

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE WORKS OF GUY DE
MAUPASSANT, VOLUME 3

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THE VIATICUM

"After all," Count d'Avorsy said, stirring his tea with the slow movements of a prelate, "what truth was there in anything that was said at Court, almost without any restraint, and did the Empress, whose beauty has been ruined by some secret grief, who will no longer see anyone and who soothes her continual mental weariness by some journeys without an object and without a rest, in foggy and melancholy islands, and did she really forget Caesar's wife ought not even to be suspected, did she really give herself to that strange and attractive corrupter, Ladislas Ferkoz?"

The bright night seemed to be scattering handfuls of stars into the placid sea, which was as calm as a blue pond, slumbering in the depths of a forest. Among the tall climbing roses, which hung a mantle of yellow flowers to the fretted baluster of the terrace, there stood out in the distance the illuminated fronts of the hotels and villas, and occasionally women's laughter was heard above the dull, monotonous sound of surf and the noise of the fog-

horns.

Then Captain Sigmund Oroshaz, whose sad and pensive face of a soldier who has seen too much slaughter and too many charnel houses, was marked by a large scar, raised his head and said in a grave, haughty voice:

"Nobody has lied in accusing Maria-Gloriosa of adultery, and nobody has calumniated the Empress and her minister, whom God has damned in the other world. Ladislas Ferkoz was his sovereign's lover until he died, and made his august master ridiculous and almost odious, for the man, no matter who he be, who allows himself to be flouted by a creature who is unworthy of bearing his name and of sharing his bread; who puts up with such disgrace, who does not crush the guilty couple with all the weight of his power, is not worth pity, nor does he deserve to be spared the mockery. And if I affirm that so harshly, my dear Count – although years and years have passed since the sponge passed over that old story – the reason is that I saw the last chapter of it, quite in spite of myself, however, for I was the officer who was on duty at the palace, and obliged to obey orders, just as if I had been on the field of battle – and on that day I was on duty near Maria-Gloriosa."

Madame de Laumières, who had begun an animated conversation on crinolines, amidst the fragrant odor of Russian cigarettes, and who was making fun of the striking toilets, with which she had amused herself by scanning through her opera glass a few hours previously at the races, stopped, for even when

she was talking most volubly she always kept her ears open to hear what was being said around her, and as her curiosity was aroused, she interrupted Sigmund Oroshaz.

"Ah! Monsieur," she said, "you are not going to leave our curiosity unsatisfied... A story about the Empress puts all our scandals on the beach, and all our questions of dress into the shade, and, I am sure," she added with a smile at the corners of her mouth, "that even our friend, Madame d'Ormonde will leave off flirting with Monsieur Le Brassard to listen to you."

Captain Oroshaz continued, with his large blue eyes full of recollections:

"It was in the middle of a grand ball that the Emperor was giving on the occasion of some family anniversary, though I forget exactly what, and where Maria-Gloriosa, who was in great grief, as she had heard that her lover was ill and his life almost despaired of, far from her, was going about with her face as pale as that of *Our Lady of Sorrows*, seemed to be a soul in affliction, appeared to be ashamed of her bare shoulders, as if she were being made a parade of in the light, while he, the adored of her heart, was lying on a bed of sickness, getting weaker every moment, longing for her and perhaps calling for her in his distress. About midnight, when the violins were striking up the quadrille, which the Emperor was to dance with the wife of the French Ambassador, one of the ladies of honor, Countess Szegedin, went up to the Empress, and whispered a few words to her, in a very low voice. Maria-Gloriosa grew still paler,

but mastered her emotion and waited until the end of the last figure. Then, however, she could not restrain herself any longer, and even without giving any pretext for running away in such a manner, and leaning on the arm of her lady of honor, she made her way through the crowd as if she were in a dream and went to her own apartments. I told you that I was on duty that evening at the door of her rooms, and according to etiquette, I was going to salute her respectfully, but she did not give me time.

"'Captain,' she said excitedly and vehemently, 'give orders for my own private coachman, Hans Hildersheim, to get a carriage ready for me immediately,' but thinking better of it immediately she went on: 'But no, we should only lose time, and every minute is precious; give me a cloak quickly, Madame, and a lace veil; we will go out of one of the small doors in the park, and take the first conveyance we see.'"

"She wrapped herself in her furs, hid her face in her mantilla, and I accompanied her, without at first knowing what this mystery was, and where we were going to, on this mad expedition. I hailed a cab that was dawdling by the side of the pavement, and when the Empress gave me the address of Ladislav Ferkoz, the Minister of State, in a low voice, in spite of my usual phlegm, I felt a vague shiver of emotion, one of those movements of hesitation and recoil, from which the bravest are not exempt at times. But how could I get out of this unpleasant part of acting as her companion, and how show want of politeness to a sovereign who had completely lost her head? Accordingly,

we started, but the Empress did not pay any more attention to me than if I had not been sitting by her side in that narrow conveyance, but stifled her sobs with her pocket handkerchief, muttered a few incoherent words, and occasionally trembled from head to foot. Her lover's name rose to her lips as if it had been a response in a litany, and I thought that she was praying to the Virgin that she might not arrive too late to see Ladislav Ferkoz again in the possession of his faculties, and keep him alive for a few hours. Suddenly, as if in reply to herself, she said: 'I will not cry any more; he must see me looking beautiful, so that he may remember me, even in death!'

"When we arrived, I saw that we were expected, and that they had not doubted that the Empress would come to close her lover's eyes with a last kiss. She left me there, and hurried to Ladislav Ferkoz's room, without even shutting the doors behind her, where his beautiful, sensual, gipsy head stood out from the whiteness of the pillows; but his face was quite bloodless, and there was no life left in it, except in his large, strange eyes, that were striated with gold, like the eyes of an astrologer or of a bearded vulture.

"The cold numbness of the death struggle had already laid hold of his robust body and paralyzed his lips and arms, and he could not reply even by a sound of tenderness to Maria-Gloriosa's wild lamentations and amorous cries. Neither reply nor smile, alas! But his eyes dilated, and glistened like the last flame that shoots up from an expiring fire, and filled them with a world of dying thoughts, of divine recollections, of delirious

love. They appeared to envelope her in kisses, they spoke to her, they thanked her, they followed her movements, and seemed delighted at her grief. And as if she were replying to their mute supplications, as if she had understood them, Maria-Gloriosa suddenly tore off her lace, threw aside her fur cloak, stood erect beside the dying man, whose eyes were radiant, desirable in her supreme beauty with her bare shoulders, her bust like marble and her fair hair, in which diamonds glistened, surrounding her proud head, like that of the Goddess Diana, the huntress, and with her arms stretched out towards him in an attitude of love, of embrace and of blessing. He looked at her in ecstasy, he feasted on her beauty, and seemed to be having a terrible struggle with death, in order that he might gaze at her, that apparition of love, a little longer, see her beyond eternal sleep and prolong this unexpected dream. And when he felt that it was all over with him, and that even his eyes were growing dim, two great tears rolled down his cheeks...

"When Maria-Gloriosa saw that he was dead, she piously and devoutly kissed his lips and closed his eyes, like a priest who closes the gold tabernacle after service, on an evening after benediction, and then, without exchanging a word, we returned through the darkness to the palace where the ball was still going on."

There was a minute's silence, and while Madame de Laumières, who was very much touched by this story and whose nerves were rather highly strung, was drying her tears behind her

open fan, suddenly the harsh and shrill voices of the fast women who were returning from the Casino, by the strange irony of fate, struck up an idiotic song which was then in vogue: "*Oh! the poor, oh! the poor, oh! the poor, dear girl!*"

THE RELICS

They had given him a grand public funeral, like they do victorious soldiers who have added some dazzling pages to the glorious annals of their country, who have restored courage to desponding heads and cast over other nations the proud shadow of their country's flag, like a yoke under which those went who were no longer to have a country, or liberty.

During a whole bright and calm night, when falling stars made people think of unknown metamorphoses and the transmigration of souls, who knows whether tall cavalry soldiers in their cuirasses and sitting as motionless as statues on their horses, had watched by the dead man's coffin, which was resting, covered with wreaths, under the porch of the heroes, every stone of which is engraved with the name of a brave man, and of a battle.

The whole town was in mourning, as if it had lost the only object that had possession of its heart, and which it loved. The crowd went silently and thoughtfully down the avenue of the *Champs Elysées*, and they almost fought for the commemorative medals and the common portraits which hawkers were selling, or climbed upon the stands which street boys had erected here and there, and whence they could see over the heads of the crowd. The *Place de la Concorde* had something solemn about it, with its circle of statues hung from head to foot with long crape coverings, which looked in the distance like widows, weeping

and praying.

According to his last wish, Jean Ramel had been conveyed to the Pantheon in the wretched paupers' hearse, which conveys them to the common grave at the shambling trot of some thin and broken-winded horse.

That dreadful, black conveyance without any drapery, without plumes and without flowers, which was followed by Ministers and deputies, by several regiments with their bands, and their flags flying above the helmets and the sabers, by children from the national schools, by delegates from the provinces, and an innumerable crowd of men in blouses, of women, of shop-keepers from every quarter, had a most theatrical effect, and while standing on the steps of the Pantheon, at the foot of the massive columns of the portico, the orators successively discanted on his apotheosis, tried to make their voices predominate over the noise, emphasized their pompous periods, and finished the performance by a poor third act, which makes people yawn and gradually empties the theater, people remembered who that man had been, on whom such posthumous honors were being bestowed, and who was having such a funeral: it was Jean Ramel.

Those three sonorous syllables called up a lionine head, with white hair thrown back in disorder, like a mane, with features that looked as if they had been cut out with a bill-hook, but which were so powerful, and in which there lay such a flame of life, that one forgot their vulgarity and ugliness; with black eyes

under bushy eyebrows, which dilated and flashed like lightning, now were veiled as if in tears and then were filled with serene mildness, with a voice which now growled so as almost to terrify its hearers, and which would have filled the hall of some working men's club, full of the thick smoke from strong pipes without being affected by it, and then would be soft, coaxing, persuasive and unctuous like that of a priest who is holding out promises of Paradise, or giving absolution for our sins.

He had had the good luck to be persecuted, to be in the eyes of the people, the incarnation of that lying formula which appears on every public edifice, of those three words of the *Golden Age*, which make those who think, those who suffer and those who govern, smile somewhat sadly, *Liberty, Fraternity, Equality*. Luck had been kind to him, had sustained, had pushed him on by the shoulders, and had set him up on his pedestal again when he had fallen down, like all idols do.

He spoke and he wrote, and always in order to announce the good news to all the multitudes who suffered – no matter to what grade of society they might belong – to hold out his hand to them and to defend them, to attack the abuses of the *Code* – that book of injustice and severity – to speak the truth boldly, even when it lashed his enemies as if it had been a whip.

His books were like Gospels, which are read chapter by chapter, and warmed the most despairing and the most sorrowing hearts, and brought comfort, hope and dreams to each.

He had lived very modestly until the end, and appeared to

spend nothing; and he only kept one old servant, who spoke to him in the Basque dialect.

That chaste philosopher, who had all his life long feared women's snares and wiles, who had looked upon love as a luxury made only for the rich and idle, which unsettles the brain and interferes with acuteness of thought, had allowed himself to be caught like an ordinary man, late in life, when his hair was white and his forehead deeply wrinkled.

It was not, however, as happens in the visions of solitary ascetics, some strange queen or female magician, with stars in her eyes and witchery in her voice, some loose woman who held up the symbolical lamp immodestly, to light up her radiant nudity, and the pink and white bouquet of her sweet-smelling skin, some woman in search of voluptuous pleasures, whose lascivious appeals it is impossible for any man to listen to, without being excited to the very depths of his being. Neither a princess out of some fairy tale, nor a frail beauty who was an expert in the art of reviving the ardor of old men, and of leading them astray, nor a woman who was disgusted with her ideals, that always turned out to be alike, and who dreamt of awakening the heart of one of those men who suffer, who have afforded so much alleviation to human misery, who seemed to be surrounded by a halo, and who never knew anything but the true, the beautiful and the good.

It was only a little girl of twenty, who was as pretty as a wild flower, who had a ringing laugh, white teeth, and a mind that was as spotless as a new mirror, in which no figure has been reflected

as yet.

He was in exile at the time for having given public expression to what he thought, and he was living in an Italian village which was buried in chestnut trees and situated on the shores of a lake that was narrow and so transparent that it might have been taken for some nobleman's fish pond that was like an emerald in a large park. The village consisted of about twenty red-tiled houses. Several paths paved with flint led up the side of the hill among the vines where the Madonna, full of grace and goodness extended her indulgence.

For the first time in his life Ramel remarked that there were some lips that were more desirable, more smiling than others, that there was hair in which it must be delicious to bury the fingers like in fine silk, and which it must be delightful to kiss, and that there were eyes which contained an infinitude of caresses, and he had spelled right through the eclogue, which at length revealed true happiness to him, and he had had a child, a son, by her.

