is not Miss Bessie, who is it, ma'am?"

There was a tone of indecision in her voice.

"My good Jane," said I, "set your mind at rest. Miss Bessie could not act as you suppose. Have you seen her on these occasions and assured yourself that it is she?"

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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