This was the only secret that Ramel jealously concealed, and which no more than two or three of his oldest friends knew anything about, and while he hesitated about spending twopence on himself, and went to the Institute and to the Chamber of Deputies outside an omnibus, Pepa led the happy life of a millionaire who is not frightened of the to-morrow, and brought up her son like a little prince, with a tutor and three servants, who had nothing to do but to look after him.

All that Ramel made went into his mistress's hands, and when he felt that his last hour was approaching, and that there was no hope of his recovery – in full possession of his faculties and joy in his dull eyes – he gave his name to Pepa, and made her his lawful widow, in the presence of all his friends. She inherited everything that her former lover left behind, a considerable income from his share of the annual profits on his books, and also his pension, which the State continued to pay to her.

Little Ramel throve wonderfully amidst all this luxury, and gave free scope to his instincts and his caprices, without his mother ever having the courage to reprove him in the least, and he did not bear the slightest resemblance to Jean Ramel.

Full of pranks, effeminate, a superfine dandy, and precociously vicious, he suggested the idea of those pages at the Court of Florence, whom we frequently meet with in *The Decameron*, and who were the playthings for the idle hands and tips of the patrician ladies.

He was very ignorant and lived at a great rate, bet on races, and played cards for heavy stakes with seasoned gamblers, old enough to be his father. And it was distressing to hear this lad joke about the memory of him whom he called *the old man*, and persecute his mother because of the worship and adoration which she felt for Jean Ramel, whom she spoke of as if he had become a demigod when he died, like in Roman theogony.

He would have liked altogether to have altered the arrangement of that kind of sanctuary, the drawing-room, where

Pepa kept some of her husband's manuscripts, the furniture that he had most frequently used, the bed on which he had died, his pens, his clothes and his weapons. And one evening, not knowing how to dress himself up more originally than the rest for a masked ball that stout Toinette Danicheff was going to give as her house-warming, without saying a word to his mother, he took down the Academician's dress, the sword and cocked hat that had belonged to Jean Ramel, and put it on as if it had been a disguise on Shrove Tuesday.

Slightly built and with thin arms and legs, the wide clothes hung on him, and he was a comical sight with the embroidered skirt of his coat sweeping the carpet, and his sword knocking against his heels. The elbows and the collar were shiny and greasy from wear, for the *Master* had worn it until it was threadbare, to avoid having to buy another, and had never thought of replacing it.

He made a tremendous hit, and fair Liline Ablette laughed so at his grimaces and his disguise, that that night she threw over Prince Nouredin for him, although he had paid for her house, her horses and everything else, and allowed her six thousand francs a month – £240 – for extras and pocket money.

THE THIEF

"Certainly," Dr. Sorbier exclaimed, who, while appearing to be thinking of something else, had been listening quietly to those surprising accounts of burglaries and of daring acts which might have been borrowed from the trial of Cartouche; "certainly, I do not know any viler fault, nor any meaner action than to attack a girl's innocence, to corrupt her, to profit by a moment of unconscious weakness and of madness, when her heart is beating like that of a frightened fawn, when her body, which has been unpolluted up till then, is palpitating with mad desire and her pure lips seek those of her seducer; when her whole being is feverish and vanquished, and she abandons herself without thinking of the irremediable stain, nor of her fall nor of the painful awakening on the morrow.

"The man who has brought this about slowly, viciously, and who can tell with what science of evil, and who, in such a case, has not steadiness and self-restraint enough to quench that flame by some icy words, who has not sense enough for two, who cannot recover his self-possession and master the runaway brute within him, and who loses his head on the edge of the precipice over which she is going to fall, is as contemptible as any man who breaks open a lock, or as any rascal on the look-out for a house left defenseless and without protection, or for some easy and profitable stroke of business, or as that thief whose various

exploits you have just related to us.

"I, for my part, utterly, refuse to absolve him even when extenuating circumstances plead in his favor, even when he is carrying on a dangerous flirtation, in which a man tries in vain to keep his balance, not to exceed the limits of the game, any more than at lawn tennis; even when the parts are inverted and a man's adversary is some precocious, curious, seductive girl, who shows you immediately that she has nothing to learn and nothing to experience, except the last chapter of love, one of those girls from whom may fate always preserve our sons, and whom a psychological novel writer has christened *The Semi-Virgins*.

"It is, of course, difficult and painful for that coarse and unfathomable vanity which is characteristic of every man, and which might be called *malism*, not to stir such a charming fire, to act the Joseph and the fool, to turn away his eyes, and, as it were, to put wax into his ears, like the companions of Ulysses did when they were attracted by the divine, seductive songs of the sirens, just to touch that pretty table, covered with a perfectly new cloth, at which you are invited to take a seat before any one else, in such a suggestive voice, and are requested to quench your thirst and to taste that new wine, whose fresh and strange flavor you will never forget. But who would hesitate to exercise such self-restraint if, when he rapidly examined his conscience, in one of those instinctive returns to his sober self, in which a man thinks clearly and recovers his head; if he were to measure the gravity of his fault, think of his fault, think of its consequences, of the

reprisals, of the uneasiness which he would always feel in the future, and which would destroy the repose and the happiness of his life?

"You may guess that behind all these moral reflections, such as a gray-beard like myself may indulge in, there is a story hidden, and sad as it is, I am sure it will interest you on account of the strange heroism that it shows."

He was silent for a few moments as if to classify recollections, and with his elbows resting on the arms of his easy chair, and his eyes looking into space, he continued in the slow voice of a hospital professor, who is explaining a case to his class of medical students, at a bedside:

"He was one of those men who, as our grandfathers used to say, never met with a cruel woman, the type of the adventurous knight who was always foraging, who had something of the scamp about him, but who despised danger and was bold even to rashness. He was ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, and a man who had an irresistible charm about him, one of those men in whom we excuse the greatest excesses, as the most natural things in the world. He had run through all his money at gambling and with pretty girls, and so became, as it were, a soldier of fortune, who amused himself whenever and however he could, and was at that time quartered at Versailles.

"I knew him to the very depths of his childish heart, which was only too easily penetrated and sounded, and I loved him like some old bachelor uncle loves a nephew who plays him some tricks, but

who knows how to make him indulgent towards him, and how to wheedle him. He had made me his confidant far more than his adviser, kept me informed of his slightest tricks, though he always pretended to be speaking about one of his friends, and not about himself, and I must confess that his youthful impetuosity, his careless gaiety and his amorous ardor sometimes distracted my thoughts and made me envy the handsome, vigorous young fellow who was so happy at being alive, so that I had not the courage to check him, to show him his right road, and to call out to him, "Take care!" as children do at blind man's buff.

"And one day, after one of those interminable *cotillons*, where the couples do not leave each other for hours, but have the bridle on their neck and can disappear together without anybody thinking of taking notice of it, the poor fellow at last discovered what love was, that real love which takes up its abode in the very center of the heart and in the brain, and is proud of being there, and which rules like a sovereign and tyrannous master, and so he grew desperately enamored of a pretty, but badly brought up girl, who was as disquieting and as wayward as she was pretty.

"She loved him, however, or rather she idolized him despotically, madly, with all her enraptured soul, and all her excited person. Left to do as she pleased by imprudent and frivolous parents, suffering from neurosis, in consequence of the unwholesome friendships which she contracted at the convent-school, instructed by what she saw and heard and knew was going on around her, in spite of her deceitful and artificial

conduct, knowing that neither her father nor her mother, who were very proud of their race, as well as avaricious, would ever agree to let her marry the man whom she had taken a liking to, that handsome fellow who had little besides visionary ideas and debts, and who belonged to the middle classes, she laid aside all scruples, thought of nothing but of belonging to him altogether, of taking him for her lover, and of triumphing over his desperate resistance as an honorable man.

"By degrees, the unfortunate man's strength gave way, his heart grew softened, his nerves became excited, and he allowed himself to be carried away by that current which buffeted him, surrounded him and left him on the shore like a waif and a stray.

"They wrote letters full of temptation and of madness to each other, and not a day passed without their meeting, either accidentally, as it seemed, or at parties and balls. She had given him her lips in long, ardent caresses, and she had sealed their compact of mutual passion with kisses of desire and of hope. And at last she brought him to her room, almost in spite of himself."

The doctor stopped, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears, as these former troubles came back to his mind, and then in a hoarse voice, he went on, full of horror of what he was going to relate:

"For months he scaled the garden wall, and holding his breath and listening for the slightest noise, like a burglar who is going to break into a house, he went in by the servants' entrance, which she had left open, went barefoot down a long passage and up

the broad staircase, which creaked occasionally, to the second story, where his mistress's room was, and stopped there nearly the whole night.

"One night, when it was darker than usual, and he was making haste lest he should be later than the time agreed on, the officer knocked up against a piece of furniture in the ante-room and upset it. It so happened that the girl's mother had not gone to sleep yet, either because she had a sick headache, or else because she had sat up late over some novel, and frightened at that unusual noise which disturbed the silence of the house, she jumped out of bed, opened the door, saw some one, indistinctly, running away and keeping close to the wall, and, immediately thinking that there were burglars in the house, she aroused her husband and the servants by her frantic screams. The unfortunate man knew what he was about, and seeing into what a terrible fix he had got, and preferring to be taken for a common thief to dishonoring his adored mistress and to betraying the secret of their guilty love, he ran into the drawing-room, felt on the tables and what-nots, filled his pockets at random with valuable gew-gaws, and then cowered down behind the grand piano, which barred up a corner of a large room.

"The servants who had run in with lighted candles, found him, and overwhelming him with abuse, seized him by the collar and dragged him, panting and appearing half dead with shame and terror, to the nearest police station. He defended himself with intentional awkwardness when he was brought up for trial, kept

up his part with the most perfect self-possession, and without any signs of the despair and anguish that he felt in his heart, and condemned and degraded and made to suffer martyrdom in his honor as a man and as a soldier, he did not protest, but went to prison as one of those criminals whom society gets rid of, like noxious vermin.

"He died there of misery and of bitterness of spirit, with the name of the fair-haired idol, for whom he had sacrificed himself, on his lips, as if it had been an ecstatic prayer, and he entrusted his will to the priest who administered extreme unction to him, and requested him to give it to me. In it, without mentioning anybody, and without in the least lifting the veil, he at last explained the enigma, and cleared himself of those accusations, the terrible burden of which he had borne until his last breath.

"I have always thought myself, though I do not know why, that the girl married and had several charming children, whom she brought up with the austere strictness, and in the serious piety of former days!"

A RUPTURE

"It is just as I tell you, my dear fellow, those two poor things whom we all of us envied, who looked like a couple of pigeons when they are billing and cooing, and were always spooning until they made themselves ridiculous, now hate each other just as much as they used to adore each other. It is a complete break, and one of those which cannot be mended like you can an old plate! And all for a bit of nonsense, for something so funny that it ought to have brought them closer together and have made them amuse themselves together until they were ill. But how can a man explain himself when he is dying of jealousy, and when he keeps repeating to his terrified mistress, 'You are lying! you are lying!' When he shakes her, interrupts her while she is speaking, and says such hard things to her that at last she flies into a rage, has enough of it, becomes hard and mad, and thinks of nothing but of giving him tit for tat and of paying him out in his own coin; does not care a straw about destroying his happiness, sends everything to the devil, and talks a lot of bosh which she certainly does not believe. And then, because there is nothing so stupid and so obstinate in the whole world as lovers, neither he nor she will take the first steps, and own to having been in the wrong, and regret having gone too far; but both wait and watch and do not even write a few lines about nothing, which would restore peace. No, they let day succeed day, and there are feverish and

sleepless nights when the bed seems so hard, so cheerless and so large, and habits get weakened and the fire of love that was still smoldering at the bottom of the heart evaporates in smoke. By degrees both find some reason for what they wished to do, they think themselves idiots to lose the time which will never return in that fashion, and so good-bye, and there you are! That is how Josine Cadenette and that great idiot Servance separated."

Lalie Spring had lighted a cigarette, and the blue smoke played about her fine, fair hair, and made one think of those last rays of the setting sun which pierce through the clouds at sunset, and resting her elbows on her knees, and with her chin in her hand in a dreamy attitude, she murmured:

"Sad, isn't it?"

"Bah!" I replied, "at their age people easily console themselves, and everything begins over again, even love!"

"Well, Josine had already found somebody else..."

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Of course she did, and it is such a joke!.. You must know that Servance is one of those fellows like one would wish to have when one has time to amuse oneself, and so self-possessed that he would be capable of ruining all the older ones in a girls' school, and given to trifling as much as most men, so that Josine calls him 'perpetual motion.' He would have liked to have gone on with his fun until the Day of Judgment, and seemed to fancy that beds were not made to sleep in at all, but she could not get used to being deprived of nearly all her rest, and it really made her ill. But

as she wished to be as conciliatory as possible, and to love and to be loved as ardently as in the past, and also to sleep off the effects of her happiness peacefully, she rented a small room in a distant quarter, in a quiet, shady street giving out that she had just come from the country, and put hardly any furniture into it except a good bed and a dressing table. Then she invented an old aunt for the occasion, who was ill and always grumbling, and who suffered from heart disease and lived in one of the suburbs, and so several times a week Josine took refuge in her sleeping place, and used to sleep late there as if it had been some delicious abode where one forgets the whole world. Sometimes they forgot to call her at the proper time; she got back late, tired, with red and swollen eyelids, involved herself in lies, contradicted herself and looked so much as if she had just come from the confessional, feeling horribly ashamed of herself, or, as if she had hurried home from some assignation, that at last Servance worried himself about it, thought that he was being made a fool of like so many of his comrades were, got into a rage and made up his mind to set the matter straight, and so discover who this aunt of his mistress's was, who had so suddenly fallen from the skies.

"He necessarily applied to an obliging agency, where they excited his jealousy, exasperated him day after day by making him believe that Josine Cadenette was making an absolute fool of him, had no more a sick aunt than she had any virtue, but that during the day she continued the little debaucheries which she committed with him at night, and that she shamelessly frequented

some discreet bachelor's lodgings, where more than probably one of his own best friends was amusing himself at his expense, and having his share of the cake. He was fool enough to believe these fellows, instead of going and watching Josine himself, putting his nose into the business and going and knocking at the door of her room. He wanted to hear no more, and would not listen to her. For a trifle, in spite of her tears, he would have turned the poor thing into the streets, as if she had been a bundle of dirty linen. You may guess how she flew out at him and told him all sorts of things to annoy him; she let him believe he was not mistaken, that she had had enough of his affection, and that she was madly in love with another man. He grew very pale when she said that, looked at her furiously, clenched his teeth and said in a hoarse voice:

"Tell me his name, tell me his name!"

"Oh!" she said, chaffingly, 'you know him very well!' and if I had not happened to have gone in I think there would have been a tragedy... How stupid they are, and they were so happy and loved each other so... And now Josine is living with fat Schweinsshon, a low scoundrel who will live upon her and Servance has taken up with Sophie Labisque, who might easily be his mother; you know her, that bundle of red and yellow, who has been at that kind of thing for eighteen years, and whom Laglandee has christened, '*Saecula saeculorum*!'"

"By Jove! I should rather think I did!"

A USEFUL HOUSE

Royamount's fat sides shook with laughter at the mere recollection of the funny story that he had promised to his friends, and throwing himself back in the great arm-chair, which he completely filled, *that picker up of bits of pinchbeck*, as they called him at the club, at last said:

"It is perfectly true, Bordenave does not owe anyone a penny and can go through any street he likes and publish those famous memoirs of sheriff's officers, which he has been writing for the last ten years, when he did not dare to go out, and in which he carefully brought out the characters and peculiarities of all those generous distributors of stamped paper with whom he had had dealings, their tricks and wiles, their weaknesses, their jokes, their manner of performing their duties, sometimes with brutal rudeness and at others with cunning good nature, now embarrassed and almost ashamed of their work, and again ironically jovial, as well the artifices of their clerks to get a few crumbs from their employer's cake. The book will soon be published and Machin, the Vaudeville writer, has promised him a preface, so that it will be a most amusing work. You are surprised, eh? Confess that you are absolutely surprised, and I will lay you any bet you like that you will not guess how our excellent friend, whose existence is an inexplicable problem, has been able to settle with his creditors, and suddenly produce the

requisite amount."

"Do get to the facts, confound it," Captain Hardeur said, who was growing tired of all this verbiage.

"All right, I will get to them as quickly as possible," Royaumont replied, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. "I will clear my throat and begin. I suppose all of you know that two better friends than Bordenave and Quillanet do not exist; neither of them could do without the other, and they have ended by dressing alike, by having the same gestures, the same laugh, the same walk and the same inflections of voice, so that one would think that some close bond united them, and that they had been brought up together from childhood. There is, however, this great difference between them, that Bordenave is completely ruined and that all that he possesses are bundles of mortgages, laughable parchments which attest his ancient race, and chimerical hopes of inheriting money some day, though these expectations are already heavily hypothecated. Consequently, he is always on the look-out for some fresh expedients for raising money, though he is superbly indifferent about everything, while Sebastien Quillanet, of the banking house of Quillanet Brothers, must have an income of eight thousand francs a year, but is descended from an obscure laborer who managed to secure some of the national property, then he became an army contractor, speculated on defeat as well as victory, and does not know now what to do with his money. But the millionaire is timid, dull and always bored, the ruined

spendthrift amuses him by his impertinent ways, and his libertine jokes; he prompts him when he is at a loss for an answer, extricates him out of his difficulties, serves as his guide in the great forests of Paris which is strewn with so many pit-falls, and helps him to avoid those vulgar adventures which socially ruins a man, no matter how well ballasted he may be. Then he points out to him what women would make suitable mistresses for him, who make a man noted, and have the effect of some rare and beautiful flower pinned into his buttonhole. He is the confidant of his intrigues, his guest when he gives small, special entertainments, his daily familiar table companion, and the buffoon whose sly humor one stimulates, and whose worst witticisms one tolerates."

"Really, really," the captain interrupted him, "you have been going on for more than a quarter of an hour without saying anything."

So Royaumont shrugged his shoulders and continued: "Oh you can be very tiresome when you please, my dear fellow!.. Last year, when he was at daggers drawn with his people, who were deafening him with their recriminations, were worrying him and threatening him with a lot of annoyance, Quillanet got married. A marriage of reason, and which apparently changed his habits and his tastes, more especially as the banker was at that time keeping a perfect little marvel of a woman, a Parisian jewel of unspeakable attractions and of bewitching delicacy, that adorable Suzette Marly who is just like a pocket Venus, and who in some prior stage of her existence must have been Phryne or Lesbia.

Of course he did not get rid of her, but as he was bound to take some judicious precautions, which are necessary for a man who is deceiving his wife, he rented a furnished house with a courtyard in front, and a garden at the back, which one might think had been built to shelter some amorous folly. It was the nest that he had dreamt of, warm, snug, elegant, the walls covered with silk hangings of subdued tints, large pier-glasses, allegorical pictures, and filled with luxurious, low furniture that seemed to invite caresses and embraces. Bordenave occupied the ground floor, and the first floor served as a shrine for the banker and his mistress. Well, just a week ago, in order to hide the situation better, Bordenave asked Quillanet and some other friends to one of those luncheons which he understands so well how to order, such a delicious luncheon, that before it was quite over, every man had a woman on his knees already, and was asking himself whether a kiss from coaxing and naughty lips, was not a thousand times more intoxicating than the finest old brandy or the choicest vintage wines, and was looking at the bedroom door wishing to escape to it, although the Faculty altogether forbids that fashion of digesting a dainty repast, when the butler came in with an embarrassed look, and whispered something to him.

"Tell the gentleman that he has made a mistake, and ask him to leave me in peace," Bordenave replied to him in an angry voice. The servant went out and returned immediately to say that the intruder was using threats, that he refused to leave the house, and even spoke of having recourse to the commissary of

police. Bordenave frowned, threw his table napkin down, upset two glasses and staggered out with a red face, swearing and stammering out:

"This is rather too much, and the fellow shall find out what going out of the window means, if he will not leave by the door." But in the ante-room he found himself face to face with a very cool, polite, impassive gentleman, who said very quietly to him:

"You are Count Robert de Bordenave, I believe. Monsieur?"

"Yes, Monsieur."

"And the lease that you signed at the lawyer's, Monsieur Albin Calvert, in the *Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière*, is in your name, I believe?"

"Certainly, Monsieur."

"Then I regret extremely to have to tell you that if you are not in a position to pay the various accounts which different people have intrusted to me for collection here, I shall be obliged to seize all the furniture, pictures, plate, clothes etc., which are here, in the presence of two witnesses who are waiting for me downstairs in the street."

"I suppose this is some joke, Monsieur?"

"It would be a very poor joke, Monsieur le Comte, and one which I should certainly not allow myself towards you!"

The situation was absolutely critical and ridiculous, the more so, that in the dining-room the women who were slightly *elevated*, were tapping the wine glasses with their spoons, and calling for him. What could he do except to explain his misadventure to

Quillanet, who became sobered immediately, and rather than see his shrine of love violated, his secret sin disclosed and his pictures, ornaments and furniture sold, gave a check in due form for the claim there and then, though with a very wry face. And in spite of this, some people will deny that men who are utterly cleared out, often have a stroke of luck.

THE ACCENT

It was a large, upholstered house, with long white terraces shaded by vines, from which one could see the sea. Large pines stretched a dark dome over the sacked facade, and there was a look of neglect, of want and wretchedness about it all, such as irreparable losses, departures to other countries, and death leave behind them.

The interior wore a strange look, with half unpacked boxes serving for wardrobes, piles of band boxes, and for seats there was an array of worm-eaten armchairs, into which bits of velvet and silk, which had been cut from old dresses, had been festooned anyhow, and along the walls there were rows of rusty nails which made one think of old portraits and of pictures full of associations, which had one by one been bought for a low price by some second-hand furniture broker.

The rooms were in disorder and furnished no matter how, while velvets were hanging from the ceilings and in the corners, and seemed to show that as the servants were no longer paid except by hopes, they no longer did more than give them an accidental, careless touch with the broom occasionally. The drawing-room, which was extremely large, was full of useless knick-knacks, rubbish which is put up for sale at stalls at watering places, daubs, they could not be called paintings of portraits and of flowers, and an old piano with yellow keys.

Such is the home where she, who had been called the handsome Madame de Maurillac, was spending her monotonous existence, like some unfortunate doll which inconstant, childish hands have thrown into a corner in a loft, she who, almost passed for a professional seductress, and whose coqueties, at least so the Faithful ones of the Party said, had been able to excite a passing and last spark of desire in the dull eyes of the Emperor.

Like so many others, she and her husband had waited for his return from Elba, had discounted a fresh, immediate chance, had kept up boldly and spent the remains of his fortune at that game of luxury.

On the day when the illusion vanished, and he was forced to awake from his dream, Monsieur de Maurillac, without considering that he was leaving his wife and daughter behind him almost penniless, but not being able to make up his mind to come down in the world, to vegetate, to fight against his creditors, to accept the derisive alms of some sinecure, poisoned himself, like a shop girl who is forsaken by her lover.

Madame de Maurillac did not mourn for him, and as this lamentable disaster had made her interesting, and as she was assisted and supported by unexpected acts of kindness, and had a good adviser in one of those old Parisian lawyers who would get anybody out of the most inextricable difficulties, she managed to save something from the wreck, and to keep a small income. Then reassured and emboldened, and resting her ultimate illusions and her chimerical hopes on her daughter's

radiant beauty, and preparing for that last game in which they would risk everything, and perhaps also hoping that she might herself marry again, the ancient flirt arranged a double existence.

For months and months she disappeared from the world, and as a pretext for her isolation and for hiding herself in the country, she alleged her daughter's delicate health, and also the important interests she had to look after in the South of France.

Her frivolous friends looked upon that as a great act of heroism, as something almost super-human, and so courageous, that they tried to distract her by their incessant letters, religiously kept her up in all the scandal, and love adventures, in the falls, as well as in the apotheosis of the capital.

The difficult struggle which Madame de Maurillac had to keep up in order to maintain her rank, was really as fine as any of those campaigns in the twilight of glory, as those slow retreats where men only give way inch by inch and fight until the last cartridge is expended, until at last fresh troops arrive, reinforcement which bar the way to the enemy, and save the threatened flag.

Broken in by the same discipline, and haunted by the same dream, mother and daughter lived on almost nothing in the dull, dilapidated house which the peasants called the *château*, and economized like poor people who only have a few hundred francs a year to live on. But Fabienne de Maurillac developed well in spite of everything, and grew up into a woman like some rare flower which is preserved from all contact with the outer air and

is reared in a hot-house.

In order that she might not lose her Parisian accent by speaking too much with the servants, who had remained peasants under their livery, Madame de Maurillac, who had not been able to bring a lady's maid with her, on account of the extra cost which her traveling expenses and wages would have entailed, and who, moreover, was afraid that some indiscretion might betray her maneuvers and cover her with ridicule, made up her mind to wait on her daughter herself. And Fabienne talked with nobody but her, saw nobody but her, and was like a little novice in a convent. Nobody was allowed to speak to her, or to interfere with her walks in the large garden, or on the white terraces that were reflected in the blue water.

As soon as the season for the country and the seaside came, however, they packed up their trunks, and locked the doors of their house of exile. As they were not known, and taking those terrible trains which stop at every station, and by which travelers arrive at their destination in the middle of the night, with the certainty that nobody will be waiting for you, and see you get out of the carriage, they traveled third class, so that they might have a few bank notes the more, with which to make a show.

A fortnight in Paris in the family house at Auteuil, a fortnight in which to try on dresses and bonnets and to show themselves, and then Trouville, Aix or Biarritz, the whole show complete, with parties succeeding parties, money was spent as if they did not know its value, balls at the Casinos, constant flirtations,

compromising intimacies, and those kind of admirers who immediately surround two pretty women, one in the radiant beauty of her eighteen years, and the other in the brightness of that maturity, which beautiful September days bring with them.

Unfortunately, however, they had to do the same thing over again every year, and as if bad luck were continuing to follow them implacably, Madame de Maurillac and her daughter did not succeed in their endeavors, and did not manage during her usual absence from home, to pick up some nice fellow who fell in love immediately, who took them seriously, and asked for Fabienne's hand, consequently, they were very unhappy. Their energies flagged, and their courage left them like water that escapes, drop by drop, through a crack in a jug. They grew low-spirited and no longer dared to be open towards each other and to exchange confidences and projects.

Fabienne, with her pale cheeks, her large eyes with blue circles round them and her tight lips, looked like some captive princess who is tormented by constant ennui, and troubled by evil suggestions; who dreams of flight, and of escape from that prison where fate holds her captive.

One night, when the sky was covered with heavy thunderclouds and the heat was most oppressive, Madame de Maurillac called her daughter whose room was next to hers. After calling her loudly for some time in vain, she sprang out of bed in terror and almost broke open the door with her trembling hands. The room was empty, and the pillows untouched.

Then, nearly mad and foreseeing some irreparable misfortune, the poor woman ran all over the large house, and then rushed out into the garden, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. She had the appearance of some wild animal that is being pursued by a pack of hounds, tried to penetrate the darkness with her anxious looks, and gasped as if some one were holding her by the throat; but suddenly she staggered, uttered a painful cry and fell down in a fit.

There before her, in the shadow of the myrtle trees, Fabienne was sitting on the knees of a man – of the gardener – with both her arms round his neck and kissing him ardently, and as if to defy her, and to show her how vain all her precautions and her vigilance had been, the girl was telling her lover in the country dialect, and in a cooing and delightful voice, how she adored him and that she belonged to him...

Madame de Maurillac is in a lunatic asylum, and Fabienne has married the gardener.

What could she have done better?

GHOSTS

Just at the time when the *Concordat* was in its most flourishing condition, a young man belonging to a wealthy and highly respected middle class family went to the office of the head of the police at P – , and begged for his help and advice, which was immediately promised him.

"My father threatens to disinherit me," the young man then began, "although I have never offended against the laws of the State, of morality or of his paternal authority, merely because I do not share his blind reverence for the Catholic Church and her Ministers. On that account he looks upon me, not merely as Latitudinarian, but as a perfect Atheist, and a faithful old manservant of ours, who is much attached to me, and who accidentally saw my father's will, told me in confidence that he had left all his property to the Jesuits. I think this is highly suspicious, and I fear that the priests have been maligning me to my father. Until less than a year ago, we used to live very quietly and happily together, but ever since he has had so much to do with the clergy, our domestic peace and happiness are at an end."

"What you have told me," the official replied, "is as likely as it is regrettable, but I fail to see how I can interfere in the matter. Your father is in the full possession of all his mental faculties, and can dispose of all his property exactly as he pleases. I also think that your protest is premature; you must wait until his will

can legally take effect, and then you can invoke the aid of justice; I am sorry to say that I can do nothing for you."

"I think you will be able to," the young man replied; "for I believe that a very clever piece of deceit is being carried on here."

"How? Please explain yourself more clearly."

"When I remonstrated with him, yesterday evening, he referred to my dead mother, and at last assured me, in a voice of the deepest conviction, that she had frequently appeared to him, and had threatened him with all the torments of the damned, if he did not disinherit his son, who had fallen away from God, and leave all his property to the Church. Now I do not believe in ghosts."

"Neither do I," the police director replied; "but I cannot well do anything on this dangerous ground, if I had nothing but superstitions to go upon. You know how the Church rules all our affairs since the *Concordat* with Rome, and if I investigate this matter, and obtain no results, I am risking my post. It would be very different if you could adduce any proofs for your suspicions. I do not deny that I should like to see the clerical party, which will, I fear, be the ruin of Austria, receive a staggering blow; try, therefore, to get to the bottom of this business, and then we will talk it over again."

About a month passed, without the young Latitudinarian being heard of; but then he suddenly came one evening, evidently in a great state of excitement, and told him that he was in a position to expose the priestly deceit which he had mentioned,

if the authorities would assist him. The police director asked for further information.

"I have obtained a number of important clues," the young man said. "In the first place, my father confessed to me, that my mother did not appear to him in our house, but in the churchyard where she is buried. My mother was consumptive for many years, and a few weeks before her death she went to the village of S – , where she died and was buried. In addition to this, I found out from our footman, that my father has already left the house twice, late at night, in company of X – , the Jesuit priest, and that on both occasions he did not return till morning. Each time he was remarkably uneasy and low-spirited after his return, and had three masses said for my dead mother. He also told me just now, that he has to leave home this evening on business, but immediately he told me that, our footman saw the Jesuit go out of the house. We may, therefore, assume that he intends this evening to consult the spirit of my dead mother again, and this would be an excellent opportunity for getting on the track of the matter, if you do not object to opposing the most powerful force in the Empire, for the sake of such an insignificant individual as myself."

"Every citizen has an equal right to the protection of the State," the police director replied; "and I think that I have shown often enough, that I am not wanting in courage to perform my duty, no matter how serious the consequences may be; but only very young men act without any prospects of success, as they are

carried away by their feelings. When you came to me the first time, I was obliged to refuse your request for assistance, but to-day your shares have risen in value. It is now eight o'clock, and I shall expect you in two hours' time, here in my office. At present, all you have to do is to hold your tongue; everything else is my affair."

As soon as it was dark, four men got into a closed carriage in the yard of the police office, and were driven in the direction of the village of S – ; their carriage, however, did not enter the village, but stopped at the edge of a small wood in the immediate neighborhood. Here they all four alighted; they were the police director, accompanied by the young Latitudinarian, a police sergeant and an ordinary policeman, who was, however, dressed in plain clothes.

"The first thing for us to do is to examine the locality carefully," the police director said; "it is eleven o'clock and the exorcisers of ghosts will not arrive before midnight, so we have time to look round us, and to take our measure."

The four men went to the churchyard, which lay at the end of the village, near the little wood. Everything was as still as death, and not a soul was to be seen. The sexton was evidently sitting in the public house, for they found the door of his cottage locked, as well as the door of the little chapel that stood in the middle of the churchyard.

"Where is your mother's grave?" the police director asked; but as there were only a few stars visible, it was not easy to find it,

but at last they managed it, and the police director looked about in the neighborhood of it.

"The position is not a very favorable one for us," he said at last; "there is nothing here, not even a shrub, behind which we could hide."

But just then the policeman said that he had tried to get into the sexton's hut through the door or the window, and that at last he had succeeded in doing so by breaking open a square in a window, which had been mended with paper, and that he had opened it and obtained possession of the key, which he brought to the police director.

His plans were very quickly settled. He had the chapel opened and went in with the young Latitudinarian; then he told the police sergeant to lock the door behind him and to put the key back where he had found it, and to shut the window of the sexton's cottage carefully. Lastly, he made arrangements as to what they were to do, in case anything unforeseen should occur, whereupon the sergeant and the constable left the churchyard, and lay down in a ditch at some distance from the gate, but opposite to it.

Almost as soon as the clock struck half-past eleven, they heard steps near the chapel, whereupon the police director and the young Latitudinarian went to the window, in order to watch the beginning of the exorcism, and as the chapel was in total darkness, they thought that they should be able to see, without being seen; but matters turned out differently from what they expected.

Suddenly, the key turned in the lock, and they barely had time to conceal themselves behind the altar, before two men came in, one of whom was carrying a dark lantern. One was the young man's father, an elderly man of the middle class, who seemed very unhappy and depressed, the other the Jesuit father K — , a tall, thin, big-boned man, with a thin, bilious face, in which two large gray eyes shone restlessly under their bushy, black eyebrows. He lit the tapers, which were standing on the altar, and then began to say a *Requiem Mass*; while the old man knelt on the altar steps and served him.

When it was over, the Jesuit took the book of the Gospels and the holy water sprinkler, and went slowly out of the chapel, while the old man followed him, with the holy water basin in one hand and a taper in the other. Then the police director left his hiding place, and stooping down, so as not to be seen, he crept to the chapel window, where he cowered down carefully, and the young man followed his example. They were now looking straight on his mother's grave.

The Jesuit, followed by the superstitious old man, walked three times round the grave; then he remained standing before it, and by the light of the taper, he read a few passages from the Gospel; then he dipped the holy water sprinkler three times into the holy water basin, and sprinkled the grave three times; then both returned to the chapel, knelt down outside it with their faces towards the grave, and began to pray aloud, until at last the Jesuit sprang up, in a species of wild ecstasy, and cried out three times

in a shrill voice:

"Exsurge! Exsurge! Exsurge!"¹

Scarcely had the last word of the exorcism died away, when thick, blue smoke rose out of the grave, which rapidly grew into a cloud, and began to assume the outlines of a human body, until at last a tall, white figure stood behind the grave, and beckoned with its hand.

"Who art thou?" the Jesuit asked solemnly, while the old man began to cry.

"When I was alive, I was called Anna Maria B – ," the ghost replied in a hollow voice.

"Will you answer all my questions?" the priest continued.

"As far as I can."

"Have you not yet been delivered from purgatory by our prayers, and all the masses for your soul, which we have said for you?"

"Not yet, but soon, soon I shall be."

"When?"

"As soon as that blasphemer, my son, has been punished."

"Has that not already happened? Has not your husband disinherited his lost son, and made the Church his heir, in his place?"

"That is not enough."

"What must he do besides?"

"He must deposit his will with the Judicial Authorities, as his

¹ Arise!

last will and testament, and drive the reprobate out of his house."

"Consider well what you are saying. Must this really be?"

"It must, or otherwise I shall have to languish in purgatory much longer," the sepulchral voice replied with a deep sigh; but the next moment it yelled out in terror:

"Oh! Good Lord!" and the ghost began to run away as fast as it could. A shrill whistle was heard, and then another, and the police director laid his hand on the shoulder of the exorcisor, accompanied with the remark:

"You are in custody."

Meanwhile, the police sergeant and the policeman, who had come into the churchyard, had caught the ghost, and dragged it forward. It was the sexton, who had put on a flowing, white dress, and who wore a wax mask, which bore striking resemblance to his mother, as the son declared.

When the case was heard, it was proved that the mask had been very skillfully made from a portrait of the deceased woman. The Government gave orders that the matter should be investigated as secretly as possible, and left the punishment of Father K – to the spiritual authorities, which was a matter of course, at a time when priests were outside the jurisdiction of the Civil Authorities; and it is needless to say that he was very comfortable during his imprisonment, in a monastery in a part of the country which abounded with game and trout.

The only valuable result of the amusing ghost story was, that it brought about a reconciliation between father and son, and the

former, as a matter of fact, felt such deep respect for priests and their ghosts in consequence of the apparition, that a short time after his wife had left purgatory for the last time, in order to talk with him, he turned *Protestant*.

CRASH

Love is stronger than death, and consequently also, than the greatest crash.

A young, and by no means bad-looking son of Palestine, and one of the barons of the Almanac of the *Ghetto*, who had left the field covered with wounds in the last general engagement on the Stock Exchange, used to go very frequently to the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, in order to divert his thoughts, and to console himself amidst the varied scenes, and the numerous objects of attraction there. One day he met a newly married couple in the Russian section, who had a very old coat of arms, but on the other hand, a very modest income.

This latter circumstance had frequently emboldened the stockbroker to make secret overtures to the delightful little lady; overtures which might have fascinated certain Viennese actresses, but which were sure to insult a respectable woman. The baroness, whose name appeared in the *Almanack de Gotha*, therefore felt something very like hatred for the man from the *Ghetto*, and for a long time her pretty little head had been full of various plans of revenge.

The stockbroker, who was really, and even passionately in love with her, got close to her in the Exhibition buildings, which he could do all the more easily, since the little woman's husband had taken to flight, foreseeing mischief, as soon as she went up to the

show-case of a Russian fur dealer, before which she remained standing in rapture.

"Do look at that lovely fur," the baroness said, while her dark eyes expressed her pleasure; "I must have it."

But she looked at the white ticket on which the price was marked.

"Four thousand roubles," she said in despair; "that is about six thousand florins."

"Certainly," he replied, "but what of that? It is a sum not worth mentioning in the presence of such a charming lady."

"But my husband is not in a position ..."

"Be less cruel than usual for once," the man from the *Ghetto* said to the young woman in a low voice, "and allow me to lay this sable skin at your feet."

"I presume that you are joking."

"Not I ..."

"I think you must be joking, as I cannot think that you intend to insult me."

"But, Baroness, I love you..."

"That is one reason more why you should not make me angry."

"But ..."

"Oh! I am in such a rage," the energetic little woman said; "I could flog you like *Venus in the Fur*² did her slave."

"Let me be your slave," the Stock Exchange baron replied ardently, "and I will gladly put up with everything from you."

² One of Sacher-Masoch's novels. – TRANSLATOR.

Really, in this sable cloak, and with a whip in your hand, you would make a most lovely picture of the heroine of that story."

The baroness looked at the man for a moment with a peculiar smile.

"Then if I were to listen to you favorably, you would let me flog you?" she said after a pause.

"With pleasure."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "You will let me give you twenty-five cuts with a whip, and I will be yours after the twenty-fifth blow."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Fully."

The man from the *Ghetto* took her hand, and pressed it ardently to his lips.

"When may I come?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"And I may bring the sable cloak and the whip with me?"

"No, I will see about that myself."

The next evening the enamored stockbroker came to the house of the charming little Baroness, and found her alone, lying on a couch, wrapped in a dark fur, while she held a dog whip in her small hand, which the man from the *Ghetto* kissed.

"You know our agreement," she began.

"Of course I do," the Stock Exchange baron replied. "I am to allow you to give me twenty-five cuts with the whip, and after the twenty-fifth you will listen to me."

"Yes, but I am going to tie your hands first of all."

The amorous baron quietly allowed this new Delila to tie his hands behind him, and then at her bidding, he knelt down before her, and she raised her whip and hit him hard.

"Oh! That hurts me most confoundedly," he exclaimed.

"I mean it to hurt you," she said with a mocking laugh, and went on thrashing him without mercy. At last the poor fool groaned with pain, but he consoled himself with the thought that each blow brought him nearer to his happiness.

At the twenty-fourth cut, she threw the whip down.

"That only makes twenty-four," the beaten would-be, *Don Juan*, remarked.

"I will make you a present of the twenty-fifth," she said with a laugh.

"And now you are mine, altogether mine," he exclaimed ardently.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Have I not let you beat me?"

"Certainly; but I promised you to grant your wish after the twenty-fifth blow, and you have only received twenty-four," the cruel little bit of virtue cried, "and I have witnesses to prove it."

With these words, she drew back the curtains over the door, and her husband, followed by two other gentlemen came out of the next room, smiling. For a moment the stockbroker remained speechless on his knees before the beautiful woman; then he gave a deep sigh, and sadly uttered that one, most significant word:

"Crash!"

AN HONEST IDEAL

Among my numerous friends in Vienna, there is one who is an author, and who has always amused me by his childish idealism.

Not by his idealism from an abstract point of view, for in spite of my Pessimism I am an absurd Idealist, and because I am perfectly well aware of this, I as a rule never laugh at people's Idealism, but his sort of Idealism was really too funny.

He was a serious man of great capabilities who only just fell short of being learned, with a clear, critical intellect; a man without any illusions about Society, the State, Literature, or anything else, and especially not about women; but yet he was the craziest Optimist as soon as he got upon the subject of actresses, theatrical princesses and heroines; he was one of those men, who, like Hackländer, cannot discover the Ideal of Virtue anywhere, except in a ballet girl.

My friend was always in love with some actress or other; of course only Platonically, and from preference with some girl of rising talent, whose literary knight he constituted himself, until the time came when her admirers laid something much more substantial than laurel wreaths at her feet; then he withdrew and sought for fresh talent which would allow itself to be patronized by him.

He was never without the photograph of his ideal in his breast pocket, and when he was in a good temper he used to show me

one or other of them, whom I had never seen, with a knowing smile, and once, when we were sitting in a *café* in the *Prater*, he took out a portrait without saying a word, and laid it on the table before me.

It was the portrait of a beautiful woman, but what struck me in it first of all was not the almost classic cut of her features, but her white eyes.

"If she had not the black hair of a living woman, I should take her for a statue," I said.

"Certainly," my friend replied; "for a statue of Venus, perhaps for the Venus of Milo, herself."

"Who is she?"

"A young actress."

"That is a matter of course in your case; what I meant was, what is her name?"

My friend told me, and it was a name which is at present one of the best known on the German stage, with which a number of terrestrial adventures are connected, as every Viennese knows, with which those of Venus herself were only innocent toying, but which I then heard for the first time.

My idealist described her as a woman of the highest talent, which I believed, and as an angel of purity, which I did not believe; on that particular occasion, however, I at any rate did not believe the contrary.

A few days later, I was accidentally turning over the leaves of the portrait album of another intimate friend of mine, who was

a thoroughly careless, somewhat dissolute Viennese, and I came across that strange female face with the dead eyes again.

"How did you come by the picture of this Venus?" I asked him.

"Well, she certainly is a Venus," he replied, "but one of that cheap kind who are to be met with in the *Graben*³, which is their ideal grove..."

"Impossible!"

"I give you my word of honor it is so."

I could say nothing more after that. So my intellectual friend's new ideal, that woman of the highest dramatic talent, that wonderful woman with the white eyes, was a street Venus!

But my friend was right in one respect. He had not deceived himself with regard to her wonderful dramatic gifts, and she very soon made a career for herself; far from being a mute character on a suburban stage, she rose in two years to be the leading actress at one of the principal theaters.

My friend interested himself on her behalf with the manager of it, who was not blinded by any prejudices. She acted in a rehearsal, and pleased him; whereupon he sent her to star in the provinces, and my friend accompanied her, and took care she was well puffed.

She went on the boards as Schiller's *Marie Stuart*, and achieved the most brilliant success, and before she had finished her

³ The street where most of the best shops are to be found, and much frequented by venial beauties. – TRANSLATOR.

starring tour, she obtained an engagement at a large theater in a Northern town, where her appearance was the signal for a triumphant success.

Her reputation, that is, her reputation as a most gifted actress, grew very high in less than a year, and the manager of the Court theater invited her to star at the Court theater.

She was received with some suspicion at first, but she soon overcame all prejudices and doubts; the applause grew more and more vehement at every act, and at the close of the performance, her future was decided. She obtained a splendid engagement, and soon afterwards became an actress at the Court theater.

A well-known author wrote a racy novel, of which she was the heroine; one of the leading bankers and financiers was at her feet; she was the most popular personage, and the lioness of the capital; she had splendid apartments, and all her surroundings were of the most luxurious character, and she had reached that height in her career at which my idealistic friend, who had constituted himself her literary knight, quietly took his leave of her, and went in search of fresh talent.

But the beautiful woman with the dead eyes and the dead heart seemed to be destined to be the scourge of the Idealists, quite against her will, for scarcely had one unfolded his wings and flown away from her, than another fell out of the nest into her net.

A very young student, who was neither handsome, nor of good family, and certainly not rich or even well off, but who was enthusiastic, intellectual and impressionable, saw her as *Marie*

Stuart in The Maid of Orleans, The Lady with the Camelias, and most of the plays of the best French play writers, for the manager was making experiments with her, and she was doing the same with her talents.

The poor student was enraptured with the celebrated actress, and at the same time conceived a passion for the woman, which bordered on madness.

He saved up penny by penny, he nearly starved himself, only in order that he might be able to pay for a seat in the gallery whenever she acted, and be able to devour her with his eyes. He always got a seat in the front row, for he was always outside three hours before the doors opened, so as to be one of the first to gain his Olympus, the seat of the theatrical enthusiasts; he grew pale, and his heart beat violently when she appeared; he laughed when she laughed, shed tears when she wept, applauded her, as if he had been paid to do it by the highest favors that a woman can bestow, and yet she did not know him, and was ignorant of his very existence.

The regular frequenters of the Court theater noticed him at last, and spoke about his infatuation for her, until at last she heard about him, but still did not know him, and although he could not send her any costly jewelry, and not even a bouquet, yet at last he succeeded in attracting her attention.

When she had been acting and the theater had been empty for a long time, and she left it, wrapped in valuable furs and got into the carriage of her banker, which was waiting for her at the stage

door, he always stood there, often up to his ankles in snow, or in the pouring rain.

At first she did not notice him, but when her maid said something to her in a whisper on one occasion, she looked round in surprise, and he got a look from those large eyes, which were not dead then, but dark and bright; a look which recompensed him for all his sufferings and filled him with proud hopes, which constantly gained more power over the young Idealist, who was usually so modest.

At last there was a thorough, silent understanding between the theatrical princess and the dumb adorer. When she put her foot on the carriage step, she looked round at him, and every time he stood there, devouring her with his eyes; she saw it and got contentedly into her carriage, but she did not see how he ran after the carriage, and how he reached her house, panting for breath, when she did, nor how he lay down outside after the door had closed behind her.

One stormy summer night, when the wind was howling in the chimneys, and the rain was beating against the windows and on the pavement, the poor student was again lying on the stone steps outside her house, when the front door was opened very cautiously and quietly; for it was not the banker who was leaving the house, but a wealthy young officer whom the girl was letting out; he kissed the pretty little Cerebus as he put a gold coin into her hand, and then accidentally trod on the Idealist, who was lying outside.

They all three simultaneously uttered a cry; the girl blew out the candle, the officer instinctively half drew his sword, and the student ran away.

Ever since that night, the poor, crazy fellow went about with a dagger, which he concealed in his belt, and it was his constant companion to the theater, and the stage door, when the actress's carriage used to wait for her, and to her house, where he nightly kept his painful watch.

His first idea was to kill his fortunate rival, then himself, then the theatrical princess, but at last, he lay down again outside her door, or stood on the pavement and watched the shadows, that flitted hither and thither on her window, turned by the magic spell of the lovely actress.

And then, the most incredible thing happened, something which he could never have hoped for, and which he scarcely believed when it did occur.

One evening, when she had been playing a very important part, she kept the carriage waiting much longer than usual; but at last she appeared, and got into it; she did not shut the door, however, but beckoned to the young Idealist to follow her.

He was almost delirious with joy, just as a moment before he had been almost mad from despair, and obeyed her immediately, and during the drive he lay at her feet and covered her hands with kisses. She allowed it quietly and even merrily, and when the carriage stopped at her door, she let him lift her out of the carriage, and went upstairs leaning on his arm.

There, the lady's maid showed him into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room, while the actress changed her dress.

Presently she appeared in her dressing gown, sat down carelessly in an easy chair, and asked him to sit down beside her.

"You take a great interest in me?" she said.

"You are my ideal!" the student cried enthusiastically.

The theatrical princess smiled, and said:

"Well, I will at any rate be an honest ideal; I will not deceive you, and you shall not be able to say that I have misused your youthful enthusiasm. I will give myself to you..."

"Oh! Heavens!" the poor Idealist exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet.

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" she said with a smile. "I have not finished yet. I can only love a man who is in a position to provide me with all those luxuries which an actress, or, if you like, which I cannot do without. As far as I know, you are poor, but I will belong to you, only for to-night, however, and in return you must promise me not to rave about me, or to follow me, from to-night. Will you do this?"

The wretched Idealist was kneeling before her; he was having a terrible mental struggle.

"Will you promise me to do this?" she said again.

"Yes," he said, almost groaning.

The next morning a man, who had buried his Ideal, tottered downstairs. He was pale enough; almost as pale as a corpse; but in spite of this, he is still alive, and if he has any Ideal at all at

present, it is certainly not a theatrical princess.

STABLE PERFUME

Three ladies belonging to that class of society which has nothing useful to do, and therefore does not know how to employ its time sensibly, were sitting on a bench in the shade of some pine trees at Ischl, and were talking incidentally of their preference for all sorts of smells.

One of the ladies, Princess F – , a slim, handsome brunette, declared there was nothing like the smell of Russian leather; she wore dull brown Russian leather boots, a Russian leather dress suspender, to keep her petticoats out of the dirt and dust, a Russian leather belt which spanned her wasp-like waist, carried a Russian leather purse, and even wore a brooch and bracelet of gilt Russian leather; people declared that her bedroom was papered with Russian leather, and that her lover was obliged to wear high Russian leather boots and tight breeches, but that on the other hand, her husband was excused from wearing anything at all in Russian leather.

Countess H – , a very stout lady, who had formerly been very beautiful and of a very loving nature, but loving after the fashion of her time *à la* Parthenia and Griseldis, could not get over the vulgar taste of the young Princess. All she cared for was the smell of hay, and she it was who brought the scent *New Mown Hay* into fashion. Her ideal was a freshly mown field in the moonlight, and when she rolled slowly along, she looked like a moving haystack,

and exhaled an odor of hay all about her.

The third lady's taste was even more peculiar than Countess H – 's, and more vulgar than the Princess's, for the small, delicate, light-haired Countess W – lived only for – the smell of stables. Her friends could absolutely not understand this; the Princess raised her beautiful, full arm with its broad bracelet to her Grecian nose and inhaled the sweet smell of the Russian leather, while the sentimental hay-rick exclaimed over and over again:

"How dreadful! What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?"

The delicate little Countess seemed very much embarrassed at the effect that her confession had had, and tried to justify her taste.

"Prince T – told me that that smell had quite bewitched him once," she said; "it was in a Jewish town in Gallicia, where he was quartered once with his hussar regiment, and a number of poor, ragged circus riders, with half-starved horses came from Russia and put up a circus with a few poles and some rags of canvas, and the Prince went to see them, and found a woman among them, who was neither young nor beautiful, but bold and impudent; and the impudent woman wore a faded, bright red jacket, trimmed with old, shabby, imitation ermine, and that jacket stank of the stable, as the Prince expressed it, and she bewitched him with that odor, so that every time that the shameless wretch lay in his arms, and laughed impudently, and smelled abominably of the stable, he felt as if he were magnetized.

"How disgusting!" both the other ladies said, and involuntarily

held their noses.

"What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?" the haystack said with a sigh, and the little light-haired Countess was abashed and held her tongue.

At the beginning of the winter season the three friends were together again in the gay, imperial city on the blue Danube. One morning the Princess accidentally met the enthusiast for the hay at the house of the little light-haired Countess, and the two ladies were obliged to go after her to her private riding-school, where she was taking her daily lesson. As soon as she saw them, she came up, and beckoned her riding-master to her to help her out of the saddle. He was a young man of extremely good and athletic build, which was set off by his tight breeches and his short velvet coat, and he ran up and took his lovely burden into his arms with visible pleasure, to help her off the quiet, perfectly broken horse.

When the ladies looked at the handsome, vigorous man, it was quite enough to explain their little friend's predilection for the smell of a stable, but when the latter saw their looks, she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and her only way out of the difficulty was to order the riding-master, in a very authoritative manner, to take the horse back to the stable. He merely bowed, with an indescribable smile, and obeyed her.

A few months afterwards, Viennese society was alarmed at the news that Countess W – had been divorced from her husband. The event was all the more unexpected, as they had apparently always lived very happily together, and nobody was able to

mention any man on whom she had bestowed even the most passing attention, beyond the requirements of politeness.

Long afterwards, however, a strange report became current. A chattering lady's maid declared that the handsome riding-master had once so far forgotten himself as to strike the Countess with his riding-whip; a groom had told the Count of the occurrence, and when he was going to call the insolent fellow to account for it, the Countess covered him with her own body, and thus gave occasion for the divorce.

Years had passed since then and the Countess H – had grown stouter and more sentimental. Ischl and hayricks were not enough for her any longer; she spent the winter on lovely *Lago Maggiore*, where she walked among laurel bushes and cypress trees, and was rowed about on the luke warm, moonlight nights.

One evening she was returning home in the company of an English lady who was also a great lover of nature, from *Isola Bella*, when they met a beautiful private boat in which a very unusual couple were sitting; a small, delicate, light-haired woman, wrapped in a white burnoose, and a handsome, athletic man, in tight, white breeches, a short, black velvet coat trimmed with sable, a red fez on his head, and a riding whip in his hand.

Countess K – involuntarily uttered a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter with you?" the English lady asked. "Do you know those people?"

"Certainly! She is a Viennese lady," Countess H – whispered; "Countess W – ."

"Oh! Indeed you are quite mistaken; it is a Count Savelli and his wife. They are a handsome couple, don't you think so?"

When the boat came nearer, she saw that in spite of that, it was little Countess W – and that the handsome man was her former riding-master, whom she had married, and for whom she had bought a title from the Pope; and as the two boats passed each other, the short sable cloak, which was thrown carelessly over his shoulders, exhaled, like the old cat's skin jacket of that impudent female circus rider, a strong *stable perfume*.

THE ILL-OMENED GROOM

An impudent theft, to a very large amount, had been committed in the Capital. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, his wife's miniature in a frame encased with brilliants, and a considerable sum in money, the whole amounting in value to a hundred and fifteen thousand florins, had been stolen. The banker himself went to the Director of Police⁴ to give notice of the robberies, but at the same time he begged as a special favor that the investigation might be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

"First of all, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom," the police director said.

"Nobody, except my wife, my children, and Joseph, my valet, a man for whom I would answer as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"Most decidedly I do," the banker replied.

"Very well; then can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen, or on any days immediately preceding it, anybody who was not a

⁴ Head of the Criminal Investigation Department. – TRANSLATOR.

member of your household, happened by chance to go to your bedroom?"

The banker thought for a moment, and then said with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

The experienced official, however, was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary blush, so he took his hand, and looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite candid with me; somebody was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed there was nobody here." "Then at present, there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest – and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be obliged to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later, the banker's valet was in the police director's private room, who first of all looked at his man very closely, and then came to the conclusion that such an honest, unembarrassed face, and such quiet, steady eyes could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?"

"No, your Honor."

"A large theft has been committed in your master's house," the police director continued, "from his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been into the room, within the last few days?"

"Nobody but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying that, you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, sir," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe..."

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days, I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me..."

The police director shrugged his shoulders: "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore I must – sorry as I am to do so – have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good name is more to me than my situation. Somebody was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this somebody was...?"

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not reply for some time.

"It must come out," he said at length. "My master keeps a woman – you understand, sir, a pretty, fair woman; and he has furnished a house for her and goes to see her, but secretly of

course, for if my mistress were to find it out, there would be a terrible scene. This person was with him yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in, and she was in his bedroom with him; but I had to call him out after a short time, as his confidential clerk wanted to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cæcelia K – ; she is a Hungarian." At the same time the valet gave him her address.

Then the director of police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face to face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts which the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cæcelia K – into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police officer who had been dispatched for that purpose, returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the Capital also, the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifty thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman, whom he loved with all the passion of which he was capable. He could not grasp the idea that a woman whom he had surrounded with Asiatic luxury, whose strangest whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully, and now he had a quarrel with his wife, and

an end of all domestic peace, into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to raise the hue and cry after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was all of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the Director of Police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how heavy they might be. Special police officers were told off to try and discover her, but Cæcelia K – was so rude as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years had passed, and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon and – what he cared about a good deal more – he had found another charming mistress, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

We must now change the scene to London. A wealthy lady who created much sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her free behavior, was in want of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation, there was a young man, whose good looks and manners gave people the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's maid, and she took him immediately to her mistress's boudoir. When he entered, he saw a beautiful, voluptuous looking woman, at most, twenty-five years of age, with large, bright eyes and blue-black hair,

which seemed to increase the brilliancy of her fair complexion, lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who also had thick black hair, and who turned his glowing black eyes to the ground, beneath her searching gaze, with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build, and then she said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

And there was a strange look in her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their life; and I, who come of a good family, and who was an officer of the Honveds, must now ... go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat, as you are."

Miss Zoë – that was the lovely woman's name – smiled, and at the same time showed two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your looks," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service, if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," her maid said to herself, when she noticed the ardent looks which Miss Zoë gave her manservant, "which will soon pass away." But that experienced female was mistaken that time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos

treated her, put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian Opera, she countermanded her carriage, and refused to see her noble adorer, who wished to throw himself at her feet, and ordered her groom to be sent up to her boudoir.

"Lajos," she began, "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room, impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service, not for the sake of your money, but because I love and adore a beautiful woman in you."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you, and did not think that you loved me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately."

The groom knelt before the lovely girl, whose moist lips sought his at the same instant.

From that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he

was not allowed to be jealous, as the young lord was still her official lover, who had the pleasure of paying everything for that licentious beauty, and besides him, there was a whole army of so-called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and occasionally, something more, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers, a parrot or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos, the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, while he was playing with her dark curls, he said jeeringly:

"It is usually said that contrasts usually attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled, and then tore off her black curls, and immediately the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting by the side of Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left his mistress at about midnight, in order to look after the horses, as he said, and she put on a very pretty nightdress and went to bed. She remained awake for fully an hour, expecting her lover, and then she went to sleep, but in two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers, and saw a police inspector and two constables by the side of her magnificent bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cæcelia K – ."

"I am Miss Zoë."

"Oh! I know you," the Inspector said with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark locks, and you will be Cæcelia K – . I arrest you in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered, "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken, Madame," the Inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos.. my lover?"

"No, Lajos, the detective."

Cæcelia got out of bed, and the next moment she sank fainting onto the floor.

AN EXOTIC PRINCE

In the forthcoming reminiscences, a lady will frequently be mentioned who played a great part in the annals of the police from 1848 to 1866, and we will call her *Wanda von Chabert*. Born in Galicia of German parents, and carefully brought up in every way, she married a rich and handsome officer of noble birth, from love, when she was sixteen. The young couple, however, lived beyond their means, and when her husband died suddenly, two years after they were married, she was left anything but well off.

As Wanda had grown accustomed to luxury and amusement, the quiet life in her parents' house did not suit her any longer, and even while she was still in mourning for her husband, she allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her, and she went off with him at a venture, and continued the same extravagant life which she had led when her husband was alive, at her own authority. At the end of two years, however, her lover left her in a town in North Italy, almost without means, and she was thinking of going on the stage, when chance provided her with another resource, which enabled her to reassure her position in society. She became a secret police agent, and soon was one of their most valuable members. In addition to the proverbial charms and wit of a Polish woman, she also possessed high linguistic attainments, and she spoke Polish, Russian, French, German, English and

Italian, almost equally fluently and correctly; then she had also that encyclopædic polish, which impresses most people much more than the most profound learning of a specialist. She was very attractive in appearance, and she knew how to set off her good looks by all the arts of dress and coquetry.

In addition to this, she was a woman of the world in the widest sense of the term; pleasure-loving, faithless, unstable, and therefore never in any danger of really losing her heart, and consequently her head. She used to change the place of her abode, according to what she had to do. Sometimes she lived in Paris among the Polish emigrants, in order to find out what they were doing, and maintained intimate relations with the Tuileries and the Palais Royal at the same time; then she went to London for a short time, or hurried off to Italy, to watch the Hungarian exiles, only to reappear suddenly in Switzerland, or at one of the fashionable German watering-places.

In revolutionary circles, she was looked upon as an active member of the great *League of Freedom*, and diplomatists regarded her as an influential friend of Napoleon III.

She knew every one, but especially those men whose names were to be met with every day, in the papers, and she reckoned Victor Emmanuel, Rouher, Gladstone, and Gortschakoff among her friends, as well as Mazzini, Kossuth, Garibaldi, Mieroslawsky and Bakunin.

In the spring of 185- she was at Vevey, on the lovely lake of Geneva, and went into raptures when talking to an old

German diplomatist about the beauties of nature, and about Calame, Stifter and Turgenev, whose "Diary of a Hunter" had just become fashionable.

One day a man appeared at the *table d'hôte*, who excited unusual attention, and hers especially, so that there was nothing strange in her asking the proprietor of the hotel what his name was; and she was told that he was a wealthy Brazilian, and that his name was Don Escovedo.

Whether it was an accident, or whether he responded to the interest which the young woman felt for him, at any rate she constantly met him wherever she went, when she was taking a walk, or was on the lake, or was looking at the newspapers in the reading room; and at last she was obliged to confess to herself that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. Tall, slim, and yet muscular, the young, beardless Brazilian had a head which any woman might envy him; features which were not only beautiful and noble, but were also extremely delicate, with dark eyes which possessed a wonderful charm, and thick, auburn curly hair, which completed the attractiveness and the strangeness of his appearance.

They soon became acquainted, through a Prussian officer, whom the Brazilian had requested to introduce him to the beautiful Polish lady – for Frau von Chabert was taken for one in Vevey – and she, cold and designing as she was, blushed slightly when he stood before her for the first time; and when he gave her his arm he could feel her hand tremble slightly on it. The same

evening they went out riding together, the next he was lying at her feet, and on the third she was his. For four weeks the lovely Wanda and the Brazilian lived together as if they had been in Paradise, but he could not deceive her searching eyes any longer.

For her sharp and practiced gaze had already discovered in him that indefinable something which makes a man appear a suspicious character. Any other woman would have been pained and horrified at such a discovery, but she found the strange consolation in it, that her handsome adorer had promised also to become a very interesting object for her pursuit, and so she began systematically to watch the man who lay unsuspectingly at her feet.

She soon found out that he was no conspirator, but she asked herself in vain whether she was to look for a common swindler, an impudent adventurer or perhaps even a criminal in him. The day that she had foreseen soon came; the Brazilian's banker "unaccountably" had omitted to send him any money, and so he borrowed some of her. "So he is a male courtesan," she said to herself; and the handsome man soon required money again, and she lent it to him, until at last he left suddenly, and nobody knew where he had gone to; only this much, that he had left Vevey as the companion of an old but wealthy Wallachian lady; and so this time, clever Wanda was duped.

A year afterwards she met the Brazilian unexpectedly at Lucca, with an insipid-looking, light-haired, thin Englishwoman on his arm. Wanda stood still and looked at him steadily, but he

glanced at her quite indifferently; he did not choose to know her again.

The next morning, however, his valet brought her a letter from him, which contained the amount of his debt in Italian hundred liri notes, which were accompanied by a very cool excuse. Wanda was satisfied, but she wished to find out who the lady was, in whose company she constantly saw Don Escovedo.

"Don Escovedo."

An Austrian count, who had a loud and silly laugh, said:

"Who has saddled you with that yarn? The lady is Lady Nitingsdale, and his name is Romanesco."

"Romanesco?"

"Yes, he is a rich Boyar from Moldavia, where he has extensive estates."

Romanesco kept a faro bank in his apartments, and he certainly cheated, for he nearly always won; it was not long, therefore, before other people in good society at Lucca shared Madame von Chabert's suspicions, and consequently Romanesco thought it advisable to vanish as suddenly from Lucca as Escovedo had done from Vevey, and without leaving any more traces behind him.

Some time afterwards, Madame von Chabert was on the island of Heligoland, for the sea-bathing; and one day she saw Escovedo-Romanesco sitting opposite to her at the *table d'hôte*, in very animated conversation with a Russian lady; only his hair had turned black since she had seen him last. Evidently his light

hair had become too compromising for him.

"The sea water seems to have a very remarkable effect upon your hair," Wanda said to him spitefully, in a whisper.

"Do you think so?" he replied, condescendingly.

"I fancy that at one time your hair was fair."

"You are mistaking me for somebody else," the Brazilian replied, quietly.

"I am not."

"For whom do you take me, pray?" he said with an insolent smile.

"For Don Escovedo."

"I am Count Dembizki from Valkynia," the former Brazilian said with a bow; "perhaps you would like to see my passport."

"Well, perhaps..."

And at last, he had the impudence to show her his false passport.

A year afterwards, Wanda met Count Dembizki in Baden, near Vienna. His hair was still black, but he had a magnificent, full, black beard; he had become a Greek prince, and his name was Anastasio Maurokordatos. She met him once in one of the side walks in the park, where he could not avoid her. "If it goes on like this," she called out to him in a mocking voice, "the next time I see you, you will be king of some negro tribe or other."

That time, however, the Brazilian did not deny his identity; on the contrary, he surrendered at discretion, and implored her not to betray him, and as she was not revengeful, she pardoned

him, after enjoying his terror for a time, and promised him that she would hold her tongue, as long as he did nothing contrary to the laws.

"First of all, I must beg you not to gamble."

"You have only to command; and we do not know each other in future?"

"I must certainly insist on that," she said maliciously.

The Exotic Prince had, however, made the conquest of the charming daughter of a wealthy Austrian Count, and had cut out an excellent young officer who was wooing her; and he, in his despair began to make love to Frau von Chabert, and at last told her he loved her, but she only laughed at him.

"You are very cruel," he stammered in confusion.

"I? What are you thinking about?" Wanda replied, still smiling; "all I mean is, that you have directed your love to the wrong address, for Countess..."

"Do not speak of her; she is engaged to another man."

"As long as I choose to permit it," she said; "but what will you do, if I bring her back to your arms? Will you still call me cruel?"

"Can you do this?" the young officer asked, in great excitement.

"Well, supposing I can do it, what shall I be then?"

"An angel, whom I shall thank on my knees."

A few days later, the rivals met at a coffee house; the Greek prince began to lie and boast, and the Austrian officer gave him the lie direct, and in consequence, it was arranged that they

should fight a duel with pistols next morning in a wood close to Baden. But as the officer was leaving the house with his second the next morning, a Police Commissary came up to him and begged him not to trouble himself any further about the matter, but another time to be more careful before accepting a challenge.

"What does it mean?" the officer asked, in some surprise.

"It means that this Maurokordatos is a dangerous swindler and adventurer, whom we have just taken into custody."

"He is not a prince?"

"No; a circus rider."

An hour later the officer received a letter from the charming Countess, in which she humbly begged for pardon; the happy lover set off to go and see her immediately, but on the way a sudden thought struck him, and so he turned back in order to thank beautiful Wanda, as he had promised, on his knees.

VIRTUE IN THE BALLET

It is a strange feeling of pleasure that the writer about the stage and the characters of the theatrical feels, when he occasionally discovers a good, honest human heart in the twilight behind the scenes. Of all the witches and semi-witches of that eternal *Walpurgis night*, whose boards represent the world, the ladies of the ballet have at all times and in all places been regarded at least like saints, although Hackländer repeatedly told in vain in his earlier novels, to convince us that true virtue appears in tights and short petticoats and is only to be found in ballet girls. I fear that the popular voice is right as a general rule, but is equally true that here and there one finds a pearl in the dust, and even in the dirt, and the short story that I am about to relate, will best illustrate my assertion.

Whenever a new, youthful dancer appeared at the Vienna Opera House, the *habitués* began to go after her, and did not rest, until the fresh young rose had been plucked by some hand or other, though often it was old and trembling. For how could those young and pretty, sometimes even beautiful girls who, with every right to life, love and pleasure, were poor and had to subsist on a very small salary, resist the seduction of the smell of flowers and of the flash of diamonds? And if one resisted it, it was love, some real, strong passion, that gave her the strength for this, generally, however, only to go after luxury all the more shamelessly and

selfishly, when her lover forsook her.

At the beginning of the winter season of 185 – the pleasing news was spread among the *habitués*, that a girl of dazzling beauty was going to appear very shortly in the ballet at the Court Theater. When the evening came, nobody had yet seen that much discussed phenomenon, but report spread her name from mouth to mouth; it was Satanella. The moment when the troop of elastic figures in fluttering petticoats jumped onto the stage, every opera-glass in the boxes and stalls was directed on the stage, and at the same instant the new dancer was discovered, although she timidly kept in the background.

She was one of those girls who are surrounded by the bright halo of virginity, but who at the same time present a splendid type of womanhood; she had the voluptuous form of Rubens' second wife, whom they called, not untruly, the risen Green Helen, and her head with its delicate nose, its small full mouth, and its dark inquiring eyes, reminded people of the celebrated picture of the Flemish Venus in the *Belvedere* in Vienna.

She took the old guard of the Vienna Court Theater by storm, and the very next morning a perfect shower of *billets doux*, jewels and bouquets fell into the poor ballet girl's attic. For a moment she was dazzled by all this splendor and looked at the gold bracelets, the brooches set with rubies and emeralds, and at the sparkling earrings, with flushed cheeks, but then an unspeakable terror of being lost and of sinking into degradation, seized her, and she pushed the jewels away and was about to send them

back. But as is usual in such cases, her mother intervened in favor of *the generous gentlemen*, and so the jewels were accepted, but the notes which accompanied them were not answered at present. A second and a third discharge of Cupid's artillery followed, without making any impression on that virtuous girl, in consequence a greater number of her admirers grew quiet, though some continued to send her presents, and to assail her with love letters, and one had the courage to go still further.

He was a wealthy banker, who had just called on the mother of Henrietta, as we will call the fair-haired ballet girl, and then one evening, quite unexpectedly, on the girl herself. He by no means met with the reception which he had expected from the pretty girl in a faded cotton gown; Henrietta treated him with a certain amount of good humored respect, which had a much more unpleasant effect on him than that coldness and prudery, which is so often synonymous with coquetry and selfish speculation, among a certain class of women. In spite of everything, however, he soon went to see her daily, and lavished his wealth, without her asking him for anything, on the beautiful dancer, and he gave her no chance of refusing, for he relied on the mother for everything. She took pretty, small apartments for her daughter and herself in the *Kärntnerstrasse* and furnished them elegantly, hired a cook and housemaid, made an arrangement with a fly-driver, and lastly clothed her daughter's lovely limbs in silk, velvet and valuable lace.

Henrietta persistently held her tongue at all this; only once she

said to her mother in the presence of the Stock Exchange *Jupiter*:

"Have you won a prize in the lottery?"

"Of course, I have," her mother replied with a laugh.

The girl, however, had given away her heart long before, and quite contrary to all precedent, to a man whose very name she was ignorant of, and who sent her no diamonds, and not even any flowers. But he was young and good-looking, and stood so retiringly, and so evidently in love, at the small side door of the Opera House every night, when she got out of her antediluvian rickety fly, and also when she got into it again after the performance, that she could not help noticing him. Soon, he began to follow her wherever she went, and once he summoned up courage to speak to her, when she had been to see a friend in a remote suburb. He was very nervous, but she thought all that he said very clear and logical, and she did not hesitate for a moment to confess that she returned his love.

"You have made me the happiest, and at the same time the most wretched of men," he said after a pause.

"What do you mean?" she said innocently.

"Do you not belong to another man?" he asked her in a sad voice.

She shook her abundant, light curls.

"Up till now, I have belonged to myself alone, and I will prove it to you, by requesting you to call upon me frequently and without restraint. Everyone shall know that we are lovers. I am not ashamed of belonging to an honorable man, but I will not

sell myself."

"But your splendid apartments, and your dresses," her lover interposed shyly, "you cannot pay for them out of your salary."

"My mother has won a large prize in the lottery, or made a hit on the Stock Exchange." And with these words, the determined girl cut short all further explanations.

That same evening the young man paid his first visit, to the horror of the girl's mother, who was so devoted to the Stock Exchange, and he came again the next day, and nearly every day. Her mother's reproaches were of no more avail than Jupiter's furious looks, and when the latter one day asked for an explanation as to *certain visits*, the girl said proudly:

"That is very soon explained. He loves me as I love him, and I presume you can guess the rest."

And he certainly did guess the rest, and disappeared, and with him the shower of gold ceased.

The mother cried and the daughter laughed. "I never gave the worn out old rake any hopes, and what does it matter to me, what bargain you made with him? I always thought that you had been lucky on the Stock Exchange. Now, however, we must seriously consider about giving up our apartments, and make up our minds to live as we did before."

"Are you really capable of making such a sacrifice for me, to renounce luxury and to have my poverty?" her lover said.

"Certainly I am! Is not that a matter of course when one loves?" the ballet girl replied in surprise.

"Then let me inform you, my dear Henrietta," he said, "that I am not so poor as you think; I only wished to find out, whether I could make myself loved for my own sake, I have done so. I am Count L – , and though I am a minor and dependent on my parents, yet I have enough to be able to retain your pretty rooms for you, and to offer you, if not a luxurious, at any rate a comfortable existence."

On hearing this, Mamma dried her tears immediately. Count L – became the girl's acknowledged lover, and they passed the happiest hours together. Unselfish as the girl was, she was yet such a thoroughly ingenuous Viennese, that, whenever she saw anything that took her fancy, whether it was a dress, a cloak or one of those pretty little ornaments for a side table, she used to express her admiration in such terms, as forced her lover to make her a present of the object in question. In this way, Count L – incurred enormous debts, which his father paid repeatedly; at last, however, he inquired into the cause of all this extravagance, and when he discovered it, he gave his son the choice of giving up his connection with the dancer, or of relinquishing all claims on the paternal money box.

It was a sorrowful evening, when Count L – told his mistress of his father's determination.

"If I do not give you up, I shall be able to do nothing for you," he said at last, "and I shall not even know how I should manage to live myself, for my father is just the man to allow me to want, if I defy him. That, however, is a very secondary consideration;

but as a man of honor, I cannot bind you, who have every right to luxury and enjoyment, to myself, from the moment when I cannot even keep you from want, and so I must set you at liberty."

"But I will not give you up," Henrietta said proudly.

The young Count shook his head sadly.

"Do you love me?" the ballet girl said, quickly.

"More than my life."

"Then we will not separate, as long as I have anything," she continued.

And she would not give up her connection with him, and when his father actually turned Count L – into the street, she took her lover into her own lodgings. He obtained a situation as a copyist clerk in a lawyer's office, and she sold her valuable dresses and jewels, and so they lived for more than a year.

The young man's father did not appear to trouble his head about them, but nevertheless he knew everything that went on in their small home, and knew every article that the ballet girl sold; until at last, softened by such love and strength of character, he himself made the first advances to a reconciliation with his son.

At the present time, Henrietta wears the diamonds which formerly belonged to the old Countess, and it is long since she was a ballet girl, for now she sits by the side of her husband in a carriage on whose panels their armorial bearings are painted.

IN HIS SWEETHEART'S LIVERY

At present she is a great lady, an elegant, intellectual woman, a celebrated actress; but in the year 1847, when our story begins, she was a beautiful, but not very moral girl, and then it was that the young, talented Hungarian poet, who was the first to discover her gifts for the stage, made her acquaintance.

The slim, ardent girl, with her bright, brown hair and her large blue eyes, attracted the careless poet, and he loved her, and all that was good and noble in her nature, put forth fresh buds and blossoms in the sunshine of his poetic love.

They lived in an attic in the old Imperial city on the Danube, and she shared his poverty, his triumphs and his pleasures, and she would have become his true and faithful wife, if the Hungarian revolution had not torn him from her arms.

The poet became the soldier of freedom, and followed the Magyar tricolor, and the Honved drums, while she was carried away by the current of the movement in the capital, and she might have been seen discharging her musket, like a brave Amazon, at the Croats, who were defending the town against Görgey's assaulting battalions.

But at last Hungary was subdued, and was governed as if it had been a conquered country.

It was said that the young poet had fallen at Temesvar, and his mistress wept for him, and married another man, which was

nothing either new or extraordinary. Her name was now Frau von Kubinyi, but her married life was not happy; and one day it occurred to her that her lover had told her that she had talent for the stage, and whatever he said, had always proved correct, so she separated from her husband, studied a few parts, appeared on the stage, and the public, the critics, actors and literature were lying at her feet.

She obtained a very profitable engagement, and her reputation increased with every part she played; and before the end of a year after her first appearance, she was the lioness of society. Everybody paid homage to her, and the wealthiest men tried to obtain her favors; but she remained cold and reserved, until the General commanding the district, who was a handsome man of noble bearing, and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, approached her.

Whether she was flattered at seeing that powerful man, before whom millions trembled, and who had to decide over the life and death, the honor and happiness of so many thousands, fettered by her soft curls, or whether her enigmatical heart for once really felt what true love was, suffice it to say, that in a short time she was his acknowledged mistress, and her princely lover surrounded her with the luxury of an Eastern queen.

But just then a miracle occurred – the resurrection of a dead man. Frau von Kubinyi was driving through the *Corso* in the General's carriage; she was lying back negligently in the soft cushions, and looking carelessly at the crowd on the

pavement. Then, she caught sight of a common Austrian soldier and screamed out aloud.

Nobody heard that cry, which came from the depths or a woman's heart, nobody saw how pale and how excited that woman was, who usually seemed made of marble, not even the soldier who was the cause of it. He was a Hungarian poet, who, like so many other *Honveds*⁵, now wore the uniform of an Austrian soldier.

Two days later, to his no small surprise he was told to go to the General in command, as orderly, and when he reported himself to the adjutant, he told him to go to Frau von Kubinyi's, and to await her orders.

Our poet only knew her by report, but he hated and despised the beautiful woman, who had sold herself to the enemy of the country, most intensely; he had no choice, however, but to obey.

When he arrived at her house, he seemed to be expected, for the porter knew his name, took him into his lodge, and without any further explanation, told him immediately to put on the livery of his mistress, which was lying there ready for him. He ground his teeth, but resigned himself without a word to his wretched, though laughable fate; it was quite clear that the actress had some purpose in making the poet wear her livery. He tried to remember whether he could formerly have offended her by his notices as a theatrical critic, but before he could arrive at any

⁵ A Hungarian word, meaning literally, Defender of the Fatherland. The term *Honved* is applied to the Hungarian *Landwehr*, or Militia. – Translator.

conclusion, he was told to go and show himself to Frau von Kubinyi.

She evidently wished to enjoy his humiliation.

He was shown into a small drawing-room, which was furnished with an amount of taste and magnificence such as he had never seen before, and was told to wait. But he had not been alone many minutes, before the door-curtains were parted and Frau von Kubinyi came in, calm but deadly pale, in a splendid dressing gown of some Turkish material, and he recognized his former mistress.

"Irma!" he exclaimed.

The cry came from his heart, and it also affected the heart of the woman, who was surfeited with pleasure, so greatly that the next moment she was lying on the breast of the man whom she had believed to be dead, but only for a moment, and then he freed himself from her.

"We are fated to meet again thus!" she began.

"Not through any fault of mine," he replied bitterly.

"And not through mine either," she said quickly; "everybody thought that you were dead, and I wept for you; that is my justification."

"You are really too kind," he replied sarcastically. "How can you condescend to make any excuses to me? I wear your livery, and you have to order, and I have to obey; our relative positions are clear enough."

Frau von Kubinyi turned away to hide her tears.

"I did not intend to hurt your feelings," he continued: "but I must confess that it would have been better for both of us, if we had not met again. But what do you mean by making me wear your livery? It is not enough that I have been robbed of my happiness? Does it afford you any pleasure to humiliate me as well?"

"How can you think that?" the actress exclaimed. "Oh! Ever since I have discovered your unhappy lot, I have thought of nothing but the means of delivering you from it, and until I succeed in doing this, however, I can at least make it more bearable for you."

"I understand," the unhappy poet said with a sneer. "And in order to do this, you have begged your present worshiper, to turn your former lover into a footman."

"What a thing to say to me!"

"Can you find any other plea?"

"You wish to punish me for having loved you, idolized you, I suppose?" the painter continued. "So exactly like a woman! But I can perfectly well understand that the situation promises to have a fresh charm for you..."

Before he could finish what he was saying, the actress quickly left the room; he could hear her sobbing, but he did not regret his words, and his contempt and hatred for her only increased, when he saw the extravagance and the princely luxury with which she was surrounded. But what was the use of his indignation? He was wearing her livery, he was obliged to wait upon her and to

obey her, for she had the corporal's cane at her command, and it really seemed as if he incurred the vengeance of the offended woman; as if the General's insolent mistress wished to make him feel her whole power; as if he were not to be spared the deepest humiliation.

The General and two of Frau von Kubinyi's friends, who were servants of the Muses like she was, for one was a ballet dancer, and the two others were actresses, had come to tea, and he was to wait on them.

While it was getting ready, he heard them laughing in the next room, and the blood flew to his head, and when the butler opened the door Frau von Kubinyi appeared on the General's arm; she did not, however, look at her new footman, her former lover, triumphantly or contemptuously, but she gave him a glance of the deepest commiseration.

Could he after all have wronged her?

Hatred and love, contempt and jealousy were struggling in his breast, and when he had to fill the glasses, the bottle shook in his hand.

"Is this the man?" the General said, looking at him closely.

Frau von Kubinyi nodded.

"He was evidently not born for a footman," the General added.

"And still less for a soldier," the actress observed.

These words fell heavily on the unfortunate poet's heart, but she was evidently taking his part, and trying to rescue him from his terrible position.

Suspicion, however, once more gained the day.

"She is tired of all pleasures, and satisfied with enjoyment," he said to himself; "she requires excitement and it amuses her to see the man whom she formerly loved, and who, as she knows, still loves her, tremble before her. And when she pleases she can see me tremble; not for my life, but for fear of the disgrace which she can inflict upon me at the moment if it should give her any pleasure."

But suddenly the actress gave him a look which was so sad and so imploring, that he looked down in confusion.

From that time he remained in her house without performing any duties, and without receiving any orders from her; in fact he never saw her, and did not venture to ask after her, and two months had passed in this way, when the General unexpectedly sent for him. He waited, with many others, in the ante-room, and when the General came back from parade, he saw him and beckoned him to follow, and as soon as they were alone, he said:

"You are free, as you have been allowed to purchase your discharge."

"Good heavens!" the poet stammered, "how am I to ..."

"That is already done," the General replied. "You are free."

"How is it possible? How can I thank your Excellency!"

"You owe me no thanks," he replied; "Frau von Kubinyi bought you out."

The poor poet's heart seemed to stop; he could not speak, nor even stammer a word; but with a low bow, he rushed out and tore

wildly through the streets, until he reached the mansion of the woman whom he had so misunderstood, quite out of breath; he must see her again, and throw himself at her feet.

"Where are you going to?" the porter asked him.

"To Frau von Kubinyi's."

"She is not here."

"Not here?"

"She has gone away."

"Gone away? Where to?"

"She started for Paris two hours ago."

DELILA

In a former reminiscence,⁶ we made the acquaintance of a lady, who had done the police many services in former years, and whom we called Wanda von Chabert. It is no exaggeration, if we say that she was at the same time the cleverest, the most charming and the most selfish woman whom one could possibly meet. She was certainly not exactly what is called beautiful, for neither her face nor her figure were symmetrical enough for that, but if her head was not beautiful in the style of the antique, neither like the *Venus* of Milo nor Ludoirsi's *Juno*, it was, on the other hand, in the highest sense delightful like the ladies whom Wateau and Mignard painted. Everything in her little face, and in its frame of soft brown hair was attractive and seductive, her low, Grecian forehead, her bright, almond shaped eyes, her small nose, and her full, voluptuous lips, her middling height and her small waist with its, perhaps, almost too full bust, and above all her walk, that half indolent, half coquettish swaying of her broad hips, were all maddeningly alluring.

And this woman, who was born for love, was as eager for pleasure and as amorous as few other women have even been, but for that very reason she never ran any danger of allowing her victims to escape her from pity; on the contrary, she soon

⁶ An Exotic Prince.

grew tired of each of her favorites, and her connection with the police was then extremely useful to her, in order to get rid of an inconvenient, or jealous lover.

Before the war between Austria and Italy in 1859, Frau von Chabert was in London, where she lived alone in a small, one-storied house with her servants, and was in constant communication with emigrants from all countries.

She herself was thought to be a Polish refugee, and the luxury by which she was surrounded, and a fondness for sport, and above all for horses, which was remarkable even in England, made people give her the title of Countess. At that period Count T – was one of the most prominent members of the Hungarian propaganda, and Frau von Chabert was commissioned to pay particular attention to all he said and did; but in spite of all the trouble she took, she had not hitherto even succeeded in making his acquaintance. He lived the life of a misanthrope, quite apart from the great social stream of London, and he was not believed to be either gallant, or ardent in love. Fellow-countrymen of his, who had known him formerly, during the Magyar revolution, described him as very cautious, cold and silent, so that if any man possessed a charm against the toils, which she set for him, it was he.

Just then it happened that as Wanda was riding in Hyde Park quite early one morning before there were many people about, her thoroughbred English mare took fright, and threatened to throw the plucky rider, who did not for a moment lose her

presence of mind, from the saddle. Before her groom had time to come to her assistance, a man in a Hungarian braided coat rushed from the path, and caught hold of the animal's reins. When the mare had grown quite quiet, he was about to go away with a slight bow, but Frau von Chabert detained him, so that she might thank him, and so had leisure to examine him more closely. He was neither young nor handsome, but was well-made, like all Hungarians are, and had an interesting and very expressive face. He had a sallow complexion, which was set off by a short, black full beard, and he looked as if he were suffering, while he fixed two, great, black fanatical eyes on the beautiful young woman, who was smiling at him so amiably, and it was the strange look in those large eyes which aroused in the soul of the woman who was so excitable, that violent, but passing feeling which she called *love*. She turned her horse and accompanied the stranger on his side, and he seemed to be even more charmed by her chatter than by her appearance, for his grave face grew more and more animated, and at last he himself became quite friendly and talkative. When he took leave of her, Wanda gave him her card, on the back of which her address was written, and he immediately gave her his in return.

She thanked him and rode off, looking at his name as she did so; it was Count T – .

She felt inclined to give a shout of pleasure when she found that the noble quarry, which she had been hunting so long, had at last come into her preserves, but she did not even turn her head

round to look at him, such was the command which that woman had over herself and her movements.

Count T – called upon her the very next day, soon he came every day, and in less than a month after that innocent adventure in Hyde Park, he was at her feet; for when Frau von Chabert made up her mind to be loved, nobody was able to withstand her. She became the Count's confidante almost as speedily as she had become his mistress, and every day, and almost every hour, she, with the most delicate coquetry, laid fresh fetters on the Hungarian Samson. Did she love him?

Certainly she did, after her own fashion, and at first she had not the remotest idea of betraying him; she even succeeded in completely concealing her connection with him, not only in London but also in Vienna.

Then the war of 1859 broke out, and like most Hungarian and Polish refugees, Count T – hurried off to Italy, in order to place himself at the disposal of that great and patriotic Piedmontese statesman, Cavour.

Wanda went with him, and took the greatest interest in his revolutionary intrigues in Turin; for some time she seemed to be his right hand, and it looked as if she had become unfaithful to her present patrons. Through his means, she soon became on intimate terms with Piedmontese government circles, and that was his destruction.

A young Italian diplomatist, who frequently negotiated with Count T – , or in his absence, with Wanda, fell madly in love

with the charming Polish woman, and she, who was never cruel, more especially when she herself had caught fire, allowed herself to be conquered by the handsome, intellectual, daring man. In measure as her passion for the Italian increased, so her feelings for Count T – declined, and at last she felt that her connection with him was nothing but a hindrance and a burden, and as soon as Wanda had reached that point, her adorer was as good as lost.

Count T – was not a man whom she could just coolly dismiss, or with whom she might venture to trifle, and that she knew perfectly well; so in order to avoid a catastrophe, the consequences of which might be incalculable for her, she did not let him notice the change in her feelings towards him at first, and kept the Italian, who belonged to her, at a proper distance.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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